

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

1 abrazare - grappling

1.0 quatro poste - four guards

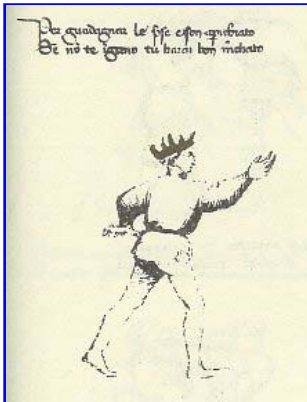
1.0.1 posta longa  (long guard)

Synopsis: Liberi writes that the foundation of any and all fighting systems are based on grappling, introducing the archetype *poste* or guards from which all grappling would originate. If the student does not learn and internalize these archetype guards, and understand their meaning and function, the ability to deploy proper holds will never materialize and therefore, he/she will not learn the fighting art well and never become proficient in the art. We begin the exploration of *abrazare* with the examination of the four archetype *poste*, by reproducing or transcribing the original script into modern font for reference, followed by a translation of the text against a chalk coloured background. He writes:

Principiamo prima in nome de deio e de meser santorso de lo abraçare a pe a guadagnare le prese. Le prese non son guadagnade se le non son cum auantaço. Pero noy .my. magistri cerchamo prese auantaçade chomo positi uedere dipento.

As was in the beginning, first in the name of God and of Saint George of grappling on foot we earn/gain holds. The holds are not earned/gained without some some preceding effort. Because none of my masters learn the holds before learning the guards.

Fiore's statement implies that *abrazare* is as "old" as God and He is/was the beginning and everything begins with God as is *abrazare* with respect to the *armizare* or the art, and therefore, critical to learning the art. He further emphasizes that the foundations of *abrazare* are the guards, and are illustrated and commented as the four *poste* described on the same page of the PD treatise.



*Per guadagnar le prese e' son aparichiato,
Se non te ingano, tu harai bon merchatò.*

**To gain/earn the hold I am ready/prepared,
If I cannot deceive you, you'll have the better bargain.**

Interpretation: Fiore writes in the first line of the couplet that in order to deploy a successful "prese" or hold, one must be prepared or setup properly which expanded means that the proper stance must be achieved and good footwork practiced. The second line of the couplet appears to convey that should the master be unable to deceive the *zugadore* by concealing the true intent of the *posta longa* which is to make a hold (an offensive manœuvre) or strike, potentially far more dangerous to the *zugadore* than a simple defensive guard, the *zugadore* may be able to turn this situation around by exploiting the out-stretched arm creating an advantage for him/herself and thus, having the better deal in the exchange with the master. [Click on the images view a larger image of the same.](#)



Application: The *posta longa* is achieved by the extension of the right or left arm, with the respective leg forward (right leg forward accompanying the right arm extended and vice versa). The forward leg will bear most of the weight of the combatant, with the trailing foot on the ball of the foot and heel slightly raised off the floor. The long guard can be deployed to throw the *zugadore* provided the *prese* has been properly obtained, or the extended arm may have been the result of a strike to the face or other sensitive part of the *zugadore*.

example applications

Section	Play	Carta
<i>abrazare</i>	3rd play: <i>dente di zengchiar</i> ==> <i>posta longa</i>	[4 B]
<i>abrazare</i>	4th play: shoulder grab ==> hip pull and face push	[4 B]
<i>daga</i>	1st play: first Remedy Master	[6 A]

Translation and interpretation by David M. Cvet. For queries on Liberi's 1410 treatise (Pisani-Dossi version), contact [David M. Cvet](#) or [AEMMA](#).

Images used in this presentation were sourced directly from: Pisani-Dossi MS: F. Novati, *Flos duellatorum: Il Fior di battaglia di maestro Fiore dei Liberi da Premariacco* (Bergamo, 1902) Audio provided by Nina Scott-Stoddart (www.ninascottstoddart.com).

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1 *abrazare* - grappling

1.0 *quatro poste* - four guards

1.0.2 *dente di zengchiar* (tooth of the boar)



*De pugna mutacon cercho de fare
E cum quella in tera ti faro andare.*

**In a change of the fight I seek to make
with this one and I'll force you to the ground.**

Interpretation: The first line of the couplet indicates that the state of the engagement or fight has changed somehow and with this change, an alternative must be considered (sought). In any physical fight, the dynamics change continuously and the fighter must continuously monitor the situation and seek out opportunities of advantage in order to incapacitate the *zugadore*. With proper footwork and guard stance, the master is prepared to deploy whatever is necessary to address whatever the changes are occurring during the fight. The second line of the couplet, the master indicates that the change from the previous *posta* to the *dente di zengchiar* given the some recognized queue¹ has presented itself (e.g. an arm bar (straight arm), or to explosively create an arm bar from the *dente di zengchiar* to throw the *zugadore*). [Click on the images view a larger image of the same.](#)



Application: The *dente di zengchiar* or "tooth of the boar / boar's tooth" illustrates the end position of an explosive movement in which the right arm is thrust upwards with the elbow bent approx 90° (upper arm parallel to the floor, the forearm perpendicular), which may have originated from an "iron gate". This action involves the use of the hips as the source of the power (similar to taking a golf swing or baseball bat), and the other arm swinging downwards so that the entire movement has a "scissor" like action. The footwork is also involved as when one swings a bat, there is some slight pivoting of the feet to increase the power of the output.

The name of the *posta* probably referring to the boar as the name aptly describes the manner of defense by the boar when attacked which are vigorous upward thrusts of its tusks into the under belly of an attacking predator or competitive boar.

example applications

Section	Play	Carta
<i>abrazare</i>	1st play: shoulder grab ==> <i>dente di zengchiar</i>	[4 B]
<i>abrazare</i>	2nd play: arm bar ==> <i>dente di zengchiar</i>	[4 B]

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1 *abrazare* - grappling

1.0 *quatro poste* - four guards

1.0.3 *porta de ferro* (iron gate)



*Se per incegno non me uinceray zo acto
Che cum mia forza ti faro male e peco.*

**I know that with cunning you will not beat me
that with my strength I will hurt you and break you.**

Interpretation: The first line of the couplet, assuming the translation is relatively good, implies that the *porta de ferro* offers the best defensive strategy from which to either defend against most attacks or deploy an offense thwarting any attempts on the master. The second line of the couplet appears to imply that a successful manœuvre from the *porta de ferro* can only be done with physical "strength", however, this can also be interpreted as the "strength" of all combat attributes which would come to bear when deploying an offense or creating a defense. Fiore discusses the four great warrior attributes, and *fortitudo* is only one of the four attributes, and there are no cases in which a single attribute becomes the only attribute in any given situation. All attributes come to bear, but one or more are greater while others are less, but none are ever excluded. [Click on the images view a larger image of the same.](#)

Application: The *porta de ferro* illustrated depicts the master with both hands positioned approximately waist height, hands relaxed, left leg forward and right leg trailing. The footing can also be reversed. The weight is distributed over the left leg and the trailing foot on the ball of the foot with heel slightly raised, legs slightly bent and back straight creating a posture which is

prepared to leap into action, whether offensive or defensive.



example applications

Section	Play	Carta

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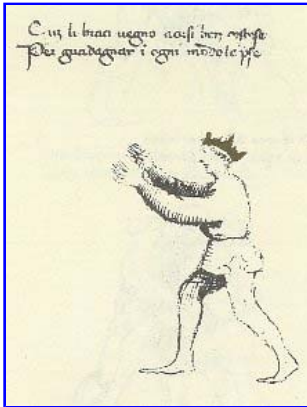
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1 *abrazare* - grappling

1.0 *quatro poste* - four guards

1.0.4 *posta frontale* (frontal guard)



*Cum li braci uegno acusi ben destese
Per guadagnar in ogni modo le prese.*

**I come well skilled with the arms forward
I will win for every manner of prese/hold.**

Interpretation: The first line of the couplet appears to indicate that *posta frontale* is highly regarded and formidable being able to neutralize most holds deployed against the master with the arms raised in the position depicted. This is followed with the second line of the couplet which supports the initial sentiment that this *posta* would be able to defeat most if not all attempts on the master. [Click on the images view a larger image of the same.](#)

Application: The *posta frontale* is illustrated opposite to the *porta de ferro* implying that when facing a *zugadore* who is in a *porta de ferro*, the *posta frontale* may be the most appropriate counter *posta*. In fact, to achieve this *poste* from the *porta de ferro*, one simply raises both hands to the position as illustrated with both hands raised to approximately the height of the shoulders. Right leg is forward and left is trailing. The arms should not be fully extended (straightened), permitting some play in the elbows in order to adjust distance and to maintain strength when deploying this guard.



example applications

Section	Play	Carta

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