

Fiore dei Liberi: *Flos Duellatorum*, 1410 (Pisani-Dossi, F. Novati, Bergamo, 1902)

5 *spada longa in arme* - armoured longsword

5.0 *poste* (guards)

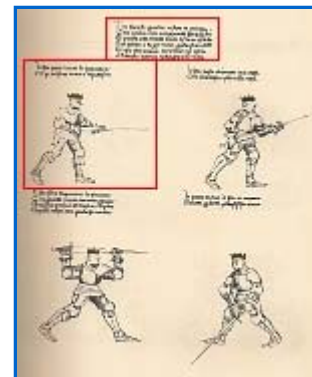
5.0.1 *posta breve, la serpentina* (guard of the short serpent)



*Io son posta breue, la serpentina,
Che per passare arme la punta fina*

**I am the guard of the short serpent,
A sharp point which will pass through armour**

Synopsis: The name *la serpentina* implies that the movement is comprised of quick thrusts and cuts, such as is the movement observed of a striking snake or serpent. The thrust is delivered and re-coiled immediately for a follow-up strike and possibly repeated again, somewhat like jabs. The verse comments on the effectiveness of thrusting against armour.



Practical Application: Liberi describes this efficient guard with only a single purpose in mind, it is quick/fast. It is clear that the principle purpose of this

guard position is to deploy thrusts which may or may not deliver a mortal wound, but provides the opportunity of the thruster to engage in close-quarters by pressing in due to the distractions to the opponent caused by his/her receiving a quick succession of thrusts. Should the thrusting point be planted well on the opponent as he/she steps forward ("sticky point"), the thruster can then easily terminate the engagement with a forceful thrust, or engage with cross-swords and therefore, close-quarters.

This same guard can also be used as an entry into close-quarters combat by simply transitioning to the **guard of the true cross** by placing the blade against the opponent's blade resulting in the crossing of swords. This is accomplished by arching outwards and forward of the right hand pivoting against the left hand gripping on the blade (**guard of the bastard cross**) and stepping forward to press in onto the opponent. It is expected that this manner of movement is deployed when the opportunity presents itself which may have been setup previously with the principle purpose of *posta breue, la serpentina*.

Secondly, because of the grip on the blade, the foible is very fast and can deliver quick cuts in a circular motion in order to attempt to hook the opponent's blade effectively setting it aside quickly followed immediately with a thrust or engage in *giocco stretto*.

Grip: For the purpose of clarity, the grip configuration is explicitly described. **Right hand:** palm down, thumb forward (inside); **Left hand:** palm up, thumb forward (outside). This is consistent with the illustration in the Getty's version. This *posta* leads to an easy transition to the *posta di vera croce* in terms of *posta* to *posta* transitions.

The following text on the same plate is an introduction to these plates found in the treatise, which is indicated in the figure above right. The following text appears on the first page of the longsword portion of the treatise, and is included here for interest purposes including its translation.

*Noy semo sei guardie in lato de armiçar,
Che quella arte integrament sauemo far,
E questa arte conclude in tuto la drita ueritade,
Aça, spada e daga mete in grande stremidade,
E qui parlaremo como l'arte pó uenir,
Magistri e scolari lo farano a non mentir*

We are the six general guards for armoured combat,
Which we know the skills of this art completely,
And these arts end in all true methods,
Axe, sword and dagger in great expertise,
And here we will explain a little how this art works,
The masters and students will do so without falsehood

example applications/similarities

Author	Year	Reference Page
Anonymous, Cod 11093	c1440	pflug
Anonymous, Gladiatoria	1425-1475	pflug - variation
Hans Talhoffer, Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre 1467	1467	gewappnete ort

Fiore dei Liberi: *Flos Duellatorum*, 1410 (Pisani-Dossi, F. Novati, Bergamo, 1902)

5 *spada longa in arme* - armoured longsword

5.0 *poste* (guards)

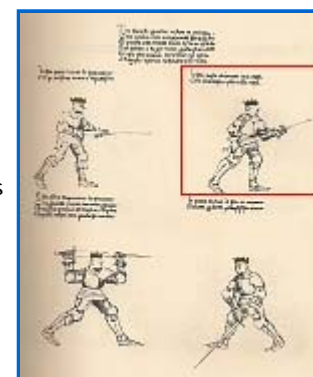
5.0.2 *posta di vera croce* (guard of the true cross)



*Io son posta chiamata uera croce,
Che a mi tagli e pūte niente nose*

**I am the guard called the true cross,
Because cuts and thrusts can do no harm to me**

Synopsis: Liberi calls this the **guard of the true cross** which obviously has religious overtones relating to the crucifix implying that this guard is an exceptional or the definitive one to protect the wielder from any harm.



Practical Application:

There are two readily apparent attributes of such a guard. The first is the wielder's orientation with respect to its counterpart guard, the *posta breve serpentina*. The wielder has the sword pommel oriented towards the opponent and

his stance is such that the body is held sideways, reducing the breadth of a visible target for thrusting from the perspective of the opponent's *posta breve serpentina*.

The second attribute is the stance itself, which is illustrated with the wielder's weight bearing down on the leading left foot while the trailing foot is positioned on the toes ready to leap into action in order to parry against an inbound thrust or cut. The orientation of the sword enables the wielder to quickly hook the inbound thrust with the pommel, and while hooked, rotate the sword around the hook bringing the point of the sword bearing upwards on the attacker concurrently for a thrust to the face or throat while the wielder is rotating his body on the trailing right foot and passing forward with the left towards the attacker. If the attack is a cut, a similar rotation of the body and footwork will ensue, however, the inbound cut will be parried with the wielder's blade quite possibly resulting in cross-weapons and therefore, close-quarters or possibly deploy a thrust to the face or throat. The angle of the parry would be deployed with the pommel around the hip area or raised overhead to parry a fendente cut from above and thrusting to the face or throat. It is of interest that the next illustration would be a *posta serpentina soprano*.

Grip: For the purpose of clarity, the grip configuration is explicitly described. **Right hand:** palm down, thumb forward (inside); **Left hand:** palm up and to the right, thumb forward (outside). The Getty's version is somewhat unclear. The orientation of the forearm and wrist suggests that the thumb is forward as is illustrated in the PD version, but it is not entirely conclusive. With the thumb forward and palm up offers a smooth transition from the *posta breve la serpentina* to the *posta de vera croce*. Secondly, this *posta* offers a smooth and easy transition in terms of grip placement, to the *posta serpentina lo soprano* with a simple change in the orientation of the body, and chambering the longsword further back, i.e. *posta breve, la serpentina* ==> *posta di vera croce* ==> *posta sagittaria*.

example applications/similarities

Author	Year	Reference Page
Anonymous, Cod 11093	c1440	pflug
Anonymous, Gladiatoria	1425-1475	pflug - variation
Hans Talhoffer, Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre 1467	1467	gewappnete ort

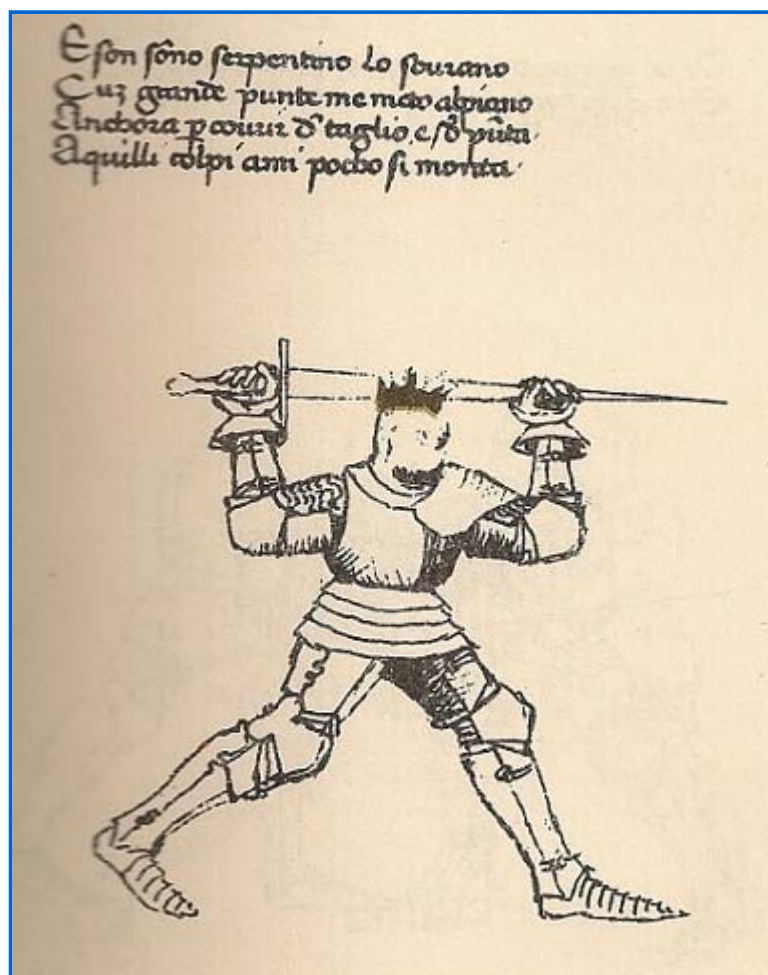
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Fiore dei Liberi: *Flos Duellatorum*, 1410 (Pisani-Dossi, F. Novati, Bergamo, 1902)

5 *spada longa in arme* - armoured longsword

5.0 *poste* (guards)

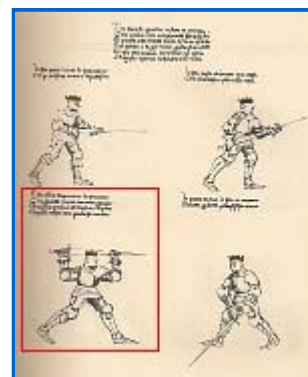
5.0.3 *posta serpentina lo soprano* (guard of the high serpent)



*E' sono serpentino lo soprano,
Cum grande punte me meto al piano;
Anchora per courir de taglio e de punta
Aquilli colpi a mi pocho si monta*

**I am the high serpent,
With my great point, I put horizontal;
Anchored to cover for cutting and for
thrusting
I strike smartly from my little mountain**

Synopsis: The reference to the serpent is found again with this *posta* and therefore implies a quick type of action similar to the *posta breve serpentina* described earlier. The second pair of phrases seems to indicate that the deployment of the action from the **high serpent** may be done



from a *stabile* or "anchored" stance. This indicates that the deployment is the time of the hand resulting in very quick movement of the hands in order to parry or re-direct an inbound strike. Given the raised sword above the head, this creates the "mountain" from which the wielder can smartly attack his opponent from above.

Practical Application: This is a classic 1/2-sword technique found throughout the German *fechtbücher*. The most outstanding feature with this particular *posta* illustration is the fact that the blade appears to be positioned behind the head (a similar observation of the Getty's version of the same *posta*). In practice, this has been observed as most difficult to deploy given some restrictions imposed by armour in terms of flexibility of the arms, and of course, the crown of the helm being in the way. However, despite the problem of positioning the blade behind the head, the principle manœuvre from this *posta* is the thrusting downwards of either point or pommel into an opening, typically between the hand and sword of the opponent and secondarily, parrying aside a *fendente* or *colpi mezzana* and driving in the point to the opponent.

Grip: For the purpose of clarity, the grip configuration is explicitly described. **Right hand:** palm up, thumb forward (inside); **Left hand:** palm up, thumb inside. This is consistent with the illustration in the Getty's version. This *posta* offers easy transition (in terms of grip placement) to the *posta di croce bastarda*.

example applications/similarities

Author	Year	Reference Page
Anonymous	1425-1475	1/2-sword - Gladiatoria
Anonymous	1450	Codex Vindobonensis B 11093
Anonymous	1450	Codex Vindobonensis B 11093
Anonymous	1450	Codex Vindobonensis B 11093
Anonymous	c1500	Goliath

The Getty's text...

*Sompno serpentino son lo soprano e ben armado grande punte zetto sotto mano
che son in erto e torno al piano.
Una forte punta ti buterò cum lo passare.
Ella è mia arte che la so ben fare.
Di toi tagli non me curo niente tanto so in l'arte che de grande punte io ti darò
gran parte.*

Sonno serpentino lo soprano

**/sompno/ I am the high serpent and is a good large armoured point /zetto/
within reach of you because I am steep and can return level.
A strong point with a pass to your throw.
Because to you, my abilities are made well.
Such that you can never cut me in this art because I lead with a great point
towards you.**

I am the high serpent

Fiore dei Liberi: *Flos Duellatorum*, 1410 (Pisani-Dossi, F. Novati, Bergamo, 1902)

5 *spada longa in arme* - armoured longsword

5.0 *poste* (guards)

5.0.4 *mezza porta di ferro* (middle iron door)



*In porta de fero io son la meçana,
A butar grande punte sempre son uana*

I am the middle in the iron door,
I always cast aside your thrown large point

Synopsis: Liberi

indicated in his treatise that most, if not all techniques illustrated can be accomplished in armour. This definitely applies to the **middle iron door**. The verse indicates, similarly as the unarmoured **middle iron door** that an inbound thrust is easily

parried aside. The verses do not elaborate on the footwork and therefore, the assumption is that the same principles of the unarmoured **middle iron door** apply with the armoured **middle iron door** as well.



Practical Application: The illustration depicted for this guard is exactly similar to the unarmoured **middle iron door** except, of course, for the armour. Therefore, the deployment of this guard will follow the same technical manoeuvres as described earlier, however, further examination is warranted given the Getty's text below.

The greatest emphasis is placed on the thrusting capabilities of this guard inconjunction with moving off-line. The piercing of the ribs while stepping off-line with the left foot while twisting the blade ensures that a cover is in place (false-edge upwards) and plant a thrust into the ribs or any other upper target on the torso. This manoeuvre makes for a very good entry into 1/2-sword or *spada mezana* for *giocco*

stretto fighting provided the point acquires its "sticky" target, i.e. the point is planted somewhere in the upper body (the need to actually pierce the ribs is not critical), and then move forward, grasping the blade of the sword, and engage in 1/2-sword with the opponent, and all the while, force is continuously applied behind the sword ensuring its "stickiness".

example applications/similarities

Author	Year	Reference Page
Fiore de' Liberi	1410	Mezza porta di ferro (Half Iron Gate - unarmoured)
Fiore de' Liberi	1410	Denti di cinghiale (Guard of Boar's Tooth)
Hans Talhoffer	1467	(tafel 2) Twisted Cut and Low Guard
Hans Talhoffer	1467	(tafel 16) Guard of the Iron Door (low guard)
Giacomo di Grassi	1594	The Low Ward
Giacomo di Grassi	1594	(13.3) Of the Defense of the Low Ward at Two Hand Sword

The Getty's text...

Porta di ferro la mezana son chiamata perché in arme e senza e fazo le punte forte, e passarò fora d'strada cum lo pe' stancho e te meterò una punta in lo volto, overo che cum la punta e cum lo taglio enfra li toi brazzi à intrado per modo che io te meterò in ligadura mezana in quella ch'è denanzi penta e nomenadad.

Porta de ferro la mezana

I am called the middle iron door because in armour and without I can make strong thrusts, and I step aside with my left foot to pierce you as I turn the point, in so much so as, with the point or with the edge enters there, through your ribs, as an entry point, in such a fashion as I can put you in a half binding hold, in which can give excruciating pain and {nomenadad}.

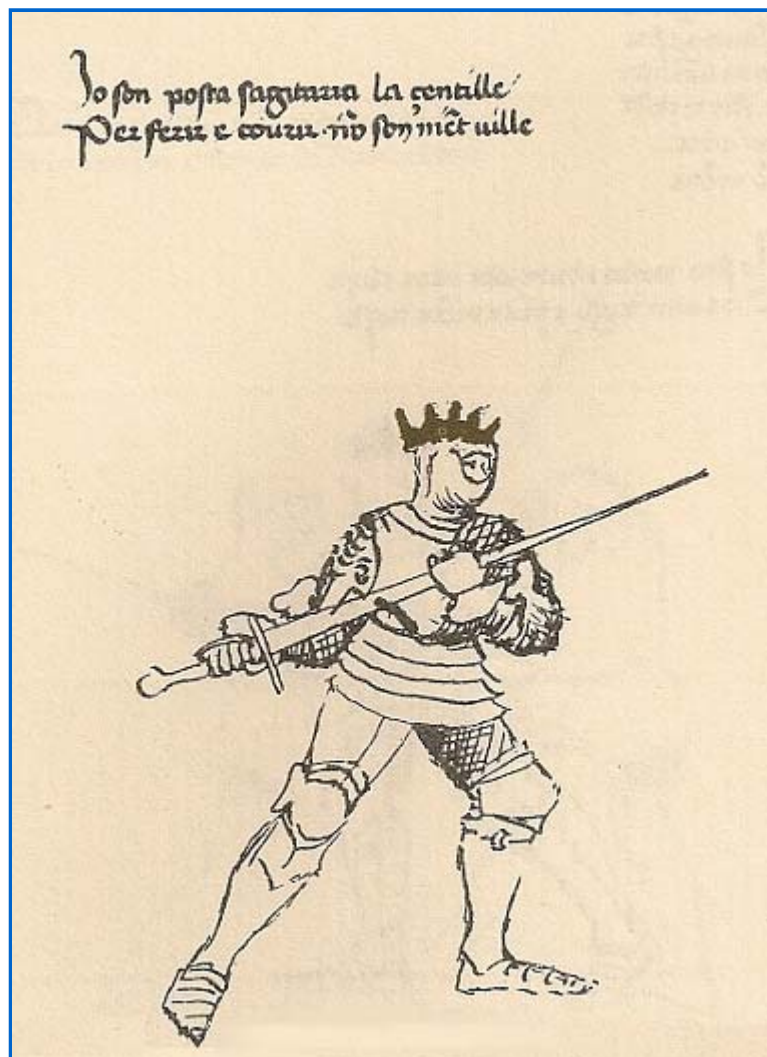
Middle iron door

Fiore dei Liberi: *Flos Duellatorum*, 1410 (Pisani-Dossi, F. Novati, Bergamo, 1902)

5 *spada longa in arme* - armoured longsword

5.0 *poste* (guards)

5.0.5 *posta sagittaria* (guard of the archer)



*Io son posta sagittaria la çentille,
Per ferir e courir non son nient uille*

**I am the archer guard of the sentinel,
I will not cowardly run and nothing will injure me**

Synopsis: Given the reference to "sagittarius" or the archer, it brings to mind images of a great archer, able to inflict wounds at distance from a stationary position, hence the "sentinel". Given the tone of the verses with references to a standing



offensive/defensive position of an archer, the second verse implies that this guard may be an excellent defensive position resulting in its deployment of thrusting from a relatively stationary position.

Practical Application: The German references below are only remotely similar to this particular guard stance. The German manner of gripping the blade is with an over-hand grip as opposed to the under-hand grip as illustrated by Liberi. The Getty's version of the text appears to indicate some movement with respect to throwing the "great thrust". However, in these verses, assuming the **sentinel** is correct, would imply that thrusts would be delivered without the need to take a passing step forward. Taking the archer into consideration, and working through this physically,

the initial targeting with the left hand is released as the right hand with force throws the thrust against the opponent. This manner of thrust would be immediately followed by close-quarters combat. However, there are no other references by Liberi to simply throwing the sword and possibly releasing it and therefore, is inconsistent with his armoured approach. Through the *posta*'s application in practice, the **great thrust** is entirely viable and can be devastating when delivered with force. This same *posta* can easily deploy a parry against an inbound thrust similar to that of the *posta breve serpentina*.

In practice, it was thought that the deployment of such a guard was the "last ditched effort", however, the text implies that this may in fact, be an opening to *giocco stretto* in which the wielder would immediately open with the **guard of the archer**, and throw the sword towards his adversary, and rush in to engage in close quarters combat. The thrown sword makes for a very effective distraction, providing a moment in time for the wielder to move in quickly. The injury incurred by the receiver is a "bonus".

Grip: For the purpose of clarity, the grip configuration is explicitly described. **Right hand:** palm down, thumb forward (inside); **Left hand:** palm up, thumb forward (outside). This is consistent with the illustration in the Getty's version.

example applications/similarities

Author	Year	Reference Page
Anonymous, Cod 11093	c1550	plate 11
Anonymous, Cod 11093	c1550	plate 23

The Getty's text...

*Posta sagittaria son per nome chiamata,
grandi punte e' zetto passando fora de strada.
E si me ven contra colpo o taglio io fazzo bona coverta e subito io fiero lo mio
contrario.
Questa si é mia arte in la qual non svario.*

Posta Sagittaria

The name of this is called guard of the archer,
I pierce you through from this way with a large quiet point.
And I overcome your strike or cut, I make a good cover (protection) for myself
and immediately I injure my adversary.
This one is my art for the likes of which there are not many.

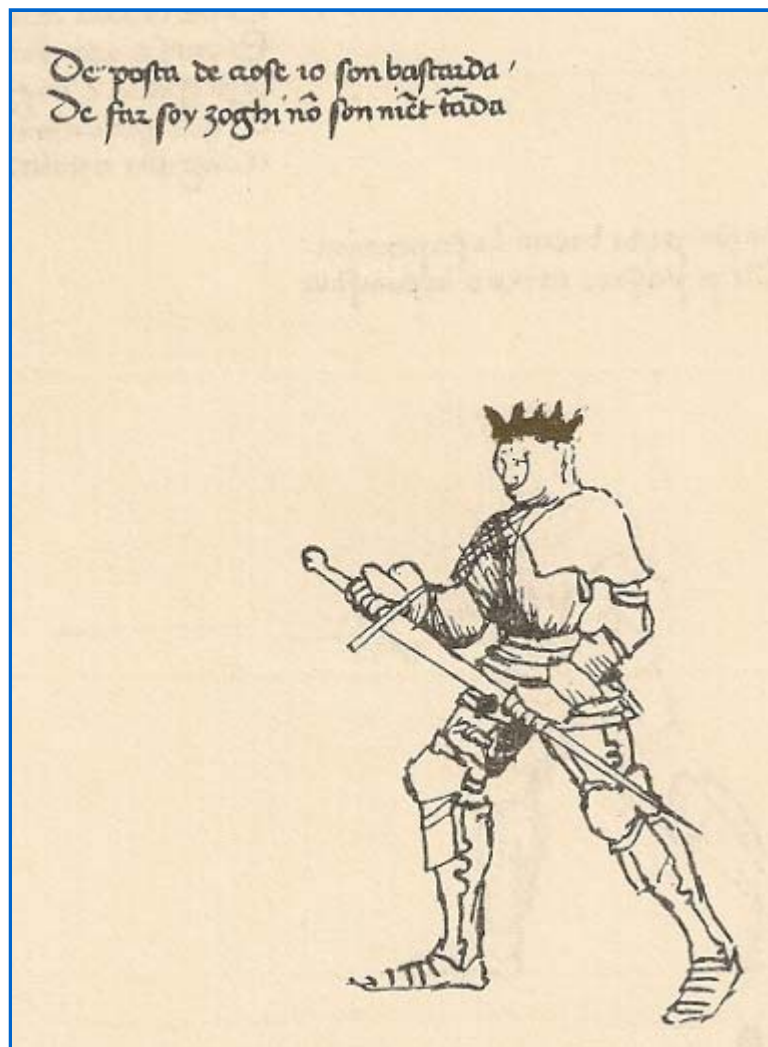
Guard of the archer

Fiore dei Liberi: *Flos Duellatorum*, 1410 (Pisani-Dossi, F. Novati, Bergamo, 1902)

5 *spada longa in arme* - armoured longsword

5.0 *poste* (guards)

5.0.6 *posta di croce bastarda* (guard of the bastard cross)



*De posta de crose io son bastarda,
De far soy zoghi non son nient tarda*

I am the guard of the bastard cross,
There is nothing slow when I make this play

Synopsis: Liberi makes reference to the "bastard cross" which probably is meant to describe that the "business end" of the sword with respect to the opponent is not the point, but rather the pommel and hence, the "bastard". However, there are significant



difference between the grip on the blade (the *posta di vera croce* has the left grip with palm up, the *posta de crose bastarda*, the left grip is oriented with the palm down) and the orientation of the body with respect to the opponent. Liberi writes that the *posta de crose bastarda* is "from" or possibly derived from the *posta di vera croce* which may indicate that one can change quickly from one *posta* to the next *posta* with little effort. The second phrase sets the context for the *posta*, in which the *posta* is intended to be deployed very quickly and which implies that the effectiveness of the deployment is dependent upon how close the wielder is to his opponent. The closer the better, and while the body and pommel is oriented towards the opponent, it is less threatening than a point which may result in closing in towards

the opponent in order to deploy quickly.

Practical Application: Despite the potential threat from the companion *posta sagittaria*, the opportunity with this guard is that it is relatively quick, and should the opponent throw his sword, the guard can deflect the thrown sword with the pommel end of the sword, or the forte very quickly. This action then presents to the opponent the pointed end of the sword as a result of the torso rotating in order to parry the in-bound sword. This places the opponent in a less than desirable position. This *posta* is also quite effective in countering the other *posta* in which it hunts for the holes found in the opponent's stance, i.e. those areas called the "crotch" between the hand grip and the sword. The *posta* can deploy an offensive by plunging the pommel of the sword into these holes, if from below, then lift up and around to disarm or tie up, or from below, pull down and around for a disarm or tie up. In any of these tie-up cases, the point of the sword can easily and effectively come into play.

Grip: For the purpose of clarity, the grip configuration is explicitly described.

example applications/similarities

Author	Year	Reference Page
Anonymous, Gladiatoria	1425-1475	pommel hook
Anonymous, Codex 11093	c1450	guard of the bastard cross
Anonymous, Codex 11093	c1450	bastard cross parry
Anonymous, Codex 11093	c1450	another guard of the bastard cross

The Getty's text...

*Posta di crose bastarda son di vera crose,
zò che la pò fare volontiera lo fazzo.
Bone coverte e punte e tagli fazo per usança sempre schivando gli colpi fora di
strada.
E di miei colpi fazzo grandissima derada.*

Posta de crose bastarda

I am the guard of the bastard cross from the true cross,
know that I do this stance easily.
Well covered (well guarded) I stab and cut to make you bleed always avoiding
(deflecting) the blows out of step.
And with my blows, I do significant damage.

Guard of the bastard cross