

**Manufacturing the war:
Armourers and arms production in Portugal (15th - 16th centuries)**

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The history of arms manufacture and of the establishment of armourers in the Iberia Peninsula is still little known. It is recognized that, like in other European regions, the peninsular kingdoms benefited from a significant entry of Italian arms makers, as well as from the importation of fine Italian armour. But it is assumed that only in the 16th century emerged an important centre of production of high-quality armours in Iberia, at the same time that the influence of the Habsburgs increased the request of armour made in southern Germany by the peninsular aristocracy. Besides those general arguments, there is a significant historical void to fill.

The lack of knowledge is particularly evident about the armourers working in Portugal during the medieval and the early modern period. In fact, their social status, their geographical origins, their works, their materials and techniques, are virtually unexplored. Arms and arms production research in Portugal is still a marginal issue in the Military History studies, due mostly to the limitation of sources specifically linked to the topic.

In my PhD thesis research, aiming the study of arms in Portugal, I'm dedicating a considerable part of the writing precisely to the service of armourers in the Portuguese territory during, roughly, the 15th and 16th centuries. In this context, the paper will focus on the identification of the makers of arms and amours, their labour in different locations and positions, their expertise and work techniques, as well as the organization of the administrative structure of armourers and their workshops in Portugal. In order to do this, it is essential to analyse two different groups of documents: royal sources, as the Royal Chancery, which will give a broader view of the existing armourers in Portugal; and the municipal documents that regulate the labour of mechanical officers, including the different expertises of arms fabrication, allowing a very detailed study of this activity. It will be also important to understand the highly specialization of some craftsman in the production of certain weapons or components; to comprehend the

probable increase of armourers as the Portuguese empire grows; and to enquire the apparent professionalization of the activity.

At this conference, it will be interesting to discuss these problems by comparing Portugal and other European locations, for instance considering the specialization on some weapons; or by confronting this period with later chronologies, looking for the evolution and unequivocal professionalization of the arms industry that eventually occurred.