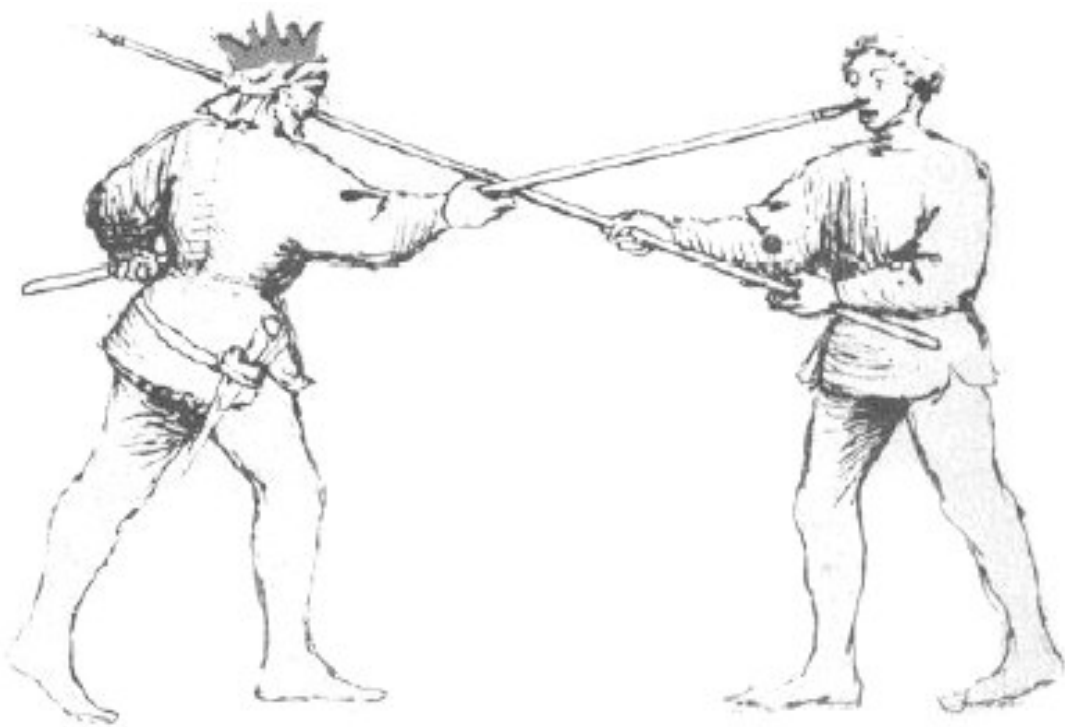




Ottawa Medieval Sword Guild

The Spear, the King of Weapons

*A Practical Analysis of the Spear in
Fiore dei Liberi's Flos Dellatorum and
Fillipo Vadi's Ars Gladiatoria.*



*July, 2006
Not for Resale*

Mathieu Ravignat

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Bibliographical Notice

All reference to Liberi's *Flos Dellatorum* are from the *Knight of the Wild Rose* translation. **Francesco Novati, *Flos duellatorum: Il Fior di battaglia di maestro Fiore dei Liberi da Premariacco (Bergamo, 1902), Pisani-Dossi Collection***. Literal Translation of Fiore de Liberi's printed words by Hermes Michelini, 2001. Pictures grabbed from original 'Flos Duellatorum' sketches and formatted for the web site by Mich Shire. <http://www.varmouries.com/wildrose/fiore/fiore.html>

All references to Vadi are from **Fillipo Vadi, *Ars Gladiatoria: 15th Century Swordsmanship of Master***. Translated by Luca Porzio , **Highland Village**: 2002.

Disclaimer

This article depicts and describes fighting techniques designed to cause severe pain and injury. They are presented for educational and entertainment purposes only. We in OMSG study this martial system for reasons of cultural heritage and recreation, and are not responsible for the use and mis-use of the information contained herein. Those wishing to study and train in this fighting system should do so *only under the supervision and instruction of a reputable, qualified instructor*.

...you have been warned!

Part I: Introduction to the Spear

Brief History

The spear is one of the oldest weapons known to European man. Spears have been found in one shape or another at neolithic stone age, bronze age Celtic, iron age Celtic, and Germanic archeological sites of importance. No doubt it begun as a hunting instrument, and was developed because it provided reach and distance between man and his prey and gave extra power and leverage in combat (Ashdown, 1967, p.14).

The Pagan Scandinavian Prose Edda, and Welsh and Irish legends, written down during the medieval period, but with far more ancient origins, attest to a special place for the spear amongst the psyche of our ancient European ancestors. In fact, if mythology is a good indicator, it would seem that the spear played a more important role than that of the sword in the ancient social hierarchy of Northern Europe. The royal preference given to this singular weapon has been well documented. For example, the Fleur de Lys, generally a symbol of royalty, may have begun as a stylized Frankish spear head and the diminutive size of royal scepter was probably reduced from the spear. No less illustrious of figures as Odin the king of Germanic Gods and the Celtic God Lugh had magical spears as symbols of their sovereignty and warrior skills (Robertson, 1990, p. 117). The use of the spear in the boar hunt also points to its special status, for in both Germanic and Celtic pagan societies this hunt, more than all others, was a kind of rite of passage for the young noble warrior. This special hunt and its spear retained their unique purpose all the way up to medieval period. In fact, several medieval boar hunting manuals survive which display this highly ritualistic use.

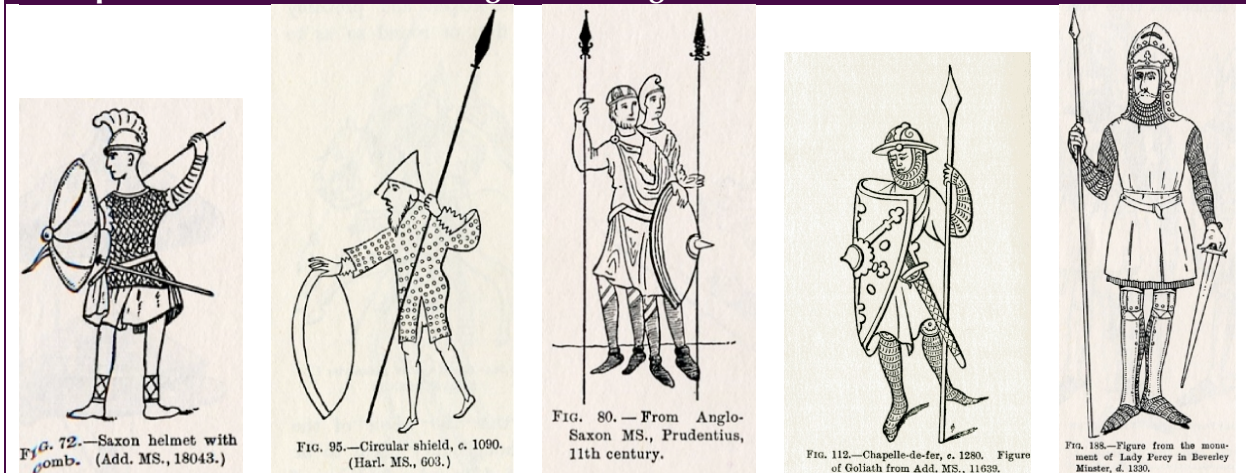
According to Ashdown it is with the invasion of the Germanic tribes across the Rhine that the spear began to take this central role (Ashdown, 1969, p. 49). Germanic chieftains were generally buried with spears as status symbols, as the Anglo-Saxon burial site of Lincolnshire attests. Also, there are several examples of ornate Germanic spears in the Royal British Museum which were probably used for ceremonial purposes. This special status given to the spear is also seen linguistically, as many Germanic names such as Geralt and Gertrude exemplify etymologies relating to the spear. In this case Geralt means "spear ruler." Ger or spear is also the probable root for the word Germans, or "spear men." So it would seem by these facts, that unlike the Gauls and Britons, the Germanic peoples primary weapon of choice in combat was not the sword, but the light spear they called the Framea. Therefore, it is probably as the various Germanic tribes progressed and began to set up their independent monarchies in Western Europe and the corresponding legal systems to govern disputes between local chieftains (e.g., the Burgundian Lex Gundobada, C.E. 484), that the spear found its way into the highly ritualized judicial duels of the medieval period.

The most famous and detailed description of a medieval Germanic warrior bearing a spear is probably that of the Frankish Carolingian King Charlemagne (Charles the Great), written by a monk of Saint Gall in 773 AD:

"Thus appeared the Iron King with his crested iron helm (ferreis galea christatus), with sleeves of iron mail (ferreis manicis armillatus) on his arms, his broad chest protected by an iron byrnie (ferrea torace tutalus), an iron spear in his left hand, right free to grasp his unconquered sword. His thighs were guarded with iron mail, though other men were wont to leave them unprotected so that they might spring more lightly upon their steeds. And his legs, like those of all his host, were protected by iron greaves (ocreis). His shield was of plain iron (boss and edging) without device or color."

Medieval Source Book: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/stgall-charlemagne.html> Downloaded April 14, 2005, 9:00am.

The Spear and the Warrior Throughout the Ages



(Ashdown, 1969, various)

As we move into the Christian period the symbolic purpose of the spear begins to be usurped by the more cruciform shape of the sword. Nonetheless, it continues to retain some legendary significance as can be seen in the Parzifal Grail quests and the tales of the Spear of Longinus, also known as The Spear of Destiny, which was that instrument of death which pierced Jesus' side at the crucifixion.

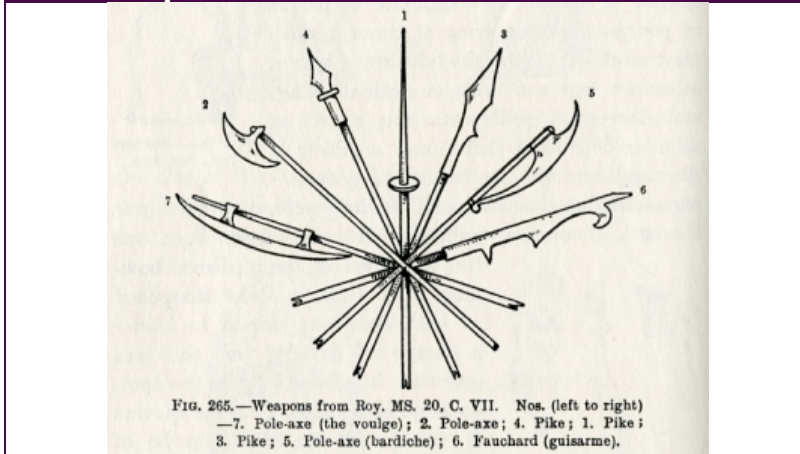
The Use of the Spear Throughout the Ages

In the early medieval period the spear was used both as an offensive weapon tucked under the arm in cavalry charges and as a defensive weapon couched against the same. In juridical duels it was also thrown as can be seen in extant manuscripts such as those by Hans Talhoffer (1443). It was also used offensively and defensively in combat on foot (Ashdown, 1969, p. 60). It was indispensable as a long range fighting weapon and Germanic warrior strategy included throwing light spears. It no doubt was also used effectively in the Viking boar's tooth wedge formation and in their shield wall defense. Its use is also well documented on the Bayeux Tapestry which celebrates the victory of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. It is this early use in the Viking and Norman shield wall to defend against cavalry charges that would see the spear metamorphose into the much longer ranged Pike.

Pike formations in the late medieval and early renaissance periods would revolutionize warfare, and along with the longbow would take much of the impetus away from the mounted knight. The English Civil War would demonstrate the long spears effectiveness on the field of battle against fully mounted knights at a charge. During the 100 Year War

the Swiss and Flemish/Belgian pikemen would also demonstrate its effectiveness by almost single handedly bringing down the Duchy of Burgundy. At the battle of Neuss (1474 CE), the army of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (arguably the best supplied and advanced army of the period) was completely decimated by the Swiss pikemen. The reputation of these pike men grew so much that the mercenary units became some of the best paid instruments of war. This situation continued until the invention of the easy firing musket. In fact, early musket troop formation was mainly based on that of tactical strategies used for pikemen since they both constituted a form of infantry.

Pole Weapons



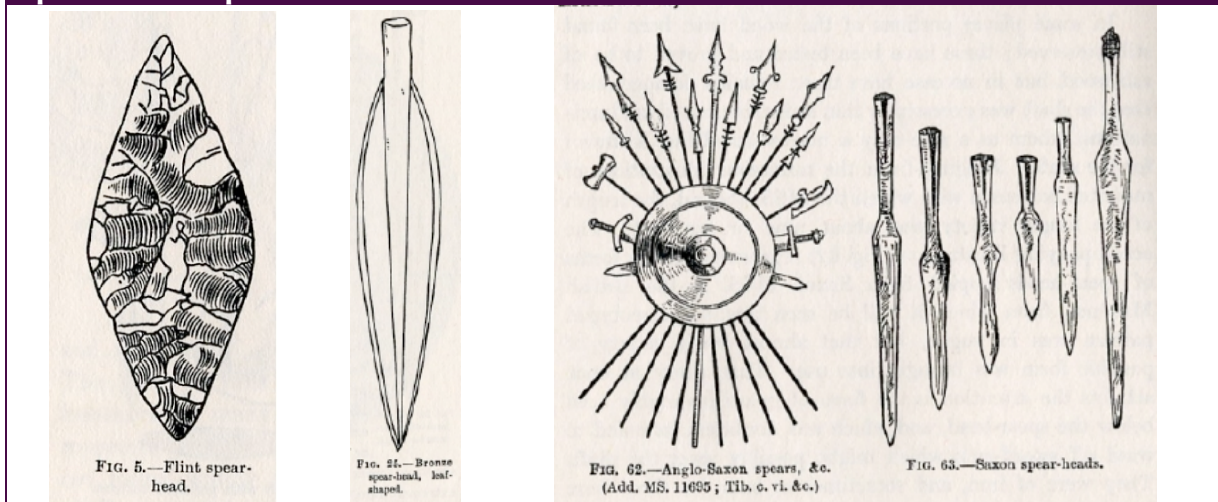
(Ashdown, 1969, p. 210)

Also, tactics of Napoleonic era Infantry included the forming of "Squares" of densely packed bayonet wielding musketeers to defend against cavalry charges (Phalanx). Civil war formations of bayonets marched across battlefields much like spearmen. The use of the modern bayonet for combat incorporates spear style techniques, and it's still a viable choice for crowd control by the police. The military also still uses terms like "spearhead" for describing military actions.

The Spears Shape Throughout the Ages

The spear is probably the weapon which has retained its basic shape the best over the centuries. Of all its shapes, the leaf headed spear was no doubt the most consistent. The basic leaf shape head attached to a shaft of hard wood has changed little since the earliest Etruscan models of the 7th century BCE., and there are several early bronze age leaf shaped examples in the Louvre and several iron age examples in the Royal British Museum.

Spearhead Shapes



(Ashdown, 1969, various)

The success of this basic shape is probably due to the fact that it allowed for maximum penetration with the sharp point and then the opening of the started wound as the blade widened. This would provide maximum damage to the internal organs. Its symmetry also allowed it to cut as effectively when it was pulled out. At times the leaf headed spear was also equipped with quillions which would stop any unwanted penetration along the shaft. This ensured easy withdrawal and prevented the spear from getting caught in a fallen body and disarming the attacker. At times these quillions were quite wide as for the boar hunt. In this case they were designed to prevent this animal from riding up the spear to attack the hunter.

The length of spear shafts varied as well as the shape and size of the heads, but the basic principle has remained the same since the dawn of mankind: Keep your distance from your opponent and thrusts him where it hurts.

A final note, though in the early medieval period the spear and the lance seem almost indistinguishable, they are quite distinct instruments of war by the middle period, the latter growing heavier and longer and increasingly designed to take advantage of the momentum created by the horse. As our subject is the spear used on foot, I have not addressed the history and nomenclature of the lance used on horseback.

Nomenclature

Name of the Spear in *Flos Duellatorum*: *Lanza Longa*. (Long Spear)

The spear is made up of the following parts:

The point (the metal end of the spear head) (*punto*)

The blade (the metal sides of the spear head)

The shaft (divided upper, middle, lower)

The butt (the blunt end of the staff, sometimes reinforced with steel or possessing a spiked end)

Part II: The Spear in Fiore Dei Liberi Flos Duellatorum and Vadi's Ars Gladiatoria

General Comments

The Striking Controversy

There is some question as to the historical accuracy of the use of the spear for striking. Though I do not pretend to have solved this dilemma, I am a practitioner that believes that the spear can be used both in thrusting and striking, while at the same time acknowledging that its primary purpose is to thrust. However, I do maintain that there is sufficient evidence to point to the fact that striking with the spear was considered usual in the Medieval Italian School of Fighting. To support this view I present the following evidence on which I invite comment:

1. Liberi's art is universal, in that all the things one can do with the sword or poleaxe, one is supposed to be able to do with every other weapon. Therefore, like the poste, the striking angles for the butt and blade of the spear should be the same as the sword.
2. Liberi clearly indicates that the butt of the spear may be used for striking if the opponent applies too much pressure on your spear. I assume one would have to acquire the skill to do this at several different angles.
3. I cannot see any other purpose for the crossed hand position of the Posta Di Finestra (Guard of the Window hands crossed) and no other interpretation to the following verse than to swing the spear: ***For sure from right and also from left: striking is done outside on the street.***
4. Liberi clearly indicates that the spear is interchangeable with the staff, and I find it hard to believe that the end of the staff was not used in striking at angles during the medieval period.
5. The realities of chaotic medieval combat are such that the needs to deflect and strike at various angles were and are necessary skill when using the spear. (Thanks to Brian McIlmoyle (AEMMA), Personal Correspondence, May 2003.)

The Spear in Liberi's Art

The limitations of the spear: The spear is the longest of the weapons presented in Flos Duellatorum and because of its length it has some close range fighting limitations. Though, Liberi's fighting system is universal, the close range fighting techniques of the dagger and half sword do not seem practical with the spear. Therefore, other than what is presented in this article, one must try to apply the other techniques in other sections of the manuscript to determine to what extent they could be performed with the spear.

Looking at the plates in the Pisani-Dossi (Novati) version of Flos Duellatorum in a more general sense the researcher can see that there are essentially 16 couples of figures. We have numbered them 1 to 16 for your convenience. By viewing all of them we get an idea

about how the spear was generally used. It may be used to strike, by bringing the point or butt in a number of semi circles to bear downward on the opponent as for the Master in plates 7 and 11 or as in plate 6 of the Student. It may be used to throw as in plate 13 and of course it may be used to thrust (its primary function) as seen from the Student in almost every plate save for the plates 6, 13 ,14.

Furthermore, it is quite obvious by their nature that the first four exchanges beginning with spear and dagger and the last four exchanges beginning with spear are what we could call “irregular techniques.” In all of them the spear is not the primary method of counterattack. In the first four plates the Master is using either a dagger and spear, clubs or the long sword to defend against a spear. The final plates of the spear section, as is the custom, show harnessed (armoured) techniques, in this case a man which is unarmed without a helmet with his mail aventail attached to a padded coif. These techniques consist of ways in which the spear shaft can be broken or the opponent disarmed.

The more consistent techniques may be found in the series of plates between them, and it is here that we learn the guards and strikes typical of early 15th century spear combat of the Italian school.

Liberi Poste

Liberi begins with the following: ***The guard of the spear which are six Masters. The first three Masters practice from the right side, the other three practice from the left. Later he says: We are the three Masters who fight in reverse.*** Indicating that the each posta is done both with the left foot forward (forward stance) and with the right foot forward (reverse stance). This symmetrical system is confirmed by the Getty manuscript which states: ***There are three poste on the right and three poste on the left. (Translation Charron, Correspondence, May 2003)***

But the plates which follow are four in number so he should be talking about eight poste and not six. The key however is that in the last plate where he clearly says: ***Such is the wounding by the three former Masters.*** Indicating that the Student is defeated in this same way as in the last plate by the Master. It also says in the caption above the second series of four plates: ***The fourth Master will complete the art of our fights*** indicating that the fourth plate for either series that is plates 8 and 12 are the finishing blows from the Master’s six poste.

Therefore, the last plates in both series, 8, 12 do not refer to a particular posta. This leaves us with plates 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11. Six in number. In these six plates six different postas are held by the Master, which are in fact three poste done on both sides. Using the longsword poste names, since Liberi does not name the spear poste, the following poste are found:

Poste in Forward Stance

In plate 5 the Full Iron Gate (Tutta Porta di Ferro) or the Butt end down in forward stance guard. **(may ward with top bottom or middle of shaft)**

In plate 6 the Middle Iron Gate (Mezza Porta di Ferro) or Spear head down in forward stance. **(may bring up the top of the spear and butt to parry and thrust)**

In plate 7 the Right Guard of the Window (Posta di Finestra Destra) or Cross hand high guard in forward stance. **(in which you can swing the spear and strike, defense is done with top of shaft)**

In all of these the left foot is forward, right hand uppermost on the shaft, and the Master is looking straight ahead.

Poste in Reverse Stance

In plate 9, the Boar's Tooth (Dente di Zengiaro) or Butt end down in reverse stance.

(warding with the top bottom and middle of the shaft)

In plate 10, the Middle Iron Gate (Mezza Porta di Ferro) or Butt end up in reverse stance.

(may strike or ward with butt end)

In plate 11, Left Guard of the Window (Posta di Finestra Sinestra) (hands uncrossed). **(in which you can strike more effectively and not thrust)**

In all of these the right foot is forward, left hand uppermost on the shaft, and you are looking at your opponent.

Though technically six guards it is easy to see by the above that they are actually three guards done on both sides. Only the hand which is uppermost and the stance has changed.

The two plates plates, 8 and 12 which are the following strokes to every posta are characteristic of long sword combat. In the sense that the spear is brought to bear on the opponents spear in the *breve* or *mezza* posta (the short guard, as in briefly (*breve*) held guard, or the middle guard middle of the body for *mezza*) to then either follow the shaft and thrust or strike it out of the way and thrust.

Vadi's Commentary

Looking at Vadi now and his *Ars Gladiatoria* (1482-87 CE) we have a very similar depiction of the spear as in *Liberi*. The weapon used is approximately the same length as that in *Liberi* though the proportions of the art being better the spear looks longer.

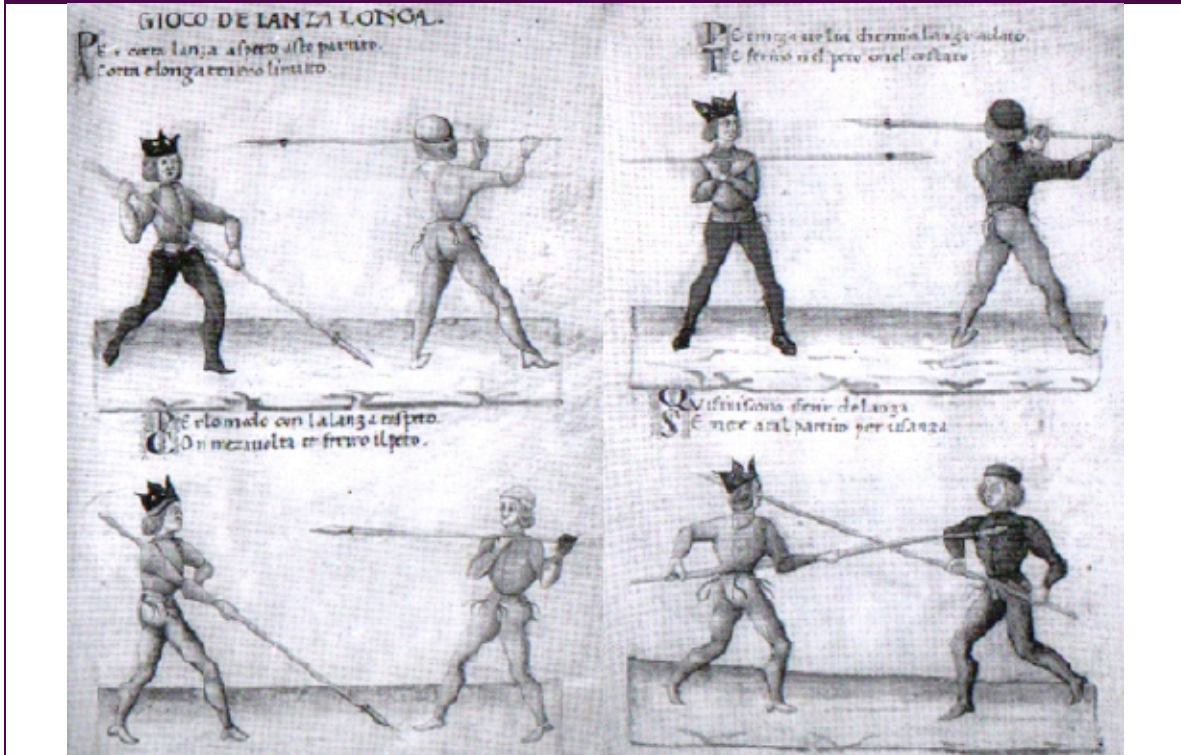
However, in this manuscript Vadi has eschewed the special techniques and reduced the plates to four couples of figure. We have numbered them 1 to 4 for you convenience (left to right, top and bottom). In much of the same way as in *Liberi* the three former plates finish with the resulting final plate which shows the Master thrusting the Student in the chest: ***Here ends the spear blow. Its stays here because so it is used.***

Vadi Poste

The Student in all the plates is in the transitional thrusting position from Guard of the Window and ready to attack the Master. The Master takes three different poste. The second and the third, which correspond exactly to the Boar's Tooth described in *Liberi* (see below) and the ***Posta di Finestra*** the Guard of the Window. The guard shown by the Master in the first image seems to be new. However, after closer inspection it is similar to Iron Gate (see

below). Vadi indicates: ***With a short spear I will wait in this way. I will invite you to attack with both short and long spear.*** This statement suggests this is a primary defense guard which can be used against long spears or short spears. Being placed first, as it is, it seems to add support to the claim that it is good for all attacks.

Vadi Poste



In this way it closely resembles Full Iron Gate, which Liberi says: ***This guard will suffice me against any spear. I cover myself above and below with steps and returns. With the butt of the ground and the tip on top I have no problem covering and hitting.*** When we look at the performance of this unnamed poste in Vadi the only difference between Liberi's Guard and the one shown in Vadi is that Vadi prefers to do it with the tip down. Note however that when brought across the body to the other side with a passing step the tip naturally changes from being below to above and corresponds exactly to Liberi's Full Iron Gate.

Liberi's Guidelines for the Spear

Before we get into the actual performance of the different poste and the striking techniques from the different poste, let us address what Liberi has to say about spear combat in general. In the captions below taken from both the Pisani-Dossi and translations and commentary of the Getty manuscript provided by Bob Charron to the author, we have an idea of the strategy involved in medieval spear combat. In the Getty version the titles of each page give us some important additional guidelines:

1. The title of the first page indicates that these techniques are good for either spear or staff.

The long spear which is used by hand. The longer it is the less its deceiving.

2. The longer the spear the less deceiving it is. The length of the spear in Liberi seems to be about seven feet if you compare the height of it with the height of the Master in plate 9 and compensate for the fact that it is above the foot and the Master is wearing a large crown. The spear of the Student seems to give the impression that it is longer.

Six Masters stay on guard with it, with one step and one strike right away they hit.

3. From the poste you need only one step before you can strike right away.

For sure from right and also from left: striking is done outside on the street.

4. If you strike on either side, this takes lots of room, implying swinging.

And the strike wants an arm on the spear, and whoever does the contrary will fail.

5. That in order to strike well you must always keep your hand arms on the spear at all times.

In the Getty version the following paragraph is given as advice for the Spear:

You are to turn your spear and follow with your body by stepping, making a strong crossing with his spear and orienting your point toward his face in the crossing. You immediately follow with a thrust so that it is almost a stesso tempo (single time) action. If he parries more strongly than you do, you whip the foot of your lance around and strike him with it. (Translation Charron, Personal Correspondence, May 2003)

6. This is very telling of the strategy that is involved including the importance of stepping right when striking right and vice versa, as well as the importance of the cross. The cross position is the position in which your opponents spear and yours has met. Usually the quickness of the counter attack in this position will determine the end of the bout. The above also clearly shows that you may hit with the butt of the weapon, and that there are only three guards done symmetrically on both sides.

Note: There are no specific guidelines given for the Spear in Vadi and the reader must deduce them from his commentary on the sword (see below on timing).

A Note on Timing

Both Liberi and Vadi emphasize the single time or *stesso tempo* with spear. That is a simultaneous defense and attack taking advantage of the full length of the weapon:

Liberi

With my spear I'll strike mine in passing and right away I'll thrust you in the chest. And in such a way that theirs (the Master's spear) will end in your face or chest.

Vadi

The half time is only a turn of the wrist, quick and immediate to strike.

According to Mese and Porzio this *stesso tempo* (or single time) is clearest seen in the plates of the Spear in Vadi:

Vadi uses a variety of "times" in his treatise. He speaks of going together with the enemy, or moving in *stesso tempo* (single time). Single time actions often include preemptive stop-thrusts, or counter cuts. The swordsman simply attacks, or counters an incoming attack with a simultaneous attack of their own:

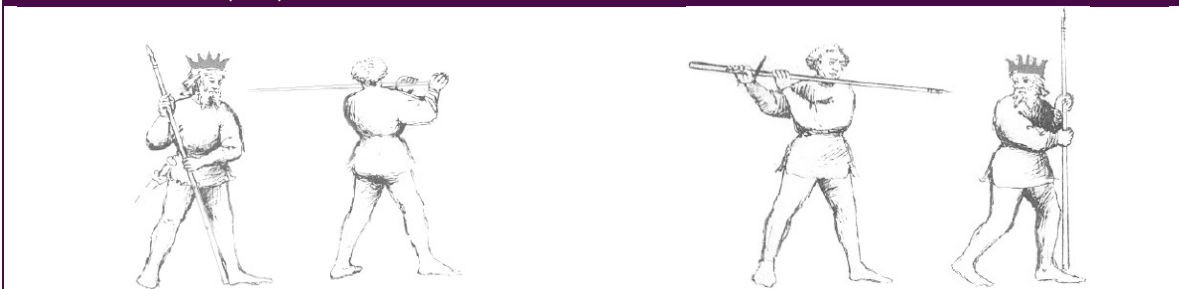
*And if you want to make him feel your tip,
Go out of the way with a sidestep,
Making him feel the point in his chest.*

With a long weapon as the two handed sword or spear, *stesso tempo* actions create an attack that simultaneously parries, since the weapon is long enough to reach the adversary and close the line of attack in one action. The clearest examples of this in Vadi's treatise can be seen in his spear plays (28v), but is also shown in his first play at the sword (17v) and in his first armoured techniques (26v). (Mese and Prozio in Vadi, 2002, p. 21)

Analysis of the Poste in Liberi

Full Iron Gate/Boar's Tooth

Full Iron Gate (left) and Boar's Tooth



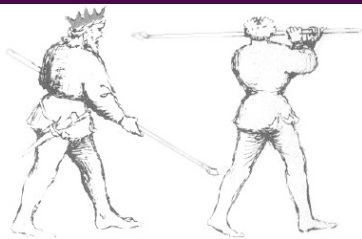
In the Novati version Liberi seems to give a preferential treatment to Boar's Tooth, when he says:

This guard will suffice me against any spear. I cover myself above and below with steps and returns. With the butt of the ground and the tip on top I have no problem covering and hitting.

This indicates that to ward the spear, this posta is best because your spear is covering your entire body. Coupled with good footwork it can evade most blows. Given that it is essentially the same guard as Full Iron Gate (in a forward stance), I propose that in either case this is the best guard to ward in and, though ideally, you want to transition through each of the posta fluidly, this is the safest basic posta to assume.

Middle Iron Gate

Middle Iron Gate

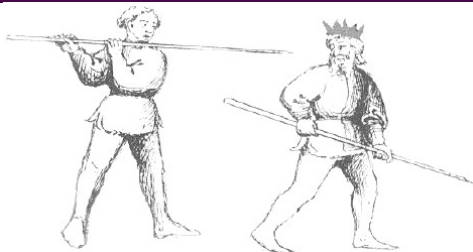


Your spear is long and short is mine: Don't try and run or I'll humiliate you

From this position the spear is held so that a thrust from below can be quickly delivered to the opponent especially when he is retreating. The Master is gazing below and the spear head is at the leg. The reference to running also seems to point to the fact that the quick strike is aimed at the front leg of the Student.

Guard of the True Cross

Guard of the True Cross

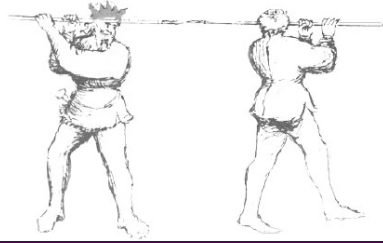


With this guard I can defend against and spear throw, that I want to thrust my spear in your chest

This is one of the more enigmatic sentences in this section. By the position of the Master I take it to mean that the butt of the spear can be used to deflect any spear attack and that the tip of the spear can be brought to bear for a thrust.

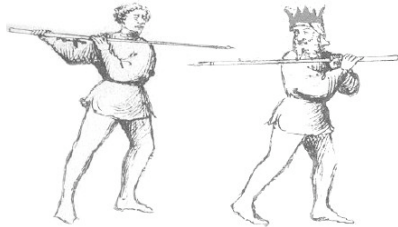
Guard of the Window

Right Guard of The Window



*With my spear I'll strike yours in passing
and right away I'll thrust it in your chest*

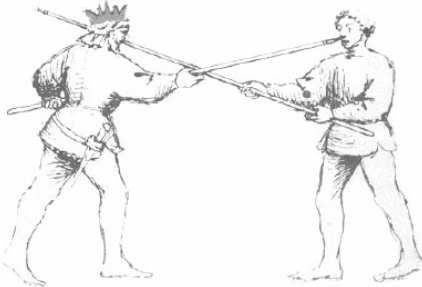
Left Guard of the Window



*I will finish you without failing when
turning around because I'm the Master of
all Changes*

Note that this is the only guard in which the hands are crossed and held at the butt end (queue) of the spear. Below for the reverse version dei Liberi says: ***I will finish you without failing when turning around because I'm the Master of all changes.*** In this hand crossed position the Master is extremely limited in what he may do. The thrust from this position is not effective because your hands remain crossed and the thrust is shortened and unnatural. It would seem that the hands should uncross. When they do a powerful swinging like motion is generated which can be angled to various heights. This uncrossing is what I believe dei Liberi is referring to as turning and changes. Coupled with the turning of the body with a passing step the blow is truly devastating. Also, this is one of the only times dei Liberi uses the term strike for the spear. A thrust can also be performed on the opposite side: if you step forward or back, twist your hands from Guard of the Window to a thrust on the opposite side, keep your point menacing always forward into the face of the adversary.

Ward and Counter



*Such is the wounding by the three former
masters,
And in such a way that their spear will end
in your face or chest*

Performing with the Spear

Stance

With long weapons the Elephant (a solid stance) must be well secured or the weapon will unbalance the body. The legs in the forward and reverse stances should be slightly wider and lower than in the long sword.

Grip

When using the spear the hands are placed on the shaft so as their palms face inward towards each other both thumbs facing upwards. The shaft is normally held so that it is divided in three equal parts. The grip should be changed so that only one hand is changed at a time keeping one hand on the spear at all times. The grip should be comfortable, not too loose and not too tight so that the spear length can be used effectively. When striking and parrying, the grip must remain flexible because the spear will slide slightly in the hands to add extra speed and power to the blow while taking advantage of the full length of the shaft.

Performance of the Poste

Full Iron Gate/Boar's Tooth

The right/left hand is pulled back to the shoulder with the elbow down holding the shaft less than a third from the top. The butt end of the shaft will be slightly longer. The left/right hand is at waist height, the arm bent almost at a ninety-degree angle with the elbow facing the opponent. The butt is held inside of the foot near the heel with the angle of the shaft across the body at about 30 degrees. The guard should be comfortable and relaxed. Anything can be done from this guard.

Middle Iron Gate/True Cross

From Full Iron Gate drop the left hand to rest on the left hip, the hands are positioned so that they divide the spear into three equal parts. The right hand holds the spear tip 45 degrees down pointing off to the side of the body either straight angle to the body or at 45 degrees forward to the right (making a cross with the body). The left foot is forward. On the reverse the right hand is held against the right hip and the point is off to the left with the right foot forward. In this position the tip of the shaft of the spear or butt can come up quickly from above to strike or deflect.

Guard of the Window

From Full Iron Gate, twist the left hand upward and over the right crossing at the forearms while simultaneously drawing your right hand forward. The movement of the spear should be quick to minimize the swing of the spear and to keep the point forward at all times menacing your opponents face. The point should be pointing forward. The right hand will

be drawn back close to the shoulder and face, the left further back past the shoulder. The spear should be gripped in the last third of the spear to take advantage of its length and so that the proper whipping action will result from unfolding from the posta.

Posta and Gripping Drills

Simple Hand Grip Changes

Change hand over hand vertical and hand over hand horizontal. Pressure should be constantly on the shaft. Increase speed.

Passing Step from Full Iron Gate to Boar's Tooth

In this exercise you will have to switch your grip. Maintain the grip of the top hand keep your spear vertical and switch your lower hand from posta to posta while you step back and forward, assume the correct posta every time. The bottom hand will become the top hand, etc...

Passing Step from Middle Iron Gate to True Cross

As you step forward and change posta flip your spear hand over hand so that there is always one hand on the spear at one time, menace with the tip by bringing it slightly forward.

Passing Step from Guard of the Window Forward and Reverse

As you step forward or back, twist your hands from Guard of the Window to a thrust on the opposite side, keep your point menacing and always forward toward the face of the adversary. Switch and do on the other side.

Poste Moulinet

Full Iron Gate, Middle Iron Gate, True Cross, Boar's Tooth, Left Window, Right Window, Full Iron Gate, repeat.

Striking Drills from Poste

From Iron Gate Reversed

Immobile: Strike at all reverse angles with the butt and spear. Passing step: Stepping with all right angles strike with the spearhead. Gather step: Strike at all reverse angles with the butt.

From Boar's Tooth Reversed

Immobile: Strike quickly out with the spearhead and butt at all three angles. Passing step: Strike quickly out with the spearhead at all angles. Gather step: Strike all angles with the butt while gathering.

From Guard of the Window

Immobile: Strike right angles with spearhead while bending the front leg. Passing step: Strike at all right angles while stepping. It is not effective to strike the roverso in this posta while gather stepping.

Thrusting Drills from Poste

From Boar's Tooth

Immobile: Thrust with either the spear end or the butt end. Passing step: Cross into posta breve, (short guard) and then thrust. Gather step: Cross in breve with butt and thrust with butt.

From Guard of the True Cross

Immobile: Thrust with spear head or butt. Passing step: Cross in breve and thrust. Gather step: Cross with butt and thrust with butt.

From Left Guard of the Window

Immobile: No thrusting. Passing step: Pull back from cross in breve and thrust. Gather step: No thrust.

Warding Drills

As the opponent slowly thrusts at you use Full Iron Gate to ward using passing steps and gather steps. Use the three separate sections of the shaft.

Phase One: High strikes, thrusts.

Phase Two: Middle strikes, thrusts.

Phase Three: Lower strikes, thrusts.

Phase Four: All levels.

Analysis of the Plays in the Flos Duellatorum and Ars Gladiatoria

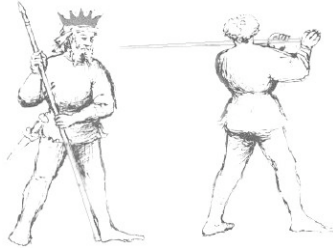
Optimum Strikes in dei Liberi

With my spear I'll strike mine in passing and right away I'll thrust you in the chest. And in such a way that theirs (the Master's spear) will end in your face or chest.

If the opponent assumes a forward stance with the right foot forward you must stand opposite to him so that your left foot is also forward. Dei Liberi assumes he has a longer spear and does not have to pass step. When you pass in breve (mezza) this will open him up to the thrust to his vital areas. You can thrust to the other side but it is not as effective. Note most of the attacks in the plates are thrusts except plate six where the student may also strike with a swing. All these defenses apply to both strikes and thrusts. No defenses are shown for attacks to the legs.

Spear Head Strikes

Full Iron Gate

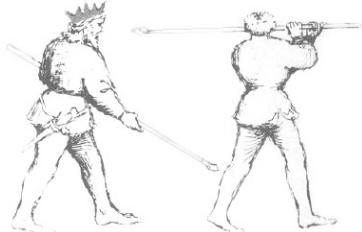


***I wait with this guard with a short spear:
My habit is to strike and to exchange the
point***

Student: Left foot forward in Left Guard of the Window- will thrust to the throat of the master by taking a step forward with his right foot.

Master: In Full Iron Gate- Master will ward by using a passing step, deflecting the spear with the top third of his spear and thrusting to the chest (Plate 8). With the spear it is best to take a small crossing step with the left foot over to the right and to the front before passing with the right foot in order to ensure the proper line of attack.

Middle Iron Gate



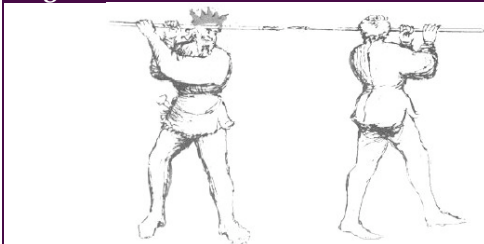
***Your spear is long and short is mine: Don't
try and run or I'll humiliate you***

Student: In Left Guard of the Window- the student will thrust to the chest while taking a passing step with the right foot.

Master: In Middle Iron Gate- uses a passing step with the right foot, covering with the top part of his spear. He will then bend forward with the leg and thrust to the face. (Plate 8)

Guard of the Window

Right Guard of The Window



***With my spear I'll strike yours in passing
and right away I'll thrust it in your chest***

Student: Will thrust to the throat from Left Guard of the Window with a passing step with the right foot.

Master: Will turn his spear to cross the Student's and then thrust to the face while taking a step forward with the right foot. Note the spear point should always stay on line and should wind from the Guard of the Window left to the Guard of the Window right followed by the thrust. (Plate 8)

Butt Strikes

These are not shown in the plates but are deduced by observation and from the following statement in the Getty version:

If he parries more strongly than you do, you whip the foot of your lance around and strike him with it.

Student: Will thrust to the Master's throat from a Guard of the Window, left foot forward, with passing step right.

Master: In True Cross will ward by gather stepping and deflecting the spear with the bottom third of his spear following immediately with a thrust to the chest with the butt.

Student: With right foot forward the student will thrust to the Master's chest with a passing step with the left foot.

Master: Will use Full Iron Gate and cover with the bottom part of his spear and then bend his leg and thrust to the face with the butt.

Note: You cannot do these butt techniques from Guard of the Window.

Optimum Strikes in Vadi

Note that the last plate is an indication of the result of the previous three plates and will not be explained.

Plate 1



With a short spear I will wait in this way. I will invite you to attack with both short and long spear.

Student: The Student pass-steps with the left foot and thrusts to the chest.

Master: Is in Vadi's Middle Iron Gate variation awaits the thrust from the Student. The Master brings up his spear and thrusts to the chest without moving by bringing the right hand up and the left hand down, deflecting the students spear with the part of the spear just below the spear head (shown down here). He then bends his forward knee and thrusts the student.

Plate 2



Thanks to a half turn of my spear I will wound you in the chest or ribs.

Student: With a right foot passing step the student thrusts to the chest.

Master: In the Guard of the Window waits for the thrust from the Student, takes a passing step with his right foot and then follows the shaft up and thrusts. This is the same play as in the last play of Liberi above. See instructions.

Plate 3



In this way I wait with the spear With a half turn I'll wound you in the chest.

Student: With a gather step or a bend of the knee the student thrusts to the chest.

Master: In a Full Iron Gate right foot forward the master waits for the Student to thrust to his face. Master brings up his spear from Full Iron Gate while turning the shaft slightly deviating the Student's spear of line and thrusting to the chest or face. Neither the student or the master take a passing step.

Plate 4



*Here end the spear blows
It stays here because so it is used*

Sensitivity Drills

The Cross Circling

It is in the crossed spear position that you will encounter most attacks, it is therefore important that you acquire sensitivity at this point of contact with your opponent. Once the cross is attained many options are presented to you. The three major are: 1. Deflecting and thrusting or striking by following the adversaries shaft or 2. Disengaging your opponents spear and thrusting, and lastly 3. Encircling your adversaries spear and thrusting.

Phase 1

To develop the sensitivity as to what your opponent will do, you cannot rely on vision alone. Pressure must be felt from the hands directly. To practice this, assume a crossed position with your partner. Circle your spears around clockwise. Choose the attacker, who will initiate the movement. The defender must follow him and apply medium pressure. The defender must follow the speed of the attacker all around the circle so that the spears never come apart and are always touching.

Phase 2

Introduce different direction circles to the attackers discretion.

The Cross Thrusting

Phase 1

In the crossed positions, the attacker will thrust forward and will then assume the crossed position again. When this is performed the defender will ward by keeping contact with the opponents spear and then follow him back to the neutral position.

Phase 2

The defender will ward by counter thrusting. Note: Fencing helmets should be worn at all times during this exercise.

The Cross Disengaging

Phase 1

The opponent will feint a thrust disengage and thrust to the other side, the defender will ward on both sides while maintaining contact with the opponents spear at all times. Note: Fencing helmets should be worn at all times during this exercise.

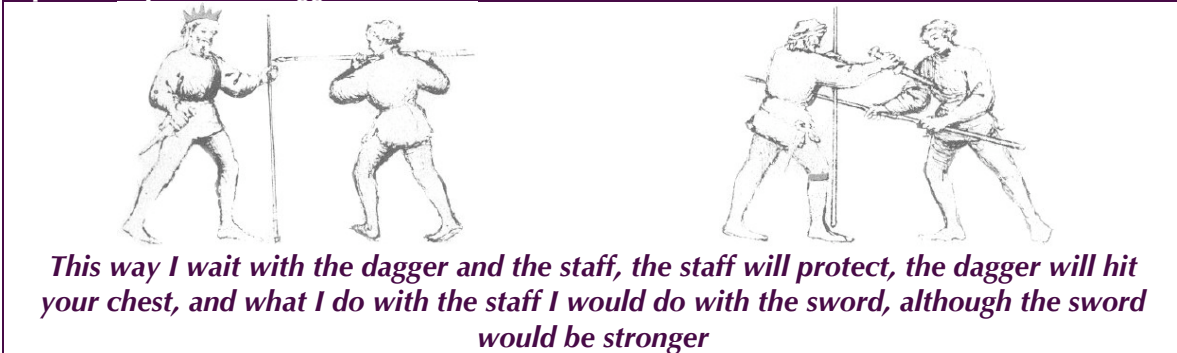
Phase 2

The defender will attempt to thrust while warding on both sides. Note: Fencing helmets should be worn at all times during this exercise.

Special Techniques in dei Liberi

Using the Spear with Dagger

Spear vs Spear and dagger



The Student on the left side of this plate thrusts by stepping forward with his right foot to the Master's chest, the Master in a one handed Full Iron Gate deflects the blow with the middle portion of the shaft then takes a passing step forward with his right foot and thrusts the Student with his rondel dagger.

Using Clubs Against the Spear

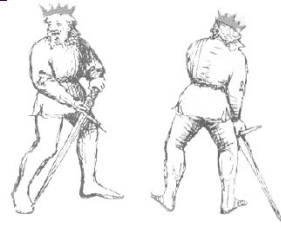
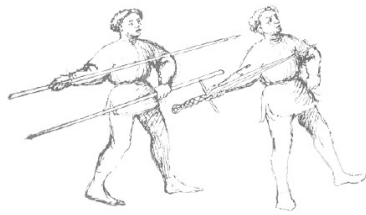
Spear vs two clubs and a dagger



The attacker takes passing step with his right foot and thrusts to the Master's body. The Master holding one club in a Posta di Donna position over his right shoulder and the other in a Full Iron Gate will throw the club which is over his shoulder and then bring up the club that is in a Full Iron Gate to ward the spear using the forte of the club, while simultaneously taking a passing step, taking out his dagger, and thrusting at his opponents chest.

Throwing the Spear

Throwing the Spear, and Defending the Throw

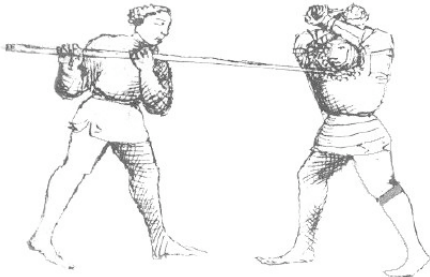


We are two Masters waiting to throw, doesn't matter if spears, arrows or swords. And we make defense with the sword and the same we'll do with the staff. With steps and returns cuts and thrusts we'll use, and even Pulicano, who I know was a good spear fighter, wouldn't gain honor against us

The attacker on the right is throwing a spear under hand. The hand is held so that the thumb is held back and the palm up. The angle of the spear is held at 30 degrees upward by resting it on the elbow of the opposite arm. The other hand holds another spear ready to throw. The same can be done with the sword. The defender using a spear (or sword as is pictured) will use a Boar's Tooth or Tail Guard and deflect the throws by coming upward with his blade.

Breaking the Spear in Harness

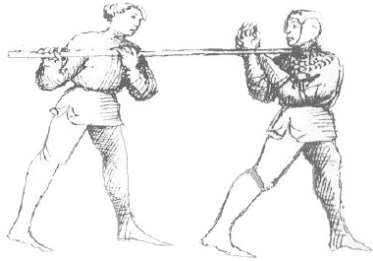
Spear vs Harness (First Variation)



If I want to get this spear off me, I'd better hit it hard from above so that I'll break the staff of your spear and then I'll feel like doing a close combat (wrestling)

The attacker on the left will thrust to the armoured opponent without stepping, the defender who is disarmed will allow the thrust to pass over his right or left shoulder. He will then raise his arms and by using his whole body and the weight of his harness to break the shaft of the spear. This is especially effective after having a thrust bounce of your coat of plates or breast plate, or if it is stuck in your harness.

Spear vs Harness (Second Variation)



With my arms, this way I'll get rid of your spear, then I'll turn and hit you, and if I can't make (do it) this way, then I'll use the technique I described above)

The attacker on the left will thrust without stepping, the defender who is disarmed will allow the thrust to pass over his right or left shoulder. He will then raise his arms to the side and link hands and by using his whole body and the weight of his harness will turn breaking the shaft of the spear by wedging it between his neck/shoulder and his arms. These techniques are especially effective after having a thrust bounce of your coat of plates or breast plate or when the spear is caught in your mail or aventail.

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