

The Forest and the Trees

(Decision Trees From Fiore dei Liberi's
Il Fior di Battaglia)



Lord John Biggeheved
Master Llwyd Aldrydd
Baron Aiden of Kingswood

Lessons of the Sword in Two Hands

Decision Trees

“I am the sword and I am lethal against any weapon;
lances, axes and dagger are worthless against me.
...Come against me and feel the pain.”

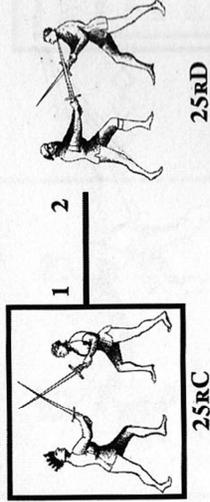
Three decision trees

1. Zogho Largo, Punta Spada (wide plays, sword point)
2. Zogho Largo, Mezza Spada (wide plays, mid-sword)
3. Zogho Stretto (close plays)

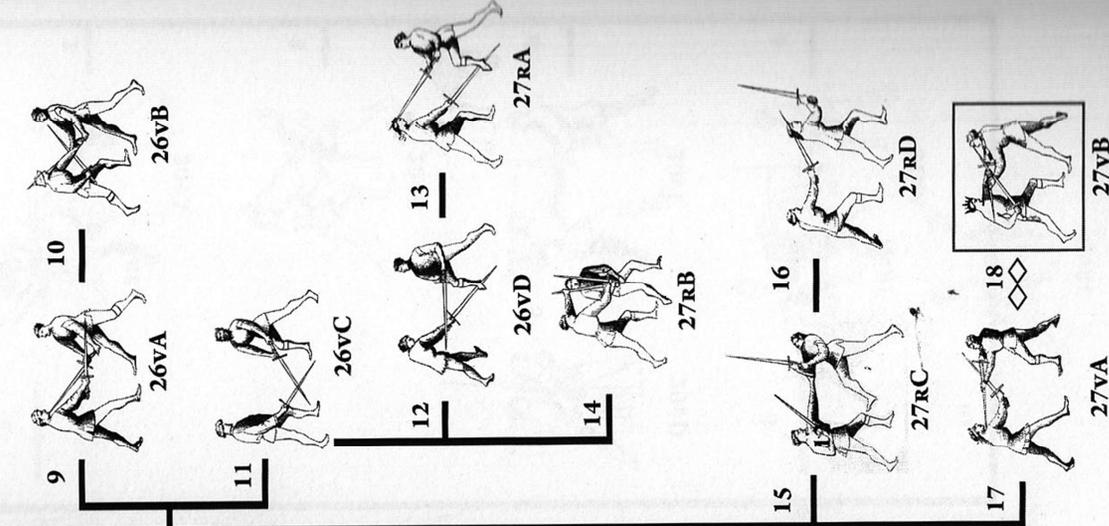
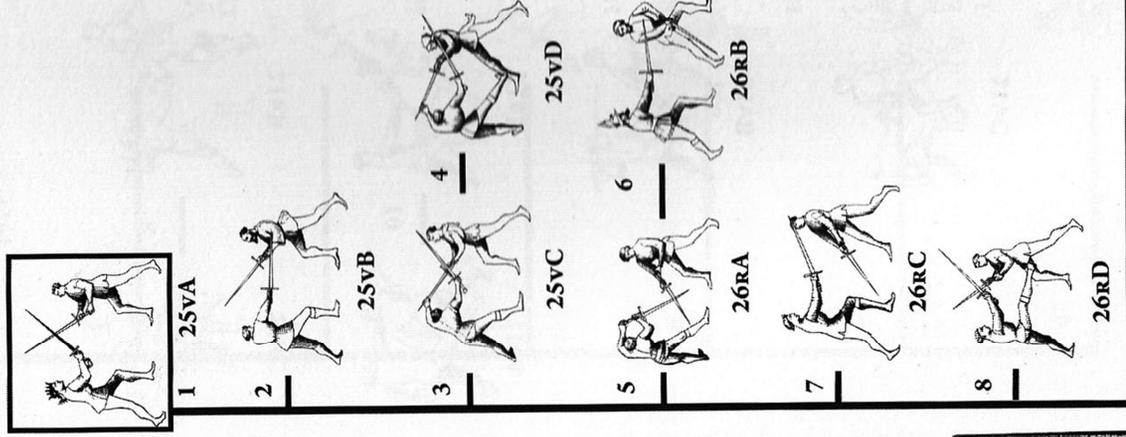
Zogho Largo (Wide Plays)

SWORD IN TWO HANDS: ZOGHO LARGO ORGANIZATION

CROSSED AT PUNTE DI SPADA



CROSSED AT MEZZA SPADA

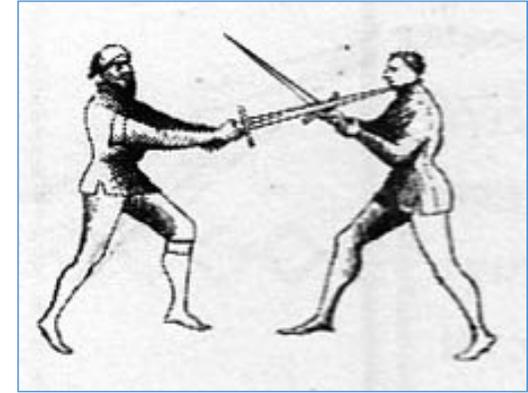


Zogho Largo, Punta Spada (Wide plays, sword point)

- swords are crossed above the middle at the weak part with little or no leverage in the bind.
- Master and Scholar are shown with left foot forward.



Zogho Largo, Punta Spada (Wide plays, sword point)



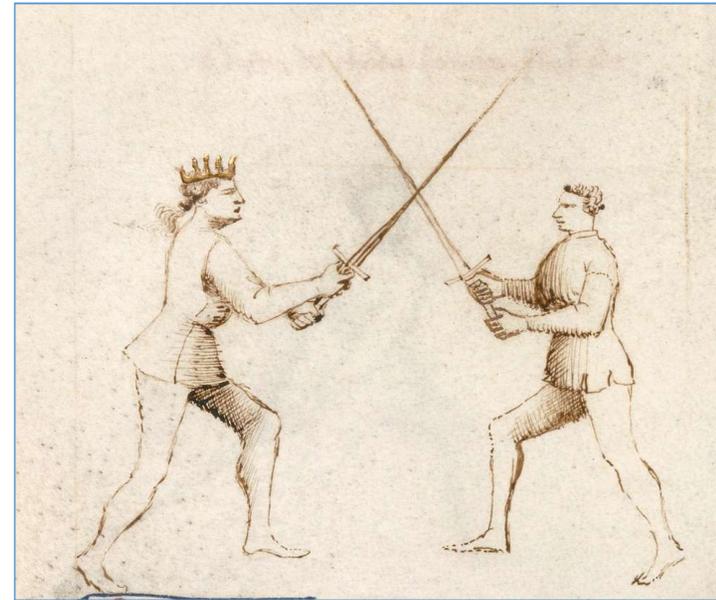
Player	When	Then
Master	crossed at the point...	Quickly turn your blade and strike to the opponent's other side with a cut from above to head and arms
Scholar		Thrust to face

One or the other will win the bind. If the scholar wins the bind, his sword will be free to make the cut. An immediate thrust keeps the scholar's sword in the center and slides past the opponent's blade.

Both master and scholar are shown with left foot forward.

Zogho Largo, Mezza Spada (Wide plays, mid-sword)

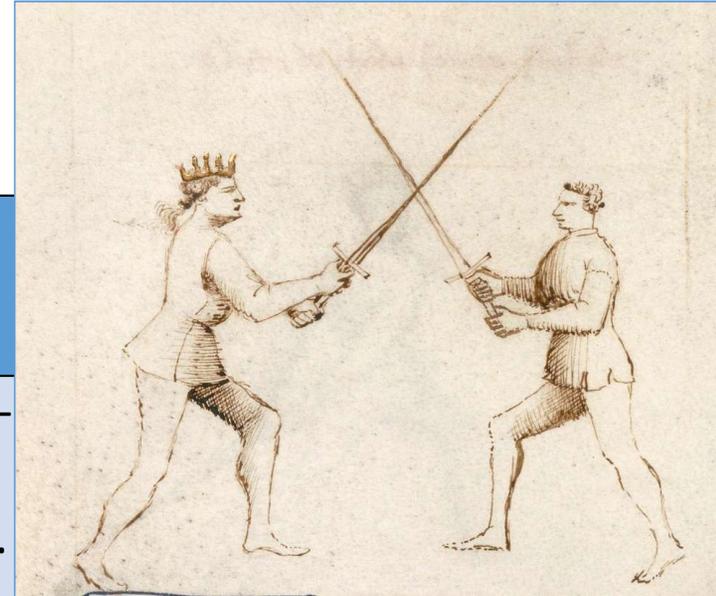
- swords are crossed at the middle with little more leverage in the bind.
- Most are shown with left foot forward. Depictions are sometimes reversed, so watch for the garter.
- Presumption is to right handedness.
- All plays can be reversed.



Master of Zogho Largo

1

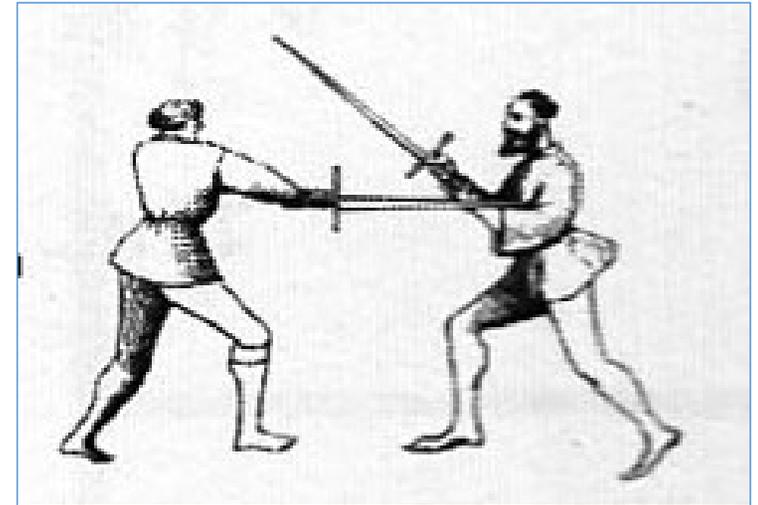
Player	When	Then
Master	Opp. gives neutral to weak pressure...	Immediate cut to the hands - or- step with right foot out of line to thrust to the chest.
Rationale	Action depends on opponent's strength in the bind.	



First Scholar of Zogho Largo

2

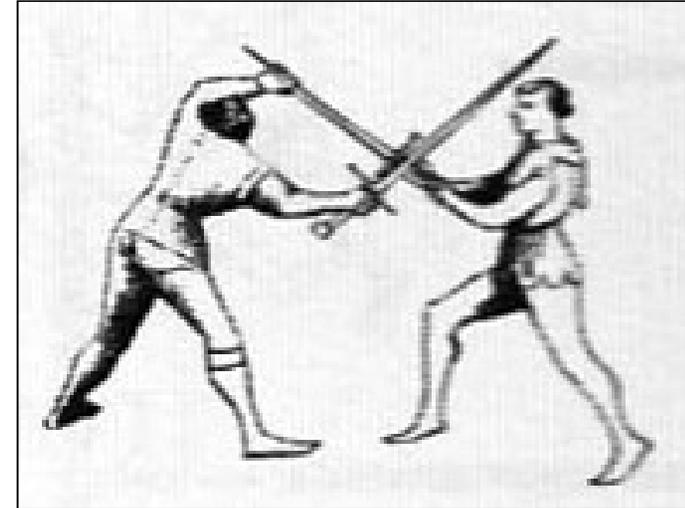
Player	When	Then
First Scholar	Opp. gives neutral to weak pressure...	make a cut to arm or hands, followed by thrust to chest.
Rationale	Right foot shown forward because he has stepped back with his left foot to maintain the wider distance.	



Second Scholar of Zogho Largo

3

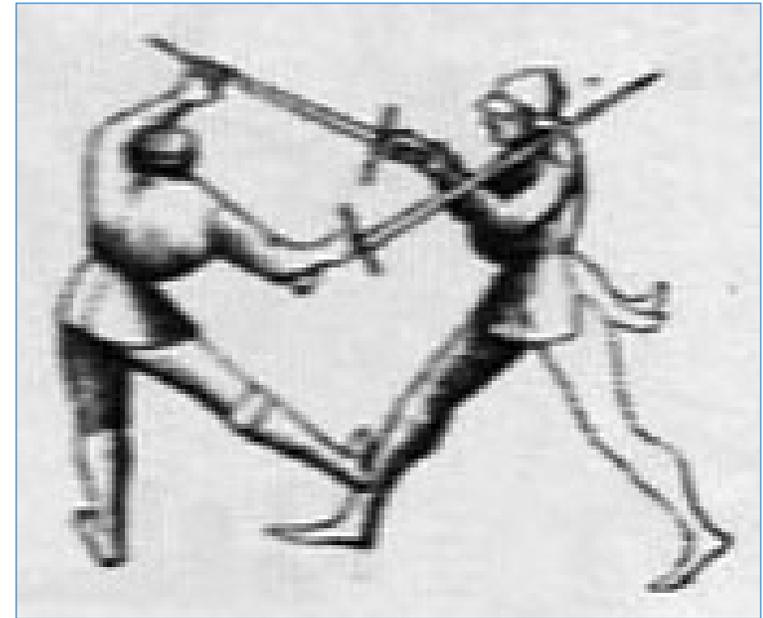
Player	When	Then
Second Scholar	Opp.'s pressure puts his point to your left...	Step forward immediately and grasp his blade, simultaneously strike with a cut or thrust.
Rationale	Since your attack is made at the same time as the grab you will hit before he can react. Be prepared to let go if you feel him pushing or pulling the blade.	



Third Scholar of Zogho Largo

4

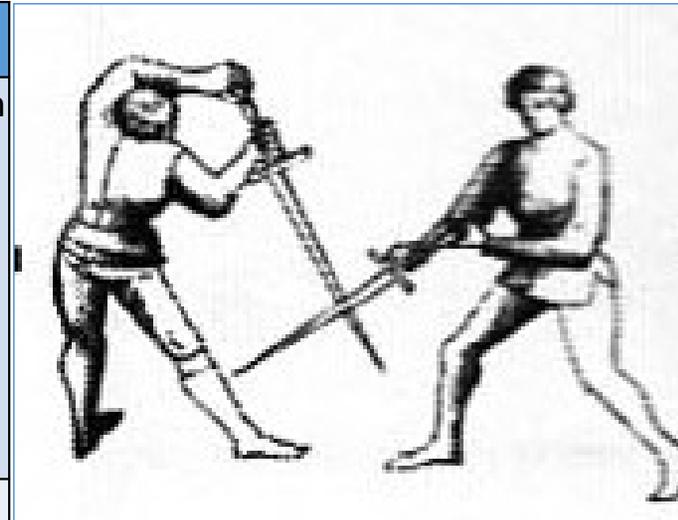
Player	When	Then
Third Scholar	Opp.'s pressure puts his point to your left...	As Second Scholar + Kick his lead leg.
Rationale	As Second Scholar. Also: If you kick his lead leg while you make the grab, you will stop him from moving to close. If you kick him after he has begun the step, you may knock him down.	



Fourth Scholar of Zogho Largo

5

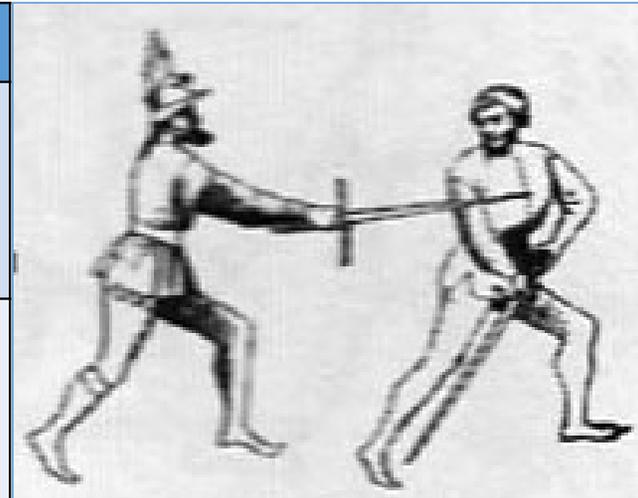
Player	When	Then
Fourth Scholar	Opp. gives strong pressure or tries to force you sword to your right...	As opponent starts to move step offline with lead foot. Immediately pass obliquely across as you bring your sword up to meet the oncoming cut with the middle of your sword. Let his sword pass downward and immediately respond with a cut from above to the head or arms.
Rationale	<p>This is for use against a peasant or other untrained fighter who will predictably give a straightforward cut.</p> <p>Does not start from the crossing of blades but uses it for its effect. Starts from a narrow stance.</p> <p>The stepping instructions have led to different interpretations.</p> <p>May be used against a trained opponent who gets in a bind and gives strong pressure, pushing your sword to your right.</p> <p>Allow your blade to be pushed aside and use that energy to turn your blade around to the other side of his. Make your cut or thrust in such a way as to keep your sword positioned as cover.</p>	



Fifth Scholar of Zogho Largo

6

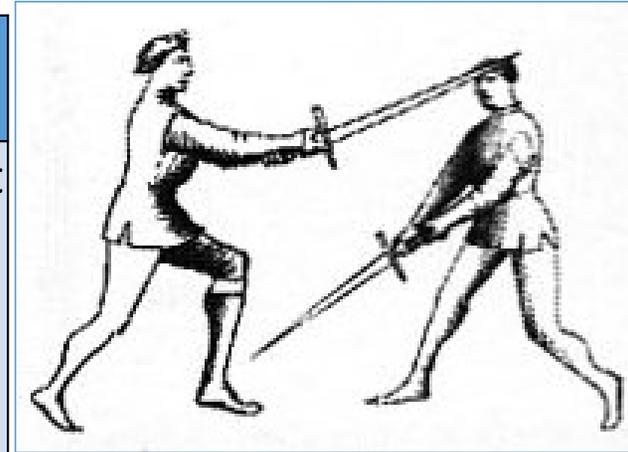
layer	When	Then
Fifth Scholar	Opp. gives strong pressure or tries to force you sword to your right...	as Fourth Scholar with a thrust to the chest
Rationale	<p>This is for use against a peasant or other untrained fighter who will predictably give a straightforward cut.</p> <p>Does not start from the crossing of blades but uses it for its effect. Starts from a narrow stance.</p> <p>The stepping instructions have led to different interpretations.</p> <p>May be used against a trained opponent who gets in a bind and gives strong pressure, pushing your sword to your right.</p> <p>Allow your blade to be pushed aside and use that energy to turn your blade around to the other side of his. Make your cut or thrust in such a way as to keep your sword positioned as cover.</p>	



Sixth Scholar of Zogho Largo

7

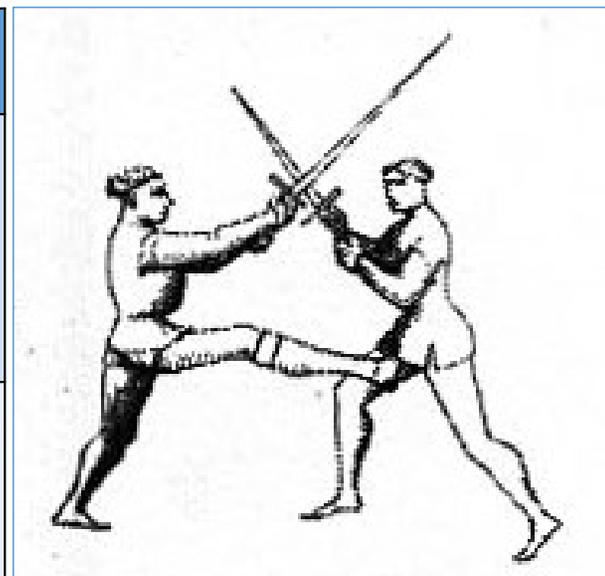
layer	When	Then
Sixth Scholar	He leaves the bind and tries to cut low to your leading leg...	Withdraw the forward foot or pass back and deliver a cut from above to the head.
Rationale	If you take your foot no further than your other foot, then you should be able to hit him in the head. If you make a full pass backwards you may move too far back to hit him. That's ok.	



8

Seventh Scholar of Zogho Largo

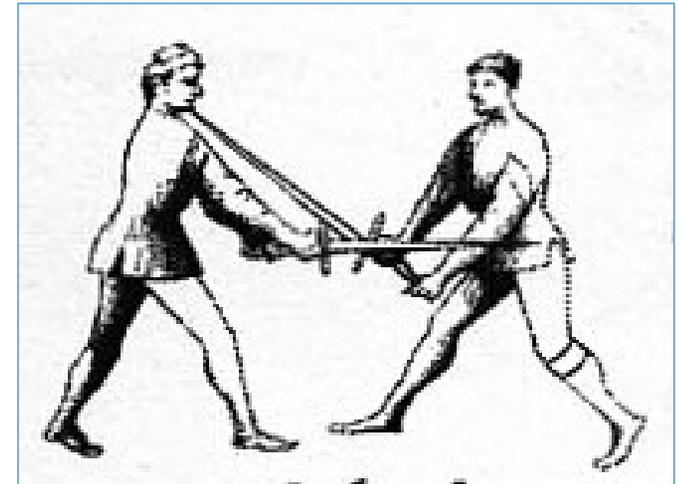
Player	When	Then
Seventh Scholar	He forces his sword in or up...	Kick him in the balls to give pain and make him miss his parry.
Rationale	<p>Strong lifting pressure in the bind may indicate he is preparing to go to zogho stretto (close play). A kick will avert his closing. Note: the scholar is not leaning back for the kick. You must maintain forward upright orientation to resist the opponent's advance even though you are only standing on one foot.</p>	



Eighth Scholar of Zogho Largo

9

Player	When	Then
Eighth Scholar	You have a low posta and He attacks you with a thrust...	step out of line with your lead foot, then pass obliquely offline, crossing his sword with your arms while thrusting to his face or chest with your point high.
Rationale	Exchange of thrusts: As your opponent thrusts, your actions will force his attack wide and puts your point on centerline. May follow to the Ninth Scholar.	



Ninth Scholar of Zogho Largo

10

Player	When	Then
Ninth Scholar	You did not get your point online or hesitated...	Pass forward with your left foot and grasp the opponent's hands/hilt. Then strike.
Rationale	<p>Exchange of thrusts: This play derives from the exchange of thrusts of the Eighth Scholar.</p> <p>If you succeeded in getting your opponent's thrust off line, but have not successfully thrust back to him. Use your body weight to control his sword, reach over with your left hand and grab the handle of his sword.</p> <p>You now have control of his blade. You can slide it free and strike or thrust upward into his neck.</p>	



11

Tenth Scholar of Zogho Largo

Player	When	Then
Tenth Scholar	You have a high posta and He attacks you with a thrust...	Make a cut from above while stepping and passing offline, beating the opponent's thrust aside almost at mid-blade. You can go to close play or follow into the Eleventh or Twelfth Scholars.
Rationale	Breaking the thrust: Student starts with arms high, suggesting one of the high postas.	

12

Eleventh Scholar of Zogho Largo

Player	When	Then
Eleventh Scholar	After beating his sword to the ground...	Forcefully step onto the opponent's blade. Then cut with false edge into the neck and immediately come back with a cut from above to the arms or hands.
Rationale	The original text says right foot, but that depends on where his blade ends up after being beat down.	

13

Twelfth Scholar of Zogho Largo

Player	When	Then
Twelfth Scholar	After beating his sword to the ground...	Forcefully step onto the opponent's blade. Then strike to the head.
Rationale	Alternate to Eleventh Scholar	

14

Thirteenth Scholar of Zogho Largo

Player	When	Then
Thirteenth Scholar	After beating his sword to the ground...	Step to the opponent's sword arm side and keep the opponent's body between the threatening sword and yourself. Possibly use a modified half-sword grip to strike your opponent's neck or arm.
Rationale	This is a follow on to the tenth scholar and is the closest play in the wide series. Little or no explanation is given for this illustration. But it keeps the opponent's body between the threatening sword and the student.	

15

Fourteenth Scholar of Zogho Largo

Player	When	Then
Fourteenth Scholar	After beating your opponent's point or crossing his sword...	Forcefully rock your opponent back by pushing on the sword arm elbow or forearm. May follow into the Fifteenth Scholar.
Rationale	This play is a bit closer and shoves the opponent back forcefully.	

16

Fifteenth Scholar of Zogho Largo

Player	When	Then
Fifteenth Scholar	If your opponent is turned around from the Fourteenth Scholar...	Strike to the back of the turned opponent.
Rationale	If your opponent has already started to move during the Fourteenth Scholar play then this will likely turn him across you to his left (your right), since he would be balanced momentarily on one foot and will pivot easily.	

17

Sixteenth Scholar of Zogho Largo

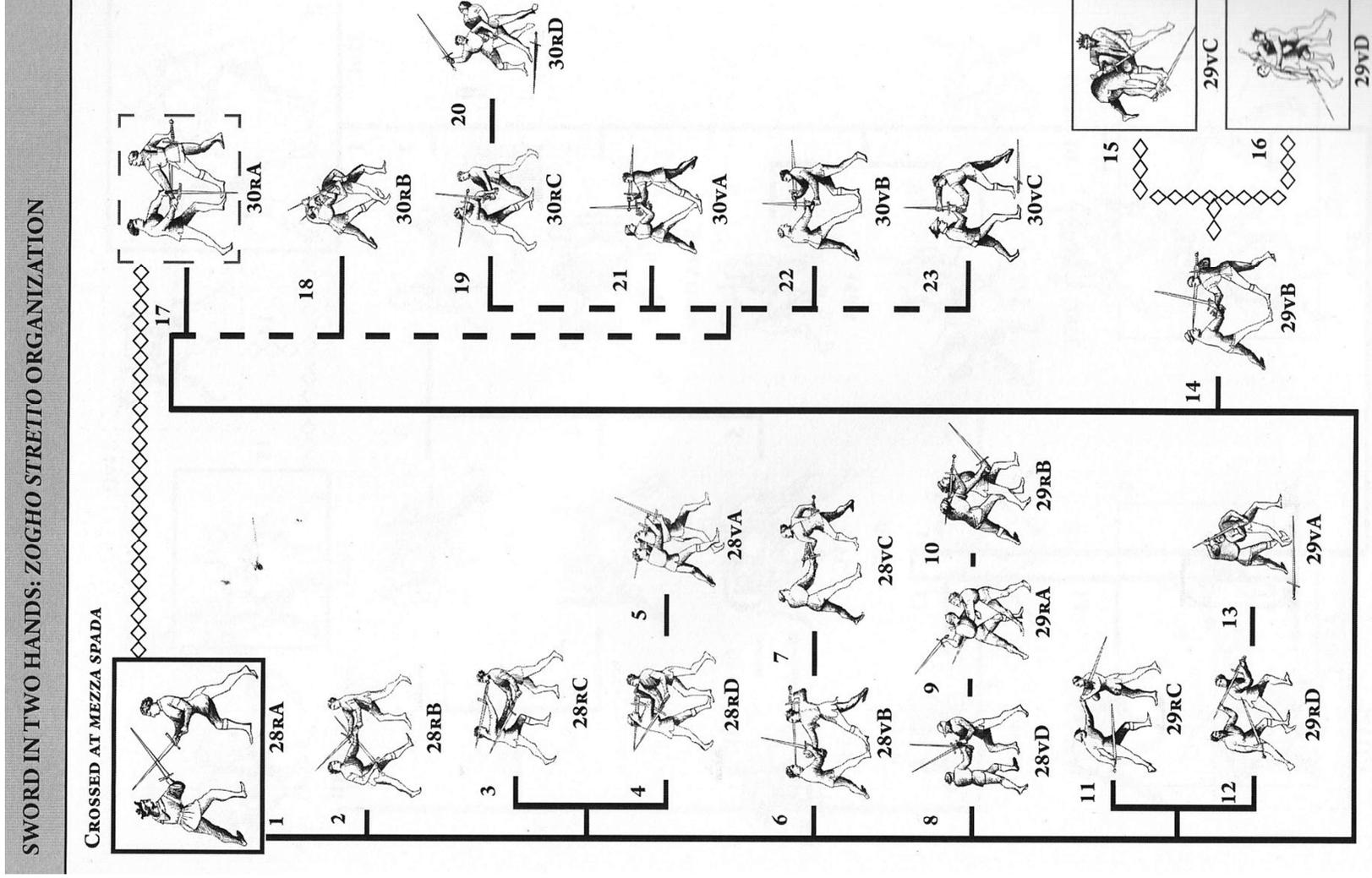
Player	When	Then
Sixteenth Scholar	You feint a strong horizontal cut to the opponent's head -or- from a crossing of swords when conditions are right...	Lightly strike his blade, then immediately turn your sword to the other side, grasping it almost at mid-blade with your left hand. Then place a quick thrust to his neck.
Rationale	This is essentially a thrusting variant of the peasant's blow, including a feint horizontal cut blow to start the play. This play can also come from pressure in a bind and need not be initiated from a feint. Caution: this play has a counter master.	

18

Counter Master of Zogho Largo

Player	When	Then
Counter Master	The Sixteenth Scholar attacks you...	Turn yours around his in the same manner, while with an oblique pass you find the opponent's uncovered side. Then put a thrust into his face.
Rationale	To counter, make the same move he did. With your sword on top, you have superior leverage and can control his sword as you thrust at his face.	

Zogho Stretto (Close plays)



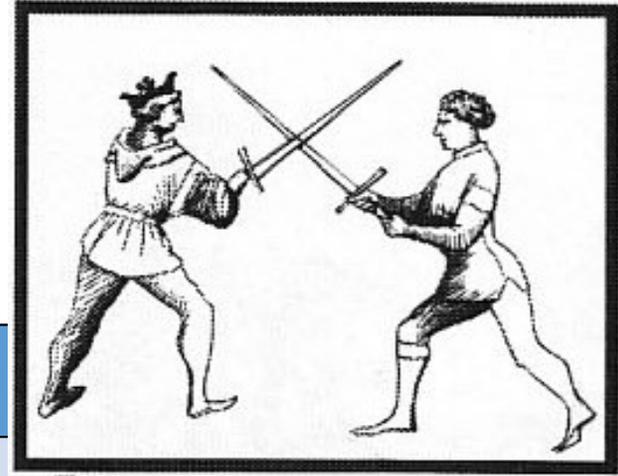
Zogho Stretto, Mezza Spada (Close plays, mid-sword)

- Fiore says, *"We will now start the close play of the two-handed sword. We will see every kind of parry, strike, entering and exiting binds, grapples, disarms and throws. We will also see the remedies and the counters to each action needed to attack and defend."*
- Swords are crossed at the middle, having equal leverage in the bind.
- The master is shown with right foot forward, ready to step into closer range.
- The scholars then step in with their left foot in most of the plays.



Zogho Stretto, Mezza Spada (Close plays, mid-sword)

1



Player	When	Then
Master	attacked...	Cross at the middle

Either Player or Opponent could perform these plays.

"We have crossed our swords; this is the crossing from which we can make all of the plays that follow."

The master is shown with right foot forward. Is ready to step in closer with left foot, as is shown in most scholars' plays.

This is generally countered in the 16th play.

First Scholar of Zogho Stretto

2

Player	When	Then
First Scholar	Opp. is weak in the bind or shifting to your left...	Pass with left foot, reach with your left hand over your right arm and grasp his sword handle between his hands. Then strike with cut or thrust.
Rationale	With his sword controlled, you can strike him as you wish. The scholar thrusts beneath his own arm.	

Second Scholar of Zogho Stretto

3

Player	When	Then
Second Scholar	Opp. stays in the center with pressure...	Grasp the opponent as shown and strike him in the face with your pommel. You can also cut from above to his head before he can parry.
Rationale	Use the blade contact point as a pivot, raise your sword hilt beside his blade. Your left hand goes to his arm to control his sword. Shove your pommel into his face as you step forward.	

Third Scholar of Zogho Stretto

4

layer	When	Then
Third Scholar	Opp. is strong in the bind or shifting to your right...	Pass with left foot, double handed pommel strike.
Rationale	Use the blade contact point as a pivot, raise your sword hilt beside his blade to let it pass. Similar to 2 nd Scholar.	

Fourth Scholar of Zogho Stretto

5

Layer	When	Then
Fourth Scholar	Opp. is strong in the bind or shifting to your right...	Pass with left foot, whip your sword around his neck.
Rationale	Use the blade contact point as a pivot, raise your sword hilt beside his blade to let it pass. Similar to 2 nd Scholar. Variant of 3 rd Scholar.	

Fifth Scholar of Zogho Stretto

6

Player	When	Then
Fifth Scholar	Crossed at the middle...	Reach under his sword with your left hand and grab his right wrist. As you twist his wrist, draw back with your right and prepare a strike.
Rationale	This can react to upward and downward pressure to your blade in the bind. This play comes from the First Remedy Master of the dagger. Traps the sword. 6 th Scholar is an alternate.	

Sixth Scholar of Zogho Stretto

7

Player	When	Then
Sixth Scholar	Crossed at the middle and Opp. lifts his sword...	Reach deep under his sword with your left hand go for the middle bind. Slip your hand behind and under his elbow. Make a stable turn as you seek the Boar's Tooth Abrazare position on the left.
Rationale	Alternate to 5 th Scholar. This play comes from the play that follows the First Remedy Master of the dagger. Traps the arms.	

Seventh Scholar of Zogho Stretto

8

layer	When	Then
Seventh Scholar	Crossed at the middle and Opp. lifts his sword...	Put your hilt between his hands, lift his arms with his point high. Throw your left arm over his arms, to your left, and strike with his sword under your left arm.
Rationale	Flows into 8 th scholar...	

Eighth Scholar of Zogho Stretto

9

layer	When	Then
Eighth Scholar	Crossed at the middle and Opp. lifts his sword...	Put your hilt between his hands, lift his arms with his point high. Throw your left arm over his arms, to your left, and strike with his sword under your left arm.
Rationale	Flows from 7 th scholar...	

Ninth Scholar of Zogho Stretto

10

layer	When	Then
Ninth Scholar	Crossed at the middle and Opp. lifts his sword...	Unexplained
Rationale	Flows from 7 th & 8 th scholar... Appears to have spun the opponent and put sword around his neck similar to 4 th scholar.	

Tenth Scholar of Zogho Stretto

11

layer	When	Then
Tenth Scholar	Lifts his hilt in the bind, to your left...	Grasp his left hand and his whole pommel with your hand and push him backward; Then strike him with thrusts or cuts.
Rationale	If someone parries on the left side...	

Eleventh Scholar of Zogho Stretto

12

layer	When	Then
Eleventh Scholar	Lifts his hilt in the bind, to your right...	Grasp his sword with your left hand and strike him with thrusts or cuts.
Rationale	If someone parries on the right side... Flows into the 12 th scholar.	

Twelfth Scholar of Zogho Stretto

13

layer	When	Then
Twelfth Scholar	following the 11 th Scholar	Grasp his sword with your left hand and between his hands with your right, dropping your sword. Whip his sword around his head. (Unexplained)
Rationale	If someone parries on the right side... Flows from the 11 th scholar.	

Thirteenth Scholar of Zogho Stretto

14

layer	When	Then
Thirteenth Scholar	following the 11 th Scholar	Grasp his sword with your left hand and between his hands with your right, dropping your sword. Whip his sword around his head. (Unexplained)
Rationale	If someone parries on the right side... Flows from the 11 th scholar.	

I don't see the difference between this and the 5th scholar...

Counter Master to the Thirteenth Scholar of Zogho

Stretto

15

layer	When	Then
Counter Master	As the 13 th scholar goes for the middle bind...	Shift your left hand to the blade of your sword while using your right to lay your sword against his shoulder. Lever the blade against him, moving your left hand down and your right hand up.
Rationale	You can do this with a Stable Turn or you can step across in a Half Turn to add even more power to your binding.	

Counter Master to the Thirteenth Scholar of Zogho

Stretto

16

layer	When	Then
Counter Master	As the 13 th scholar goes for the middle bind...	Release your left hand and roll your right hand over towards your center. Tilt your blade down over his shoulder and grip the blade with your left hand. Then advance.
Rationale	This will force your blade's edge into his throat. You can also advance deeply to throw him to the ground.	

General Counter to the Master of Zogho Stretto

17

layer	When	Then
Sixteenth scholar	You cross into close play...	Immediately grapple; Reach under his sword with your left hand and grab his right wrist. Step in and rotate your hand as though your were starting a dagger disarm. While he struggles cut or thrust him.
Rationale	The pressure of your arm against his handle, supported by your body as you step, forces his sword wide.	

In the Morgan and Pisani-Dossi copies this is a Counter Master, while in the Getty copy it is a scholar.

Counter Master to the Thirteenth Scholar of Zogho

18

Stretto

layer	When	Then
Seventeenth Scholar	Opp. Throws false edge horizontal cut...	Respond in kind.
Rationale	This is a variant to 16 th scholar. Don't know how this one works.	

Hard to determine action from the picture...
Lacks description.

Riverso Mezzana is a horizontal strike, from left to right, using the false edge.

Disarms of the Stretto Master

19

layer

When

Then

20

Crossed at
the middle...

Hold your sword and push forward
with the left hand, squeezing his arms
until he abandons his weapons.
Then give him a good dose of strikes.

Rationale

This is a high disarm.

Press down and to your left while using the handle
of your sword to put pressure against his blade,
forcing it to the right.

The scholar after shows the opponent's sword on
the ground.

Disarms of the Stretto Master

21

layer	When	Then
	Crossed at the middle...	Hold your sword and push forward with the left hand between his hands. Press into his wrist and up while using the handle of your sword to push right and down.
Rationale	This is a middle disarm. The turn of the sword is the same as the previous, although the grapple is different.	

Disarms of the Stretto Master

22

layer	When	Then
	Crossed at the middle...	Grab the pommel of his sword with your left hand. Hook your pommel around his blade as in previous disarms. Lever clockwise with both hands.
Rationale	This is a low disarm.	

Disarms of the Stretto Master

23

layer	When	Then
	Crossed at the middle...	Let go of your right hand grip first. Reach under your own sword and grab his about mid-blade. Drop your own sword and grab his pommel with your left hand. Turn the sword quickly.
Rationale	Empty handed disarm.	