

**SMITHS, GUNNERS AND APOTHECARIES
IN THE WAR PRODUCTION OF RENAISSANCE FLORENCE**

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Abstract

This paper examines the market of weapons during the Florentine *Quattrocento*, from the early conflicts against the Visconti until the first years of the Pisan war. The aim is the reconstruction of the whole economic phenomenon through the entire century, analyzing the qualitative standards achieved by Tuscan craftsmen before and after the appearance and the assimilation of the most efficient French artilleries into Italian warfare.

Data have been collected essentially from the State Archive of Florence. Fiscal sources (*catasto, decima*) and the documentation of guilds provided the information on artisans and their workshops. The registers of military officers (*Dieci di Balìa* and *Otto di Pratica*) offered the opportunity to underline the leading role of public demand in the introduction of technical changes and innovative tools. Last but not least, the sources offer the opportunity to highlight the migrations of the *pratici* and their collaboration with soldiers, captains and gunners.

The results of the research demonstrate that the *commune* actually enhanced its management of war production, fostering improvements in the fabrication of materiel, especially of firearms: even a mere quantitative study reveals a significant growth in the market. Several artisans were employed in manufacturing *munizioni* and in supplying armies and fortresses with artilleries, armor and so on. Even artists like Andrea del Verrocchio could have been involved in the casting of a *bombarda grossa*, in the capital of the Renaissance, during those years.

From the viewpoint of a reassessment of the Florentine military institutions in the fifteenth century, economic evidences make fairly clear that the received historiographical wisdom of a “backwardness” of the Republic is not accurate at all.