

ABSTRACT

The three publications offered for evaluation, *Veni Vadi Vici*, *Mastering the Art of Arms vol 1: The Medieval Dagger*, and *The Duellist's Companion*, establish by example the relatively young discipline of the accurate recreation of historical martial skills. This discipline includes the following elements:

- Textual analysis of historical sources (*Veni Vadi Vici*).
- Image analysis for the purpose of establishing details of the execution of the illustrated action (all three works).
- Mechanical or kinesthetic analysis of the actions described and depicted (*The Medieval Dagger*, *The Duellist's Companion*).
- Determination of the historical and combat context in which the system is intended to work. In these cases, a formal duel or tournament contest between knights (*Veni Vadi Vici*, *The Medieval Dagger*), or illegal but socially acceptable unarmoured duelling (*The Duellist's Companion*).
- Observation of the overall tactical and mechanical preferences of the martial system represented (*The Medieval Dagger*, *The Duellist's Companion*).
- Organisation of the material into a syllabus for study and practice (*The Medieval Dagger*, *The Duellist's Companion*).

The submitted works demonstrate the discipline as applied to the extant works of three historical masters: Filippo Vadi (ca 1440–1500), Fiore dei Liberi (ca 1350–1420), and Ridolfo Capoferro (ca 1557–1620). The unified body of work is the approach to the material as represented by these books.

The submitted works:

1. *Veni Vadi Vici* (2013) is a transcription, translation and commentary on the late 15th-century Italian manuscript *De Arte Gladiatoria Dimicandi*. It makes the content of the manuscript available to anglophone non-paleographers, in a transparent way. The translation itself has also been released as a free download, with the original images in colour reproduction.
2. *Mastering the Art of Arms vol 1: The Medieval Dagger* (2012) is a practical syllabus for understanding and executing the dagger combat skills represented in Fiore dei Liberi's 1410 manuscript *Il Fior di Battaglia*. It includes detailed reference to the source, but also provides a template for martial skill development, such as ways to gradually increase the intensity and complexity of the drill until it approaches an actual combat environment.
3. *The Duellist's Companion* (2006) is a training guide for the style of rapier combat represented in Ridolfo Capoferro's 1610 work *Gran Simulacro dell'Arte e dell'uso della scherma*. Rapier mechanics and actions are refined and complex, so this book covers mechanics in some detail, and provides comprehensive instructions for making Capoferro's techniques and theory accessible to the modern reader.

Taken as a whole, these publications represent a new form of manuscript study: the recreation from textual sources of our hitherto lost martial heritage, and the development of a pedagogical method by which these arts can be safely taught and practised.