

**Poveda-Balbuena, Miguel Luis, and José Belda-Medina. 2023. *Armamento medieval inglés (1100–1500): Estudio lingüístico-histórico*. Granada: Comares. Pp. 148. ISBN 9788413-695983.**

Reviewed by Christopher Langmuir   
University of Seville

Like the armour and weaponry it glosses, this slim volume is something of a relic of a bygone age. If at the time of writing his survey of Scientific and Technical Dictionaries (mid-2006), Michael Hoare could describe the digital revolution as “in full spate,” it seeming “inevitable that online sources will become increasingly dominant, and that hard-copy paper publication will in time become a matter of antiquarian curiosity” (Hoare 2009, 92), how much more so is this the case almost twenty years on? Although *Armamento medieval inglés (1100–1500)*, henceforth AMI, is subtitled “Estudio lingüístico-histórico,” the studies—historical and linguistic, such as they are—essentially serve as preface and postlude for the bilingual glossary which takes up 75 of the volume’s 131 pages.

“Chapter One” is a breathless gallop through the highs and lows (mostly (b)lows) of England’s rampant feuding and near-constant warfare up until the death of Henry Tudor (1509). Not a single monarch from William I to Henry is allowed to go without mention but arguably the chapter would have better focused on lower social strata, the landed gentry that commissioned, traded and plundered the ever heftier weaponry and armour required for brutally killing without being killed. It was they too who embellished and decorated armour in pursuit of prestige and power and some discussion of symbolism, functionality and aesthetics, as well of more mundane aspects such as metallurgy, weight and velocities, would have been welcome. There are some minor blemishes in points of detail in this section. Despite a statement to the contrary (2), nowhere does Hadrian’s Wall coincide with the present-day border between England and Scotland, even in the west. Edward the Confessor died in January, not June 1066 and for “Haroldo III de Noruega” better to read “Harald Hardrada.”

The entries in the “Glossary” itself, 202 terms in total, are alphabetically arranged and are culled, along with spelling variants and citations, principally from the *MED* and/or *OED*. The corpus employed (*CAIM23* or *MEWC23* in English, see *Middle English Weaponry Corpus (MEWC)*, Poveda Balbuena 2016) is an improved and enlarged version of another first published by the authors in 2016. Spanish translations are supplied with the definitions and, irregularly, an

independent Spanish translation equivalent is offered but without any contrastive analysis or discussion. Each term is classified typologically (offensive/defensive, shooting, close-combat, etc.) and etymologically (loanword or native). If attested before 1100, the term is also assigned a date of “first apparition/primeraparición.” This reader baulked at false-friendly “apparition” in this context and thought rather of the first apparition (in full suit of armour as it happened) of the ghost of Hamlet’s father. In the play he could be recognized since “he wore his beaver up.” Though Shakespeare lies outside the temporal scope of the glossary, *beaver* has a lineage and is duly recorded in AMI:

**Bavier**, bavour, beaver (*MED*)

Beaver (*OED*)[footnote omitted]

A piece of plate armor protecting the chin and throat (*MED*) / Una pieza de la armadura de placa que protege la barbilla y la garganta.

Body armor / Armamento corporal

[citations omitted]

Loanword / Préstamo F. OF bavière (*OED*)

Readers of the 15th-century satirical *Coplas de la Panadera* might recall one of the combatants at the Battle of Olmedo who, “temblándole la contera . . . del grandísimo temor le recreció cagalerá;/ fuyendo en la delantera,/ cuasi fuera de sentido,/ todo cuanto había comido/ trastornó por la babera” (ll. 393–401). Enrique de Leguina’s compendious *Voces de Armería*, absent from the bibliography, defines *babera* as “una pieza de la armadura de cabeza que cubría la barba, boca y quijadas; ‘Bavera ó gorjal’, dice el *Libro del exercicio de las armas*” (de Leguina 1912, 127). It is in this and other instances of omission and lack of expository or contrastive discussion that AMI rather fails its readers. Ostensibly for academic researchers, students of philology and history, and those interested in historical linguistics and European military history (xii), it is difficult to imagine any of these not being lured elsewhere. Perhaps if differently conceived and online, the project’s utility would have been enhanced. The University of Manchester’s *The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project* (n.d.) has tabs for research, dictionaries, searchable database and gallery. It is instructive to compare the respective entries for *tippet*, an item of attire that was and still is primarily cloth and in a single recorded instance, probably mail. AMI has nothing to say on the etymology whereas in the former there is an extended discussion.<sup>1</sup>

The lack of any illustrative support is a definite disadvantage in a lexical field where visualization is crucial to understanding. This is amply demonstrated by

<sup>1</sup> “*Speculative*, Probably from the ME noun *tip(pe)*, the ‘tip’ of something, (but cf. 15th century Old French *tipet* and Anglo L *tipetum*). The OED suggests there might also be a connection with OE *tæpped*, *tæppet* (a carpet or hanging) from L *tapete*, *tapeta*, *tapetum* (a carpet, tapestry, bed-cover, etc.), but phonology and sense are problematic (s.v. *tippet*, n., OED, 2nd ed., 1989).”

comparison with three substantial *Medieval Arms & Armour Sourcebooks*, the first published in 2022 and remaining two in 2024, that overlap and in many respects supersede the volume under review, albeit not in Spanish (Moffat 2022, 2024a, 2024b). Each volume is equipped with an ample illustrated glossary. Again, it is instructive to compare entries. The *salette* is “a light helmet, bowl-shaped, flaring and extended in the back, sometimes incorporating a visor” (*MED*). To the translation of this definition, AMI adds Spanish *celada* and provides the *MED* citations and etymology from OF *salade*, *salate*. Moffat, on the other hand, offers a short essay extending to well over a page on the origins and development of the *salette*. He also argues convincingly on phonological and other grounds for an Italian etymology unmediated by French and provides three photographs that allow us immediately to appreciate how it acquired a name conveying concealment (*celata*, Moffat 2024a, 21, 218–19).

It would be churlish, however, to dwell on AMI’s shortcomings and limited scope. “Chapter 4” is a short but valuable quantitative analysis of the origins of the terms glossed (predominantly French, with about 20% native and with input from Norse, Latin and, minimally, Celtic). There is some discussion of the medieval military revolution that generated much of the terminology (8–9). The section on lexical borrowing is sensible and up-to-date in terms of bibliography. Sometimes, outlandish theories, such as that of Emonds and Faarlund (2014), are stated without any comment or evaluation, but otherwise AMI is an interesting and meritorious conspectus of an arcane field.

## References

- de Leguina, Enrique. 1912. *Glosario de Voces de Armería: Apuntes reunidos por Enrique de Leguina, Barón de la Vega de Hoz*. Madrid: Librería de Felipe Rodríguez.
- Emonds, Joseph Embley, and Jan Terje Faarlund. 2014. *English, the Language of the Vikings*. Olomuc Modern Language Monographs 3. Olomuc: Palacky University Press.
- Hoare, Michael R. 2009. “Scientific and Technical Dictionaries.” In *The Oxford History of Lexicography: Volume II: Specialized Dictionaries*, edited by A. P. Cowie, 47–93. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Moffat, Ralph. 2022. *Medieval Arms & Armour: A Sourcebook. Volume 1, the Fourteenth Century*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
- Moffat, Ralph. 2024a. *Medieval Arms & Armour: A Sourcebook. Volume 2, 1400–1450*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
- Moffat, Ralph. 2024b. *Medieval Arms & Armour: A Sourcebook. Volume 3, 1450–1500*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.

Poveda Balbuena, Miguel Luis. 2016. "Orígenes y tipología de la terminología armamentística en inglés medio." PhD diss., University of Alicante.

The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project. n.d. "The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project," University of Manchester. <http://lexisproject.arts.manchester.ac.uk/research/index.html>.

(Received 10/06/2025)