



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

# Castle of Monreale

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology

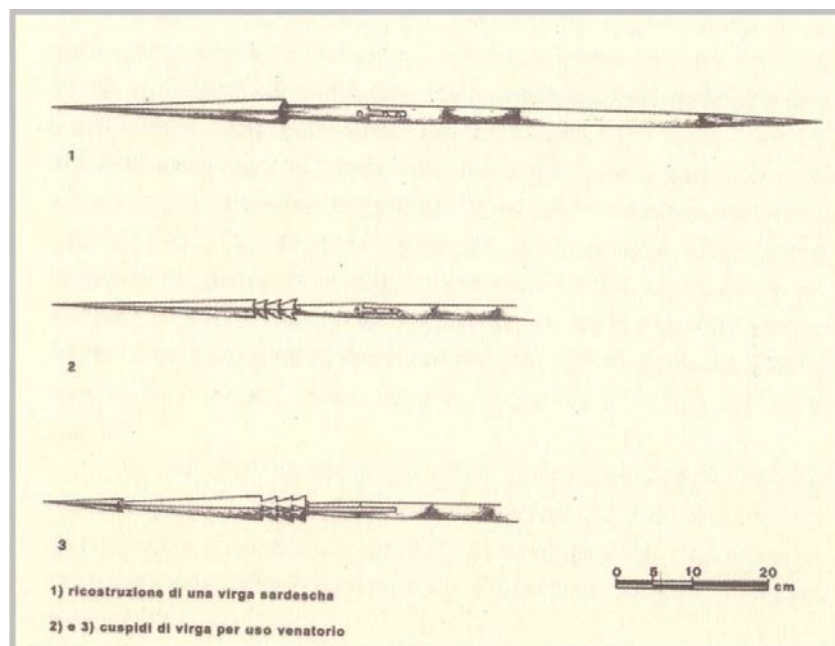


## ■ Some “Sardinian” medieval weapons

Some weapons used in Sardinia are mentioned in several documents from the middle ages: the *virga*, the *verruto*, the *partigiana*, the *stocco*<sup>1</sup>.

### ■ The *virga*

There is no preserved example, therefore a description can only be made based on the information found in the reading of Sardinian documents from the Middle Ages. We learn that the *virga* (fig. 1) was a weapon that was thrown, sometimes called a *iaculum*; it was therefore a type of javelin, i.e. a weapon with a pole and iron. It was used in Sardinia from the 12th to the 17th century, by knights, foot soldiers and the “masses”, before being overtaken by the crossbow (16th century) and then firearms. At the end of the 17th century, no more information was found about this weapon.



**Fig. 1** - Hypothetical reconstruction of the Sardinian *virga* (from G. Fois 2007, p. 120).

<sup>1</sup> For these “Sardinian” weapons, please see Fois’s precise analysis, from 2007, pages 23-122.

It is likely that each soldier had more than one with him to avoid being disarmed once he had thrown the lance. The handle was in the centre of the rod, while the iron or tip was square in section and a pyramid in shape. It was used to thrust through chain mail and the hauberk; it was not suitable for use with downward blows. According to some experts, if the swordsman was able, the *virga* could strike precisely up to 50 metres away. It was easy to construct.

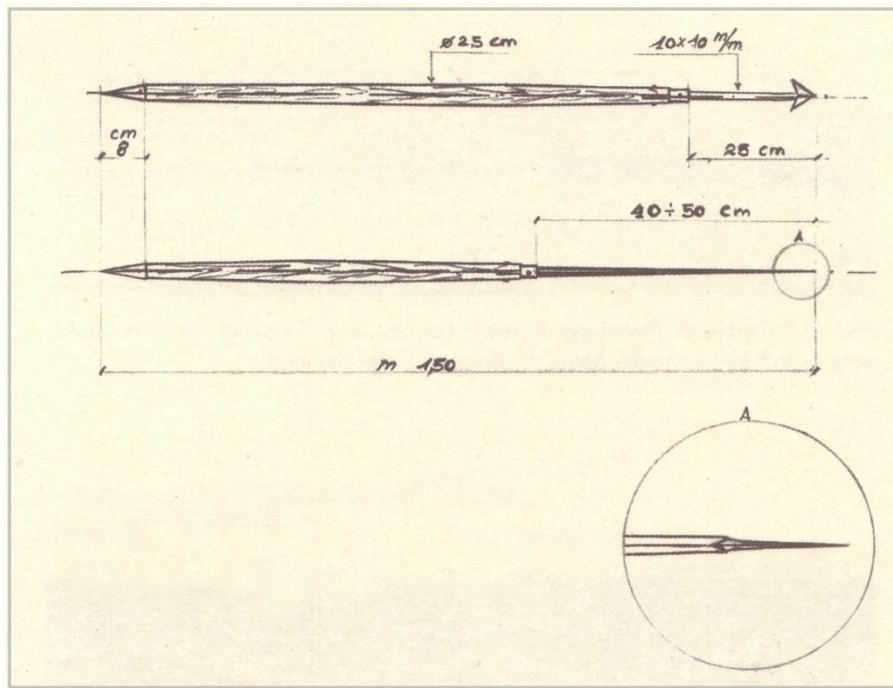
Using the *virga*, meaning a throwing weapon, meant preferring a fight without a front-on blow, without contact with the opponent. The *virga* used in this way was a weapon adapted to ambushes and useful for a type of fighting similar to guerrilla warfare<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem.*

## ■ The *verruto*

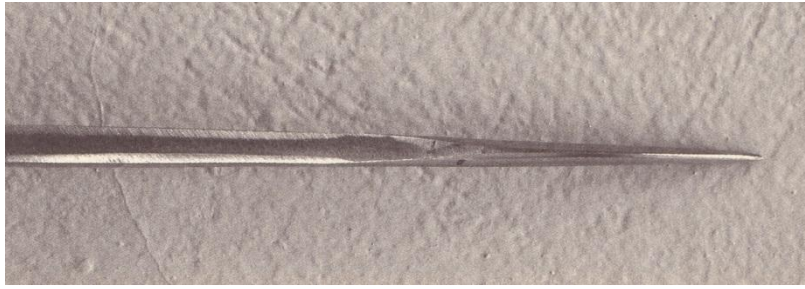
The *verruto* (or *birrudu*, *berudu*, *berrudu*) was another Sardinian pole weapon similar to the *virga*, but less common in Middle Ages documentation (figs. 2-3).



**Fig. 2** - Hypothetical reconstruction of the *birrudu* (from G. Fois 2007, p. 122).

However, the *verruto*, unlike the *virga*, lasted longer and so, centuries later, in the 19th century, a weapon with the same name was described by experts and travellers. In 1826, Alberto Della Marmora<sup>3</sup> said that the *berudu* was widespread in many areas of Sardinia and described it as a weapon that is not a javelin or a lance, and the iron was 25 cm long and attached to a pole that was a metre and a half. Therefore according to Della Marmora the weapon was 1.75 metres long in total, including pole and tip.

<sup>3</sup> DELLA MARMORA 1926, p. 197.



**Fig. 3** - Hypothetical reconstruction of the *birrudu* (from G. Fois 2007, p. 122).

About ten years after Della Marmora, Vittorio Angius<sup>4</sup> described the verruto as a real lance, 3.14 metres long including pole and tip. Giovanni Spano<sup>5</sup> defined it as a "*schidione*", i.e. A kind of roasting spit.

The *birrudu*, at least in the Middle Ages, as documents from the time show, was a weapon to be thrown, but later sources described it as a lance.

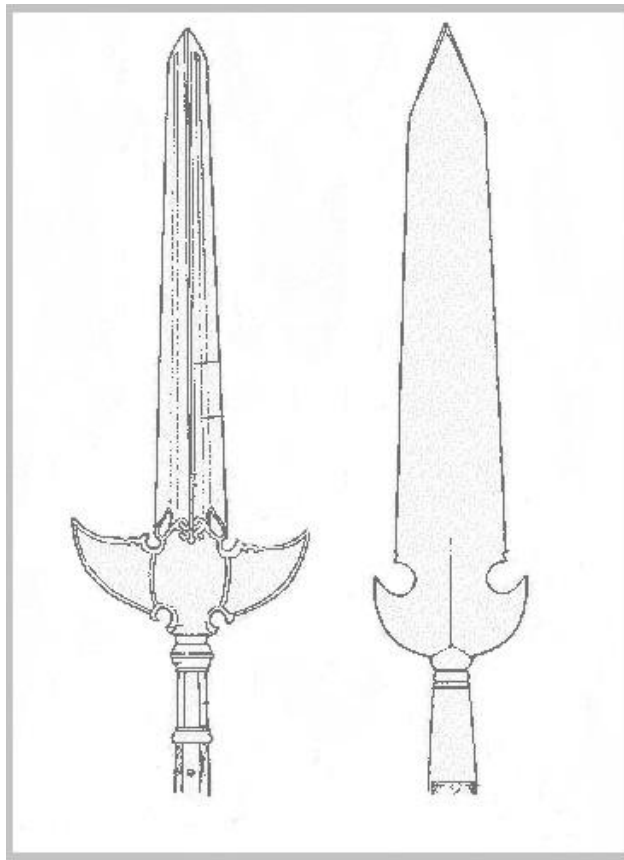
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<sup>4</sup> ANGIUS 1851, p. 544.

<sup>5</sup> SPANO 1864, p. 135.

## ■ The *partigiana*

The *partigiana* (fig. 4) is another pole weapon that we find is mentioned in a Sardinian context. It had a symmetrical iron with two wide straight cutting blades, at the base of which there may have been some blocking wings that are an integral part of the blade and always aiming upwards. It has a thrusting action and a downward blow. The weapon could perforate or cut<sup>6</sup>.



**Fig. 4** - Examples of “partigiana” (from <http://www.earmi.it/armi/glossario/glossario18.htm>).

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<sup>6</sup> TROSO 1988, p. 29.

## ■ The *stocco*

The *stocco* was a kind of spit, with a long blade, triangular in shape and rhomboid in section, narrow, without an incision and sharp at the tip. It was tied to the saddlebow and was only handled for the tip, sometimes as a long sword, other times as a lance<sup>7</sup>. It was used from the end of the 13th century to the mid 18th century. It was mainly used to perforate armour, especially plate armour.

Some documents show that the *stocco* was a pole weapon, with an average length of 1.5-2 metres, used on horseback but in close-up combat.

In Sardinia, the first witnessed use was later than in the rest of Europe. Some documents speak of the weapon from the beginning of the 17th century. Currently the *stocco* used by the Sartiglia horsemen is made from wood, but in the past it was metal.

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<sup>7</sup> Fois 2007, p. 117.

## ■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Maria Grazia Arru.

Preliminary research by Dr. Valeria Paretta and Dr. Daniele Corda.

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## La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



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