

# TECHNICAL MANUAL

## SPADA E BROCCHERE Sword & Buckler

a cura di Graziano Galvani  
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### Lesson n° 1: **The Guards**

Le lezioni qui esposte si basano sull'analisi delle fonti:

**OPERA NOVA - Antonio Manciolino - MDXXXI**

DEL MODO DI COMBATTERE ET  
SCHERMIRE DI TUTTE LE  
SORTE ARMI DIVISO  
IN SEI LIBRI.

LIBRO PRIMO.



E R C H E La ualorosa arte dell'Ar-  
 mi recca di continuo seco per sicureza  
 sua le schisfenoli guardie, che dieci fano  
 se sono, et ha uenti diuersi nomi, utile  
 ho giudicato il narrar di quelle nel pri-  
 miero loco, che s'innanzi apprese fieno, spatiose, et age-  
 uole Campo, anzi maggior luce al rimanente dell'opra  
 daranno. Quinci adunque con il diuino aiuto toremo il  
 principio.

## PREMISE

*The study of the Renaissance Scrimia can be conducted so deeply that the related technique deserves to be faithfully revived. Among the Renaissance Masters, Antonio Manciolino is certainly one who left precise and refined lessons of Scrimia. In this first technical manual we will deal with two basic lessons: the guards and blows.*

## A BRIEF LOOK AT MANCIOLINO'S WORK

The manuscript "*Opera Nova*" written by Antonio Manciolino, was printed in Venice in 1531. The work is divided into six books, which, after the introduction, treat the "*Modo di combattere et schermire di tutte le sorte armi*"<sup>1</sup>.



The first book is about the guards, the second deals with "*tre maestrevoli giochi over assalti*"<sup>2</sup> of sword and buckler. The "*strette di mezza spada*" (half-sword playing) are part of the third book and go on in the fourth with the "*gioco di due spade*" and "*gioco di spada sola*" (paired and single-sword playing).

The "*gioco di spada e cappa*" (cloak and sword playing) and "*gioco di spada (...) con il pugnale nella manca*" (sword and dagger playing) are the subjects of the fifth

book, which ends with the "*gioco di spada e rotella*" (sword and round shield playing).

The treatise ends with the sixth book which is about the "*gioco di rotella e partegiana*" (dagger and round shield playing), "*partegiana sola*" (single dagger), and combats with "*spiedo, ronca and lance*" (stecke, gisarme and lancier).



<sup>1</sup> Antonio Manciolino "Opera Nova" 1531 Venezia: "The manner of fighting and fencing with arms of every sort"

<sup>2</sup> IBI: "three masterful playings or assaults"



## SIDE SWORD

The *spada da lato* (side sword, which was carried hanging at the belt along the left side) is certainly the queen of the swords in the Renaissance time. This weapon marks decisively the development of Scrimia.



Piero della Francesca – XV sec.

The side sword is a natural evolution of the medieval sword, perpetuating its double-edged light blade with a thrusting and tapering tip. Most of these blades have a lozenge or lens-shaped section with single or multiple fullers, which lighten the weight of the sword.

Generically side swords were of two kinds: riding and footed swords.

The first, more suitable for cutting rather than thrusting, has a broader tallone and the length of its blade ranges from 100 to 130 cm. The second has a narrower and lighter blade which is long from 110 to 120 cm. The weight ranges from 1200 to 1500 gr. Blades with higher weights and measures can be rarely found.

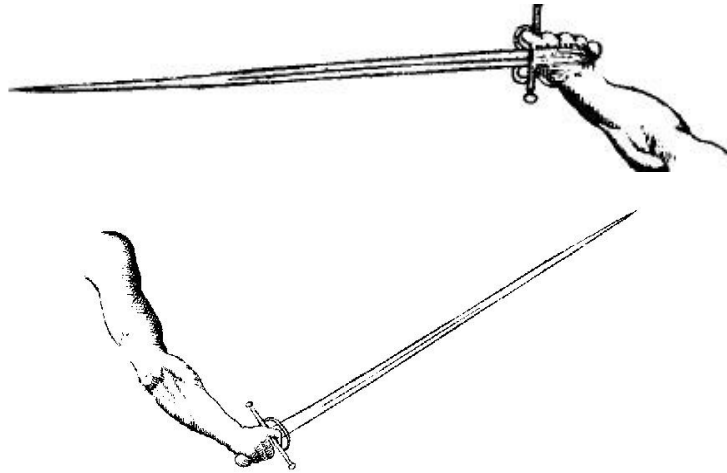


The side sword becomes popular as the weapon of civil duels, when the advancing target (the armed hand) undergoes many attacks. In order to protect this hand, the sword adopts guards with a finger ring on the right edge; then the hilt gradually develops with double finger rings, side rings and knuckle bars. Thus the compound-hilt allows a new one-hand grip fingering the ricasso.





## BUCKLER

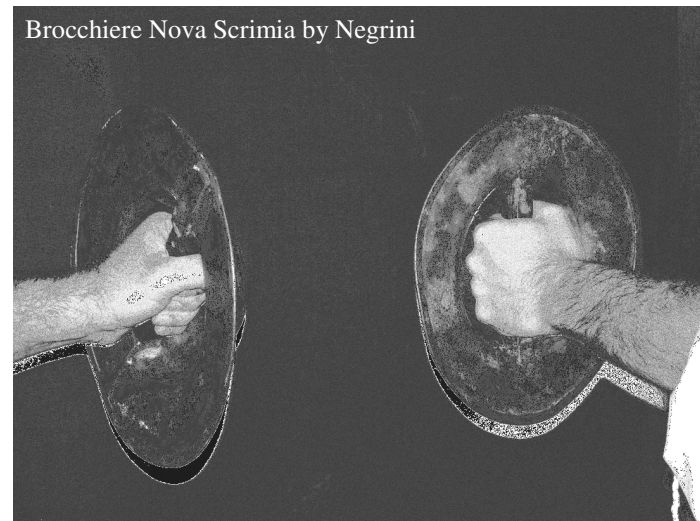


At the end of the XVIth century the side sword becomes the rapier, which continues evolving its guard in order to better protect the hand.

The small buckler is a little round hand-shield made of three parts: *penna*, *coppola/umbone* and *manico* (edge, centre and handle).

The *penna* is a round iron plate, suitably weighty, with a rebated border meant to increase its capacity to endure blows.

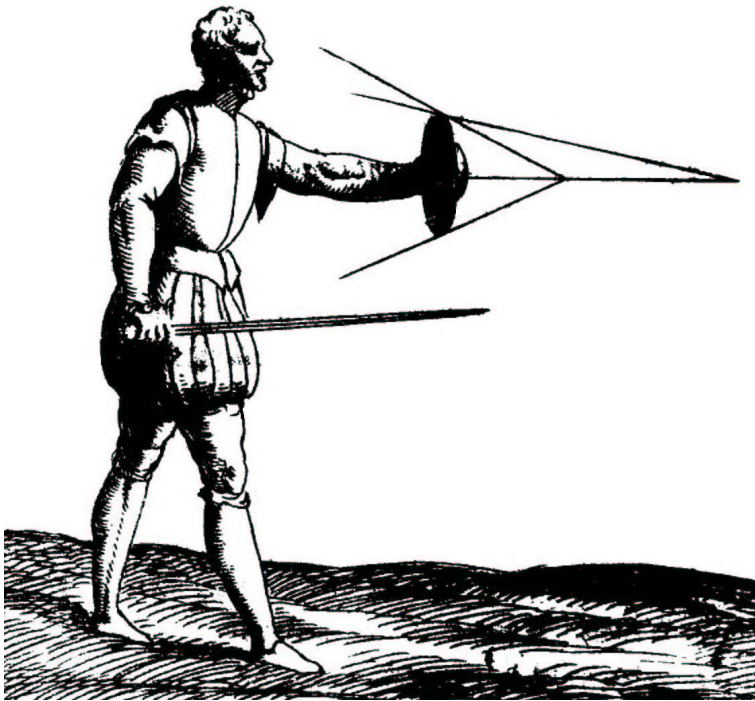
*Coppola/umbone* is a central semicircular prominence with a *brocca* (a metal spike, from which derives the name *brocchiere*) in the middle.



Bucklers can be provided with a wood covering on the inner side and an iron trimming on the outer side in order to reinforce its edges.

A single handle (manico) is fixed to the back side of the external edge and is used to hold it in a fist grip.

These shields were carried alongside the waist with a leather strip or they were hanged at the hilt of the sword. Moreover both civilians and soldiers appreciated them because they were quite easy to be carried: Master Docciolini (Florence, XVIIIth century) says that people used to carry them along in the evenings as useful defensive tools.



## LIBRO PRIMO

### THE GUARDS

(Freely translated from the modern italian)

#### *Guardia Alta (High guard)*

This first guard is called *alta*, because in this posture the sword is held overhead, with the armed arm as high as possible, so that the sword is almost directed backward.

The buckler arm must be stretched as straight as possible toward the enemy. The right foot is four fingers before the left one, and with the heel slightly lifted.

This guard can be executed in two way: making a long step forward both with the right or left foot. In fact this guard is so called because the position of the swords, not of the feet.



A. Marozzo – Cap. 10





### *Guardia di Testa (Head guard)*

The second is named **guardia di testa** and it is executed with both arms stretched toward the enemy as the previous one. Both the hands are at the height of the shoulders. The sword hand is held lower than the buckler hand. The feet position can be executed moving forward both the right or the left foot with a long step.



### *Guardia di Faccia (Face guard)*

The third is called *guardia di faccia*, which has the same characteristic of the previous guards regarding the position of the feet.

It differs from the previous one because of the height of the arms. In this guard the sword is held straight with the point directed to the enemy's face.

The buckler hand is over the sword hand.

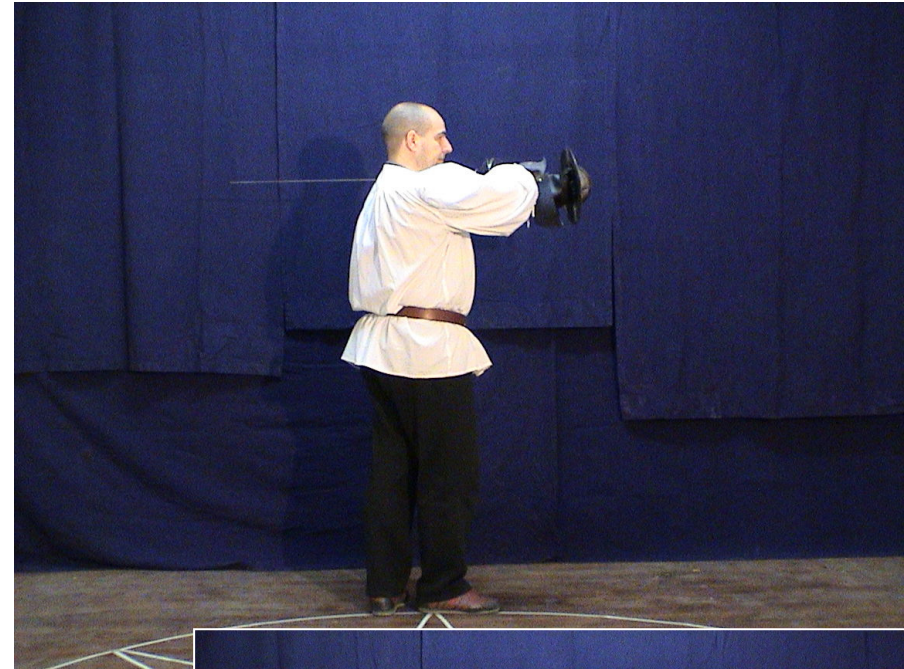




### *Guardia di Sopra il Braccio (Overhand guard)*

The fourth guard is named *soprabraccio*, because the sword hand is placed, as a cross, in the middle of the left arm. The point of the sword is directed backward and the buckler's arm is straight toward the enemy.

The right foot is before the left one without touching it. The guard can be executed making a long right step with the leg gracefully bent. The right shoulder is facing the enemy (leaning toward?).





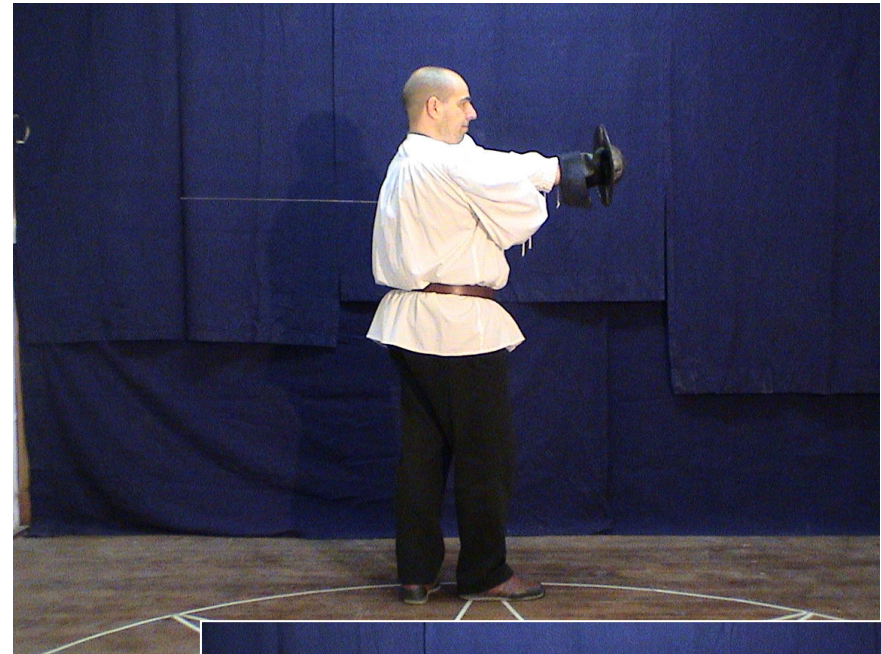
### *Guardia di Sotto'l Braccio (Underhand guard)*

The fifth guard is *guardia sottobraccio*, and it is so called because the armed hand must stay under the harmpit of the buckler's arm.

The sword's point is directed backward, but the buckler's arm must be straight toward the enemy.

The feet can be placed as above said. The right foot can stay just before the left one or in a long right step.

The second solution needs that the right shoulder is leaning toward the enemy, as before mentioned for the fouth guards.



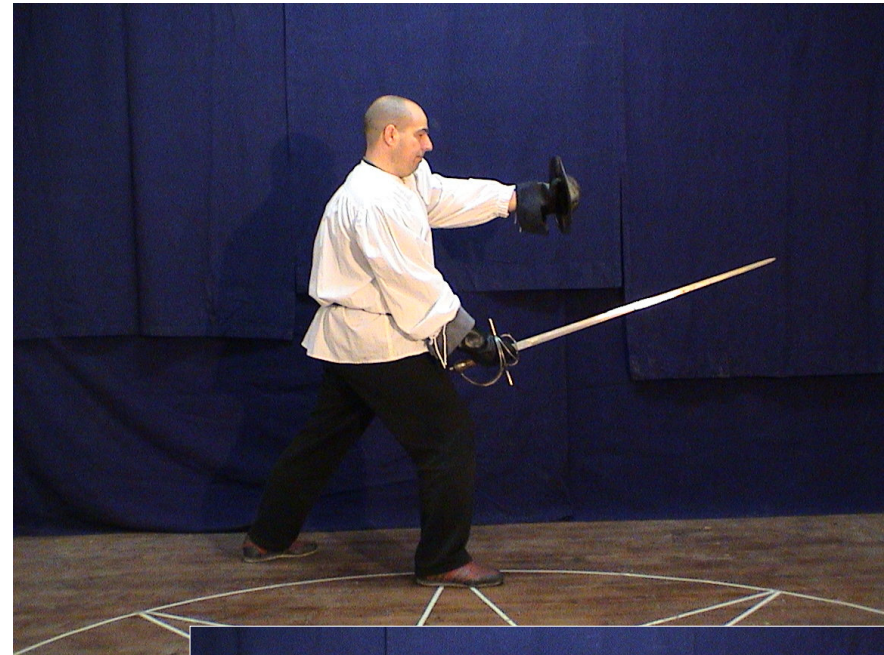
***Guardia Porta di Ferro Stretta (Narrow Iron door guard)***

In this guard the body must be set obliquely so that the shoulder is leaning toward the enemy. Both the arms are held forward. The sword's arm is straight downward to defend the right knee, so that the hand stay in the middle of the knee itself.

The buckler's arm is straight toward the enemy, and it must not be too high or too low, because its position must defend the head.

The position of the feet has the right foot before with a long step and the right knee well bent. The left foot stay sideways and the left leg is bent too.

This guard is named "Narrow iron door" because it is the safer than the others, and as strong as iron. It differs from the "Large iron door", which we will treat soon, because it "close", menacing the enemy and defending the knee.





*Guardia Porta di Ferro Larga (Large Iron door guard)*

The seventh guard is called **porta di ferro larga**, and it originate from the previous one, which is very alike.

The only difference is that the hand sword stay inwards the right knee to the left side, pointing the sword slightly downward.

It is named “Large”, because it exposes the body more than the previous one.





***Guardia Cingiara Porta di Ferro***  
(Wild boar Iron door Guard)

The eighth is called “Wild Boar”. In this guard the left foot moves in a slope step, beding the left knee, while the right leg must be straight.

The hand sword stay in front of the knee, as in Iron door Guard, from which it partly takes the name.

The buckler’s arm is straight forwards for the defence of the head.

This guard is named “ Boar”, because the wild boar’s habit of setting the head sideways, when attacked, ready to wound with the tusks.

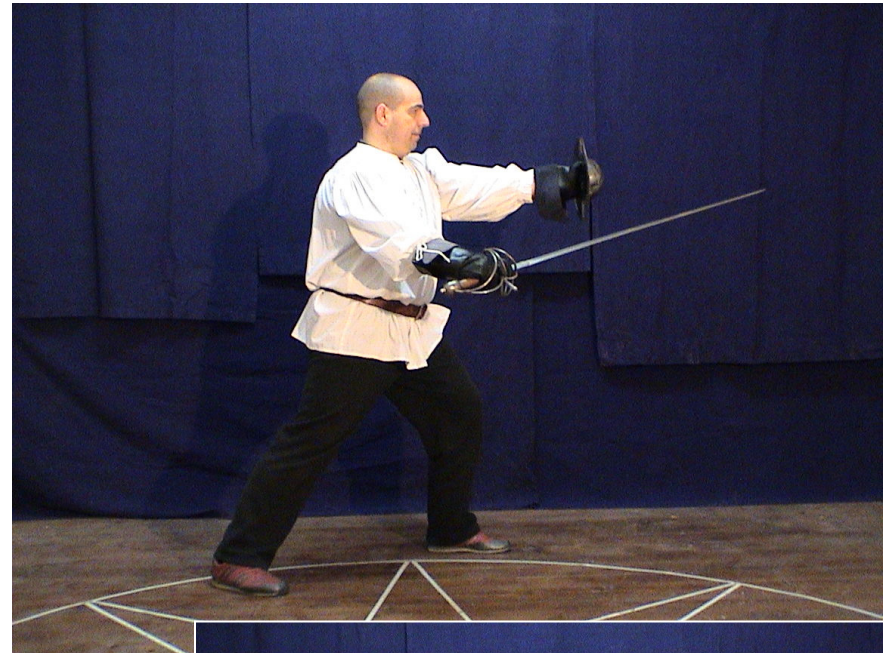


### *Guardia di Coda Lunga Alta (Long and high Tail Guard)*

The ninth guard is name Long and high Tail an it is executed moving the left foot forwards in a long step with the knee slightly bent. This foot must stay well straight toward the enemy. The right arm is straight toward the enemy, wielging the sword sideways. The point is directed towards the nemy.

The buckler's arm is well stretched toward the enemy's face. This guard and the following originates from the guard called "Long and high tail" (?) (indeed Manciolino is presumably referring to the "Long and outstretched tail").

In this guard (long and outstretched) the feet position remains the same, while the sword's arm is well stretched backwards, and the name come from the translation of the posture. In fact a popular proverb say that "do not dispute with the great Masters because they have a long tail", as it means that they could heavy trouble you because of their large following. So this guard give the name to these ninth and tenth one, because they befit well to wound from afar.







***Guardia di Coda Lunga Stretta***  
*(Long and Narrow Tail Guard)*

The tenth guard is named Long and Narrow tail, and it is performed moving the right foot forward and sideways in a long step with the knee slightly bent.

The arms are placed as the previous guard, but the sword's arm must be set much lower.

*The above said guards are sufficient to our work.*





## FORMATIVE AND PROPAEDEUTIC DRILLS

### Basic

#### Equipement

1. Wood side sword with hilt  
Or a stick long 105 cm. and of 3 cm. diameter
2. Hand-buckler

#### Drills indications

Use these two kind of step to train the guards:

- *andare e tornare*: to pass forth and back
- *crescer*: ordinary step

## - ESERCIZI -

### Exercise n° 1

Grasp the sword with the hand and place your forefinger over the cross-bar inside the finger ring, while the other fingers, with the thumb in opposition, grip fast the handle without straining.

Instead the buckler is held in full-grip.

With the feet close together, you first bear the sword to the left side with the arm straight downward and beside the flank, while the point of the sword is directed backwards and the right edge faces downward. Now you astay with the sword alongside in the so called “First position” of the modern fencing. Keep straight and look in front of you, then move the right foot forward lifting the sword in High Guard, while the buckler’s arm extend forward. This manouvre is called *scendere o andare o mettersi in guardia* (dropping or or moving or setting on guard).

Repeat the drill making a left step forward. Repeat again both with a longer right and left step. Repeat again and again.

The purpose is to take the guard in a natural, nimble, careful, elegant and composed way. Every your motion must be smooth, easy and not stiff.





## Exercise n° 2

Following the same methodology, try the stances and attitudes of all the other guards.

When the guard requires both the right or the left foot before, short or long step, you have to repeat the same number of trials on both the sides and stances.

## Exercise n° 3

The following drills (3-4-5) need to train how to move the arms, the feet and torso from guard to guard in a nimble and armonic way.

The guards are subdivided in three sections (high-medium-low).

The division is purely interpretative and needs as a basic model for the development of specific skills. We do not provide any sequence, leaving you free to move from guard to guard. We suggest you to make simple movement without striking for the moment, but move simply from a posture to another trying to make the changes essential and elegant. Let start!

Now connect all the low guards together:

- *Coda lunga stretta* (Long and Narrow Tail)
- *Porta di ferro stretta* (Narrow Iron Door)
- *Cingiara porta di ferro* (Wild boar Iron Door)
- *Coda lunga distesa* (Long and Outstretched Tail)

## Exercise n° 4

Now connect the middle guards:

- *Coda lunga alta* (Long and High Tail)
- *Porta di ferro larga* (Large Iron Door)
- *Guardia sottobraccio* (Underarm Gurad)

## Exercise n° 5

Endly connect all the high guards together:

- *Guardia alta* (High guard)
- *Guardia di testa* (Head guard)
- *Guardia di faccia* (Face guard)
- *Guardia soprabraccio* (Overarm guard)

## Exercise n° 6

In thi drill connect the groups of guards in pre-ordered:

- |                 |   |               |   |               |
|-----------------|---|---------------|---|---------------|
| • High guards   | > | Middle guards | > | Low guards    |
| • Low guards    | > | Middle guards | > | High guards   |
| • High guards   | > | Low guards    | > | Middle guards |
| • Low guards    | > | High guards   | > | Middle guards |
| • Middle guards | > | High guards   | > | Low guards    |
| • Middle guards | > | Low guards    | > | High guards   |

We come to the end of the first lesson.

In the next lesson we will study the sword blows (cut and point) and we will train in the art of striking by a *Segno* (wall figure conceived to illustrate the directions of blows). Moreover we will learn how to strike moving from guard to guard by the “*Mostra di spada*” (lett. Sword display), which is a dynamic solo form composed by a sequence of blows and guards.

See you soon.

*Sursum Corda*