



HMA in the SCA

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Adapting for the Corona Virus



My original intent for this class was to pass around copies of the period manuals and do some very slow speed practical work-throughs of a couple of plays with wooden waster swords.

Instead, I'll be talking about the books and using some pre-recorded YouTube videos that I had previously made to demonstrate how we interpret and apply the period text.



What is HMA?

HMA = Historic Martial Arts (an E for European is sometimes added: HEMA)

In the SCA it refers to an arts & sciences discipline that studies historic combat techniques via surviving period documentation - particularly manuals.

- Atlantia's (in person) University events typically have 10 or so HMA classes at each session
- Atlantia and Society have deputy A&S officers for HMA
- Atlantia has awarded all three levels of A&S recognition for HMA studies

Activities can include translation, physical workthroughs of the positions and actions, and adaptation to SCA combat forms.

Swords are the most common weapons, but manuals for grappling, daggers, spears, scythes, etc. also exist.

HMA in *The Princess Bride*



Inigo Montoya: You are using Bonetti's Defense against me, ah?

Man in Black: I thought it fitting considering the rocky terrain.

Inigo: Naturally, you must suspect me to attack with Capa Ferro*?

Man in Black: Naturally, but I find that Thibault cancels out Capa Ferro. Don't you?

Inigo: Unless the enemy has studied his Agrippa... which I have.

*Capo Ferro is the correct spelling



Today's Topics

Survey of European manuals in SCA period

Example plates from various manuals

Interpretation Demonstration & Exercise - YouTube due to current Corona Virus

Links/Rabbit Holes for more information



Terminology

Plate - An image and descriptive text from a period manual

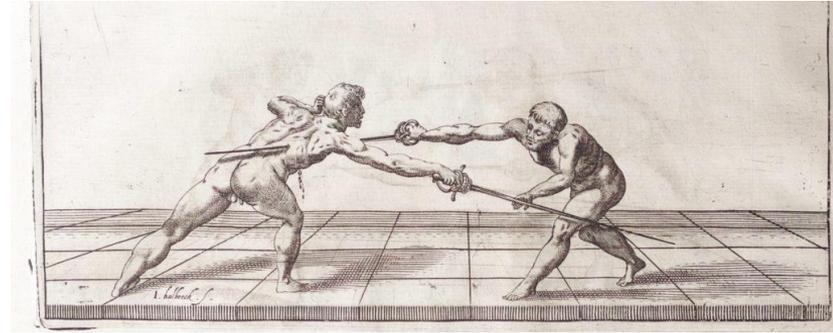
Play - A set of combat movements by one or more people

Guard/Ward/Posta - A, possibly temporary, position of body and sword

Master - The teacher in a play who, generally, wins the exchange

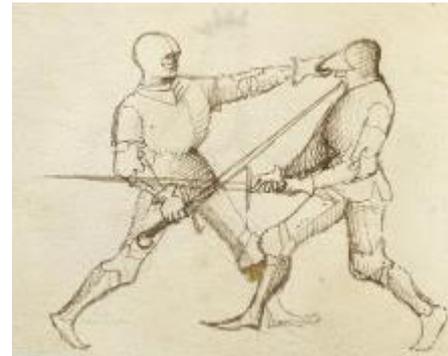
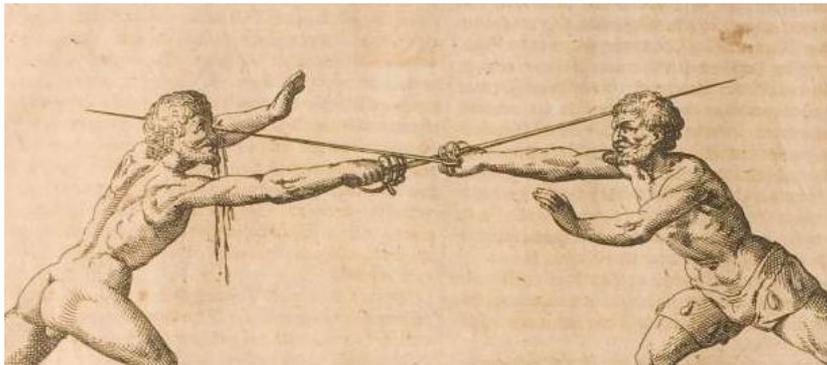


Commonalities



These are combat manuals, describing how to kill people

Many contain grappling and dirty pool attacks that are not SCA legal



I.33 (one-thirty-three)

Oldest known European fight manual from ~1320

Describes sword and buckler technique

German origin, text is mostly in Latin with some German terms used

Currently at the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, UK



Fiore dei Liberi

Oldest complete European combat system ~**1409**

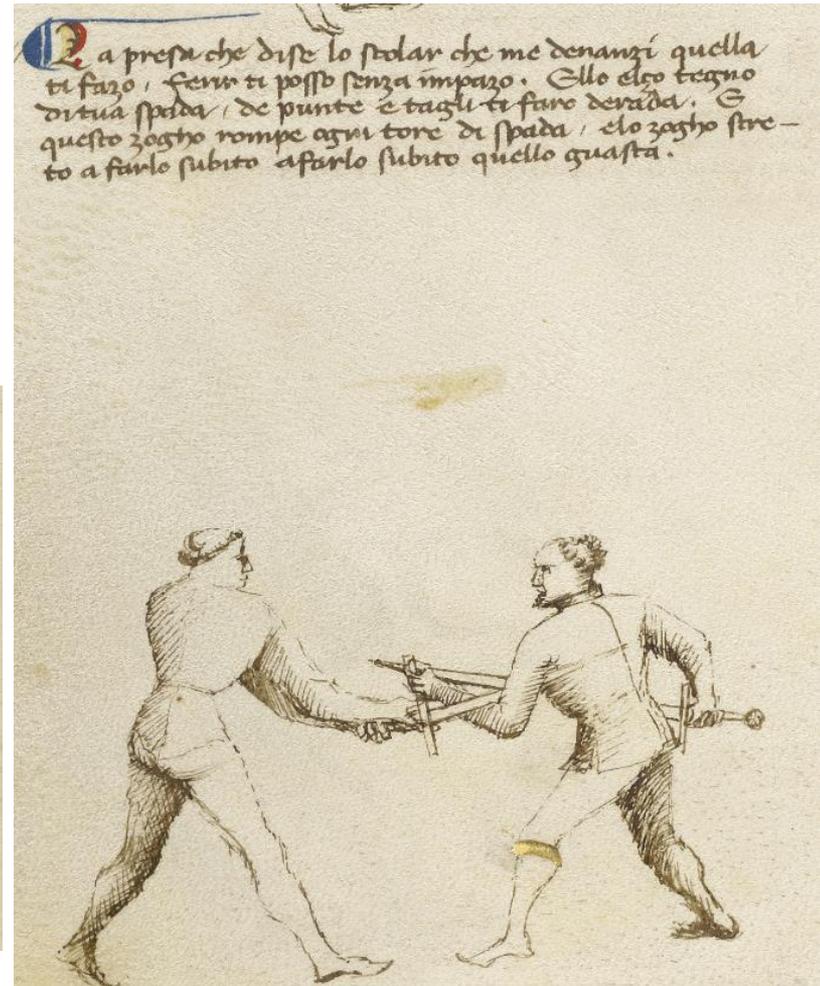
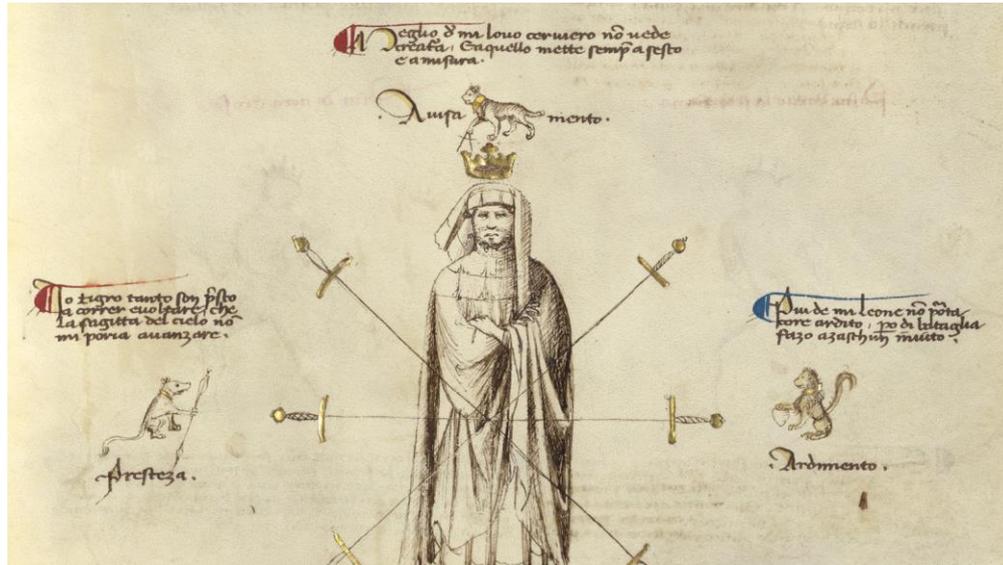
Builds a consistent system moving from wrestling to dagger, one handed sword, two handed sword, pike, and mounted combat

Style is reactive: wait for opponent to commit, then step in, interrupt his motion, steal the initiative and make him pay for his foolishness.

4 copies survive, 3 in Medieval Italian, 1 in Latin, all are slightly different

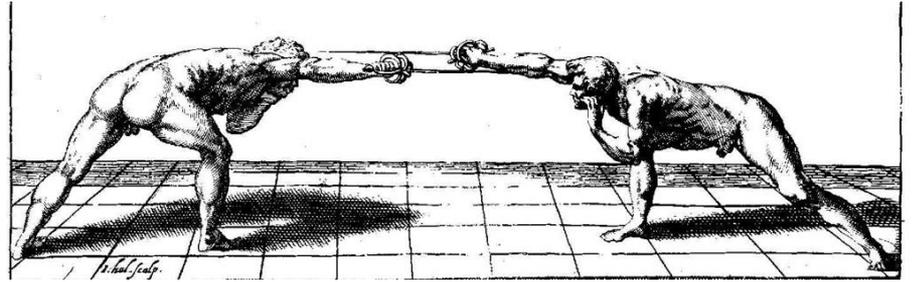


Pages from Fiore 1409





Italian Rapier



Agrippa (1553), Di Grassi (1570, 1594 in English), Capo Ferro (1610), Fabris (1606), Giganti (1606), etc.

Techniques are focused on thrusts with mostly linear movement

Generally common themes focused on controlling the “line” so that your sword can strike in a single “tempo” and theirs cannot

Some contradictory advice for the exact same reason: e.g. do/do not maintain contact with their sword because it gives you/them critical information

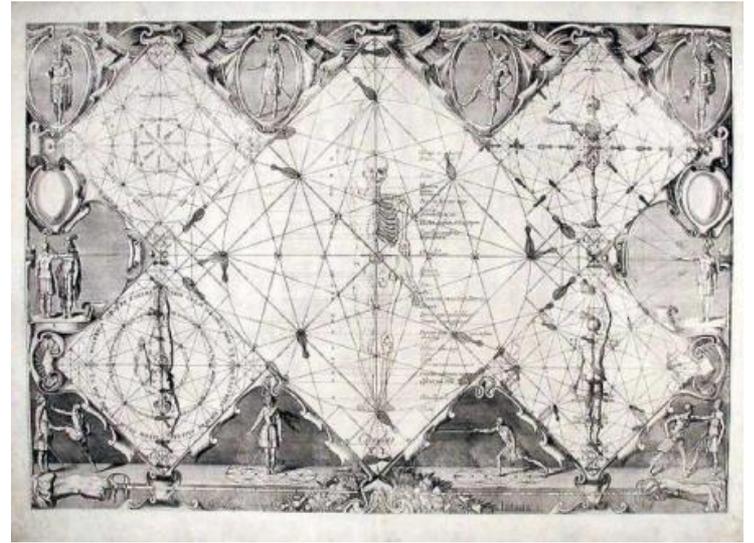
Spanish Rapier

La Verdadera Destreza - "The True Art"

Girard Thibault (Dutch) *Academie de l'Espee* (1628)

Movement takes place on a circle, whose radius is your blade length.

- Discourages movement inline toward opponent
- Lots of offline movement to work angles
- Stances tend to vertical, turned to the side, with sword extended.



English Swordsmanship

Lots of Italian rapier in Elizabethan England

- Di Grassi's book was published in English in 1594
- Vincentio Saviolo's manual published in English in 1595
- Rocco Bonetti and Saviolo ran schools in England
- Di Grassi, Saviolo, and Silver collected as facsimiles (bad photocopies of period typesetting and spelling) in "Three Elizabethan fencing manuals", 1972

George Silver (1599) railed against the rapier as an unsafe weapon, preferring the backsword and more cuts in your technique than were typical with rapier.

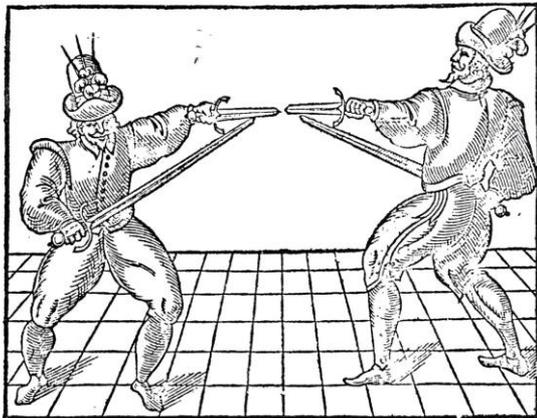


Di Grassi's Low Ward

A page from Saviolo 1595

Vincentio Saviolo his Practise.

THE THYRDE DAYES
*Discourse, of Rapier and
Dagger.*



I Know not certainly, whether it hath been my earnest desire to encounter you, that raifde me earlier this morning than my accustomed houre, or to be asser-tained of some doubtfull questions, which yester-night were proposed by some gentlemen and my selfe, in dis-course

Understanding a period plate

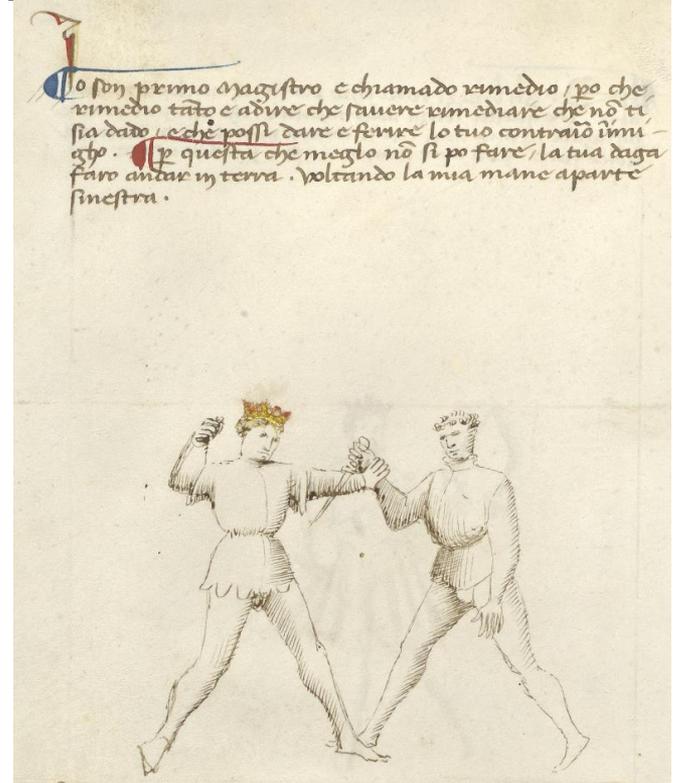
Example 1

Fiore - Getty p 10 Verso

“I am the first master and I am called Remedy, because I know how to remedy so well that you cannot harm me whereas I on the contrary can strike you and hurt you. And I cannot make a better play against you than to make your dagger go to the ground, by turning my hand to the left.”

Translation by Colin Hatcher

This is the first of a very long series of dagger plays.



Understanding a period plate

Example 1

First Remedy Master of the Dagger on

LearnFiore.org's Youtube channel

<https://youtu.be/5pN6H08rUnA>



Understanding a period plate

Example 2

Fiore - Getty p 26 Recto

“This play is named “The Peasant’s Strike” and you do it like this: take a narrow stance with your left foot forward, and wait for the Peasant to attack first with his sword. When he launches his attack, immediately advance your left foot to the left off the line, and step diagonally off line to the left with your right foot, receiving his strike in the middle of your sword. Now let his sword slide off yours to the ground, and then quickly counter-attack with a downward strike to his head or arms, or a thrust into his chest as you see drawn in the next picture. This is also a good play if you are fighting sword versus poleaxe, or against a heavy or light staff.”

Translation by Colin Hatcher



Understanding a period plate

Example 2

The Peasant's Blow from LearnFiore.org

<https://youtu.be/XBzDAkUCLAI>

Baron Aiden and I at an Atlantian
University class demonstrating the blow





Using HMA in SCA Combat



Grappling is generally not allowed

Armored fighters cannot, in general, grab their own or their opponent's blade

Still, period techniques with very minor adaptations can be very effective in SCA sport combat

- Most successful Atlantian rapier fighters are using techniques from 1600 Italian rapier manuals (most are intentional, some are not).
- I have used Fiore to great effect on both the rapier and cut and thrust fields

Using HMA in SCA Combat

Fiore - Getty p 33 Recto

“As the opponent makes his thrust, the Master or his student who is waiting in one of these guards (or posts) keeps his body low and steps offline crossing the opponent's sword, with his point high into the opponent's face or chest, and with the hilt of his sword kept low, as shown here.”

Translation by Colin Hatcher



Play on LearnFiore.org channel
<https://youtu.be/11jvtrC68Ow>

Using HMA in SCA Combat

A full speed application at the 2018 Atlantia C&T Championship finals.

The pictures show the end of the play with me (on the left) transitioning from Low Serpent to High Serpent as I deliver the thrust to his throat.





Lots of Links to Click On

General:

- Great HMA Wiki: wiktenauer.com

Fiore:

- Tir-y-Don Fiore Study Group: LearnFiore.org
- Getty: <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/1443/unknown-fiore-furlan-dei-liberi-da-premariacco-il-fior-di-battaglia-italian-about-1410/>
- Morgain: <http://www.themorgan.org/collection/renaissance-fighting-manual/thumbs>



Lots of Links to click on

I.33:

- Downloadable from <https://collections.royalarmouries.org/archive/rac-archive-391002.html>
- Cleaned up images at [https://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Walpurgis_Fechtbuch_\(MS_I.33\)](https://wiktenauer.com/wiki/Walpurgis_Fechtbuch_(MS_I.33))

Books

- Bibliography: http://dragoonguards.org/?page_id=137
- (I own most of these and you can look through them at our house)

HMA Classes

- [Atlantia University](#)
- Tir-y-Don weekly practice “[A Master a Month](#)”