

The International Armizare Society
Presents;

Beginning Armizare

An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Introduction: The Medieval Art of Arms	5
I. Spada a Dui Mani: The Longsword	7
II. Stance and Footwork	9
III. Poste: The Guards of the Longsword	14
IV. Learning to Cut with the Longsword	17
V. Defending with the Fendente	23
VI. Complex Blade Actions	25
VII. Parrata e Risposta	25
Appendix A: Glossary	28
Appendix B: Bibliography	30
Appendix C: Armizare Introductory Class Lesson Plan	31

FOREWORD

The following document was originally developed as a study guide and training companion for students in the popular "Taste of the Knightly Arts" course taught by the Chicago Swordplay Guild. It has been slightly revised, complete with the 12 class outline used in that course in order to assist new teachers, small study groups or independent students looking for a way to begin their study of armizare.

Readers should note that by no means is this a complete curriculum. There is none of the detailed discussion of body mechanics, weight distribution or cutting mechanics that occurs during classroom instruction, nor an explanation of the number of paired exercises that are used to develop student's basic skills, outside of the paired techniques, or "set-plays," themselves. Thrusts are only discussed in passing, and there is no mention of the close-quarter grappling that is part and parcel of medieval swordsmanship. However, as a swordsmanship primer it will teach students all of the guards, defensive tactics and covering actions that form the foundation for adding those elements to their training, particularly when used in combination with the growing library of both public resources you will find at the International Armizare Society website, and those the society makes privately available for mentored students/groups.

Good luck, and good training!

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INTRODUCTION: THE MEDIEVAL ART OF ARMS

The Medieval longsword, or *spada a doi mani* in the Italian tradition, was a specialized form of the “knightly” cruciform sword that developed in the early 13th century. This style of swordplay became so popular that fencing matches are recorded in Italy and Germany as late as the mid-18th century, two hundred years after the weapon’s usefulness on the battlefield had died out.

This *Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship* course focuses on the tradition of Fiore dei Liberi, a mercenary knight and master-at-arms active in Northern Italy during the late 14th and early 15th centuries. The course is designed to provide the student with an intensive overview of the weapon and the basic techniques of its use.

Dei Liberi gave no formal name to his school or his martial art, simply calling it *armizare* (“the art of arms”), and we only know that the style outlived the founder because of a surviving manuscript from another master-at-arms, separated from dei Liberi by two to three generations of time. Yet these two men have left us a complete martial art of a richness and complexity to stand beside any other in the world.

Armizare is divided into three principle sections: close quarter combat, long weapon combat and mounted combat. Close quarter combat forms the basis for many of the grappling and disarming techniques used in later sections of the manuscript, and is used in or out of armour, with the dagger section forming the single largest collection of techniques:

- *Abrazare*
(striking, throwing & grappling)
- *Bastoncello*
(a short stick, approximately 12” long)
- *Daga* (the rondel dagger)
- *Daga contra spada*
(dagger vs. sword)
- *Spada contra daga*
(sword vs. dagger)

Long weapon combat begins with the introduction of the sword, and swordplay forms the basis for all other long weapon combat. The treatise also includes several other “knightly” weapons used on foot, both in and out of armour, such as the spear and poleaxe. There are also several unusual weapons, such as monstrous, specialized swords for judicial combat, and hollow-headed polehammers, meant to be filled with an acidic powder to blind the opponent!

- *Spada d’un mano*
(one-handed sword techniques)
- *Spada a dui mani*
(two-handed sword techniques)
- *Daga e bastone* (staff and dagger)
- *Lanza* (spear)
- *Spada en arme*
(sword in full armour)
- *Azza* (poleaxe)

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

Finally, mounted combat, reintroduces many of the disciplines already presented, this time adapted for combat on horseback, again in or out of armour. Even if one does not ride, the mounted techniques contain many interesting insights into the other sections of the art of arms. Within these subsections, dei Liberi taught his art through a series of *zoghi* (“plays”) — formal, two-man drills— that were both technique and tactical lesson.

Fiore dei Liberi, Founder of the Art

Fiore dei Liberi of Premariacco d’Ostria (ca. 1350 - 1420s) was a late 14th century knight, diplomat, and fencing master. He was born sometime around 1350 in Cividale del Friuli, a small town on the river Natisone in the far northeast of modern Italy, and was the son of Sir Benedetto dei Liberi, a scion of a minor noble family. His birth year is estimated by the prologue of *Il Fior di Battaglia* (1409), where he says that he had been practicing the art of swordsmanship for 40 years at the time of its writing.

Very little is known about dei Liberi’s early life, except for what is written in the prologue of his work. He tells us that he was motivated from childhood to learn the art of wrestling, sword, axe and lance. He initially learned from local masters-at-arms, but in order to further improve himself, he left Premariacco, seeking greater instruction under a variety of German and Italian masters. At some point dei Liberi made the transition from student to teacher, and began traveling as a weapons-instructor throughout the northern Italian states. Apparently this did not sit well with the local masters, who frowned upon the competition, and on five separate occasions he found himself challenged to illicit duels. Dei Liberi tells us little of these duels, other than honor compelled him to accept and to fight for his life far from home or friends, writing: *But, by the grace of God, I, Fiore, have always come away with honor and without injury to my body.*

The master also participated in the military engagements that plagued Italy in the last decades of the 14th century. In 1383 he was in Udine, fighting on the side of the town during a civil war. He arrived in the town, perhaps as an independent *condottiero* (mercenary soldier) and was placed in charge of its ballista crews. Although the details of the fighting that followed are scant, Udine prevailed, and dei Liberi must have played some notable role in its defense; to this day there is a street in Udine named for him.

Following the defense of Udine, dei Liberi again took to the road as a hired sword and swordmaster. In his prologue, Maestro Fiore writes, *many times have many Signori, Knights, and Squires asked to learn this art of fighting and of combat in the lists from me*, and his path can be traced across the cities of northern Italy: Mantua, Padua, Pavia, and likely Milan, whose ambitious Duke Giangaleazzo Visconti dominated Italian politics in the late 14th century. While the details of his life in this period are lost, the names of the students he trained, and the feats of arms they performed, are not. Although their ranks and pedigrees varied widely, all were *condottieri*.

From 1399 Fiore dei Liberi disappears from our records until he appears connected to the court of his last and greatest patron, the young, bellicose Niccolò III d’Este, Marquise of Ferrara (1383-

1441). It is believed to have been at Niccolò's request that Fiore wrote his manuscript. In 1409 Fiore dedicated his treatise to the marquise, and despite a few tantalizing leads, after 1410 there are no known records of his life or death.

The Flower Of Battle

Fiore dei Liberi's art is preserved in the manuscripts he left behind, all entitled *il Fior di Battaglia* (the Flower of Battle). Presented to the Marquise d'Este in 1409, at least five distinct copies once existed. Only four are known to survive, each with slight differences. The manuscripts are named for the collections that hold them: the John Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the Pierpoint-Morgan in New York City, the Biblitheque National in Paris, and the Pissani-Dossi collection, formerly in Italy. The Getty manuscript is the largest and most detailed of the three texts, but each adds unique advice, techniques or clarifications to the other three.

I. SPADA A DUI MANI: THE LONGSWORD

I am the sword and I am lethal against any weapon; lances, axes and dagger are worthless against me. I can become extended or withdrawn; when I get near the opponent I can enter into close play, perform disarms and abrazare. My art is to turn and to bind; I am expert in defense and offense, and always strive to finish in those. Come against me and feel the pain. I am Royal, enforce justice, propagate goodness and destroy evil. Look at me as a cross, and I will give you fame and a name in the art of arms.

Fiore dei Liberi, *Il Fior di Battaglia*

1.1 Origin of the Longsword

Prior to the 13th century, the principle knightly sword was a straight, broad-bladed and double edged weapon about 39" (1 m) long, wielded in one hand. Used with a shield, this sword was primarily used from horseback as a back-up weapon once the lance was discarded, or on foot by lightly armoured foot soldiers. By the year 1200, however, the adoption of heavier crossbows and bows capable of penetrating maille armour, accompanied by the appearance of better-trained, professional foot soldiers armed with heavier polearms, was combined with new iron smelting and refining processes that made the production of steel plate cheaper and easier, all of which began to rapidly change the medieval battlefield. Thus, in a chicken-and-egg process, as new arms made plate armour necessary, the means of producing that armour, and to mass produce steel swords, became more readily available. While the knight's improving armour made it possible for him to rely on his shield less, that same armour also required him to use a sword better suited to defeat it. Thus, the first longswords were born.

1.2 Evolution of the Longsword

The medieval longsword went through many changes throughout its history. The sword that first appeared in the 13th century was primarily a broad-bladed cutting weapon, with a fuller (a long groove along the center of the blade) to make the blade lighter without weakening it. The tip was not as prominent as its future brothers, but still deadly. By the late 13th century, the sword began to develop a more tapered point, to pierce both mail as well as the gaps in the new

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

plate armour that began to appear at this time. As plate armour rapidly developed in the 14th century, a form with a sharply-tapered point, creating a very triangular silhouette also appeared by 1350. With a new emphasis on the point, a thick diamond cross-section (called a "riser") replaced fullers, making the sword more rigid, and thereby better suited to thrusting. Swords of this form became popular by the late 14th century and became one of the dominant longsword forms in the following century.

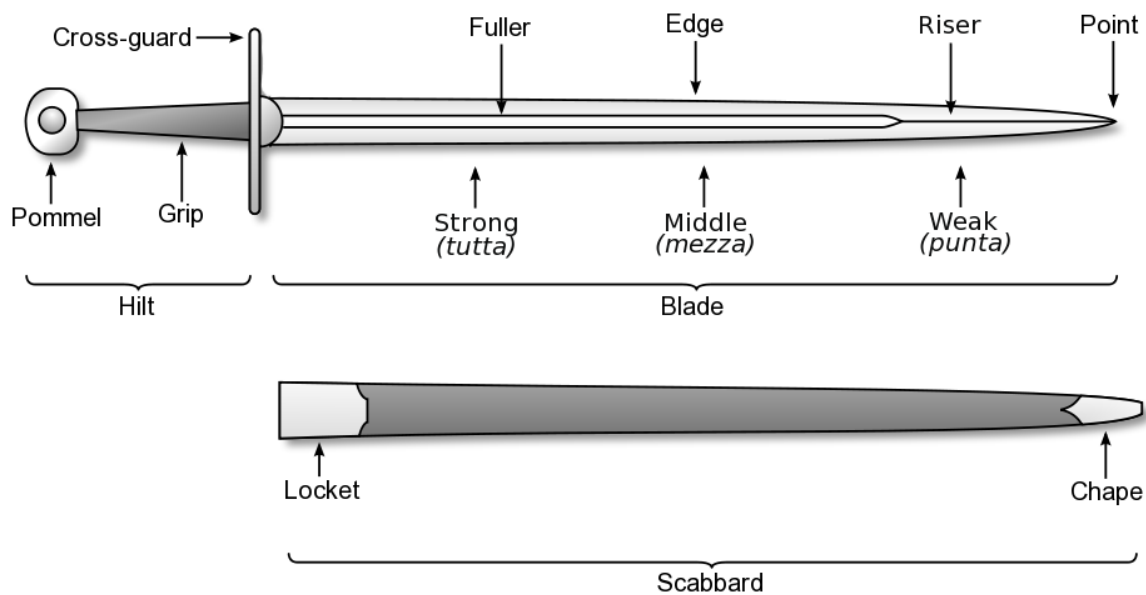
By the 16th century, both tapered and broad-bladed longswords remained popular, but the longsword's utility on the battlefield was nearly over, while the rapier had supplanted its popularity in civilian life. In the street melee that opens *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare has old Montague call for his longsword, as a way of portraying him as old-fashioned and even buffoonish.

1.2 Anatomy of the Longsword

There are two principal forms of longsword. The first is usually about 46 - 50 inches long, with a weight between 2.5 and 4 lbs. This sort of weapon was generally carried in battle, when traveling, or in the late medieval era, as a civilian weapon.

The second form of longsword was about 54 inches long (the usual measurement was that the pommel should fit under the crook of the armpit), with a weight of 3 to 5 lbs. This was specifically a battlefield weapon, and was carried in the hand or suspended from the saddle, not worn on the body.

The following illustration shows the major components of a medieval sword's blade and hilt.



Point (Punta) – The tip of the longsword, used for thrusting.

Flat (Piatto) – The flexible plane of the sword that “connects” the edges.

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- Edge (Filo) – The juncture of the two flats, with which the sword cuts and deflects blows. The two edges are named “true” and “false”, the true edge being the one aligned with the knuckles when the sword is gripped.
- Fuller/Riser – The spine of the sword. A *fuller* is a shallow groove that runs down each flat, along the sword’s spine. The fuller lightens the sword, but in such a way that it retains stiffness for cutting. Note that some swords, particularly those designed to emphasize the thrust, do not have a fuller, but rather have a wide, diamond cross-sectioned blade. This thicker “spine” makes the sword stiffer, and is called a *riser*.
- Cross (Croce) – The steel bar that protects the hands from an opponent’s blade, and is also used offensively to hook and bind the opponent’s weapon.
- Forte – “Strong” – First third of the blade, used for parrying, also called the “*tutta*” of the sword.
- Grip (impugnatura) – Made of wood, sometimes wrapped in leather or thin metal wire for a good grip.
- Hilt (Elsa) – Composed of the cross guard, pommel and grip.
- Mezza – Middle third of the blade.
- Pommel (Pommo) – Counter-weight riveted onto the tang of the sword, holding the whole thing together.
- Punta – Last third of the blade, also called the *debole* (“weak”) of the sword, used for cutting or thrusting.

II. STANCE AND FOOTWORK

2.1 Basic Stance



The forward stance

The “stance” of the fighter consists of two parts, the guard (or lack thereof) in which they initially carry their weapon, and the overall alignment of the body and its weight.

The basic stance has a right and left position, based on which foot leads. Each of these stances also has a forward and backward weighted stance, for a total of four variations. Try this visualization. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and parallel. Step forward as if to grab a doorknob, or to shake hands. Now shift your weight onto the forward leg and down through the ball of your foot into the earth, forward weighting the stance just enough that the heel of your rear foot has come

slightly off of the ground, but the ball of the foot is still in place. Here is what you should see:

- Your feet are shoulder width apart.
- The lead foot points forward, towards an imaginary opponent.
- The back foot now points about 45 degrees to the outside, and the heel is slightly raised off of the ground.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

- Knees should have a slight, natural bend, and your bodyweight should be over your hips, distributed with a preference to the forward foot of about 70% vs. 30%.
- Shoulders should be square, back straight and head erect.

This is the **forward stance**. Mirror this for the left stance.

The Rear Stance

To assume the right rear stance:

- Begin in a forward stance, right leg leading.
- While continuing to look forward, twist your hips to the left, so that your right (forward) hip rotates 135-degrees.
- As your hips turn, pivot left on the balls of your feet without moving them from the ground, shifting your weight so that approximately 70% of your body weight is on your left (rear) leg, and your left knee points over your left foot.



The Rear Stance

The left rear stance is formed by beginning in a left forward stance and shifting your hips to the right.

These two stances are simply dictated by your bodyweight. In any stance, the bodyweight is greater on whichever leg is more bent, so the forward leg is more bent in the forward stance, the rear leg is more bent in the rear stance. Although the rear stance seems less instinctual than the forward stance, especially since the swordsman's feet actually appear to be turned away from the opponent, its purpose is three-fold. It allows for subtle changes in range, shifting from a forward to rear stance and vice-versa allows power and leverage to be generated by without moving the feet, and it allows the combatant to more naturally fight in all 360 degrees. To better understand the last point, try the following drill. Assume a right lead forward stance. Now, without moving the feet, look over your left shoulder and shift 70% of your weight onto your right foot. You are in a left back stance, facing 135 degrees to the left from where you began. Try the same drill by standing in a left lead forward stance and turning your head to the right. You are now in a right lead rear stance.

2.1.1 Checkpoints

Now that you know how to stand, here are the key principles of this stance, which you must keep in mind at all times.

1. Firstly, carry your back relatively erect. The weight must be carried over your center of balance. Once you are in your stance, imagine that there is a straight line that runs from the middle of your body, and extends forwards and back. Your lead leg is forward, toe pointed towards the opponent, with the entire foot to *one side* of this centerline (right in a right lead, left in a left lead). Your back foot is turned out at about 45-degrees, and its heel is placed against the centerline.

2. Why square your shoulders? While this does create a larger target to your opponent, it is also important to be able to freely move your shoulders and hips to generate power with your cuts. By turning your shoulders more square to the opponent, you are able to attack and parry more freely.

From this simple starting position, you should feel fairly relaxed and natural. This stance will serve with a variety of weapons, and it did not substantially change until the seventeenth century, as the rapier began to develop into a purely thrusting weapon, and the use of secondary weapons was discontinued.

You now have gained the first key to good swordsmanship: knowing how to stand. While this may sound silly, you'd be surprised at how simple things like standing, walking, and breathing can become terribly complex when someone is swinging a poleax your way.

2.2 Footwork

Controlled, natural and elegant footwork is the foundation of good swordsmanship, and can never be practiced enough.

The Four Basic Steps

The basic length of any sort of simple step is roughly the length of a foot. Steps should be natural, smooth, and soundless. Any sort of unnatural footwork, like the lunge or crossing the feet is not used with medieval weapons. Fiore dei Liberi defines the following classes of footwork in armizare:

- 1) Advancing/Retreating Steps (*Acressimento* and *Discreccimento*)
- 2) Passing Forward and Back (*Passamento* and *Tornamento*)
- 3) Stepping Offline (*ala Traversa*)
- 4) Turning (*Volta*)

Acressimento and Discreccimento: Advance or Retreat

This is a simple advance (*acressimento*) or retreat (*discreccimento*) made by moving both feet in the same direction, but where the feet never cross. In an advance, the front foot moves first, while in a retreat, the rear foot is the first mover.

Lateral movement is called traversing (*ala traversa*). There is a simple rule for executing traverses: whichever way you want to step, move that foot first. This avoids crossing your feet and destabilizing your balance. Because your feet don't cross, steps *ala traversa* are placed in the category of gathering footwork.

Passamento and Tornamento: The Passing Step

Passing footwork is "natural" footwork, in that it is basically walking with the sword. Yet when we walk, we are often horribly off-balance; simply letting our body fall forward while our feet catch-up. Passing footwork, even when done quickly, is balanced and deliberate.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

When executing a forward pace or pass (*passamento*), the trailing foot moves ahead of the forward foot. Immediately after, the forward foot passes to the front again. In a pass back (*tornamento*) the lead foot moves straight back behind the rear foot, and the trailing leg quickly follows form. When passing forward or back, the previously rear foot ends up in front. Note that, unlike casual walking, *passamenti* and *tornamenti* are practiced moving on the balls of the feet. This gives superior balance and makes turns (*volte*) easier to execute.

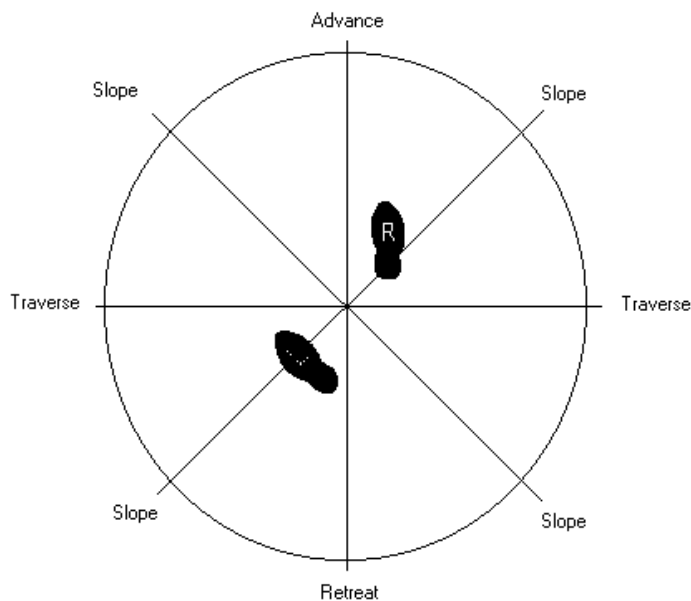
The Three Volte (Turns):

Fiore specifically describes three types of turns to be used in his system:

1. *Volta Stabile* (stable turn): "let's you play forward and backward (from one side) without moving your feet." This is a shift from a forward to rear stance or vice-versa, that is accomplished by turning on the balls of your feet without stepping.
2. *Mezza Volta* (half turn): "Is when you pass forward or backward, letting your play on the opposite side". This is just a passing step where the foot that is doing the pass points across your centerline, so that your line of power moves to the other side. Put another way, if one is free to rotate their body on the right side when making a *volta stabile*, after making a *mezza volta*, they will instead be able to do the same thing on the left.
3. *Tutta Volta* (full turn): " Is when you use one foot to describe a circle around the other". This is a step where you rotate on the ball of one foot by moving the other foot, around and past it, reversing your original facing.

The Triangle Step:

Any footwork in armizare can be created by combining the four steps and three turns. One



recurring example is the so-called triangle step.¹ This begins with a diagonal step offline, usually a *mezza volta* of the rear foot, followed by a circular pace back and to the same side by the former lead foot. So a "triangle step" to the right would be made with a *mezza volta* to the right by the right foot, followed by a circular step back and to the right with the left foot.

Direction:

The diagram to the left shows the eight possible directions of movement. All of these angles are made with either *straight* or *oblique* paces. Any advance, retreat, pass or traverse that moves on directly

¹ Note that dei Liberi has no name for this step, but just describes each movement individually; the term "triangle step" is adopted from later masters.

towards the opponent or perpendicular to him is *straight*. Moving diagonally, usually in an attempt to flank your opponent, is known as *oblique* stepping. Oblique steps can be made with traverses *fora della strada* ("off the line") as dei Liberi describes it, or with *mezze volte*.

2.2.1 General Notes on Footwork

All movement should be fluid and have very little "bobbing" to it. Your legs are perfectly designed shock absorbers, which the pelvis and torso can almost seem to "float" on top of as you move. Do not bob, do not "stamp," but rather move deliberately. Done correctly, the swordsman can often seem to "float" across the ground. In the words of a 16th century Italian master, Giacomo di Grassi:

And above all, not to skip or leap, but keep one foot always firm and steadfast: and when he would move it, to do it upon some great occasion...²

Therefore, avoid the following types of movement:

1. "Bobbing" footwork
2. "Planted" footwork
3. "Crouching" footwork
4. "Jumping" footwork

The first is the "bobbing" footwork warned against above. Bobbing also appears when you constantly shift your weight from one foot to another, even when you aren't covering ground. This telegraphs your commitment to the attacker, who can time his own entering based on when your weight is committed to one foot or another, or just before, when your balance is most compromised. Weight shifts should be subtle and done in-sync with footwork.

The second error occurs by evenly distributing your weight over both legs, and bending your knees somewhat too deeply. This gives a very strong, balanced platform, but forces you to shift your weight before you can take any action or movement. The end result tends to be a very static fighter who can be easily out-maneuvered.

The third error makes your stance progressively wider and lower, by bending the knees too deeply, and thus forcing your weight either too far forward, or too far behind your center of gravity. This latter instance usually occurs because the swordsman is over-stepping when he moves. This can be avoided by keeping the back straight, as detailed above, and the paces confined to the length of a normal walking pace.

The final error is by far the most serious, and is a common problem faced by students with backgrounds in Olympic-style fencing, or kick-boxing sports. A "jumping" stance is when you rely upon hops, leaps, or springs to cover distance, rather than controlled, flowing footwork.

² di Grassi, *His True Arte of Defence* (1594), p.31

Swordsmen relying on this sort of movement often do so because they have strong legs, and can spring back or to the side with both feet at the same time. While a testament to athleticism, it is poor for swordsmanship, because you cannot change your direction or halt while in mid-air, cannot properly derive power for cuts or thrusts while off of the ground, and can be literally “knocked out of the air” by a grounded opponent.

III. POSTE: THE GUARDS OF THE LONGSWORD

And these are the beginnings of that art, which is of the art of arms, in which these masters stay in guard because they are positioned in a place and in a way right to make a grand defence.

Fiore dei Liberi da Premariacco, *il Fior di Battaglia*

Each Italian master-at-arms had a similar, yet distinct series of guards or *poste* (“positions” or “stations”) for the longsword. These *poste* don’t really “guard” anything. Rather, they are the natural starting and ending points of the eight cuts and four thrusts (see below) of the longsword. As such, they are also interconnected; the swordsman will flow from *poste* to *poste* in the course of a sword fight. Each guard *does* make it naturally difficult to strike one target, while leaving another area inherently vulnerable. A good swordsman understands this relationship, and uses it to manipulate his opponent to attack where he desires. For example, the Half Iron Door makes it difficult to strike the legs, while seemingly leaving the head vulnerable. Knowing this, a good swordsman will anticipate an attack to the head, and be able to instantly lift his sword in such a way as to parry the blow, and leave his adversary vulnerable.

In the *Flower of Battle*, Fiore dei Liberi defines twelve principle guards for the two-handed sword, and shows several variations of some. You will find these illustrated in the Appendices. Of these twelve, we will use seven in this course, which are detailed below.

Posta di Donna la Destraza (Right Woman’s Guard)

A strong position for striking with cuts or thrusts, the Woman’s Guard is an *invitational* guard; that is, it leaves the entire body uncovered in order to draw the opponent in. It defends the same way it attacks: by striking. This guard can be formed with either a forward stance (shown), or a backward stance, and you can move freely from one to the other with a *volta stabile*. Keep the torso coiled back, with the left arm relatively straight and close to the body, to avoid your elbow being a target. You should stand in this guard with a feeling of confidence, as if you are going to dominate the opponent with your will.



Posta Longa (Long Position)

The long position is the ending place of all thrusts, as well as all half-cuts from above, or from below with the false edge. Used as a guard, it is also a *provocational* position: by holding the point extended toward the opponent's eyes, you keep him at bay, and draw him into wanting to bind or bat your weapon aside. Keep a forward stance in this posta. Be sure to keep your rear heel raised, and your point threatening the opponent's eyes.



Posta Dente di Zenghiaro (Boar's Tooth Position)

The conclusion of a full mandritto blow, or the initiation of one from below. To understand how to fight from the Boar's Tooth, think of how a wild boar attacks: it goes by raking upwards with its tusks. In the same way, this guard initiates its attacks with strong, rising thrusts. As we will see later, it can use this same basic motion to attack or parry with rising blows (*sottani*) with the false edge. This guard is formed with a forward stance. Think of putting your right hand in your left pocket.) Be sure to look over your right shoulder, which should align with your right hip, knee and toe.



Posta di Donna la Sinistra (Left Woman's Guard)

The point of initiation for a *riverso fendente*, the left side *Posta di Donna* has all of the qualities and possibilities of its right-side counterpart. It can also be formed with a forward or back-weighted stance (shown here).



Posta Porta di Ferro Mezzana (Middle Iron Gate)

The Middle Iron Gate is the terminus of a *riverso fendente* and the starting point for a rising thrust. It is also an *invitational* guard, since the sword is held low, and therefore seemingly not threatening. This is a ruse, as if one misjudges distance, or presses in, the Gate can open and unleash a preemptive attack of its own. When holding this guard you should be relaxed, but not listless – keep your sword pointed to the ground, but not on it, and be ready to thrust or parry immediately.



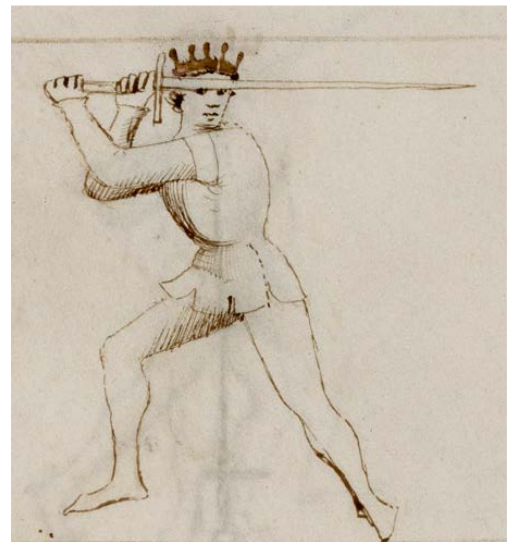
Posta Tutta Porta di Ferro (Full Iron Gate)

This last *invitational* guard is closely related to both Porta di Ferro Mezzana, and Posta di Donna. From Porta di Ferro Mezzana, step back with your right foot, and let your right hand turn palm up, so that the hilt of the sword lies across your groin and the blade is angled down and to your right. The name “Iron Gate” for these positions refers to its ability to defend against any attack by striking up from below to bind or beat cuts and thrusts aside. Although it appears to be at rest, it can also make strong cuts and thrusts; so much so, that it can be said that anything Posta di Donna can do, Posta Tutta Porta di Ferro can as well.



Posta di Finestra (Window Guard)

This final guard is another *provocational* guard, and is both the terminus of rising cuts made with the true edge, and a natural parry for cuts made to the head. Like Posta di Donna, there are both left and right, forward and backward-weighted variations to this guard. Like Posta Longa, the Window Guard keeps the opponent back by threatening with a thrust. Unlike Longa, however, it is not held so extended, and thus is vulnerable to attacks made to the opposite side of the body. Finestra is a subtle position, and until you are comfortable with it, it is best to move through, rather than to lie in for an extended period of time.



IV. LEARNING TO CUT WITH THE LONGSWORD

*Understand well my writing:
the sword stikes in seven ways,
that means six cuts and a thrust.*

Filippo Vadi, *Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi* (c.1482), Cap. 5

4.1 Gripping the Longsword

We find two primary methods of gripping the sword illustrated in medieval Italian technical sources and artwork. The first is sometimes called a simple fist grip, or, erroneously, a “hammer grip”. The second is called a “fingered” grip or “fingering the cross”, wherein the



Fingering the Cross (Getty Ms. 26r)

index finger is looped around the cross guard, allowing greater point control, at the expense of a slightly weaker cut. Later, the finger was protected by a simple steel loop, which was the beginning of the complex guards found in Renaissance swords and rapiers. During the Renaissance, this “fingered grip” became the dominant form of grip in Italy, particularly as the thrust became favored over the cut. Dei Liberi illustrates both of these grips in his treatise, while Vadi only shows the “fist grip”. However, the “fist grip” is not a really simple closed fist at all, but rather a fairly relaxed grip, much like the position with which one holds a knife or shakes hands.

When you take up the longsword, the dominant hand sits back on the hilt, the handle nestled in the palm of the hand behind the large muscle of the thumb, and a small space created between cross guard and the webbing between the thumb and index finger. To find this grip, grasp the hilt with the dominant hand, as described above and extend the sword into a one-handed Posta Longa, using the weight of the blade to naturally settle the handle into the crook of the ring and little fingers.



Relaxed “Hammer” Grip (Getty Ms. 25v)

The sword should feel almost weightless in your hand, and the blade like a long, extended index finger. Now your rear hand grasps with the same relaxed grip just above the pommel, half on the pommel and half on the hilt, or by the pommel entirely, and turns slightly inward, much as a racquet is grasped in tennis, or golf club. Depending on the length of the hilt the amount of space between your two hands will vary, but these relative positions do not.

As the sword is swung, the fourth and fifth fingers of your rear hand tighten and clench down on the handle or pommel, almost in the way a fishing rod is fly-casted. (Almost, because this is

a tightening motion, not a “snapping” motion, per se.) This accelerates the sword’s point forward, so that the blade leads the hand while cutting, a mechanical and tactical imperative we’ll look at later in more detail. After the sword strikes, the grip actually loosens again, which is what allows the hand to turn the sword into whatever path is desired or necessary.

Grasping the sword with this relaxed grip helps accelerate the cut, adds control to blade work, and most importantly, greatly reduces hand fatigue while fighting. It is *imperative* that you avoid clenching the hilt.

4.2 The Six Cuts

Just as there are eight directions of footwork, Fiore dei Liberi details six simple lines of attack on which all sword cuts must come. They are horizontal, diagonally down, and diagonally up, made from left-to-right, and from right-to-left. Cuts are first divided into forehand and backhand blows, labeled as *mandritto* and *riverso*, respectively.

Each cut direction is then further defined by which angle it strikes on:

Fendente: (“Cleaving Blow”) Descending blows, cutting diagonally from the jaw line through the body to the opposite knee. Fendente are made with the true edge.

Sottano: (“Blow from Below”) Diagonal rising blow, following the reverse path of the *fendente*. Either edge can be used, generally true edge with the forehand, false edge with the backhand.

Mezzano: (“Middle Blow”) Horizontal blow that can strike on any line from the knees to the head. The *Mezzano* is made with the true edge with the forehand and the false edge with the backhand.

Falso: A designate used to signify when a blow is made with the false edge.

Punta: All thrusts are known as *la punta*, but they can be more specifically defined, based on the direction from which the thrust comes.

4.3 The Four Quarters

When viewed as a target, the human body is divided into *high* and *low* lines, as well as *inside* and *outside* lines that are determined as follows.

High: Strikes that are aimed above the hip line.

Low: Strikes aimed below the hipline.

Left: The area left of the center axis of the body.

Right: The area to the right of the center axis of the body.

4.4 Interconnectedness between Cuts and Guards

As discussed under *poste* (Section 3, above), all half cuts and thrusts begin in a guard and strike into *Posta Longa*. If they are a “full cut” (a blow that begins in a high guard and finishes in a low or vice-versa), they then “recover” or finish in another guard. One set of examples is as follows:

- Fendente begins in *Posta di Donna*, passes through *Posta Longa* and ends in *Dente di Zenghiaro* (mandritto) or *Porta di Ferro Mezzana* (riverso).
- Mezzano begins in *Posta di Donna* and ends in *Posta di Donna* on the other side.
- Falso sottano begins *Dente di Zenghiaro* (riverso) or *Tutta Porta di Ferro* (mandritto) and finishes in *Posta Longa*.
- A true edge sottano begins in *Tutta Porta di Ferro* (mandritto) finishes in *Posta di Finestra* on the left.

4.5 Distance and Timing

In order to understand how to strike safely, we need more than an understanding of body mechanics, we also need to understand how to control *distance*. In medieval thought, distance and time cannot be separated: what defines “time” is an object moving across a space.³ Therefore, we can break down the fight into several different “times”, which relate to how much movement your body has to make across distance in order to strike your opponent. The more parts of the body that you need to move, the longer the distance and thus the slower your attack or defense is going to be. These are the four true times:

- The time of the hand
- The time of the hand and body
- The time of the hand, body and foot
- The time of the hand, body and feet

The time of the hand: Any action where the only action required is in the hands. Thrusting from out of a bind is an example of the time of the hand.

The time of the hand and body: When the hands move with the body to perform an action without moving the feet. Cutting from a back-weighted *Posta di Donna* to a forward-weighted *Posta Longa* is one example.

The time of the hand, body, and foot: You fall into this true time anytime you take a single step when making an attack. Passing in or advancing to strike are both examples of this time.

³ In reality, this idea holds true today: our most basic unit of time is a day, which is nothing more than one rotation of the Earth on its axis, which the ancients perceived as the sun and moon moving across the sky.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

The time of the hand, body and feet: The slowest of all the true times. By definition, this attack requires more than one step to perform. Just because it is the slowest, doesn't make it useless though. Most feints fall into this time, forcing your opponent to react to your first step, then making a second step and cut to the newly open side.

As all of these times are "true," because the fastest moving object -- the hand -- breaks distance first, so that your weapon remains before you at all times, in offence or defense. Thus, before an opponent can attack you, they must deal with your sword, or if you are closing distance to defend, your sword will always arrive before your body! All true times can and should be used when fighting.

Conversely, there are also four "false times," which are the reverse of the true times:

- The time of the foot
- The time of the foot and body
- The time of the foot, body and hand
- The time of the feet, body and hand

These times are "false" because they create openings your opponent can exploit. By moving your foot first, you close into distance without presenting a threat your opponent must respond with, and thus he can strike at you freely.

The real importance in the concept of Time is understanding how to do things in the fastest time possible and still remain safe. E.g.: If you close with your opponent in the time of the hand, body and foot, they can respond in the same amount of time. But more importantly, if you aren't careful, they may have an open target at which they can immediately cut. Since you have closed distance for them, they can now strike in a faster time, that of the hand.

Thus it can truly be said that time cannot be understood without an understanding of distance.

4.6 Distance and Range

In a fight, you find yourself coming to different ranges all the time. The number of variations is infinite, but some masters found ways to group the distances into categories to better understand the strategy of the fight.

- Close distance
- Wide distance
- Out of distance

Close distance: This is where a combatant can strike without moving his feet. This is a dangerous place to be, especially if you do not control the initiative as the hand moves faster than the eye.

Wide distance: Any distance in which you must take a step in to hit your opponent. This covers every step, from the small gathering step, to a large passing step, and everything in-between.

Out of distance: If your opponent is too far away to be struck with a step, he is out of distance from you. (This does not mean you are out of distance from him, however!) This is safest place to be in the fight. You may not strike without moving into a true or false time of the feet.

The important thing to remember about all of these distances is that they are relative to each combatant. Thus a shorter swordsman, or one armed with a shorter weapon, may be in wide distance while his opponent is in close distance. In an extreme case, such as a combatant with a short sword vs. one with a spear, one combatant can even be in close distance while the other is completely out of distance.

4.7 Basic Cutting Drills

When cutting with the sword, the two hands move in conjunction, using the space between them as a fulcrum. The primary hand pushes, while the secondary hand pulls. Similarly, the primary hand targets the cut, while the secondary hand adds power.

Basic Fendente Drill

This first drill combines the fendente with footwork, allowing you to practice each of the four ways one can realistically make a descending cut. The asymmetry of the guards used throughout the drill is an artifact of wielding a two-handed weapon to both sides without changing lead hands, and reinforces uncrossing the wrists at the end of the *riverso*.

1. Begin in a rear-weighted, right *Posta di Donna*.
2. Make a *volta stabile* and cut *mandritto* so that you are now in *Posta Longa*.
3. Recover the sword by pressing down on the pommel of the sword with your left hand and pull back with the right, as you make a second *volta stabile*. The sword should return back the way it came and you have now returned to right *Posta di Donna*.
4. Pass forward (*passamento*) with your right foot, and cut *mandritto fendente*. The sword will again finish in *Posta Longa*.
5. Recover the sword as before, this time letting the sword “pull” your right foot back with it, so that you return to right *Posta di Donna*.
6. Pass backward (*tornamento*) with your left foot, and cut *mandritto fendente*. The sword will again finish in *Posta Longa*.
7. Recover the sword as before, this time letting the sword “pull” your left foot forward with it, so that you return to right *Posta di Donna*.
8. Pass forward with your right foot and make a full *mandritto fendente*, so that your sword slices the “opponent” from under his jawline to his right knee. Your cut should pass through *Posta Longa* as the ball of your right foot steps down and your weight shifts forward onto it. Continuing the rotation of your hip and shoulder, recover into *Dente di Zenghiaro*.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

9. Transition into left Posta di Donna with a volta stabile.
10. Make a volta stabile and cut *riverso* so that you are now in Posta Longa.
11. Recover the sword by pressing forward on the pommel of the sword with your left hand and pull back with the right, as you make a second volta stabile. The sword should return back the way it came and you have now returned to left Posta di Donna.
12. Pass forward with your left foot, and cut *riverso fendente*. The sword will again finish in Posta Longa.
13. Recover the sword as before, this time letting the sword “pull” your right foot back with it, so that you return to left Posta di Donna.
14. Pass backward (*tornamento*) with your right foot, and cut *riverso fendente*. The sword will again finish in Posta Longa.
15. Recover the sword as before, this time letting the sword “pull” your right foot forward with it, so that you return to left Posta di Donna.
16. Pass forward with the left foot and make a full *riverso fendente*. The sword will cut your opponent from his left jaw line to his right knee.
17. Your cut should pass through Posta Longa as the ball of your left foot steps down and your weight shifts forward onto it.
18. Continuing the rotation of your hip and shoulder, recover into Porta di Ferro Mezzana.
19. Lift the sword into right Posta di Donna with a volta stabile. When the hands reach shoulder height, begin passing in again, repeating the entire drill. Practice this both on the forward and rear pass.

This drill allows you to practice all of the four *fendente* variations, along with recovering your sword through the use of the volta stabile. Obviously, you can also isolate any of these actions so that you only practice the half *fendente* with a volta stabile, or the half or full *fendente* with a pass and recovery to the opposite side.

V. DEFENDING WITH THE FENDENTE: COUNTERATTACKS vs. THE CUT

Defensive techniques in armizare are taught through partner drills, called *set-plays*: prearranged sequences that teach a core technique and principle of swordsmanship. In a set-play, one partner takes the roll of the *Zugadore* (Player), who is the initiator of an attack, and the other takes on the roll of the *Scholaro* (Student), who is the receiver of the attack. Generally, the Student is always victorious in the plays.

Once these first two cutting exercises have been learned with simple, forward and backward movement, they can immediately be adapted with more tactical footwork to move into or away from an attack, and forming the basis for learning one of the most sophisticated defenses in medieval swordsmanship: the counterattack. Footwork and angulation of the defender’s counterattack are combined with using the length of the attacker’s *tempo* (an attack in time of the hand, body and foot – see 4.5 above) to thwart his strike in the midst of his action, or *mezzo tempo*.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

Play Name	Zugadore's Starting Posta	Scholaro's Starting Posta	Zugadore's Attack	Scholaro's Response	Notes
Step Into the Attack	Donna	Donna (Back-weighted)	Pass and cut m. fendente to left side of neck	Acressere to forward left w/left foot and cut m. fendente to centerline.	Perform to both sides.
Step Away from the Attack	Donna	Donna (Forward-weighted)	Pass and cut m. fendente to left side of neck	Mezza volta to right and cut m. fendente to left side of neck.	Perform to both sides.
Over-Running a Low Attack	Donna	Donna (Back-weighted)	Pass and cut m. fendente to left leg.	Slip left leg back to right while cutting m. fendente to neck.	Variation with a thrust.

Each of these first three set-plays is an application of the first three actions in the Basic Fendente cutting drill. All that's changed is that the footwork has been adjusted to deal with an opponent. In the first play, the Scholaro steps into the attack with a small *acrescimento*, striking their counterattack before the Zugadore's blow is in full force.⁴ It is important that the Scholaro's left foot finish outside of the Zugadore's right, so that he can "capture" the centerline, and thereby gain a mechanical advantage over the opponent's blade as he counterattacks. In the second play, the Scholaro uses a *mezza volta* to step forward and away from the attack, increasing the distance so that the attack will reach him after it has begun losing reach and force.⁵ The Scholaro's right foot steps forward and to the right at approximately 45-degrees to the centerline, but his foot must point inward to the opponent's center of mass, so that the force of his cut is transmitted into the target. In both cases, the Scholaro's sword does not merely "hit" the opponent's weapon, but slices through it, driving it down and to the left as his own *punta* strikes home, as explained by Filippo Vadi:

*when you parry, parry with fendente,
carefully push your sword a little away⁶*

In the third play, the forward leg is used as "bait" to draw an attack. However, as an attack to the leg has a longer distance to travel, and thus takes longer in time, than a cut to the head, the

⁴ For those familiar with Fiore dei Liberi's manuscripts, this is an equivalent to the first crossing of *zogho largo* (wide play), found on 25r of the Getty Ms. Should the counterattack fail, the follow-on plays then becomes available.

⁵ This creates an equivalent to the crossing of *zogho stretto* (close-play), found on 27v of the Getty Ms. Should the counterattack fail to land, a bind results, making any of those plays available to the Scholaro.

⁶ Filippo Vadi, *De Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi*, Cap. XI.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

Scholaro may defend any attack below the waist by simply counterattacking with a cut or thrust to the Zugadore's head!

The fourth play introduces a new concept: what to do if you are caught out of tempo and unprepared to execute a counterattack. From Posta di Donna, the answer is simple: you still make an "attack" only redirected to the Zugadore's blade!

Play Name	Zugadore's Posta	Scholaro's Posta	Zugadore's Attack	Scholaro's Response	Notes
Rebatter from Above	Donna	Donna (Forward-weighted)	Pass and cut m. fendente to left side of neck	Mezza volta to right and cut m. fendente to sword. Strike back up line with r. falso sottano to throat with a volta stabile.	Perform to both sides.

All that changes from the second play (Counter Attack Stepping Away) is that instead of pointing the toe of the stepping foot into the opponent's center-of-mass, the Scholaro points his foot at the incoming sword-blow when making the mezza volta, as this is the target. This has the effect of having the Scholaro step 45° to his right, but actually turn his body 90° to the left, as he crosses the Zugadore's sword at almost a right angle, driving into the ground. Because of the body turn, rather than finishing in Dente di Zenghiaro, the blow finishes in Porta di Ferro Mezzana. Looking to his right, the Scholar makes a volta stabile to the right as he makes his risposta, a riverso falso sottano to the Zugadore's throat.

Although technically a *parrata e risposta* ("parry and riposte") the feeling is the same: you want to think of yourself as the aggressor, seizing the fight from the opponent. You can refine this set-play with the following solo drill:

Three-Count Drill: Rompere ("Breaking")

This cutting drill is a three-count exercise that uses a sottano to link both the mandritto and riverso fendenti, and teaches the close interrelation between the fendente and sottano: you can strike one and instantly return along the same line with the complementary cut without having to step or reorient the body. This allows for very fast, compound attacks.

1. Begin in Posta di Donna on the right.
2. Pass forward and cut mandritto fendente to Dente di Zenghiaro
3. Without stepping, cut falso riverso sottano
4. Pass forward with the left foot while cutting riverso fendente to Posta Longa
5. Recover with a volta stabile to right Posta di Donna and repeat

Taken together, these four plays summarize all you can really do to defend with a fendente. Each of these set-plays can also be performed against a riverso fendente, by having both partners begin in left Posta di Donna and by striking with riversi, as taught in the second half of the Basic Fendente drill. Once students are comfortable with performing these three basic set-

plays from Posta di Donna on both sides, they should learn to perform them from Posta di Finestra, noting the specific difference in mechanics and timing taught in the second fendente cutting drill. Finally, when playing against the mandritto, the Scholar may also experiment with substitute a mezzano for the fendente, as taught in the third cutting exercise.

VI. DEFENDING FROM BELOW: PARRATA E RISPOSTA vs. THE CUT

Although counterattacks are extremely effective, they can also be difficult to execute correctly. There are also many times when a counterattack may either not be feasible or tactically desirable. In this case a double time, or *dui tempi*, action is preferred. The "double-time" is so named because the defender uses a single, discreet action to parry the attack (one tempo), and then a second action to initiate his own attack, the *risposta* (the second tempo).

Parries can be performed with either edge, and either *collect* the incoming attack (true edge), stopping the attack dead, or *deflect* it, redirecting its energy away from the defender. Further, deflective parries can be a percussive *rebatte* ("beat") or a more passive, yielding parry. Examples of all of these actions appear in the set-plays that follow.

Basic Sottani Drill

As with the first cutting drill, this is a four-action drill that forms the basis for four paired exercises, or set-plays. However, whereas these are parry-ripostes, not counterattacks, each action has two parts, for eight movements in total.

1. (Beginning of Action One.) Begin in Dente di Zenghiaro. Cut falso riverso sottano with a twist of the hips forward, left heel turning out. The sword will finish with the cross at the height of your right temple, blade angled up and back at about 45°.
2. Pulling the left heel back in, immediately cut back down the same line with a mandritto fendente, returning to Dente di Zenghiaro. (End of Action One)
3. (Beginning of Action Two) Cut falso riverso sottano with a twist of the hips forward, left heel turning out. The sword will finish with the cross at the height of your right temple, blade angled up and back at about 45°.
4. Let the blade loop in front of the head and cut riverso fendente, as you make a triangle step to the right, finishing in Tutta Porta di Ferro. (Ending of Action Two)
5. (Beginning of Action Three) Traversimento left with the left foot and cut with a true-edge mandritto sottano into Posta Frontale.
6. Traverse right with your right foot and cut riverso fendente to Posta Longa. Recover to Tutta Porta di Ferro. (End of Action Three.)
7. (Beginning of Action Four) Cut falso sottano with a twist of the hips forward, right heel turning out.
8. Let the blade loop in front of the head and cut mandritto fendente as you make a triangle step to the left finishing in Dente di Zenghiaro. (Ending of Action Four)

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

This cutting drill teaches three things:

1. Sottani from the reverso side are commonly made with the false edge,⁷ and *deflect*.
2. Sottani from the mandritto side can both deflect with the false edge, deflect or collect with the true edge.
3. It is faster, following the parry, to cut back down the same line; safer, but slower, to cut around with a "ribbon cut". (ie: If you parry reverso, riposte with a reverso.)

Once you are comfortable with the cutting drill, you can move on to the following, partnered exercises.

Play Name	Zugadore's Posta	Scholaro's Posta	Zugadore's Attack	Scholaro's Response	Notes
False-edge Rebatter from the Left, Mandritto Risposta	Same	Dente di Zenghiaro	Pass and cut m. fendente to left side of neck	Deflect with a r. falso sottano and risposta w/ m. fendente to neck.	Remember to turn out left heel to drive left hip forward in parry.
False-edge Rebatter from the Left, Reverso Risposta	Same	Dente di Zenghiaro	Pass and cut m. fendente to left side of neck	Deflect with a r. falso sottano and risposta w/ r. fendente to neck, while making a triangle step to the left.	Same parry as the previous play, but different conclusion
Cover in Frontale	Same	Tutta Porta di Ferro	Pass and cut m. fendente to left side of neck	Acreasing into attack and cut into Frontale. Traverse right and risposta w/ r. fendente to neck, face or arms.	
False-edge Rebatter from the Right	Same	Tutta Porta di Ferro	Pass and cut m. fendente to left leg.	Triangle step to right while cutting m. falso sottano into attack. Cut m. fendente to neck as left foot makes a mezza volta to the right.	

In the first and second plays, the reverso sottano naturally comes behind the opponent's attack, deflecting his blade wide and putting the defender's blade poised for an immediate risposta. The second play replaces the mandritto with a reverso, using a the triangle step with the response to increase measure. This is safer, because if the Player reflexively cuts back with a reverso, the swords will bind, but it is slower, requiring an action in the Time of the Hand, Body and Feet, rather than the Time of the Hand. The third play teaches how to strike into Posta Frontale, using the true edge to either deflect or collect the attack; we will see its use again when reviewing Fiore dei Liberi's plays of Zogho Largo.

⁷ Note "commonly". Vadi advises they always be made with the false edge, Fiore is silent on the matter, but certainly uses both true and false edge covers with various weapons, such as the lanza or ghiavarina.



One of many grappling techniques possible after entering under a collection in Posta Frontale

The final play introduces the use of Posta Frontale, a strong parrying position that can both serve as a reflexive block if the Scholaro finds himself behind in tempo, but is also particularly useful for bringing the opponent's weapon to a complete stop, so that the defender may respond with a *presa* ("grip"), any one of a number of grappling actions, including grabbing the blade, disarms or kicks. The final play is more technically difficult to execute, as the Scholaro's wrists cross when making the mandritto sottano and his sword meets the opponent's blade at a much more acute angle. For this reason, the triangle step is necessary to ensure the Scholaro's safety.

All these plays are percussive; the attacker's cut is redirected or knocked aside by a cut made in response by the defender. However, deflections can also be made as passive, yielding action, as we see next.

Covering with Posta di Finestra

1. (Beginning of Action One.) Begin in Dente di Zenghiaro. Lift the sword into left Posta di Finestra while making a traverse left of the left foot.
2. Thrust stoccata while passing forward into Posta Longa with the left foot. Lower your sword into Porta di Ferro Mezzana. (End of Action One)
3. (Beginning of Action Two) Lift the sword into right Posta di Finestra while making a traverse right of the right foot.
4. Thrust stoccata while passing forward into Posta Longa with the right foot. Lower your sword into Porta di Ferro Mezzana. (Ending of Action Two)
5. (Beginning of Action Three) Make a mezza volta to the left with the left foot while lifting into left Posta di Finestra.
6. Cut riverso fendente, while your right foot makes a volta to the left. Finish in Porta di Ferro Mezzana (End of Action Three)
7. (Beginning of Action Four) Make a mezza volta to the left with the left foot while lifting into left Posta di Finestra.
8. Cut mandritto fendente, while your right foot makes a volta to the right. Finish in Dente di Zenghiaro. (Ending of Action Four)

This drill teaches not only how to properly form Posta di Finestra, but how and when to thrust or cut out of the guard in response:

1. If you collect the attack by stepping into the attack, you *control* the centerline, so your risposta is a *thrust*.
2. If you deflect the attack by stepping away from the attack, you have *yielded* the centerline, so your risposta is a *cut*.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

Play Name	Zugadore's Posta	Scholaro's Posta	Zugadore's Attack	Scholaro's Response	Notes
Cover in Left Posta di Finestra	Same	Porta di Ferro Mezzana, right foot leading	Pass and cut m. fendente to left side of neck	Traverse left with left foot and cover in left Finestra. Win the bind: thrust punta sopra mano to face, loose the bind: cut around to right side of neck.	
Cover in Right Posta di Finestra	Same	Porta di Ferro Mezzana, left foot leading	Pass and cut r. fendente to right side of neck	Traverse right with the right foot and cover in right Finestra. Win the bind: thrust punta sopra mano to face, loose the bind: cut around to left side of neck.	
Deflect in Left Posta di Finestra	Same	Porta di Ferro Mezzana,	Pass and cut m. fendente to left side of neck	While shifting into right Posta di Finestra, traverse right with the right foot, followed by a mezza volta back and to the right with the left. Cut m. fendente to neck as left foot compasses to right.	
Deflect in Right Posta di Finestra	Same	Porta di Ferro Mezzana	Pass and cut m. fendente to left side of neck	While shifting into right Posta di Finestra, traverse right with the right foot, followed by a mezza volta back and to the right with the left. Cut m. fendente to neck as left foot compasses to right.	Variations: left and right side, each with left or right foot leading.

Whereas the first two plays in this final set are *collections*, in which the parry is executed to specifically stop the attack dead on the forte of the blade, generally just above the cross guard itself. By contrast, the last two are yielding deflections. When comparing these actions, we can see how the Poste di Finestra can be used to both deflect and collect a blow. By using the guard to defend "cross body" (against an attack to the left, the Scholaro uses right Posta di Finestra; against an attack to his right, he would use the left Finestra) a deflection results followed by an immediate risposta by cut. Conversely, by mirroring the attack (against an attack to the left, the Scholaro uses left Posta di Finestra, etc), a collection results, and leaves the defender's point in line for an immediate thrust to the face.

Which should you use when? Simple. Always step towards the rear foot, so that if your left foot is refused, step left, if the right foot is back, step right. This way you don't have to think "collect" or "deflect" the correct action will simply happen!

Learning this collection of set-plays will not only provide you a full repertoire of basic defenses against cuts, but will provide a foundation for learning both Fiore dei Liberi's specific defenses against the cut, and the specific plays of wide and close play recorded in the *Flower of Battle*.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abrazare	(Ah-brah-ZAR-ay) As in “with the arms”, related to modern Italian <i>abbracciare</i> “to embrace”. Unarmed combat, including strikes, grabs, throws, takedowns, joint locks and chokes.
Acressere	(Ah-cray-SAY-ray). “To increase.” One of the four types of footwork in the dei Liberi tradition, analogous to the advancing step of modern fencing. Noun form: <i>acressimento</i> .
Armizare	(Ahr-mee-ZAR-ay). “To be in arms”. <i>Arte dell’armizare</i> (the art of arms) is the closest dei Liberi comes to giving his art a formal name.
Colpo	(KOHL-poh). “Blow”. Dei Liberi defines seven blows, six cuts (<i>taglii</i>) and the thrust (<i>punta</i>). Plural <i>colpi</i> .
Colpo Fendente	(KOHL-poh fayn-DAYN-tay). “Cleaving blows”. Descending, diagonal cuts that follow the line from the teeth or jaw line to the knees. Fendente are made with the true edge. Plural <i>fendenti</i>
Colpo Mezzano	(KOHL-poh mayz-ZAH-noh). “Middle blows.” Horizontal cuts that can be made anywhere from the knee to the head, but are particularly aimed at the neck/throat. Middle blows are made with the true edge from the forehand side and with the false edge from the backhand side. Plural <i>mezzani</i> .
Colpo Sottano	(KOHL-poh sot-TAH-noh). “Blows from below”. Diagonal rising cuts that follow the same path as the <i>fendenti</i> . Vadi advises only using the true edge for the forehand <i>sottano</i> and only the false edge for the backhand <i>sottano</i> , but dei Liberi’s instructions allow for the false edge to be used for either. Plural <i>sottani</i> .
Contrario	(cohn-tra-REE-oh). “Contrary”. A counter technique.
Coverta	(koh-VAYR-tah). A “cover” or “blanket”. Any defensive action that closes the line of an attack, thereby protecting the combatant. Parries (<i>parrate</i>) are a subset of <i>coverta</i> , and beats (<i>rebatte</i>) are a subset of parry.
Discressere	(dee-scray-SAY-ray). “To decrease”. One of the four types of footwork in dei Liberi’s art, analogous to the retreat in modern fencing. Noun form <i>discressimento</i> .
Guardia	(goo-AR-dee-ah). “Guard”. A guard or position from which one may attack or defend. See <i>poste</i> . Plural <i>guardie</i> .
Incrosada	(een-croh-SAH-dah). “Crossing”. Any crossing of weapons, arms, etc., such as when a sword is parried. Dei Liberi says that crossings can happen in three places with a weapon: the point (<i>punta</i>), middle (<i>mezza</i>), or hilt (<i>tutta</i>).
Mezza Spada	(MAY-zah SPA-dah). “Half sword”. A range in combat with long weapons that bridges wide and close play (<i>zogho largo</i> and <i>zogho stretto</i>). Understanding the “half-sword” is critically important, because all actions: cuts, thrusts, hilt strikes, grapples, throws, etc., are possible.
Mezza Volta	(MAYZ-zah VOHL-tah). “Middle turn”. One of the three turns of the body (<i>volta del corpo</i>) and of the sword (<i>volta della spada</i>). As a step, the <i>mezza volta</i> is a passing step that turns the combatant’s body so that his strong side is reversed, ie: a man in a right lead has his strong side to his left.
Parrata	(pahr-RAH-tah). “Parry”. An interposition or deflection made with/by the sword. First use appears in Vadi. A subset of <i>coverta</i> , it includes the <i>rebatte</i> .
Passare	(pahs-SAR-ay). “To pass”. One of the four types of footwork in dei Liberi’s system, where the rear foot steps forward in front of the lead foot, “passing” it. Noun form: <i>passamento</i> .
Posta	(POH-stah). “Position”. Used nearly interchangeably with <i>guardia</i> , a <i>posta</i> is a position

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

Presa	of readiness from which the scholar may strike, defend or hold his ground. Plural <i>poste</i> . (PRAY-sah). “Grab”. The term can be used variously to mean anything from a simple grip, such as of the enemy’s sword hilt, to a full-out wrestling hold or play of <i>abrazare</i> . Plural <i>prese</i> .
Punta	(POON-tah). “Point”. Both the name of the end of the sword, and a thrust made with the point. Plural <i>punte</i> .
Rebatter	(ray-BAH-tayr or ray-bah-TAYR-ray). “To beat”. A percussive strike made to deflect an attack, generally either driving it back towards the attacker, or redirect it into the earth. The <i>rebatter</i> can be used as a parry or a preemptive attack on the opponent’s weapon.
Ritornare	(ree-tor-NAH-ray). To “return”. One of dei Liberi’s four types of footwork. A passing step backwards, the lead foot steps back behind the rear foot, passing it. Noun form, <i>ritornamento</i> . Also <i>tornare/tornamento</i> .
Rompere	(roh-m-PAY-ray). “To break”. The term has various meanings. For example, a guard can be “broken” by threatening the opponent so that they are forced to change guards, while an attack can be broken by driving it into the earth.
Sopramano	(soh-pra-MAH-no) Overhand.
Sottomano	(soh-to-MAH-no) Underhand.
Spada	(SPAH-dah). Sword. Plural <i>spade</i> .
Spada a dui	(SPAH-dah AH DOO-ee MAH-nee). “The sword for two hands”. The longsword, as distinguished from the <i>spadone</i> or gigantic Renaissance two-handed sword.
Mani	
Tutta Volta	(TOO-tah VOHL-tah) “Full Turn”. One of dei Liberi’s three types of turn (<i>volta</i>), where one foot moves circularly around the other, turning the scholar’s facing by 180 degrees. The <i>tutta volta</i> of the sword is when the sword strikes from one side of the opponent’s weapon to the other. For example, if the swords were crossed on the inside line, the scholar would strike around the other weapon to the outside line.
Volta	(VOHL-tah) “Turn”. Dei Liberi describes three different turns (steps used to change the body’s facing): the stable turn (<i>volta stabile</i>), half turn (<i>mezza volta</i>) and full turn (<i>tutta volta</i>). These turns can also be applied to the motion of the sword. The term <i>volta</i> also means “time” in Italian, and the longer the <i>volta</i> , the longer the time (<i>tempo</i>) it takes to execute. Plural <i>volte</i> .
Volta Stabile	(VOHL-tah stah-BEE-lay) “Stable Turn”. One of the three <i>volte</i> , the stable turn is a simple shift from a forward to a backward-weighted stance and vice-versa, allowing the swordsman to play in any direction on one side.
Zogho Largo	(ZOH-goh LAR-goh) “Wide Play”. A style of play with long weapons (sword, spear and axe) meant to keep the scholar at a distance. Plays of <i>zogho largo</i> occur at wide distance through the half-sword, and utilize long range attacks: strikes with the weapon’s edge and point, kicks, blade grabs and <i>prese</i> of the hand and forearm. Modern Italian: <i>gioco largo</i> .
Zogho Stretto	(ZOH—goh STRAY-toh) “Close Play”. A style of play with or without weapons that can bring the players into body-to-body contact. Plays of <i>zogho stretto</i> begin at the half-sword and utilize close range attacks: strikes with the weapon’s hilt, hand, elbow and knee strikes, grappling and throws. Modern Italian: <i>gioco stretto</i> .

APPENDIX B: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX C: ARMIZARE INTRODUCTORY CLASS LESSON PLAN

12 Lessons of 90 Minutes

Lesson One: Introducing the Art of Arms

1. Introduction
 - a. Historical Context
 - i. What is "Armizare"?
 - ii. Italy c. 1400
 - iii. Who was Fiore dei Liberi?
 - b. The Weapon - the Longsword
 - i. Morphology
 - ii. Reason for Evolution
 - iii. Methods of use
2. Stance
 - a. Two stances - Forward and Backward-Weighted, with left and right variations.
 - b. Every guard for every weapon system is then built on these two positions.
 - c. Practice stance transitions using a volta stabile (don't bother to name yet)
3. Footwork
 - a. Step from a Right Forward Stance to a Left Forward Stance - Passamento
 - b. Step from a Left Forward Stance back to a Right Forward Stance - Tornamento
 - c. Acrescimenti and Discrecimenti
 - d. Introduce volta stabile as way to change direction.
 - e. Basic "Simon Says" Footwork Drill - stance shifts with volta + passamenti and tornamenti + acrescimenti and discrecimenti + direction changes using volta stabile.
4. Holding the Sword
 - a. Relaxed grip, not "Hammer Grip"
 - b. Hilt behind large muscle of thumb in right hand
 - c. Rear bar of cross guard points outside the forearm.
 - d. Second hand is slightly turned inward to align forearms.
 - e. No "beachball" affect when arms held out in Posta Longa.
5. Salute
 - a. At rest, non-dominant side of body, non-dominant hand holds below guard.
 - b. Read across and draw sword in true edge mezzano; at end of the action, sword's point should be aligned with tip of nose.
 - c. Bring cross to mouth, sword is vertical.
 - d. Cut down in a 45-degree arc with an acrescimento of the right foot; at end of the action, sword's point should be aligned with the right toe.
6. Basic Fendente Drill
 - a. Explain the nature of poste, and from the "at rest position" have students draw sword and step forward into a right Posta Longa. Explain guard and its purpose.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

- b. With *tornamento*, step back to right *Posta di Donna*. Explain guard and its purpose.
 - c. Have students transition from one to the other, using a *volta stabile*. Focus on the guards, not the motion between just yet.
 - d. Now, have them practice same transition with *passamento-tornamento*.
 - e. Once they are moving cleanly to each guard, introduce the elements of the cut:
 - i. Pull down and across with rear hand, push straight out in a smooth, linear transition from *Posta di Donna* with the lead hand - do NOT lift the sword off of the shoulder;
 - ii. Exhale on cut, inhale on recovery.
 - iii. True times - sword breaks distance first; make sure that the point of the sword is actually leading the hand.
 - iv. Cut is completed in *longa* with three joints of the leg, and joints of the arm aligned. Explain that wherever your toe points is where the power goes.
 - v. Explain that this is a "half cut".
 - f. Introduce Full Cut
 - i. Full cut is usually used to break an incoming blow, or to deliver a *coup de gras*. Otherwise, more cut than you need;
 - ii. Introduce *Posta Dente di Zenghiaro*: pass and cut to *Posta Longa* as before; this is the maximum extension of the arc of a sword cut, and thus maximum power. To begin recovery phase to a low guard, put your right hand in front of your left pocket, by pulling back and in with the left hand.
 - g. Full Drill: From *Posta di Donna* on the right: half *mandritto* with a *volta stabile*, recover to right *Posta di Donna*; half cut with a *passamento*, recover to right *Posta di Donna*; half cut with a *tornamento*, recover to right *Posta di Donna*; full cut with a *passamento*, recover to right *Posta di Donna*.
7. Salute Out

Lesson Two: Counterattacks

1. Warm Up
2. Review Stance and Footwork
 - a. Stance shifts with *volta stabile*
 - b. "Simon Says" Footwork Drill
3. Swordwork: Now with footwork!
 - a. Follow the Leader footwork drill. Swords crossed at juncture of *punta/mezza*, flat to flat.
 - b. Demonstrate leverage distance through flat vs. through edge.
 - c. Repeat drill with follower turning edge into leader's flat, then both parties edge to edge.
4. Swordwork: Cutting Drills
 - a. Salute in

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

- b. Basic Fendente Drill
 - c. Partnered Fendente Drill: Working in pairs, one partner cuts while the other stands just out of measure and acts as a living segno. Their job is to watch the partner and try to see what they do wrong. Instructor needs to make sure they aren't giving bad advice, or over-correcting, rather both sides are learning to feel and see what a good vs. bad cut looks like.
 - d. Return to Basic Fendente Drill, this time adding tactical footwork:
 - i. Cut One: Acrescimento left with left foot.
 - ii. Cut Two: Mezza volta forward right with right foot.
 - iii. Rompere footwork with cut three.
5. Set-Plays: Counterattacks by Fendente
- a. Introduction: the tactics of Armizare - "V for Victory"
 - i. Defeat an attack by either **moving in** to break it before it is in full force or by **stepping away** so that it is in recovery.
 - ii. Tempo
 - 1. Tempo vs. Time: Any single action = one tempo, regardless of length in real time. Compare three actions of first cutting drill.
 - 2. All actions begin and end in a guard. Compare again to basic cutting drill.
 - 3. Three kinds of tempi: stesso, mezzo and dui. Demonstrate.
 - iii. Counterattacks:
 - 1. Highest expression of the art.
 - 2. Are NOT just "he attacks, so you attack". That is stesso tempo. They must be made inside the opponent's action -- mezzo tempo -- and they must actually intercept, aka "oppose", his weapon.
 - 3. This way, even if the counterattack doesn't land, you've parried.
 - 4. Mental trick: you have to think about hitting the opponent, not the sword, or you will just parry.
 - b. Play One: Counterattack by Stepping In.
 - i. Moving In on the V
 - ii. Edge alignment is crucial - if your cut is vertical he will strike your flat and push through
 - iii. Hands lower and closer than Posta Longa - this is Posta Breve. Reason: opponent broke distance for both parties. This is the difference between cutting in defense vs. offense.
 - c. Play Two: Counterattack by Stepping Away
 - i. Stepping Away on the V
 - ii. Edge alignment is still crucial.
 - iii. Final posta more extended than the first set-play.
 - iv. Mezza volta allows your toe to point into the opponent's center of mass.
6. Lecture: True vs. False Times
7. Salute Out

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

Lesson Three: Counterattacks, Cont'd

1. Warm Up
2. Footwork
 - a. Review Simon Says Footwork Drill
 - b. Review Follow the Leader Footwork Drill.
3. Swordwork
 - a. Salute In
 - b. Basic Fendente Cutting Drill, with Tactical Footwork
 1. Drill is now a 4-step exercise: half cut with acrescimento to left, half cut with mezza volta forward right, half cut with tornamento straight back, and full cut with deeper mezza volta right.
 2. This gives us every tactical choice for defending by fendente: Counterattack Stepping In, Counterattack Stepping Away, Slip the Leg and Break from Above.
 - c. Set-Plays:
 - i. Review Play One
 - ii. Review Play Two
 - iii. Introduce Play Three: Counterattack vs. Cut to the Leg
 1. Related to Play Two, but rather than attacking with a mezza volta forward of the right leg, it is a tornamento straight back with the left foot.
 2. Do not cut vertically, do not cut to the head - make the normal fendente to the neck, because if the opponent tries to pull their head back, the blow's trajectory will slice through their biceps instead.
 3. Our "V" just became a "Y"
4. Salute Out

Lesson Four: Breaking from Above

1. Warm Up
2. Footwork
 - a. Review Follow the Leader Footwork Drill.
3. Swordwork
 - a. Salute In
 - b. Cutting Drills:
 - i. Basic Fendente Cutting Drill: Adding the Verso
 1. Pay careful attention to explaining how left hand rotates on hilt to maintain wrist/forearm alignment on cut.
 2. Full verso finishes in a new guard - porta di ferro mezzana. We've seen this posta already in the rebatter from above.
 3. Same four tactical options exist from the verso side.
 4. Put together, you have the entire first drill, and everything that can be done with a descending cut.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

ii. Second Cutting Drill - Three Cut Exercise, Rompere

Just like the actions done in the Rebatter set-play, only now we have a half riverso fendente that teaches us how to retreat under cover.

c. Set-Plays:

- i. Review Play One
- ii. Review Play Two
- iii. Review Play Three
- iv. Introduce Play Four: Rebatter from Above
 1. Counterattacks require a certain degree of preparation; what if you are just a bit slow to respond? Then don't attack him, attack the weapon!
 2. Emphasis here must be on the proper stepping and weight shifts:
 - a. Mezza volta but point toe to the incoming blade, because that is where your blow's power goes;
 - b. At end of step, you are facing 90° to the left of where you started;
 - c. Keep your weight on your left foot throughout the mezza volta;
 - d. Look right and make a volta stabile, so that your weight shifts to your forward foot as you cut up the falso sottano riverso "under the beard".

4. Salute Out

Lesson Five: First General Review

1. Warm Up
2. Swordwork
 - a. Salute In
 - b. Cutting Drills:
 - i. Basic Fendente Cutting Drill with Tactical Footwork
 1. Drill is now a 4-step exercise: half cut with acrescimento to left, half cut with mezza volta forward right, half cut with tornamento straight back, and full cut with deeper mezza volta right.
 2. This gives us every tactical choice for defending by fendente: Counterattack Stepping In, Counterattack Stepping Away, Slip the Leg and Break from Above.
 - ii. Adding the Riverso
 1. Pay careful attention to explaining how left hand rotates on hilt to maintain wrist/forearm alignment on cut.
 2. Full riverso finishes in a new guard - porta di ferro mezzana. We've seen this posta already in the rebatter from above.
 3. Same four tactical options exist from the riverso side.
 4. Put together, you have the entire first drill, and everything that can be done with a descending cut.

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

- iii. Second Cutting Drill - Three Cut Exercise, Rompere
Just like the actions done in the Rebatter set-play, only now we have a half riverso fendente that teaches us how to retreat under cover.
 - c. Set-Plays:
 - i. Review Play One
 - ii. Review Play Two
 - iii. Review Play Three
 - iv. Review Play Four
3. Salute Out

Lesson Six: Defending with Sottani, Part One -- Dente di Zenghiaro

- 1. Warm Up
- 2. Swordwork
 - a. Salute In
 - b. Cutting Drills:
 - i. Basic Fendente Cutting Drill with Tactical Footwork (Mandritto & Riverso)
 - ii. Second Cutting Drill - Three Cut Exercise, Rompere
 - iii. Third Cutting Drill - Basic Sottani Drill.
 - c. Concerning Parries
 - i. Low vs. High Guards:
 - 1. As we've seen, high guards attack and then defend, or more literally, defend by counterattacking;
 - 2. Correspondingly, low guards defend first and then attack - the parrata e risposta.
 - 3. The only exception to this is the arrest, or stop-thrust, which we will see later.
 - ii. Types of Parries
 - 1. Parries are either *collections* or *deflections*;
 - 2. Collections are designed to stop the attack dead; these always move *in* on the Tactical V and are always made with true edge;
 - 3. Deflections are designed to redirect the attack from you and can be made with either edge.
 - a. True edge always moves *away* on the Tactical V
 - b. False edge can move either *in* or away.
 - d. Set-Plays:
 - i. Rebatter from the Left (Falso Deflection from Posta Dente di Zenghiaro)
 - 1. First saw this guard as the terminus of mandritto fendente.
 - 2. Relate to the Rebatter from Above they have already learned.
 - 3. This posta can make the false edge deflection without moving the feet. Why? The point is offline to the left; effectively, the guard has already "moved in" on the Tactical V!
 - 4. Emphasize the turning out of the heel when parrying!

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

- ii. Rebatter from the Left, Risposta with Riverso: Once students have the set-play down, let them try the ribbon cut variation, which corresponds to what they have learned in today's cutting drill.
3. Salute Out

Lesson Seven: Defending with Sottani, Part Two -- Tutta Porta di Ferro

1. Warm Up
2. Salute In
3. Swordwork
 - a. Cutting Drills: Basic Sottani Drill
 - b. Set-Plays:
 - i. Review Plays for Dente di Zenghiaro
 - ii. True Edge Deflection from Tutta Porta di Ferro
 1. Explain relationship between TPdF and DdZ: this guard exists so as not to cross the wrists. In the same vein, it also has many similar qualities to Posta di Donna; almost a low Posta di Donna,
 2. Just as right Posta di Donna moves in or away when covering, so can this guard. Here we are going to move in and cut into the attack, creating a collection in a new guard: *posta frontale*.
 3. Emphasize the turning out of the heel when parrying!
 - iii. False Edge Rebatter from the Right: Once students have the set-play down, let them try the falso mandritto sottano, which is based on moving away from the attack, just like the hanging parry.
4. Lecture: Fencing Guilds and Sword Etiquette
5. Salute Out

Lesson Eight: Defending with Posta di Finestra

1. Warm Up
2. Swordwork
 - a. Salute In
 - b. Explain the nature of posta di finestra
 - i. instabile guard - a position of motion, defense and recovery;
 - ii. As "the other high guard", related to Posta di Donna. One is point forward and threatens a thrust and covers a line, the other is point back and threatens a cut and invites an attack.
 - iii. Checkpoint: your sword's point must point cross-body to the opponent's corresponding shoulder (right Posta di Finestra points to his right shoulder, and left to his left).
 - iv. Cuts must be made smaller and faster.
 - c. Cutting Drills:
 - i. Basic Posta di Finestra Drill
 - d. Set-Plays
 - i. Review Set-Play Five: Collection into Posta di Finestra

- ii. Set-Play Six: Deflection with Posta di Finestra (Hanging Parry)
 1. Move into right Posta di Finestra, as you slope, so that your point is aimed outside the opponent's right arm. *Do not* let the point drop behind you.
 2. For shorter students: if they cannot reach the head, always *risposta* to the arms and thrust home.
 - iii. Circle-Walking Drill
 3. Summary: We now have a series of possible defenses from two high guards (Posta di Donna and Posta di Finestra), and two low guards (Dente di Zenghiaro and Tutta Porta di Ferro), and a central guard (Posta Longa) in which most of our defenses finish. This gives us the following set of decisions, based on tactics and movement:
 - i. Step Into the Attack: Counterattack Stepping In/Collection in Finestra;
 - ii. Step Away from the Attack: Counterattack Stepping Away/Hanging Parry;
 - iii. Leg Slip: Counterattack by Cut/Counterattack by Thrust
 - iv. Too Late to Counterattack: Rebatter from Above, Rebatter from Below
 4. Salute Out

Lesson Nine: Defending from Below, Part Three - Arresting and Breaking

1. Warm Up
2. Salute In
3. Pop-Quiz!
 - a. Test nomenclature
 - b. knowledge of different types of footwork
 - c. knowledge of how to grip sword
 - d. knowledge of how to make basic cuts
4. Swordwork
 - a. Cutting Drills: Basic Fendente Drill, Recovering into Posta di Finestra (Mandritto & Fendente)
 - b. Set-Plays
 - i. Review Set-Play Five: Collection into Posta di Finestra
 - ii. Review Set-Play Six: Deflection with Posta di Donna (Hanging Parry)
 - iii. Circle-Walking Drill **if needed to improve Play Six**
 - c. Summation: We now have four actions from below that correspond to our four choices from above, giving us eight possible defenses from two poste:
 - i. Step Into the Attack: Counterattack Stepping In/Collection in Finestra;
 - ii. Step Away from the Attack: Counterattack Stepping Away/Hanging Parry;
 - iii. Leg Slip: Counterattack by Cut/Counterattack by Thrust
 - iv. Too Late to Counterattack: Rebatter from Above, Rebatter from Below
5. Salute Out

Lesson Ten: Playing from and Against the Rivero, Part One

1. Warm Up
2. Salute In
3. Swordwork
 - a. Cutting Drills:
 - i. Basic Fendente Drill (Mandritto & Fendente)
 - ii. 3-Count Drill: Rompere
 - iii. Random Targeting Drill - Instructor holds out his sword and as soon the student sees it, he strikes to the target - true edge only for now. Instructor adds footwork and unusual angles.
 - b. Set-Plays:
 - i. Practice the Fendente Defenses (Plays One - Four) on the Tactical Y, as taught previously
 - ii. Introduce Plays One through Four individually from the rivero side.
 1. Emphasis on proper hand, wrist position when cutting rivero;
 2. Particularly important to "slice" through the attack, because you can't afford to just block with crossed wrists.
 - iii. Practice the rivero forms of the Fendente Defenses on the Tactical Y.
4. Salute Out

Lesson Eleven: Playing from the Rivero, Part Two

1. Warm Up
2. Salute In
3. Swordwork
 - a. Cutting Drills:
 - i. Basic Fendente Drill
 - b. Set-Plays:
 - i. Dente di Zenghiaro Defenses vs. a Rivero Fendente
Somewhat more difficult because the blades are moving parallel to one another; be certain to intersect their blow, by making your cut more rivero mezzano than sottano.
 - ii. Tutta Porta di Ferro Defenses vs. a Rivero Fendente
Extremely easy vs. the rivero, since your blade is already *behind* the opponent's.
4. Lecture: the Judicial Duel
5. Salute Out

Lesson Twelve: General Review

1. Warm Up
2. Salute In
3. Pop-Quiz!
 - a. Test nomenclature
 - b. knowledge of different types of footwork

Beginning Armizare: An Introduction to Medieval Swordsmanship

- c. knowledge of how to grip sword
 - d. knowledge of how to make basic cuts
 - e. knowledge of the "check points" for the three Basic Cutting Drills (Fendenti, Sottani, Finestre)
4. Swordwork
- a. Cutting Drills
 - i. Basic Fendente Drill
 - ii. Basic Sottani Drill
 - iii. Basic Posta di Finestra Drill
 - b. Set-Plays
 - Set One: Defending with Fendenti
 - i. Counterattack Stepping In (Mandritto and Rivero)
 - ii. Counterattack Stepping Away (Mandritto and Rivero)
 - iii. Counterattack vs. Leg Cut (Mandritto)
 - iv. Rebatter from Above (Mandritto and Rivero)
 - Set Two: Defending with Sottani
 - i. Rivero Falso Rebattamento, Mandritto Risposta (vs. Mandritto)
 - ii. Rivero Falso Rebattamento, Rivero Risposta (vs. Mandritto)
 - iii. Coverta in Tutta Porta di Ferro, Rivero Risposta (vs. Mandritto)
 - iv. Mandritto Falso Rebattamento, Mandritto Risposta (vs. Mandritto)
 - Set Three: Covering with Posta di Finestra
 - i. Collection in Left Posta di Finestra, Punta Sopramano (vs. Mandritto)
 - ii. Collection in Right Posta di Finestra, Punta Sopramano (vs. Rivero)
 - iii. Deflection in Right Posta di Finestra, Mandritto Risposta (vs. Mandritto)
 - iv. Deflection in Left Posta di Finestra, Rivero Risposta (vs. Rivero)
5. Final Questions
6. Salute Out