

Sword in One Hand

From the Pisani-Dossi or Novati

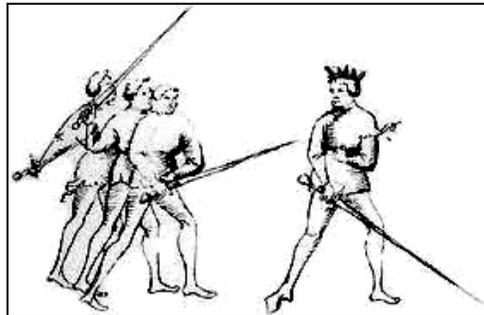
Spada a una mano or sword in one hand is one of the weapons taught within Fiore dei Liberi's four acknowledged treatises. It is shown both alone as sword in one hand fighting on foot as well as within the mounted section of the manuscripts. The sword used is the Hand and a Half Sword also known as the Bastard sword. It is the same sword Fiore uses in spada a dui mani or sword in two hands. An arming sword could also be used.

What you will read below is from the Pisani-Dossi, also referred to as Novati, titled Flos Duellatorum. Spada a una mano begins after the daga section on the bottom left panel of Carta 13A showing the image of the Master facing three attackers. It continues through Carta 14B. Within these four pages are fourteen images along with text written in poetic verse, unlike the Getty or Morgan which are written in a more descriptive style. Because of this verse style writing, the text is not as clear as the Getty on what exactly is happening leading to slightly different interpretations to both the text and images shown. This is my interpretation on what I believe Fiore might be trying to show the reader.

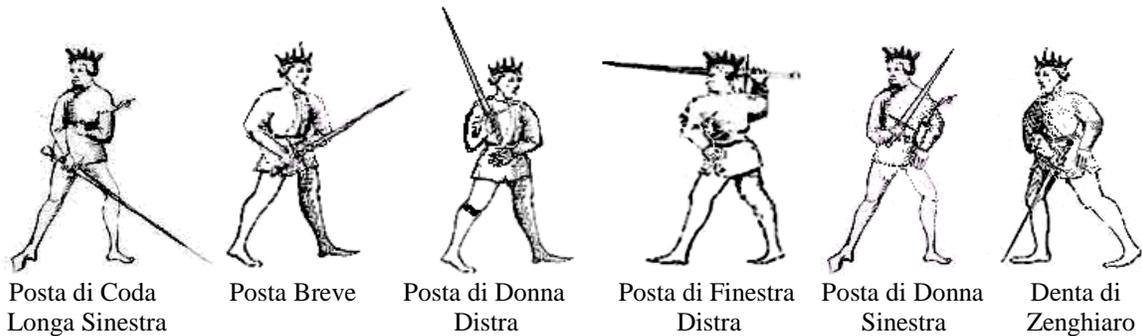
Sword in One Hand Poste

In the Pisani-Dossi treatise, there is only one posta (which is unnamed) for all of the plays in sword in one hand. The posta is shown again within the mounted section where it is named Coda Longa. So not to confuse Coda Longa on the right side, which is used in the sword with two hands, I shall call this posta Coda Longa Sinestra since the posta is positioned on the left side of the body. If we look at the mounted section of the Getty, we can learn more about Coda Longa from the left side as Fiore explains its use against both sword and lance. As translated by Tom Leoni, Fiore states on 43 Verso of the Getty treatise: *"Bear in mind that thrusts and riversi must be beaten to the outside, that is, sideways and not upward; fendendi should similarly be beaten to the outside, lifting slightly the opponent's weapon."* He continues on the next paragraph to say *"...this guard counters all blows on the mandritto and riverso side, and is usable against right or left handed opponents."* The Getty tells us how to use Coda Longa, information not present in the Pisani-Dossi.

The posta which begins the entire series of sword in one hand plays, Posta di Coda Longa Sinestra, is unique to sword in one hand and is not used in any other form. We can determine through the actions from within Fiore's manuscripts other poste can be adapted to the sword in one hand "on foot" from both the mounted sword in one hand and the sword in two hands. The image to the right has the Master against three armed swordsmen: the first in Posta Breve, the second in Posta di Donna Distra and the last, in an unnamed posta, readying to throw his sword.



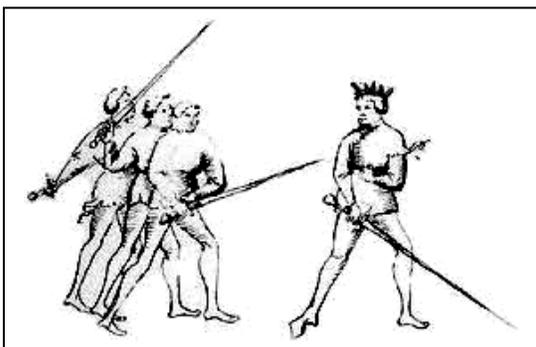
We can also add Posta di Donna Sinestra and Dente di Zenghiaro from the mounted section as well as Posta di Finestra Distra from the first play of the sword in one hand. Other sword in two hand poste can be used with one hand even though they are not shown in the manuscript. Below are examples of how the six shown poste for sword in one hand might appear.



Sword in One Hand Introduction

The following are plays for sword in one hand from my interpretation using both the images within the Pisani-Dossi and the translations available. You will see both images from Pisani-Dossi and images created by me to better demonstrate the actions of the play. While the images shown are not photographs but artist concepts, I believe there is information that Fiore wants to convey to us found within.

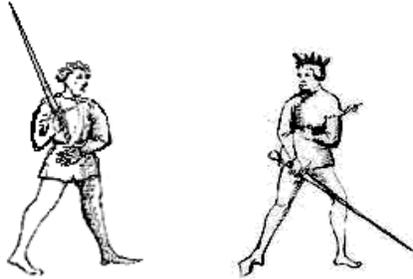
I will also include the translation of the verse which accompanies the image as shown below. The translation is from Hermes Michelini and is one of two translations that can be easily found online. Below you see the Master facing the three attackers. Translations will be in *Italic* form.



*For thrusts and cuts and strikes of the sword
My guard gives me no problem, Let them
come to me one after the other, For I want to
fight them all; And he who wants to see
parrying and wounding, Grabbing away the
sword and tying without failure, Let him see
what my scholars can do: If he doesn't find
the contrary, they have no equals.*

The beginning posta for each, the Scolaro and the Zugadore, is played the same for all but the last play. The Zugadore begins in Posta di Donna Distra. The Scolaro begins in Posta di Coda Longa Sinestra. The Zugadore attacks with a fendente mandritto or

fendente reverso with or without a step forward depending on distance. The Scolaro replies with one of the plays that follow. The image below has been modified from the earlier image, Master against three attackers, to better illustrate the beginning of the next eight plays that follow.



Posta di Donna Distra Posta di Coda Longa Sinistra

Sword in one Hand Plays

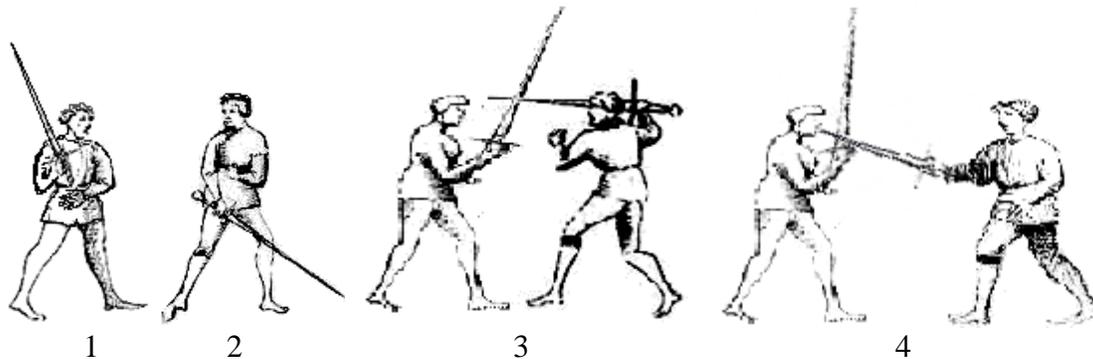
Play #1 Rebattendo with punta: We begin with the main action performed at the beginning of all but the last play with the sword in one hand. This is a rebattendo (beating aside) or a redoppiando (redirecting) movement depending on the Zugadore's attack. So in play #1 the Scolaro beats the Zugadore's sword aside then counters. See the image and translation below.



*With one step I parried with my sword
which right away entered in your chest.*

Here you see the modified image of the first play. Notice that the left hand is forward but not extended towards the Zugadore. Within the Getty image of the same play, not shown here, the left hand is beside the right or sword hand of the Zugadore to provide assistance if needed.

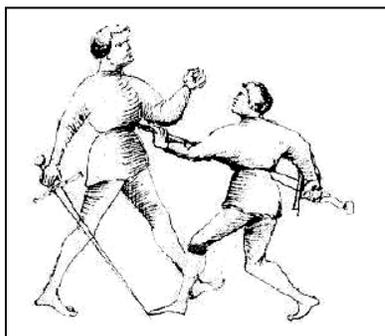
The Zugadore is in Posta di Donna Distra (Image 1). The Scolaro is in Posta di Coda Longa Sinistra (Image 2). The Zugadore attacks with a fendente from Posta di Donna Distra. The Scolaro steps passo ala traversa (rear left foot passes off line to the left) as he sweeps the sword up using a true edge sottano into Posta di Finestra Distra (Image 3). The Scolaro's sword ends up in Posta di Finestra Distra where the Scolaro finishes with a punta (thrust) to the face or body of the Zugadore (Image 4).



This play, as the others which follow, will work if the Zugadore throws either a fendente mandritto or reverso. The Zugadore's blade is either beaten aside or redirected and the thrust delivered.

Note: In the first image for sword in one hand from the Getty, Fiore says to move the front foot first with an *acressare* off line before passing the rear foot. I believe this is partly due to the position of the forward foot. The *acressare* of the right foot to the left allows the Scolaro to move further off line. An *acressare* to the right with the right foot brings the left hand into closer play. Since Pisani-Dossi does not give a descriptive narrative of the play I have included this information. Instead we can use *left ellefante* with the right foot pointing towards the Zugadore then there will not be a need to *acressare* the right foot. This will also allow ease of movement without the use of the more static foot position.

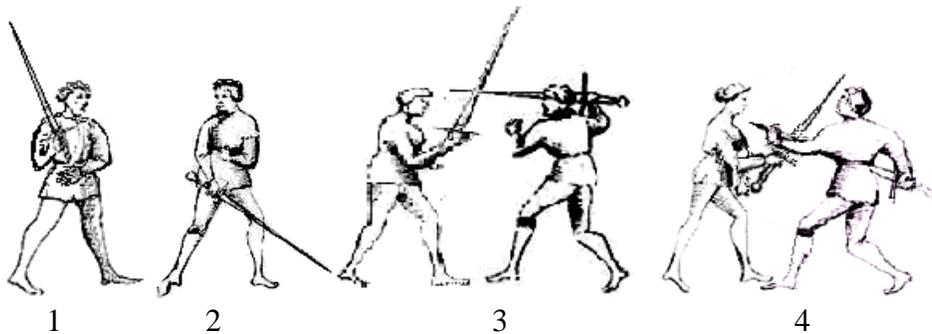
Play #2 Half sword from *incrosa*: In the original Fiore image, shown beside the *Italic* text, you see the Zugadore's sword on his right side as the Scolaro uses half sword against him. In the Getty, Fiore says this play works better in armor than out of armor. As you can see from the image the Scolaro has no cover as the left side of his body is completely open to attack thus the reason for Fiore's statement about armor. The question is how the Zugadore's sword ended up where it is shown. There are several ways this could happen. One is the Zugadore attacked with a fendente reverso. Upon striking the Scolaro's blade the Zugadore's blade continues towards the right, sliding off to the side. Another possibility is that the Scolaro was late in his response. The Zugadore's blade struck the Scolaro's blade while moving across the body. The Zugadore's sword then deflected to the right. Either way, the outcome illustrated in the image below does not satisfy Fiore's goal of controlling your opponent's weapon.



*To wound you again with my tip
My [left] hand I added to the sword.*

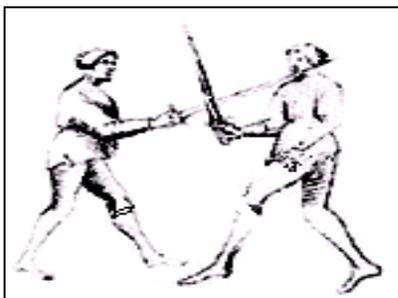
While I am sure Fiore had a good reason for showing this play as it is, I prefer better cover. Therefore I have altered the image slightly from the original as you will see on the next page.

Play #2 begins as play #1. The Zugadore is in Posta di Donna Distra (Image 1). The Scolaro is in Posta di Coda Longa Sinestra (Image 2). The Zugadore attacks with the fendente but the Zugadore's sword is not beaten completely aside by the Scolaro (Image 3). The reason it was not beaten aside is not as important as what happens next. The Scolaro, realizing he will not be able to beat the Zugadore's sword away, grabs his blade with his extended left hand, (half sword), rotating against the Zugadore's blade using the blade as cover as he thrusts the tip into the Zugadore (Image 4). An *acressare* may be taken to close the distance.



The last play in the sword in two hands *zogho largo* section "False Thrust" is similar to this play in that the Scolaro maintains cover with the Zugadore's sword as he brings the *punta* into action. This play, I believe, more closely follows the Fiore mindset than the original play shown above.

Play #3 *Rebattendo with coplo*: Here you see the original image alongside the *Italic* text. The play is simple. As with play #1, the Scolaro has gained the advantage with cover but instead of using a thrust he has opted for a *colpo*.

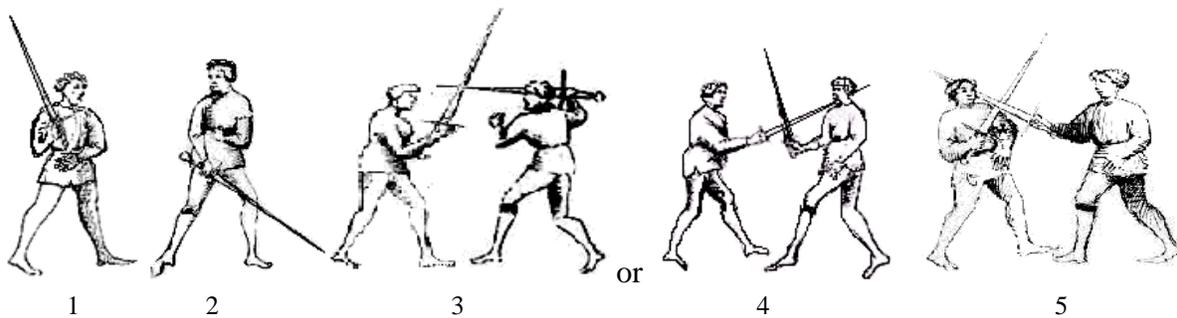


*And here I have wounded your head
with the parrying I've done so quick.*

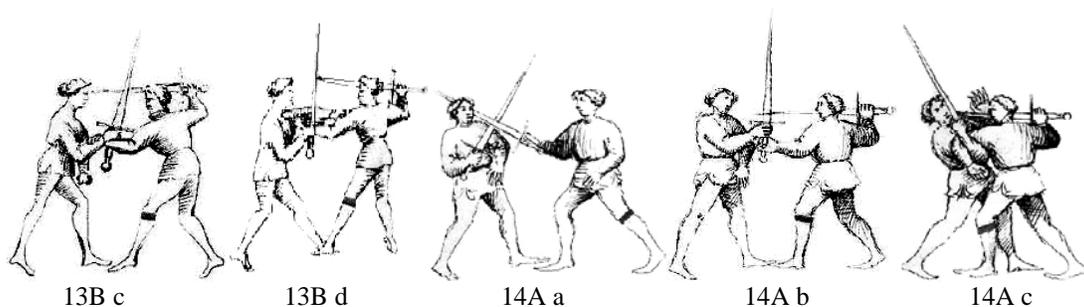
In this image the Scolaro is on the left side with the Zugadore on the right. Below the images have been reversed to conform to the rest of the images in spada a una mano.

To reach the point where a colpo can be delivered, two different approaches may be used. Because of this, Play #3 has two alternant crossings. Both begin in Coda Longa Sinestra. The first alternant crossing is performed with the true edge sottano beating the Zugadore's sword aside as in play #1. The Scolaro then performs a Volta Stabile of the sword delivering a colpo against the Zugadore. The second alternant crossing has the Scolaro delivering a false edge sottano against the Zugadore's sword beating the sword aside while moving into Posta di Donna Distra. This version works just like the fourth elephant play. The Scolaro finishes with a fendente mandritto against the Zugadore.

The Zugadore is in Posta di Donna Distra (Image 1). The Scolaro is in Coda Longa Sinestra (Image 2). The Zugadore attacks with a fendente. The Scolaro uses either a true edge sottano reverso (Image 3) or a false edge sottano reverso (Image 4) to beat the Zugadore's sword offline. The Scolaro finishes with either a volta stabile of the sword or a fendente mandritto (image 5).

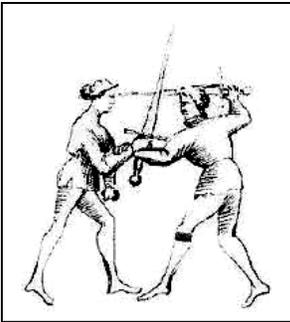


The next three plays #4, #5, and #6 begin on Carta 13B image c, and continue through Carta 14A image c. I believe the first image is the beginning of the next three plays in that the four images following image 13B c are linked to it. This is the reason for their placement which seems out of order. Let's look at the five images below.



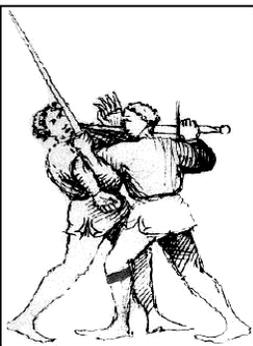
The next three plays use the left hand in three different ways to control the Zugadore or his weapon: binding, pushing and twisting. For example play #4 is a combination of 13B c and 14A c which controls the Zugadore with a middle bind. In the Getty, these two images follow each other so why not here? I think Fiore may have done this on purpose so the reader would see the correlation between 13B c and the other three images between it and 14A c. (See more in the next three plays.)

Play #4 Control with hand/middle bind: First we shall look at the beginning of play #4. You can see the image of the Scolaro with his hand wrapped over the Zugadore's wrist on the next page. The forearm is located outside the grip which reduces the amount of motion the Zugadore can move the blade. At this point the play could end but the Scolaro doesn't have complete control over his opponent. So the middle bind is applied to complete the play.



Because of the hand I put under your grip, if your sword doesn't fall to the ground, you can call me blind.

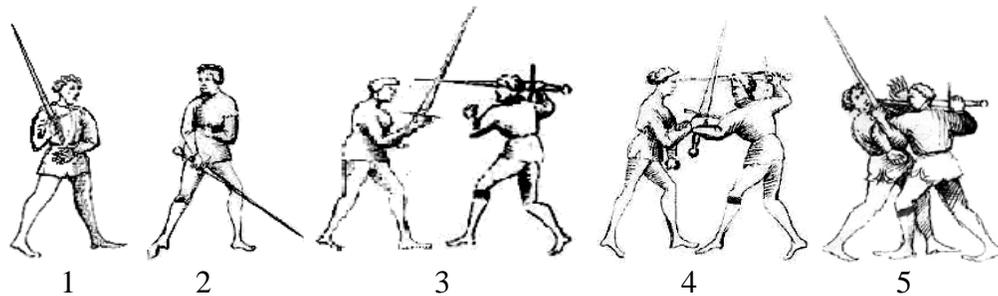
Next we see the middle bind. From this position, the Zugadore will be hard pressed to escape. In the Pisani-Dossi the middle bind is the fifth of the five images that I mentioned before. In the Getty the bind follows the "hand under grip" image as the two techniques flow together nicely. I believe the reason why it was placed four images later in the Pisani-Dossi was possibly to show how the other techniques begin with the same or similar left hand motion.



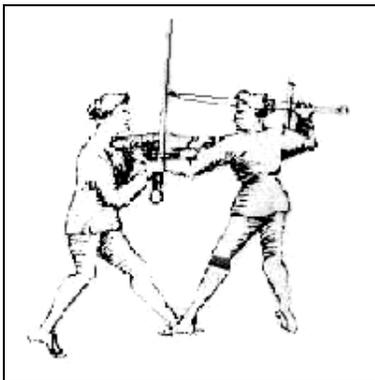
With my left arm I tied your right arm and with many wounds you'll be stricken.

Play #4 begins with the Zugadore is in Posta di Donna Distra (Image 1). The Scolaro is in Coda Longa Sinestra (Image 2). The Zugadore attacks with the fendente but the Zugadore's sword is not beaten completely aside by the Scolaro (Image 3). The Scolaro reaches out, with or without an acressare, with his left hand and slides his left hand

between the sword grip and the wrist of the Zugadore (Image 4). The left hand comes in from underneath, as per the image, and can either press or grip the Zugadore's forearm. From here the Scolaro has some control over the Zugadore's sword hand and the play could end with a punta or colpo. While I believe it is plausible to end here Fiore wants us to continue into a position where the Scolaro has better control over the Zugadore. So to finish this play, the Scolaro continues to slip the left hand in and down using a middle bind to fully control the Zugadore before delivering a punta to the face.



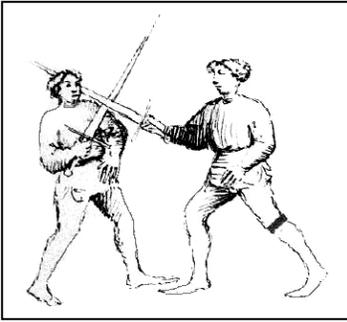
Play #5 Defending against the counter: This play comes from the two images that directly follow the Carta 13B c image. The first image found on Carta 13 d, is not included in the Getty or the Morgan, but in Florius folios 11V a, it does appear. There are several important pieces of information in this image. First is the position of the



In this manner I handle you to wound you with my tip and vindicate all my offenses and indignities.

Zugadore. It appeared he is moving forward with an *acressare* as his front foot is now even with the Scolaro's front foot. Second, the Zugadore's left hand is reaching towards the Scolaro like he's trying to grab hold of him or push him away. Third, the Scolaro has moved his weight to his rear leg. This shows, to me, that the Scolaro is starting to lean back moving his upper body out of the reach of the Zugadore. The Scolaro's left hand is not grabbing the Zugadore but appears to be pushing the Zugadore's left arm aside. I believe the translation agrees with this. "In this manner I handle you" meaning I'll keep you away from me.

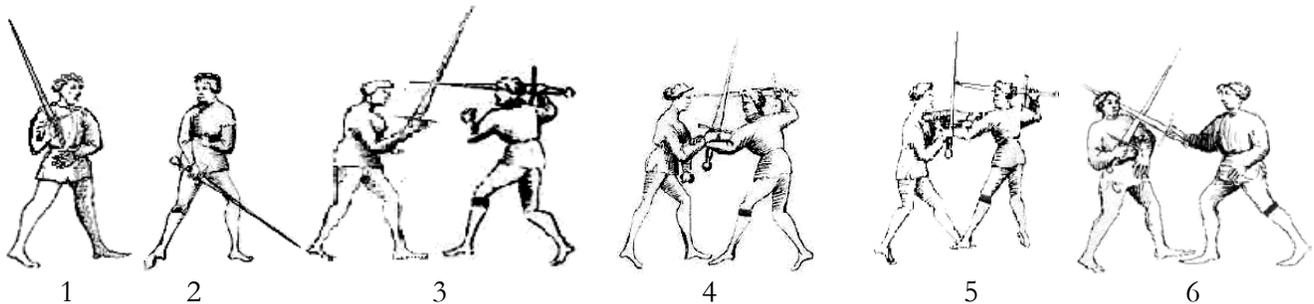
The next image from the Pisani-Dossi is on Carta 14A a. This image does appear in the Getty and Morgan but the context is completely different. This image shows two important pieces of information. First the left hand is not reaching out as it does in nearly every other image in sword in one hand.



*Your head again I have wounded without moving forward
for the good cover I was able to do*

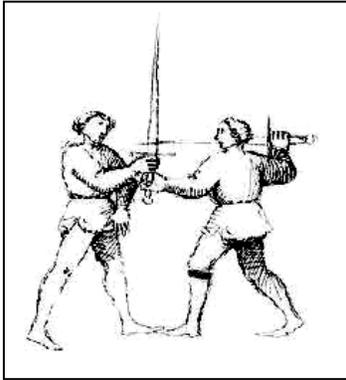
Second, the left foot is behind the right. This can be interrupted in two ways. First the Scolaro remained in place and attacked with a colpo. This is plausible, but why put it here? It would make more sense to place it closer to the beginning like the image on 13B b that is shown in play #3. Second, the Scolaro stepped back and attacked. The translation above says “without moving forward”. This could mean that he moved backwards. This same idea is performed in “slipping the leg” within the sword in two hands.

So play #5 begins with the Zugadore is in Posta di Donna Distra (Image 1). The Scolaro is in Coda Longa Sinestra (Image 2). The Zugadore attacks with the fendente but the Zugadore’s sword is not beaten completely aside by the Scolaro (Image 3). From imperfect cover the Scolaro reaches out towards the Zugadore (Image 4). But as the Scolaro reaches his hand towards the Zugadore, the Zugadore reaches out with his left hand with an aressare to grab or push away the Scolaro. The Scolaro reacts by shifting his weight back while using his left hand to push the Zugadore’s left arm aside (Image 5). The Scolaro then performs a tournare, a step back, with the left foot to gain distance as he attacks with a fendente (Image 6).



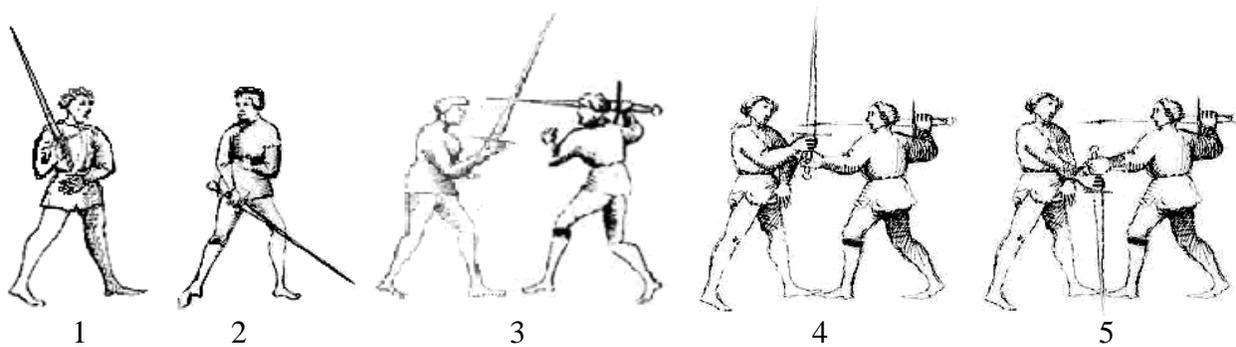
Play #6 Sword twist: In play #4 the Scolaro uses his left hand to grab hold of the Zugadore’s right or sword hand before entering a middle bind against the Zugadore. In play #5 the Scolaro uses his left hand to deflect or push away the Zugadore’s hand or arm aside before delivering a colpo. In play #6 the Scolaro uses his left hand to wrench the Zugadore’s sword from his hand, either disarming the Zugadore or injuring the wrist/hand/arm. While Fiore shows grabbing the grip in the image you may also grab the

blade just above the cross guard if the grip or pommel is not as good of a target. The key is leverage which makes twisting the sword easier.



*For the way I grabbed your sword
right away I'll take it away from your hand.*

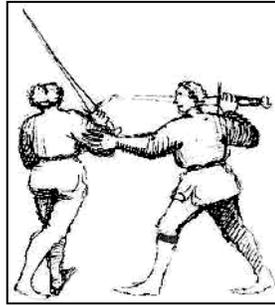
Play #6 begins with the Zugadore is in Posta di Donna Distra (Image 1). The Scolaro is in Coda Longa Sinestra (Image 2). The Zugadore attacks with the fendente but the Zugadore's sword is not beaten completely aside by the Scolaro (Image 3). The Scolaro reaches in with his left hand and grasps the exposed grip or pommel of the Zugadore's sword (Image 4). He does so with the hand turned thumb down. This is important because if the thumb is up you will not be able to twist the sword out of your opponent's hand. Once the Scolaro has the grip or pommel in hand, he twists his hand counter-clockwise rotating the Zugadore's hand against the wrist either causing the Zugadore to release the sword or rendering it useless (Image 5).



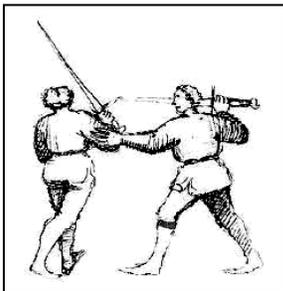
This play, I believe, come directly from the first movements in play #4. Instead of sliding the hand between the grip and wrist as in the begings of play #4 the hand simply grabs the sword handle and twists.

Below is Carta 14A d. This image shows an elbow push against the right elbow performed by the Scolaro to turn the Zugadore. Play #7 and #8 start with the elbow push then continue from there. Like the “hand under grip” position in Carta 13B c, I believe the elbow push to be the key beginning in the next two plays. While the elbow push alone can be performed and followed with a punta or colpo, the second parts of the next two plays really require the “push” to work.

Carta 14A d

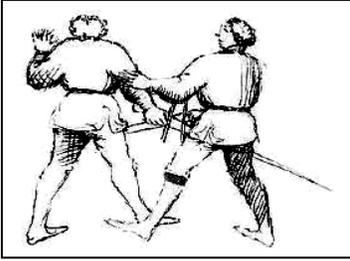


Play #7 Elbow push and throw: The elbow push appears in both sword sections of Fiore manuscript. It is an easy and effective way to manipulate your opponent. Below you see the first image of the play as shown before, Carta 14A, d. The Zugadore’s body is turned to the left making it difficult for him to return any form of blow.



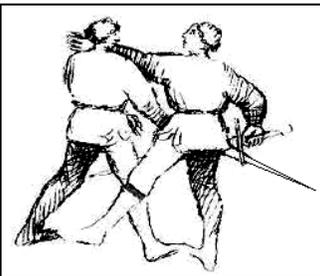
*I will turn you around with my left hand
and in that I'll strike you the hardest.*

The next image is Carta 14B b. The translation here is not very clear. From the image I believe you can see what he means. First “*And this is an easy break of the point on the ground*”. The Scolaro has pushed the Zugadore’s sword down towards the ground with his sword. I do not believe he means to actually break the Zugadore’s sword on the ground but to forcefully drive it down with control over the blade breaking the attack. The next line “*And it gets tight this way*”, I believe means you move closer which you must do to complete the third part of the play. There are three important visual aspects in the image. One is the Scolaro still maintaining control over the Zugadore’s right arm by holding the elbow. The second is that the Scolaro has placed his sword over of the Zugadore’s sword pushing it down. The cross guard is clearly shown keeping the Zugadore’s blade under control. The third is the Scolaro has begun to accessare with his left foot to move in behind the Zugadore, as we will see in the following image.



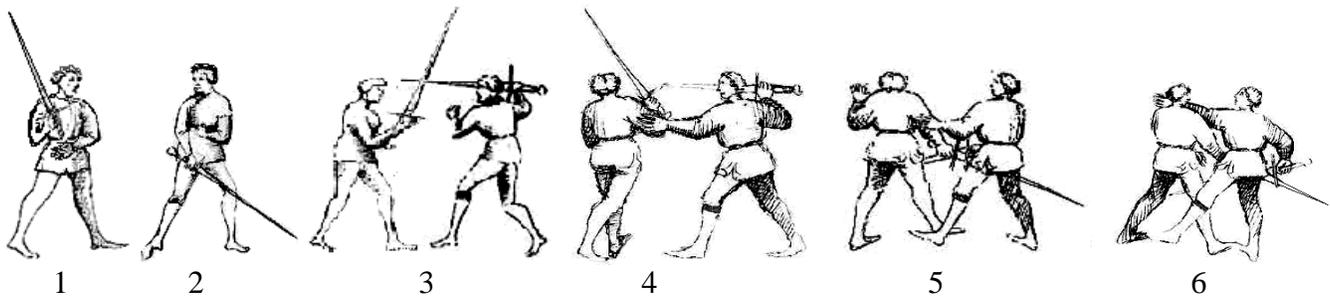
*And this is an easy break of the point on the ground.
And it gets tight this way.*

This image, 14B c, follows the previous image for a reason. It completes the movement Fiore has begun. Again, Fiore uses this technique in other parts of his treatises. He says “...I'll throw you to the ground” which is a clear indication what his has in mind to do. Look at the image. You see that the *acressare* performed before places you in the position for a “*throw*”. You also see that your sword still controls the *Zugadore*'s sword with your guard. The movement of the left hand from the right elbow to across the chest is an easy transition. From here, plant the left foot and *volta* the body.

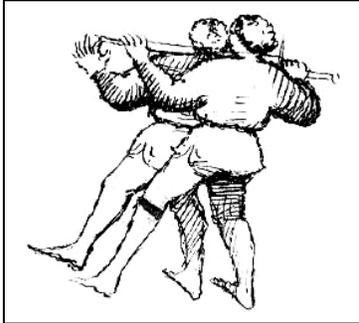


*I think that I'll throw you to the ground
and so, unarmed, I will wound you.*

Play #7 begins with the *Zugadore* is in *Posta di Donna Distra* (Image 1). The *Scolaro* is in *Coda Longa Sinestra* (Image 2). The *Zugadore* attacks with the *fendente* but the *Zugadore*'s sword is not beaten completely aside by the *Scolaro* (Image 3). The *Scolaro* reaches in towards the *Zugadore*'s right elbow and pushes it to the *Zugadore*'s left (Image 4). At this point any number of attacks could be performed but the *Scolaro* continues to press his attack. To maintain control of the *Zugadore* the *Scolaro* uses his sword to drive down, pin or bind the *Zugadore*'s weapon as he *acressares* forward with the left foot behind the *Zugadore* while still maintaining control of the right elbow or arm (Image 5). As the *Scolaro*'s left foot passes behind the *Zugadore*'s right foot he slides his left arm up in front of the chest of the *Zugadore* (Image 6). From here the *Scolaro* performs a *Volta* of the body throwing the *Zugadore* to the ground.



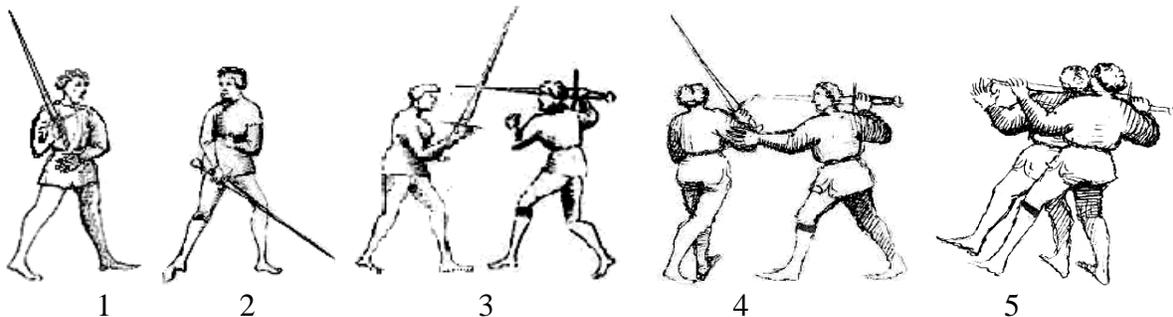
Play #8 Elbow push and cut: As in the play before, play #8 also begins with an elbow push but this time it sets up a more gruesome technique. If you look at the image below you will see what follows.



*For the turn I gave you through your elbow
I think I've cut your throat in the middle.*

After a solid elbow push has turned the Zugadore, the Scolaro cuts the throat as shown above. The image shows one method to complete the throat cut. I have added a second method as well.

Here play #8 begins with the Zugadore is in Posta di Donna Distra (Image 1). The Scolaro is in Coda Longa Sinestra (Image 2). The Zugadore attacks with the fendente but the Zugadore's sword is not beaten completely aside by the Scolaro (Image 3). Like play #7 the Zugadore is pushed around towards his left by the Scolaro (Image 4). The Scolaro brings his sword up in front of the Zugadore and cuts his throat (Image 5). This can be accomplished in two ways. The version shown below (Image 5) is performed with an *acressare* behind the Zugadore. The sword sweeps around or over the head of the Zugadore as the left hand grabs near the punta. The Scolaro delivers a guillotine like cut to the neck. The alternate version has the Scolaro using a push/pull of the sword across the front of the Zugadore's throat after the elbow push. This method is faster but offers less control over the Zugadore.

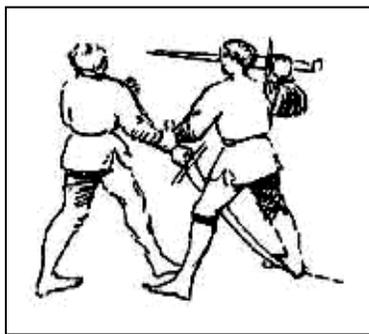


Play #9 Rebattendo vs. punta: In the last play, #9, the Zugadore attacks from a new posta. In the first image of the sword in one hand, the Master facing three villani, the first villano is standing in Posta Breve. As you can see, the Master waits in Posta Breve with the right hand low ready to launch an attack. His attack is a thrust. The Scolaro remains in Posta di Coda Longa Sinestra.



Posta Breve

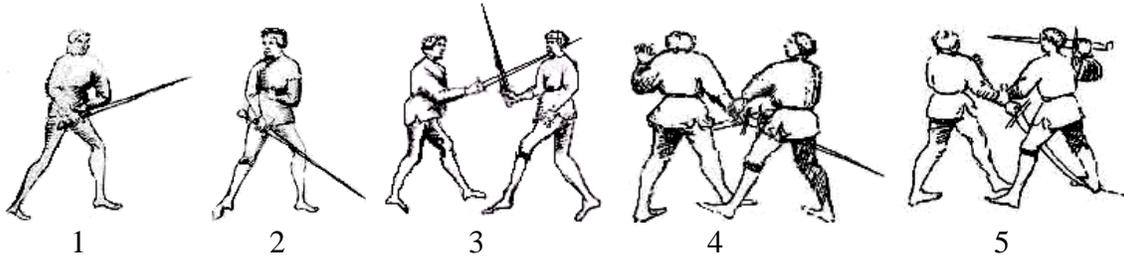
This is the last image of the sword in one hand. This is the single hand version of the Zogho Largo Play 8 as shown in the sword with two hands, “Breaking the Thrust”. The Scolaro beats the sword down using a fendente reverso, the same movement as a fendente mandritto when performed from Tutta Porta di Ferro but from the opposite side. Though the true edge is facing downwards in Coda Longa Sinestra, a quick turn of the wrist will bring the true edge into play.



*Your sword is either bent or broken
and with mine I can wound you up or down.*

Play #9 begins with the Zugadore standing in Posta Breve with one hand (Image 1). The Scolaro is in Posta di Coda Longa Sinestra (Image 2). The Zugadore attacks with a thrust. The Scolaro replies with an ala traversing step while delivering a fendente reverso beating the Zugadore’s sword aside (Image 3). The Scolaro performs an accressare, if necessary, with the left foot while grabbing the Zugadore’s right wrist to control the arm

as he steps his right foot onto the Zugadore's sword to the pin to the ground or break the tip (Image 4). Once control is established the Scolaro may deliver a punta or colpo as desired (Image 5).



As you can see I have used a modified image of Carta 14B b (Image 4) as it also applies to this play as well as play #7. It shows control over the Zugadore's sword using the left hand as well as control of his sword as the Scolaro pushes his sword down driving the Zugadore's sword into the ground.

Conclusion

While each illustration within Fiore's spade a una mano may be performed separately, it is my belief that many of the images were placed in their present locations to show how they are linked to one another to form a series of actions. I believe I have shown this possibility in the plays above. Not everyone will agree but no one can refute the effectiveness of the plays Fiore has given us in spade a una mano.

Credits

Literal Translation of Fiore de Liberi's *Flos Duellatorum* by Hermes Michelini, 2001.

Fiore de' Liberi Fior di Battaglia Second English Edition by Tom Leoni, 2012.

Fiore dei Liberi's Sword in Two Hands by Brian R Price, 2007

Masters of the Cross Sword by Brian R Price

Most images copied from various websites from original *Flos Duellatorum* sketches. Remaining images manipulated from same images for use in this document.

Sword in One Hand Plays

Play #1: Rebattendo with punta

*Thrust after beating sword aside.

*Left hand out in play to use if necessary.

Play #2: Half sword from incrosa.

*From incrosa grab your sword beyond mezza spada with your left hand and thrust.

*Left hand grip on spada should be thumb facing forward.

*This play works like “False Thrust” from the Zohgo Largo Sword in Two Hands.

Play #3: Rebattendo with coplo

*Fendente or Volta Stabile after beating sword aside.

* Practice incrosa with both true and false edges.

Play #4: Control with hand/middle bind

*From incrosa take control of Zugadore’s right hand. Follow with middle bind.

*Acessare with left foot if needed while threatening with the punta.

Play #5: Defending against counter

*From incrosa Zugadore attempt to enter stretto range. Step back and fendente.

*Use measure to defend and counter.

*Use left hand to enter incrosa with Zugadore’s left hand.

Play #6: Sword twist

*From incrosa grab Zugadore’s grip/pommel and twist.

*Left hand must be thumb down to work.

Play #7: Elbow push and throw

*From incrosa push Zugadore’s elbow while binding his sword, step behind and throw to the ground.

*Preform Volta of the body to throw. Use caution if throw is performed.

Play #8: Elbow push and cut

*From incrosa push Zugadore’s elbow while raising your sword to cut his throat or step behind and cut his throat with both hands.

Play #9: Rebattendo vs. punta

*Beat Zugadore’s thrust to ground with fendente reverso.

*Use cross guard to lock Zugadore’s blade.

*Control Zugadore’s right arm at wrist, step on blade if possible and finish with a thrust or colpo.