

APPENDIX A

NOTES FROM HISTORICAL MANUALS

Unfortunately, period discussions of horseback sword work are not as plentiful as, for example, longsword work on foot. However, there are certainly enough to give us a basic understanding of the principals involved. The Fiore and Ringeck manuscripts have been extensively studied and utilized by members of the SCA and Historical Martial Arts groups, so they can provide us with a good starting point. While there are some obvious differences between foot and mounted work, with a basic understanding of their respective systems we can explore and extrapolate from the mounted plays we do have.

Fiore de Liberi (circa 1400)

The following commentary and plays are based on the horseback section of the Fiore de Liberi manuscript. Great thanks to the Hopologia Association, which has placed facsimiles of the relevant sections online, with translation by Tom Leoni.

<http://hopologia.org/fr/fiori/f-index.html>

Note-- sword types are not specified, but it can be assumed from the illustrations as well as the rest of the Fiore manuscript that the riders in these plays are equipped with what we would call a longsword. The illustrated sword looks no different in length than the typically two handed sword we are familiar with for ground plays, but in these plays is used one handed.

Fiore specifies nine specific plays, all starting from *Coda Lunga*, with the blade held down and back on the left. Plate one discusses it as good guard against an opponent thrusting from the left (as illustrated), and also against *reversi* (cuts from the opponent's off side) and *fendenti* (overhead cuts). Basically, an all purpose guard, with the main response to an attack being to beat the opponent's sword away, taking care to do so to the side, lifting the opponent's blade.

Plate One:

Questo portar di spada se chiama posta de cada
longa. e se e molto bona contra lanza. e contra
ogni arma manuale. cauallando de la pte dritta
dello suo inimigo. Et ente bon a mente che le pte
e li colpi rueresi si debano rebatter in fora (oc) ala
trruersta e no in esto. Et li colpi de fendenti si
debano rebatter p lo simile in fora. leuando un
poco la spada dello suo inimigo. E po fare gli zogni
fazendo le figure de pente.



Anchora questa ppa guardia de cada longa
se bona quando vno gli uene in contra cu la spada
non ruersta come uene questo mio inimigo. Et sapia
che questa guardia e contra tutti colpi de parte
dritta e di pte ruersta. contra zasthu che sta o
dritta o manzino. Et qui dredo cominzano gli zogni
di cada longa che sempre rebatte p lo modo che ditto
denanzi in ppa guardia de cada longa.



Plate two discusses the first four plays

--Beat aside the blow, put point at chest/head.

--Same play, but cut at the head if he is helmetless.

--If the opponent lets his blade hang statically after being beat aside, grasp it and cut or thrust to the head.

--Disarm followed by a strike. Presumably this is like similar disarms in the Fiore ms

Plate Two



Plate Three has the next four plays. It includes a few wrestling moves, which quite obviously are beyond the scope of this program.

--Throw arm around neck after the beat aside and throw him to the ground. Not recommended in armor.

--Disarm to his grip if he turns his sword away and down.

--Strikes to leg from Coda Lunga. Not recommended against armored targets.

--For the eighth play, Fiore describes as how to defeat the various plays from Coda Lunga so far described (i.e, the standard beat aside counter). Throw the thrust or blow, then when they counter with a beat, flip your sword and pommel them to the face. Use this position as a cover as you ride by, then execute a quick *tondo* (horizontal cut) to the back of their head.

Plate Three

Questo sic lo quinto zozzo che fa la cotta
 cu lo rebatter de spada. Io gli buoto lo braccio
 colle alto uolera subito. E un' altra la spada
 lu butare senza dubito. E lo mio contruo de d'edo
 sic lo seondo zozzo. Ben che stando armado di
 farlo. no a lego.



Questo sic lo settimo zozzo che comuio
 del quinto. Lo fene chello gli fa in la guardia
 a quello d'esso. Et lo compagno fessuando
 no to mfidar in esso.



Questo sic lo sesto che uol tere la spada al co
 pagno. Et lo mantoni de la spada laltre mantoni
 leuen in ciro. della mane gli cadem fa spada p
 cetro.

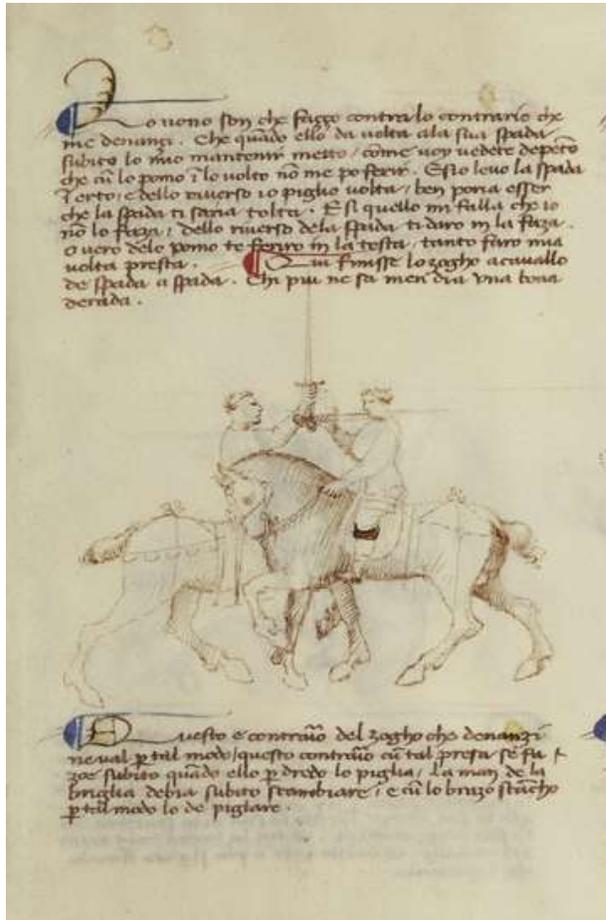


Questo sic lo ottauo zozzo che contruo de tutti
 gli zozzi che mi sono denota. e maximo altre della
 zozzi de spada attuale. e della loro manere che sono
 in guardia. Et cada lingua. Che quado li maigro o
 punta o altro colpo. e subito chi me rebateno o taglia
 e io do uolta ala mia spada. e di lo pono mo. io gli
 fiore in lo uetro. E poi passo oia la mia cotta presta
 e di lo muoto tendo gli fiore d'edo la testa.



--For the ninth and final play, Fiore describes how to defeat the eighth. As your opponent attempts to strike with the pommel, lift and block with the hilt of your sword. Fiore notes that if at this time you throw a *riverso* (offside shot), you might disarm him (presumably, your hilt lifts his up). If that doesn't work, *riverso* to the face or pommel him since "the turn of my sword will be very quick". Note that the remainder of the plate is the beginning of Fiore's horseback wrestling section.

Plate Four



That's all for sword vs sword work. Fiore also has a number of plays with lance, lance vs. sword, ground vs. horse and wrestling, all well worth looking at. But for now, to quote him "With this ends the play of mounted sword against sword. If you know any more, give me a good portion of your wisdom."

Ringeck Manuscript (circa 1420-1440)

The Ringeck manuscript is well known for its treatment of 15th century German Longsword technique. It also includes a short section on mounted combat. While lacking the beautiful illustrations of the Fiore manuscript, it lists multiple guards and a few plays.

Many of Ringeck's plays involve finishing with a thrust to the face or a wrestling take down, both understandable moves if one is facing an armored opponent. Since there is an experimental program for thrusts, these plays are included here, but for now, thrusting is not permitted in this program. Wrestling take downs are not permitted, either, and unlikely to be so. Ringeck's discussion of moves including wrestling is included here strictly for historical interest.

Notes based on the translation and commentary provided by Christian Tobler in his book German Medieval Swordsmanship (Chivalry Bookshelf, 2001)

Guards

First Guard: Sword angled across the saddle, resting on left arm. Preparatory position for the *Taschenbau* ("pouch strike")

Second Guard: Right hand held "high above head", with point dropped to threaten the face of the opponent. Note the similarity to the foot combat guard of Ochs, as well as the opponent's position in the first image in plate one of the Fiore horseback section.

Third Guard: Sword held at right side by leg with the point rising up to threaten the opponent. Note similarity to *Pflug*.

Fourth Guard: Place the sword pommel on saddlebow, with the point upwards as with the third guard.

Fifth Guard Hold the sword across the saddle, grasping the middle of the blade with the left hand. This is the basic horseback halfsword guard. Tobler notes that while there are no Ringeck plays utilizing this guard, other contemporary German manuals use this guard in plays that hook the opponent's neck as he rides by. Such maneuvers are outside the scope of this program.

Mounted Nebenhut: Like the fourth guard, but drop the tip so the sword is "at ease", resting against the right leg.

Plays

--*Taschenbau:* Start in First Guard. Ride right to right. In response to a cut or thrust to the face, displace with the strong of your sword while rotating to Third Guard and

thrusting from below to his face. If he displaces the thrust by moving “high up” with his sword, change the rotation to a cut at his left hands or reins. Ringeck adds that if you desire to distress his horse, you can cut at his right leg to send the horse running. Distressing horses is a prohibited maneuver in this program.

--A variant of *Taschenbau* that finishes with the hilt of the sword against the opponent’s neck, grasping the pommel from behind to pull the opponent off his horse.

--If your point is displaced in *Taschenbau*, grasp his right hand with your left and thrust to his face.

--*Oberhau* (overhead strike). If your sword is displaced from an *oberhau*, use the momentum to rotate your pommel to his face. Ringeck finishes from here to grasping the helmet and throwing the opponent..

--If your *Oberhau* is displaced by a *Zwerchau*, move up high with your sword and thrust to his face (a basic *winden* move from German longsword). If he rides past you, move your right arm over his right, pressing his arm against you and take his sword.

--From *Nebenhut*, as the opponent approaches, raise your sword into *Langen Ort* (Long Point, basically pointed straight at the opponent).

--If from the previous play, the opponent displaces the thrust, wind up to the Second Guard and hang the point at his face. If he continues to ride at you, thrust to his face.

Note: the last play was referred to as “the first play in *Nebenhut*” in the manuscript, but unfortunately, the mounted combat section ends abruptly here.

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