

Abstract

The genre of military handbooks, classified as educational literature, has its roots in antiquity. A significant phase of its evolution came with the advent of the printing press, allowing the propagation of such titles via movable types in increasingly large quantities. Authored by experienced soldiers, these books primarily aimed to educate (prospective) officers on the fundamentals of modern warfare. Simultaneously, these often typographically elaborate volumes – supplemented with numerous educational illustrations – could represent a means for their owners to project self-image. In Central Europe, the proliferation of military handbooks began to surge noticeably after 1550, mainly driven by German printing production. This thesis explores the Central European transformation of this genre from the mid-16th to the mid-17th century, that is, until shortly after the end of the Thirty Years' War.

The research approach aligns with the cultural history of warfare and the *New Military History* movement. This school of thought strive to apply methods common in non-military historical research to military issues, and explore military history through underutilized or unexplored sources. The research methodology primarily involves retrospective bibliography, but also other quantitative and qualitative methods such as prosopography and analyses of text, typography, and illustrations.

Central European military handbooks from the early modern period have rarely been the centre of scholarly attention, with few examining them from a book history perspective. This thesis endeavours to address this research gap. It examines the genre from multiple angles. At the core, the text proposes a typology of early modern military manuals based on content and form. Relevant sub-genres into which each applicable book is categorized include military treatises, military mathematics, artillery, fortifications, military administration, and military art. Each book group is initially defined in broad strokes before introducing its representative works.

Subsequent chapters scrutinize military handbooks concerning the type of army they were designed for and the region of their origin. Attention is also focused on the illustrations of military handbooks, both the depictions in the text and the introductory illustrations. Consideration is given to the graphic techniques employed, the typology of the illustrations, and the subjects depicted. A separate chapter spotlights the originators of military handbooks – primarily authors, translators, printers, and publishers – characterizing these groups, their interrelationships, and presenting brief biographies of notable authors. The thesis concludes with a summary of the genre's evolution from antiquity to the end of the 17th century, emphasizing changes in Central European prints between 1550 and 1650. The appendices, particularly the *Catalogue of military handbooks printed in Central Europe between 1550 and 1650*, form an integral part of this work, cataloguing the books examined in this project.

Key words: Warfare – military handbooks – old prints – book culture – Central Europe – 1550–1650