

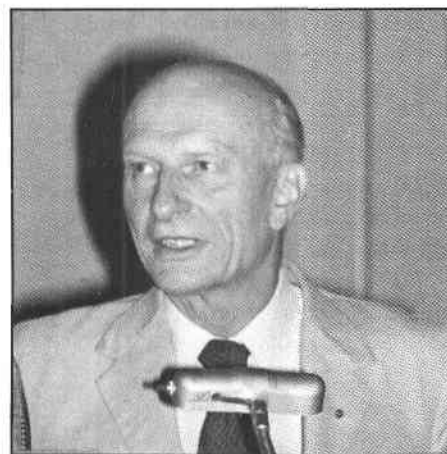


# Filippo Orso, Designer, and Caremolo Modrone, Armourer, of Mantua

By John Hayward

Filippo Orso has left no trace of his life and work in the chronicles of his times; his name is known to us only because he signed the title-page of three slightly variant books of drawings of pageant costume, armour, sword hilts and horse bits. Even the precise form of his name is uncertain, as the title pages are written in Latin and opinions have differed as to the Italian equivalent by which he would have been known to his contemporaries. The text reads 'Liber Philippi Ursonis Manu, Pictoris Mantuani'. From this can be deduced that he worked as a painter in Mantua and that his Christian name was Filippo, whereas his surname has been read as Orso (Hayward), Ursoni (Mann)<sup>1</sup>, or Orsoni (Boccia)<sup>2</sup>. As his device, which appears on the title page of his books, was a bear, I prefer to call him Orso, which is the Italian for a bear. Of the three versions of his book which are known to exist, one is in the Victoria and Albert Museum (refined to below as the London Codex), the second is in the library of the former Dukes of Braunschweig-Wolfenbützel, while the present location of the third, which was seen in the London art market some twenty years ago, is unknown. It is also incomplete, since it now consists mainly of drawings of horse bits. One of the pages of the London Codex bears the date 1554; the Wolfenbützel version is dated 1558 and 1559 on two of its pages, but both contain approximately the same material and represent the fashions of the mid-16th century. I have been able to collate the contents of the first two codices, but not, of course, the third; they correspond very closely. The London Codex has in all three hundred and four drawings: five pages of horse bards, five of saddle steels and stirrups, five equestrian pageant costumes, one equestrian armour, four of close helmets and parts of armour, sixteen of casques, thirty-nine of sword hilts, the remainder showing horses and horse-bits. The Wolfenbützel Codex has nine pages of horse bards, six of saddle steels and stirrups, ten of equestrian masque costumes, one equestrian armour with bard, six of close helmets and armours, eighteen of casques, forty three of sword hilts, the remainder showing horses and horse bits. The Wolfenbützel version is, therefore, the more complete. There is also in the Victoria and Albert Museum a single sheet showing a sword hilt which reproduces with minor variations one of the drawings present in the other two Codices. This presumably comes from the third Codex, unless, of course, Orso produced some preliminary sketches for his drawings.

The drawings are not of great artistic merit; the best are the title page and the following sheet, which shows a view of the city as it appeared in the mid-16th century. Below each drawing or page of drawings is a caption stating what is represented and recommending the merits of the designs in a prolix, naive and often repetitive manner. In the Wolfenbützel codex, however, the captions to the swords are omitted. Many of the captions, particularly those describing the armour, are of considerable interest as they give the contemporary terminology



for the various parts of armour. They also make suggestions concerning the most suitable materials to be used in the construction of pageant armour.

It is doubtful whether Orso produced these designs at one time. Assuming that he followed what was later the practice, he would have produced designs for armourers as and when he was commissioned to do so, and only later, when he had accumulated a large enough number to make up a book, would he have collected and copied them, or had them copied by a member of his workshop. In later centuries it was usual for the artist to have his collection of designs engraved and published as a pattern book. Why then did Orso undertake the extremely tedious task of making three versions of his designs? The answer must be that the demand for books of armour fashions was too small to justify the expense of publishing a printed book. The wages of apprentices were on the other hand very low and copying was a regular part of their training. Another example of such drawings being reproduced in several versions for sale is discussed in relation to another designer of sword hilts, Erasmus Hornick, in my book *Virtuoso Goldsmiths*.

The purpose of these books of drawings was presumably to illustrate the fashion in armour, pageant costume and sword hilt construction set by a leading Italian court, that of the Gonzaga Dukes of Mantua. The two versions of the codex, the whereabouts of which are known, both went north of the Alps; that now in the Victoria and Albert Museum belonged to Marcus Sitticus, Count of Hohenembs and Archbishop of Salzburg (1574-1619), the other to one of the Dukes of Braunschweig-Wolfenbützel. Mantua was at this time the place of work not only of major artists, such as Giulio Romano, Benvenuto Cellini, Francesco Primaticcio and Jacopo da Strada, but also of one of the leading armourers of northern Italy, Caremolo Modrone, court armourer to Federico Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua (c. 1500-1540).

Though no documentary evidence has come to light which would connect Filippo Orso with Caremolo Modrone, it does

not require too great a stretch of the imagination to accept that there is likely to have been some relationship between the Mantuan designer of costumes and armour and the Mantuan court armourer. While there is no trace of Orso in the Mantuan records, much more is known about Modrone. A native of Milan, he lived from 1489 to 1543 and some forty references to him and his work have been found in the Mantua archive.<sup>3</sup> Most refer to armour and weapons supplied to the Gonzaga court, but his clients included prominent figures of the time, including Alfonso d'Avalos, Marchese del Vasto, and the Holy Roman Emperor himself. In view of the relationship, which I seek to show between Orso and Modrone, some account of Modrone's career is called for. The first mention dates from 1521 when he was working in association with the armourer, Jacopo da Brescia. When the latter was in trouble with Duke Federigo because he had failed to deliver a sallet on time, he excused himself on the grounds that Modrone had induced his workmen to leave him and thus delayed completion of the helmet. In 1524 Duke Federigo wrote that he had commissioned Modrone to make armours for him and also for some of his mounted and foot soldiers. In the following year he wrote that he was accustomed to order armour from Modrone three or four times a year according to current fashion or to designs that pleased him. Some armours were retained for his own use, while he gave others to friends or gentlemen of his court. In

1527 Modrone was granted citizenship of Mantua and in the following year he received permission to construct a forge for armours near the river in Mantua. In the same year there is a reference to an armour which was lying finished in Brescia. In 1534 and again in 1536 he journeyed to Spain to hand over the armours he had constructed for Charles V. There are also references to swords and daggers supplied by him; in 1537, he was in contact with the Brescian bladesmith, Antonio Serafino, concerning commissions he had received for swords which were to be sent to Mariotto Martinengo, a member of the well-known Brescian family, and to Anne de Montmorency, Grand Connetable de France. In 1539 and in 1540 he was engaged on armours for the son of Don Garcia de Toledo, Viceroy of Naples, and for the French knight, Boissy d'Abbeville. He died in 1543 at the age of fifty-four and was succeeded as master of the Ducal Armoury by a Maestro Marco Antonio.

It follows from the above account that a designer working in association with Modrone would have reason to expect orders from the most august sources. Many of the Orso drawings do, in fact, include in their decoration the devices of the Holy Roman Emperor or of the King or the Dauphin of France, though as far as one knows none was ever executed. Mann has suggested that the designs may have been prepared in 1551 when a truce was declared between Charles V and Henri II of France, who were then at war concerning the succession to the duchy of Parma and Piacenza. Even if Orso's designs were never executed, he had an obvious motive for including them in his pattern books, giving the impression that he had enjoyed the patronage of these princes. Two drawings of the Wolfenbuttel Codex show two horse bards for the Emperor and the King of France respectively. The former shows the columns of Hercules and the orb surmounted by a single crowned eagle, while the double eagle of the Empire is on the front and over the rump of the horse (pl. 1). Orso describes the bard as intended for the joust and suggests that the textile covering should be of crimson velvet or of silk with the devices embroidered in gold and silver. The King of France's bard is decorated with the shell of St. Michael and crescent moons, which Orso proposes should be embroidered in gold and silver respectively. On other sheets Orso shows both front and rear saddle plates, stirrups, bits and bosses. One shows the saddle plates decorated with lively designs including lions and scrolling foliage inhabited by human figures in the manner of Giulio Romano (pl. 2); the captions state that the ornament should be in relief and enriched with silvering and gilding. A second page shows a front saddle plate with the arms of the Habsburg Emperor in the middle, while one of the stirrups bears the device of the Order of the Golden Fleece. (pl. 3) Another shows the devices of Henri II of France. Another (pl. 4) shows a half armour apparently intended for Henri II, though the caption to the Wolfenbuttel version only states that it is *Franciosa* (in French style).

Four armours have been attributed to Modrone, of which two are at Madrid and two at Vienna.<sup>4</sup> There is documentary evidence for the attribution of the two at Madrid, whereas the two at Vienna are attributed because they belonged to members of the Gonzaga family and are, therefore, likely to have been made in Mantua. The two armours at Madrid were both presented to the Emperor Charles V by Duke Federigo

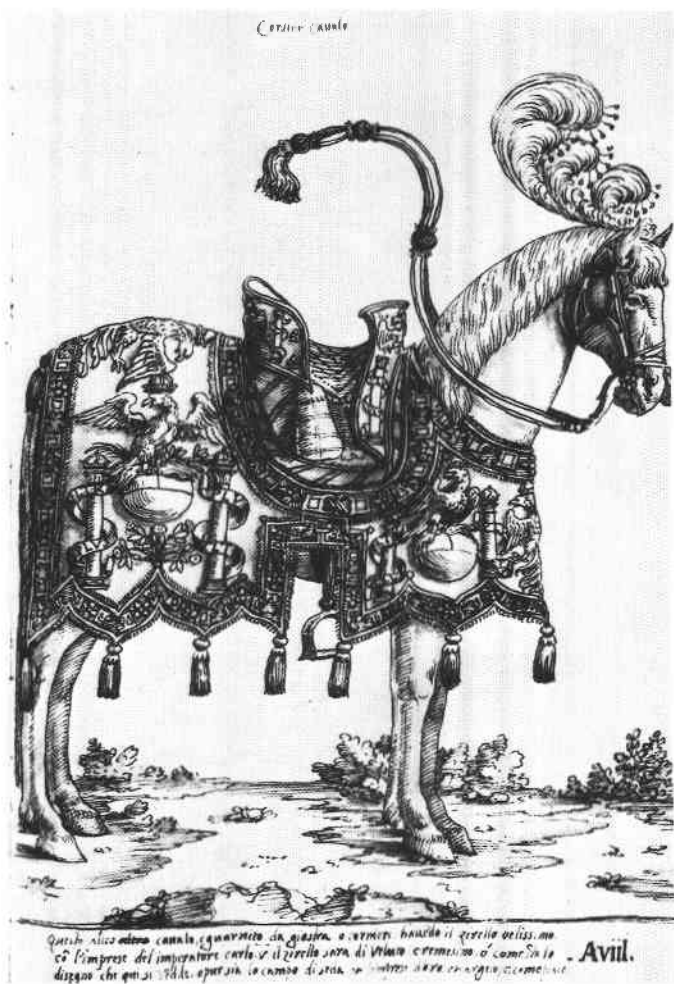


Plate 1. Drawing of a horse bard with devices of the Emperor Charles V.

Gonzaga in 1534 and 1536 respectively, though it should be mentioned that the wording of the documents concerning the second is not quite clear and it may have been commissioned by the Emperor. The first armour was handed over to the Emperor by Caremolo himself, who travelled to the city of Palencia in Spain in order to do so. It is a plain undecorated suit (Madrid A. 112), but was probably originally gilt. It is believed to have been worn by Charles on his expedition against Tunis. When Charles received it, he showed great satisfaction and sent a warm letter of thanks to the Duke stating that 'the armour was more precious to him than a city and that, if his measure had been taken a thousand times, it could not fit better.' While there is no reason to doubt that this armour is by Modrone, it does not tell us much about his style, the only decoration being a chiselled border to the tassets.

The second armour made by Modrone for Charles V and completed in 1536 (No. A 114) is now incomplete, consisting only of breast-plate, complete arms, culet, part of one tasset and a burgonet helmet. Once again Caremolo delivered it in person and it was acknowledged by the Emperor in enthusiastic terms. It appears to have been accompanied by certain arms which Charles described as 'muy buenas'. There is an illustration of this armour in the *Inventario Iluminado* of 1544, which shows that it was richly decorated with vertical bands and borders of damascened ornament against a blued ground, while the edges of some of the plates were embossed with interlacing palm-branches.<sup>5</sup>

Of the two armours in Vienna, both of which came from the Ambras Collection, that of Ferrante Gonzaga, Federigo's brother, is composite and is decorated only with etching and gilding. Ferrante Gonzaga had his own armourer, a certain Marco Bastone, and it seems likely that he, rather than Modrone, would have furnished this armour. The Orso designs, referred to above and illustrated in pl. 1 to 3, are for elaborately embossed armours, but Orso also provided designs for plainer armours. There are on two consecutive pages drawings of parts of a field armour decorated only with etched and gilt borders and bands. (pl. 5) The accompanying text states "all these pieces of armour and also those on the following page, built in this manner, serve for a dismounted man in light harness, and also for a mounted man (*homme d'arme*) either adding or removing certain plates, as is well known and can be seen in the drawings; a similar armour was wrought of iron and gilded and silvered and engraved in Mantua in the manner of this drawing and was worn in France." While the drawing evidently represents an armour made in Mantua, we cannot be sure whether it was designed by Orso. The construction is normal for the period and Orso's part may have been confined to designing the etched decoration.

On another drawing Orso shows a complete equestrian armour (pl. 6) which he describes in his caption as '*Homme d'arme alla Italiana*'. He further comments "This drawing shows how a horseman and his horse should be armed for battle; similar armours with more relief decoration were made in Mantua and worn by a gentleman of Brescia in France." The armour is, in fact, only decorated with raised bands and borders, but the mention of relief decoration is significant, for this is precisely the treatment associated with Modrone.

The second armour in the Vienna *Waffensammlung* attributed to Modrone belonged to Federigo's cousin, Carlo Gonzaga di Bozzolo. This armour (pl. 7) is embossed with finely executed scrolling foliage in a manner evidently inspired by the fashion introduced by the Negroli family in Milan and best represented by the armour '*con mascheroni*' made for the Emperor Charles V in 1539 (Madrid A 139). Much the same treatment can be seen, though in more elaborate form on the Orso design reproduced in pl. 4. This drawing of an armour intended for king Henri II of France shows the breast and back embossed with a central feature composed of the shell of St. Michel and the crescent moon surmounted by a closed crown, as well as two versions of a pauldron *a l'antica* and two casques, of which one is decorated with the sun and moon. The other is embossed with the mask of an old man and is strikingly similar to a burgonet *a l'antica*, which with its companion shield is in the Vienna *Waffensammlung* and has been recognized as the work of Modrone. (pl. 8) In this helmet, therefore, we have a piece believed to have been wrought by Modrone, of which a closely similar design by Orso exists. It is, of course, also possible that Orso first saw the Modrone casque and produced another version of it, but the usual procedure would be the reverse, namely that the armourer looked to the designer to produce a scheme of decoration for the armour he wrought.

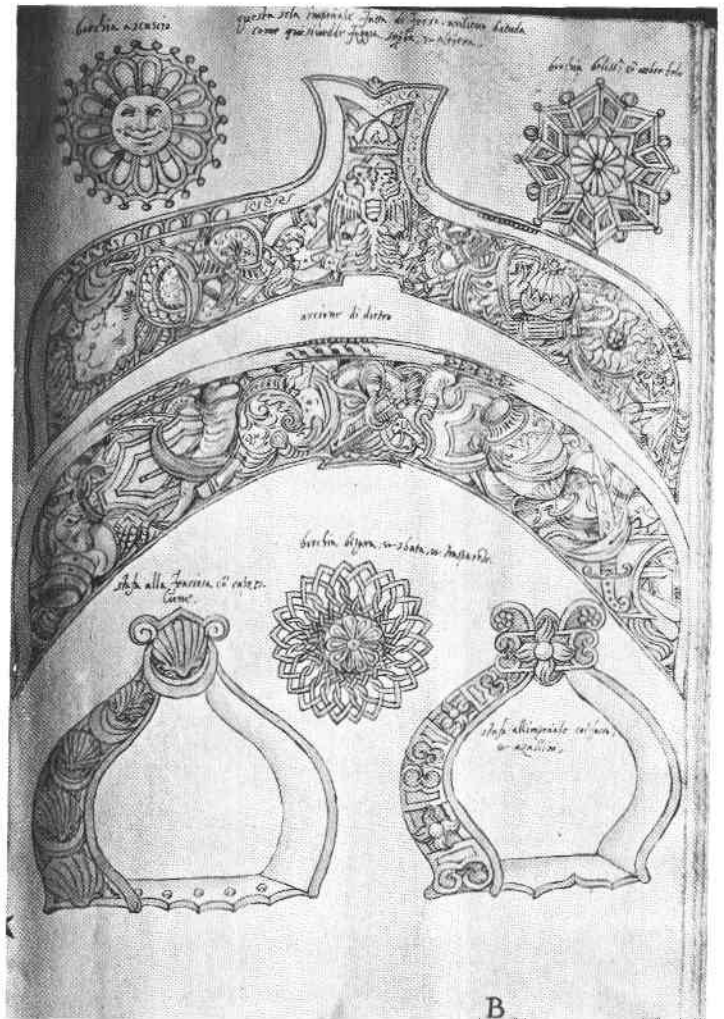


Plate 8. Saddle plates embossed with trophies of arms and the double eagle of the Habsburg Emperor, stirrup with the device of the Golden Fleece and another with the shell of St. Michael.

The likely course of events would be for Orso to have produced a design for Modrone, which, after acceptance, would have been followed by a working drawing. After the helmet had been produced Orso would have included a version of his original drawing in his book of design.

The decoration of this burgonet also resembles that of another which once belonged to the Emperor Charles V and is now in the Waddesdon Collection at Waddesdon Manor.<sup>6</sup> This burgonet is shown in the *Inventario Illuminado* of the armoury of Charles V on the same page as the Modrone armour of 1536. Curiously enough, it cannot have belonged to this armour, though it must have become associated with it, as it is damascened and not embossed, whereas the decoration of the armour is damascened, with embossed palmleaf borders. There is, however, no reason to reject the generally accepted attribution to Modrone. Thus there are two surviving embossed helmets attributable to Modrone which seem to derive from designs by Orso. Further evidence in favour of the theory of an established relationship between Orso and Modrone is provided by a portrait at Schloss Ambras of Carlo Gonzaga wearing the embossed armour which is now at Vienna (pl. 7). This shows a burgonet at his side decorated in a manner very similar to the Waddesdon burgonet and the Orso designs.

The list of elements of armour decorated with scrolling

foliage in the manner associated with Orso and Modrone can be expanded by a few further examples. These include to casque (pl. 9) in the Wallace Collection (No. A 108), the form and ornament of which can be found on several Orso drawings; the gauntlet in the Tower of London Armouries (pl. 10) which recalls the decoration of the Carlo Gonzaga gauntlets (pl. 7), and the horse armour, also attributed to Modrone, which is now split between the Este armoury, now in the castle of Konopiste, south of Prague, and the Bargello, Florence, where one of the saddle plates is preserved.<sup>8</sup> These last pieces are decorated with a gilt vine leaf trail in relief against a blued ground. Duke Federigo's mother was Isabella d'Este, sister of Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, so the presence of armour by Modrone in the Este armoury is not unlikely. It is not known how the saddle-plate came to Florence.

Among his helmet designs, Orso includes two that are decorated with French royal devices and two with those of the Empire. One drawing shows a most ungainly pot helmet described by Orso as a *celada*; its decoration incorporates the shell of St. Michael, the crescent moon, dolphins, the fleur de lys and, on a medallion attached in front like a badge, a full-length figure of St. Michael (pl. 11). Orso claims that the helmet is very beautiful and convenient, bearing all the devices of the King of France. A second drawing shows another helmet

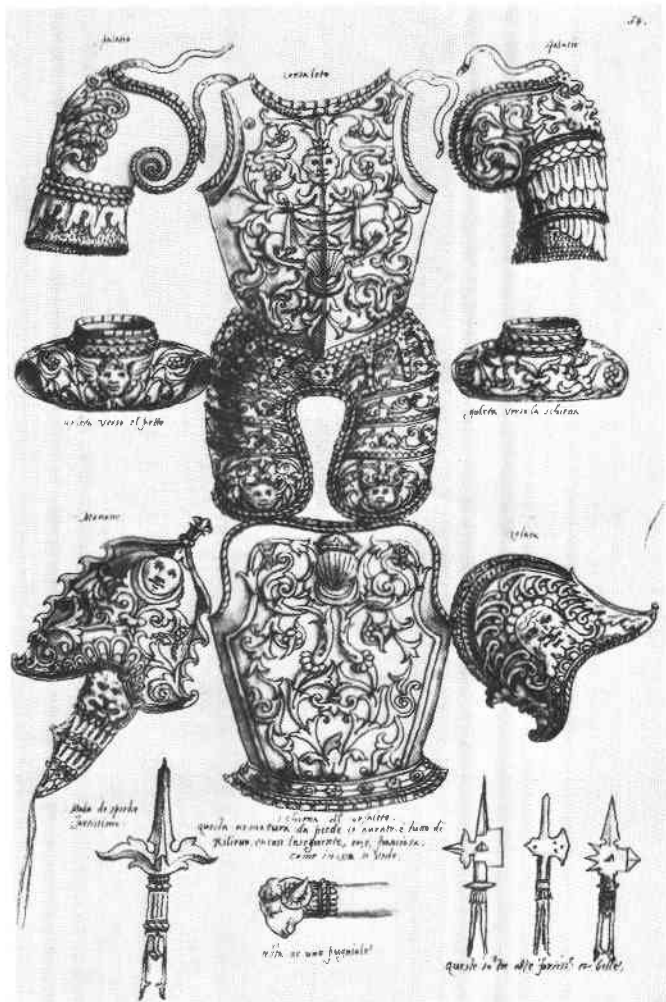


Plate 4. Drawing of half armour bearing the devices of Henri II, King of France with alternative designs for a burgonet.

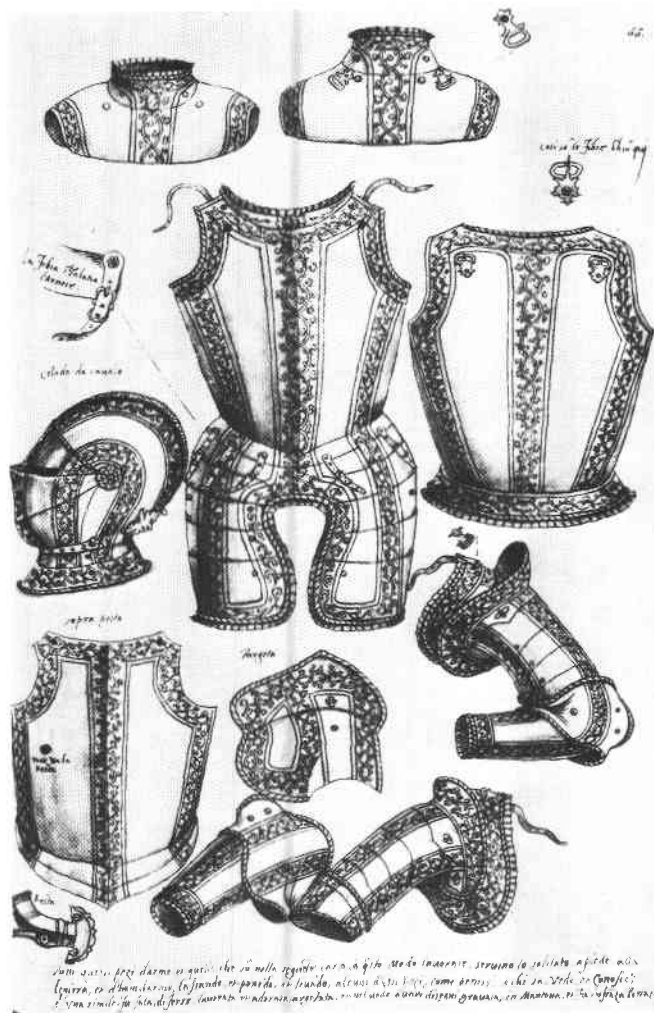


Plate 5. Drawing of a field armour with extra pieces for the joust.

decorated with fleur de lys, crescent moon and, at the top of the ear-strap, a shell, while on the side of the skull is the crowned letter F, presumably for Francois I, who died in 1547. Here Orso was in error as the crescent moon is not an appropriate device for Francois I. He comments that this burgonet was intended for display rather than war and, on the Wolfenbuttel drawing, praises the beauty of the breastplate. The presence of so many drawings relating to the king of France is surprising, as Federigo Gonzaga was allied with Charles V, who was constantly at war with Francois I of France. They are probably to be regarded as advertisement or wishful thinking. There are also two drawings of helmets with imperial devices; one of the hideous pot form is decorated with the letter K for Karolus, the Burgundy Cross and the fleece and fire steel of the Order of the Golden Fleece. Orso merely comments that it is a *l'imperiale* and bears the devices of the imperial order. The second helmet, a burgonet, (pl. 12) has the double-eagle on the side of the skull while the crest takes the form of an eagle's head rising from an orle. The front and back of the helmet are clasped in sprays of palm-leaves. Orso states that this celada *e alla imperiale*, but he can only mean that it is imperial in style, for the double-eagle without a crown above and the eagle crest would not be appropriate for the Emperor himself.



Plate 6. Drawing of armour for a man at arms *alla Italiana*.

While these helmets decorated with devices of the Emperor and the French king do not seem to have met with favour, other designs amongst the Orso drawings are close to existing casques, though not so far so that they can have served as models. Thus the embossed casque *a l'antica* of Archduke Ferdinand of Tirol in the Vienna *Waffensammlung* (pl. 13), of which there is a second version in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, combines features of two drawings, one in the London Codex (pl. 14) and the other in the Wolfenbuttel Codex. Orso's comments on these are enlightening. In the London version he describes his design as bizarre, but very beautiful and comfortable as well. The Wolfenbuttel version is said to be suitable for warfare or for the masque, in which case the breastplate could be made of stucco. Each Codex includes one quite simple casque design corresponding to the usual form, of which numerous examples survive. The type is represented by examples in various collections, including the Victoria and Albert Museum<sup>7</sup> and the Wallace Collection (pl. 15) (nos. A 94 and 97). Of these the first has already been attributed to Modrone. Blair<sup>8</sup> also attributes an other casque in the Hermitage, Leningrad, to him.

Another neighboring court to Mantua was that of the Farnese family, Dukes of Parma and Piacenza. The Farnese armoury, now at Naples, has been little researched since my own publications of 1956/7 in the Swiss journal *Arms Anciennes*<sup>9</sup>. These established that their main commissions went to the workshops of the Milanese armourer, Pompeo della Chiesa. However, the series of burgonets which were worn by the body



Plate 7. Armour of Carlo Gonzaga di Bozzolo, attributed to Caremolo Modrone, circa 1540, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Plate 8. Burgonet and shield attributed to Caremolo Modrone, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Plate 9. Burgonet attributed to Caremolo Modrone, Wallace Collection.

guard of Pier Luis Farnese, decorated on each side with the Farnese lily flanked by scrolling foliage, while the crest is embossed with gadrooning of the type frequently seen on Orso drawings. (pl. 16) These may, again, have been wrought by Modrone, who, like other artisans of his day, would have been happy to accept a large order for less finely finished pieces as well as the fine armour intended to be worn by princes.

Summing up, there is much evidence in the way of surviving armour to support the theory of a working partnership between Filippo Orso and Caremolo Modrone; one complete armour, an incomplete horse armour, five burgonets and perhaps, the burgonets of the bodyguard of Duke Pierluigi of Parma and Piacenza. Not all the Orso drawings were intended for the armourer: one in the London Codex shows an equestrian figure in Roman armour, described in the Wolfenbittel Codex as *Cavalier Greco*, with horse trappings decorated with numerous volutes, which could, according to Orso, conveniently be made of cardboard. The mask costumes include several others after classical models; more curious is one in the Wolfenbittel Codex, showing a mounted German soldier brandishing a wheel-lock pistol. He proposes this also as a mask costume and mentions that this type of soldier was known in Italy as *Ferrarola*.

While many of Orso's helmet designs are ungainly and even ridiculous, his designs for sword hilts show that he was familiar with the problems of hilt construction and ingenious in devising new forms. The main feature of his designs is their complexity with not only quillons, knuckle bow, arms of the guard and counter guards, but often with additional guards between upper ring and knuckle bow. Most of the designs provide for lavish chiselled ornament in more or less high relief, frequently introducing figure subjects wrought in the round, which would have called for great sculptural skill on the part of the hilt-maker. In the great variety of detailed ornament which Orso introduces in his designs, he follows contemporary Mannerist fashion with emphasis placed on originality rather than beauty of effect. There is a difference between the London and the



Plate 16. Burgonet of the Guard of Pier Luigi Farnese, Duke of Parma and Piacenza. Victoria and Albert Museum.

Wolfenbittel codices; in the former each sword drawing is accompanied by notes recommending its merits and suggesting the materials requisite for its construction, whereas in the Wolfenbittel version, Orso provides an introduction on the first sheet, but does not comment on them page by page. His remarks are curiously naive. In translation they are as follows:

"Here begin the designs of swords for fighting on foot or on horseback. They show many varieties of hilts both in construction and in carved decoration, as one may see one after another in the following pages. They can be made of iron and, according to taste, of large or smaller dimensions, gilt all over or in part, silvered or given a russet finish. These hilts delight not only on account of their beauty and understanding, but of the excellence of their design. Furthermore, if these designs are executed by a master skilled in such matters, they will render honorable service to any valorous knight worthy of them to his satisfaction and praise. I shall not describe each sword individually as I have already written enough".

The designs recall in general those in the contemporary pattern book of the Lyon master, Pierre Woeriot, published in 1555, but whereas the Lyon designs are of a delicacy and elaboration which could only have been executed in precious metal<sup>10</sup> (pl. 17), the Orso hilts were intended to be of iron. A number of Orso's designs show hilts without a knuckle bow; this he refers to as "alla maniera dinanzi", i.e. in the former manner, showing that by the mid century, the more complex hilt with knuckle bow was usual. In his sword, as in his helmet designs, Orso introduces crowded and over elaborate Mannerist ornament, requiring the fourbisseur to render iron in forms more appropriate to some softer material. Occasionally, in the London codex, he refers to practical considerations, as in the design of one hilt decorated with festoons of laurel, warning the maker that the points of the foliage must not be rendered in too high relief or they would tear the clothing or injure the hand. Though, on the whole, surviving Italian hilts are less prickly than those designed by Orso, his drawings can be accepted as a reliable guide to the Italian sword of the mid-16th century.



Plate 10. Gauntlet for the right hand attributed to Caremolo Modrone, Tower of London, Armouries.

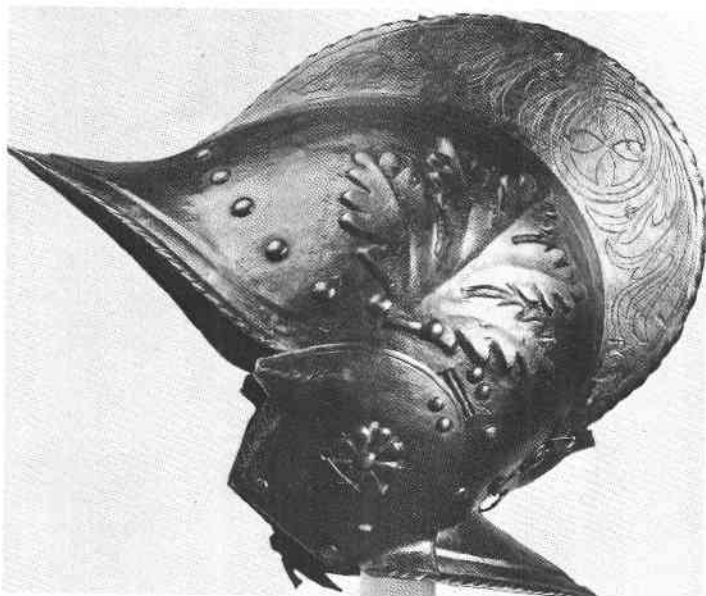


Plate 13. Burgonet of Archduke Ferdinand of Tirol attributed to Filippo Negrolì of Milan, circa 1563. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Plate 15. Italian burgonet, third quarter of 16th century. Wallace Collection.



The Orso hilt designs cover the whole range of constructions then fashionable in Italy. The type which appears most frequently has either straight quillons or quillons curving in opposite directions in either the horizontal or vertical plane, two ring guards and arms between them (pl. 18). In the captions to the London Codex he describes this type as old fashioned and it is curious that he should nevertheless represent it so frequently. The explanation is presumably that Orso was assembling a collection of drawings which he had produced over a long period. There are also three variants of the construction without knuckle bow: one has only one ring which joins the lower ends of the arms; the second has a loop guard running obliquely between the two rings; the third has a ring or loop running obliquely from the upper end of the rear arm to the lower end of the forward arm, while a single bar projects at right angles from the lower end of the rear arm. Other constructions include the most popular type of the 16th century, that is, with two rings, one at each end of the arms and a knuckle bow (pl. 19). An alternative form of this particular construction has an oblique ring between the forward end of the quillon block and the rear arm, and a bar projecting at right angles from the lower end of the front arm (pl. 20). Another form shows the oblique loop running from the lower end of the rear arm joining the knuckle bow half way between quillon block and pommel. This type is frequently encountered on hilts of the second half of the 16th century, but without the forward quillon which Orso shows.

The next group consists of half basket hilts with one or more bars extending from the arms to join the knuckle bow (pl. 21). There are eight different versions of this hilt. It does not seem to have been popular, for few extant examples are known, ex-

cept in the even more complex version of the schiavona. Finally, Orso shows four designs for curved swords, which he calls *Cortelacci*, i.e., cutlasses, but which we should probably describe as scimitars. These all have quillons turned in opposite directions and the pommel in the form of an eagle's, lion's or monster's head. (pl. 22)

Considering the designs as a whole, the development was from a hilt with arms and single ring to double ring to which were added knuckle bow and oblique bars until finally a half basket hilt is formed. Italian hilts of this period often have metal grips of baluster shape, a type which is also represented in the Orso drawings. One curious feature should be noticed: in surviving swords the arms of the guard usually correspond with the ricasso of the blade, but in Orso's drawings, the ricasso extends well below the space covered by the arms. This may be of some encouragement to collectors, who, finding that the ricasso of a sword in their collection is longer than the distance enclosed by the arms, have assumed that the blade must have been changed subsequently.

In some of his sword designs Orso has inscribed two or more letters on the ricasso. Their meaning is not known; two of the Wolfenbuttel drawings bear two monograms PHE and VR inscribed one on each side of the langet. Another is inscribed F.O., another in the London Codex Z.F. (pl. 22). Presumably they relate to the client who had commissioned the design, for bladesmiths signed their work with marks rather than initials.

We can now return to Caremolo Modrone, whose name is referred to in the Mantua records in connection with the supply of swords as well as armour. When he delivered the second armour to Charles V in 1536, the Emperor expressed a wish to have the *Dagone*, presumably a dagger or short sword, as soon



Plate 11. Drawing of helmet with devices of Henri II.



Plate 12. Drawing of helmet with imperial devices.

as possible. Further, in 1537 and again in 1539, he was in communication with the Brescian bladesmith, Antonio Serafine di Gardone, concerning the supply of blades for which he was presumably to supply the hilts. I am now entering the realm of pure speculation, but it is interesting to recall that some years ago, a magnificent Italian sword (pl. 23) was acquired by the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. This sword was thought to be one of the pieces stolen from the Armeria Real, Madrid, in the 1830's, which were subsequently sold by auction at Christies. The Fountaine collection, from which it came, had included other pieces from Madrid acquired at this sale. The sword, or at least, the hilt, for the blade has been changed, is of the period of Charles V and the quality is worthy of him. Its design is very similar to those in the Orso Codex and my suggestion is that this hilt might have been commissioned from a Mantuan master after a design by Orso and sent as a gift from Federigo Gonzaga to Charles V. Only in the Orso drawings can one find both construction and decoration corresponding to the highly individual form of this particular hilt.

#### NOTES

1. J. G. Mann, *The Lost Armoury of the Gonzagas*, *Archaeological Journal*, XCV, 1938, p. 240/336
2. L.G. Boccia and E. Coelao, *Armi Bianche Italiane*, Milan, 1975.
3. A. Bertolotti, *Arti Minori alla Corte de Mantova*, Milan, 1889.
4. O. Gamber, *L'Arte Milanese dell'Armatura in Storia di Milano*, Vol. XI, p. 758-760
5. Gamber, *op. cit.* p. 767
6. C. Blair, *The James de Rothschild Collection, Arms Armour and Metalwork*, London, 1974, p. 21-27.
7. C. Blair *op. cit.* p. 26
8. ill. Boccia, *L'Arte dell'Armatura in Italia*, Milan, 1967, No. 254
9. *op. cit.* p. 27

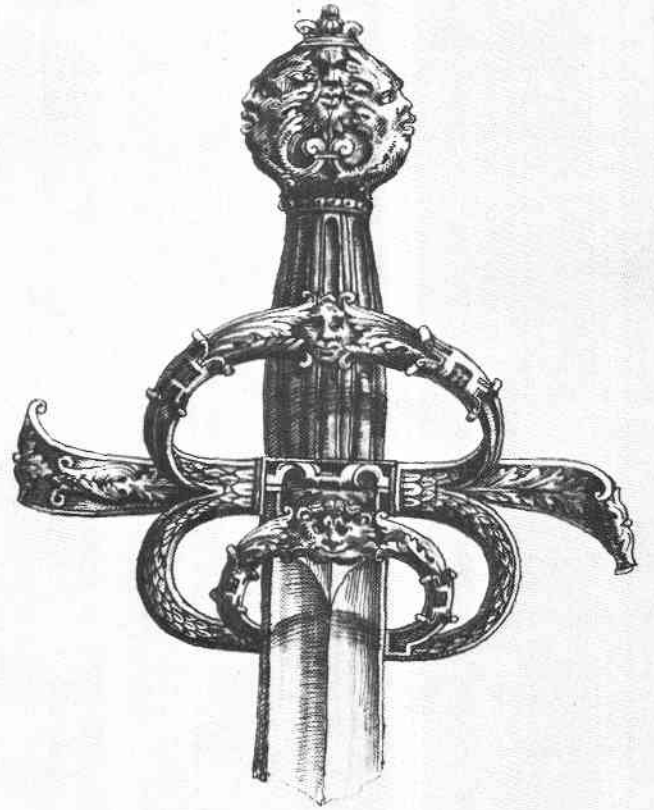


Plate 17. Design for a sword hilt by Pierre Woeriot, Lyon, 1555.



Plate 14. Drawing of burgonet embossed with a lion mask.

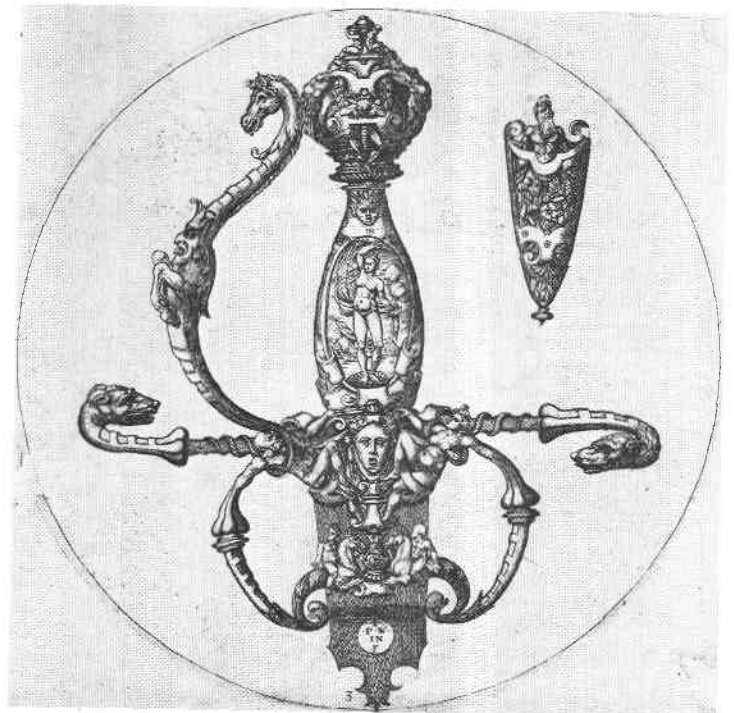


Plate 18. Drawing of sword hilt of old-fashioned design.

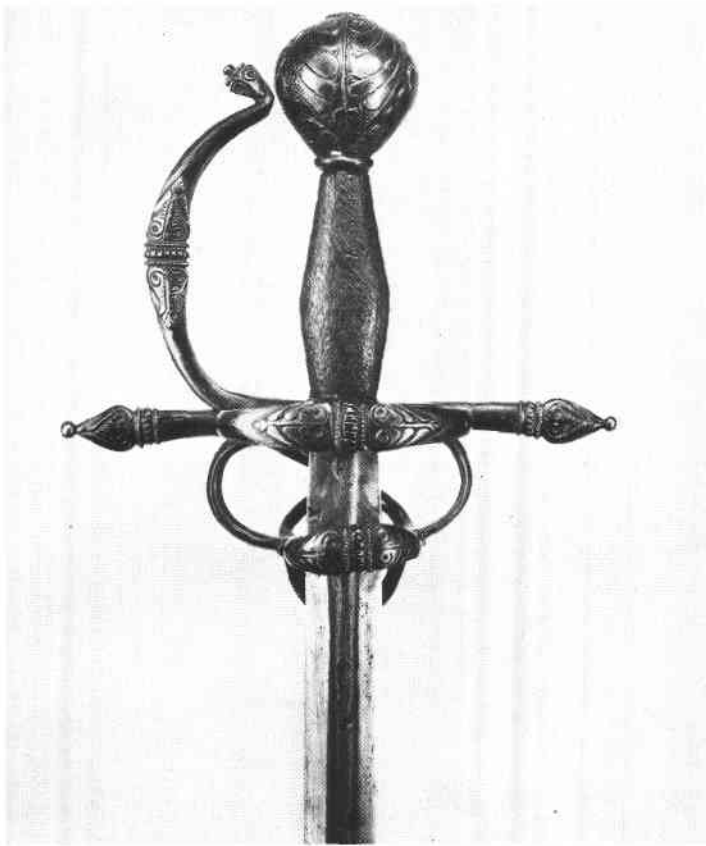


Plate 19. Sword, Italian, mid 16th century.

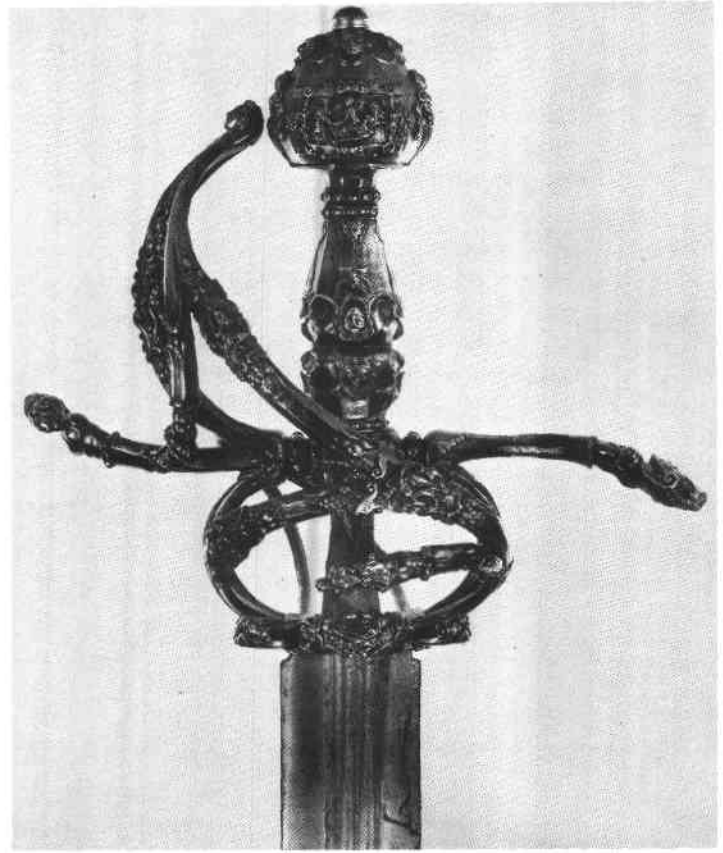


Plate 23. Sword hilt of chiseled iron, perhaps made in Mantua after a design by Orso.

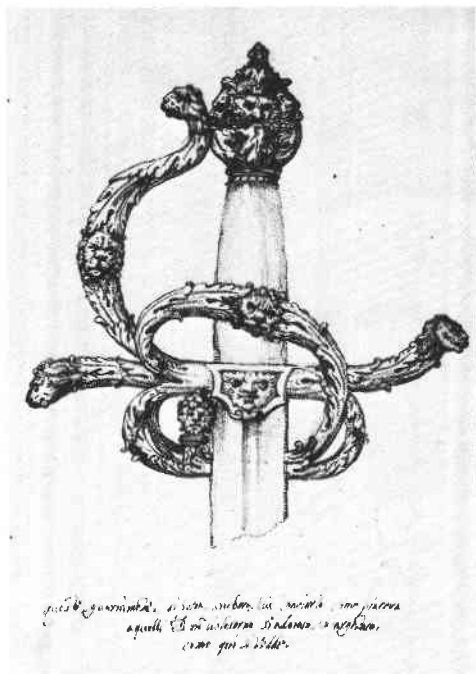


Plate 20. Sword hilt design by Filippo Orso.

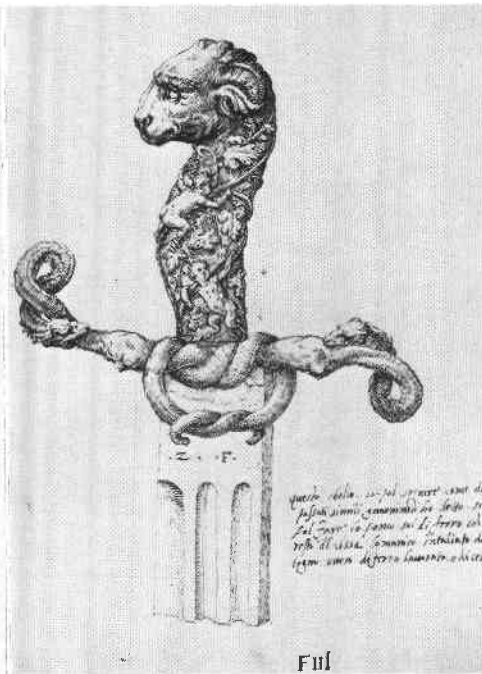


Plate 22. Design for a scimitar by Orso.

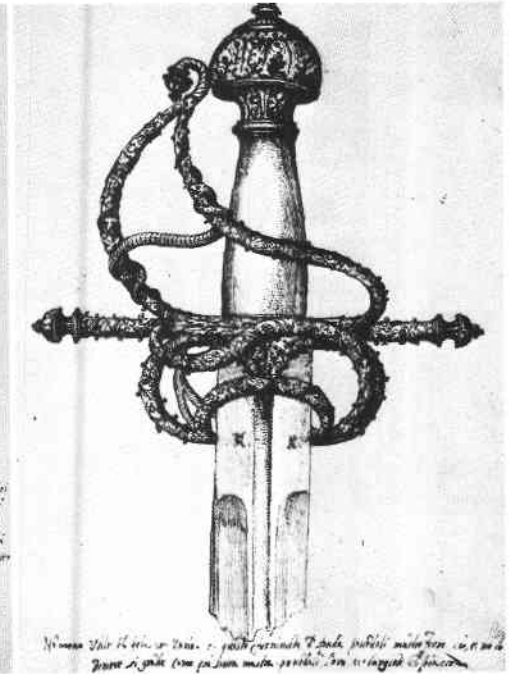


Plate 21. Half basket hilt design by Orso.