CHAPTER ONE

“CAESAR TO THIS PRESENT DAY OF KING JAMES”:
MILITARY BOOKS AND MILITARY CULTURE, 1572–1603

I pray GOD rayse vp many such mindes, to make our Country of all
Nations the most happy: and also that thyse worke may stirre vppe the
harts of all Noble men, Gentlemen, and all other her Maisties subjects
that minde to professe Armes, that by the exercise of the same they may
be better instructed with greater skill, and so with theyr manly and valiant
mindes, to the defence of our most gracious sovereigne.

Thomas Garrard’s Dedication to Robert Devereux, the 2nd earl of
Essex in William Garrard’s *The Arte of Warre* (1591)

The proliferation of military manuals in late sixteenth- and early seven-
teenth-century England was part of an ongoing effort taking place
across the European continent to quantify the known military world.
Analytical treatises and drill manuals dedicated to the *arte militarie* pro-
vided readers with a body of knowledge and a set of rules on a broad
range of military activities. But who used these books and what role
did military literature play in the education of the “complete” English
soldier in this period? I begin to answer this question by exploring
the relationships that were established and fostered among gentlemen
soldiers in England and on the continent and by examining the books
that soldiers possessed and the titles they recommended to friends and
comrades. As we will see, men of noble birth dispensed their patronage
to scholars and writers and allowed their homes to become centres of
learning and repositories for large libraries that included the latest works
on military affairs. While we know that books are not always read by
their owners, we can get a picture of which titles were influential by
examining library catalogues, estate inventories, personal letters, and
contemporary accounts and then recording those books repeatedly
singled out by English readers.

As I demonstrate in this chapter, books on the military arts were
easy to acquire and letters often record friends offering advice and
suggestions on new titles and recommendations of passages or chap-
ters that illuminated specific tactics, practices, or theories on the art
of war. Secretaries cited examples from ancient and modern military
books in support of the foreign and domestic policies carried out by their influential patrons. Circles of soldiers and scholars discussed the changes shaping warfare and arranged for young sons or relatives to meet with leading continental generals or captains when they were on their European tours. As one might expect, different readers could draw entirely different lessons from these books. Soldiers headed for the continent read in order to understand more about the tactics and weapons of their allies and their enemies, captains and lieutenants in the trained bands took what they could from these books to assist them in training the young men in the county militias, while courtiers, diplomats, and scholars searched the pages of military books for advice on just war, foreign policy, and, if I might use a truly modern term, the improvement of homeland security.

The transformation of European warfare during the sixteenth century required that soldiers learn the new lexicon of warfare and those assigned the task of commanding armies were expected to adapt to the various changes to technology and tactics. These “moderne” principles and practices of warfare, described by many contemporaries as “new-fangled,” fostered the development of a new aristocratic military ethos, an ethos that was an intermediary step between the agonistic warfare of the medieval period and the more formalized, professionalism of the

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1 The transformation of European warfare, more popularly known as the early modern military revolution, continues to be debated among historians and this study was greatly influenced by the seminal works on the subject, including Michael Roberts’s “The Military Revolution, 1560–1660,” in The Military Revolution Debate, ed. C. Rogers (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); Gustavus Adolphus: A History of Sweden 1626–1632, vols. 1–2 (London: Longmans, 1957); and “Gustav Adolphus and the Art of War,” in Essays in Swedish History, ed. M. Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967). Geoffrey Parker’s The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567–1659 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) and his influential The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500–1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) set the tone for the debate and sparked a cottage industry devoted to the subject of the military revolution. A detailed discussion of these debates falls outside the focus of this study, though the conclusions drawn in the pages that follow suggest that the English were eager to keep pace with the changes in military technology and tactics, though I believe those changes to have been more evolutionary than revolutionary. For a discussion of England’s role in the transformation of European warfare during this period, see G. Phillips, The Anglo-Scots Wars 1513–1550 (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1999); D. Eltis, The Military Revolution in the Sixteenth Century (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1995); and M.C. Fissel, English Warfare 1511–1642 (London: Routledge, 2001).