

Introduction

The War People

Their word for themselves was *People*. Early seventeenth-century common soldiers were *Die Leute*, *Das Volk*, *les gens*, or *la gente*. They were *Das Kriegsvolk*, *Die Kriegseute*, *les gens de guerre*, the War People. Neutral outsiders called them mercenaries, *Söldner*, or soldiers, *Soldaten*. When a warlord ordered them by the head in a contract they were “persons,” *Personen*. To a quartermaster charged with supplying their bread, they were “mouths.” When they call themselves *Kriegseute* I translate it as War People. This phrase echoes classic works of ethnography like *The Harmless People* (1959), *The Forest People* (1961), *The Mountain People* (1972), and *The Fierce People* (1968).¹ It is deliberately defamiliarizing.

This is a social history of common soldiers in and from Electoral Saxony during the Thirty Years War, primarily from the 1620s. It aims to present the interactions of these men in their depth and intricacy, in order to argue that the concepts of the military revolution and the fiscal-military state should be separated from the question of social relationships within early seventeenth-century military units.

Discussions about the growth and centralization of modern armies and the modern state share the assumption that new political philosophies and new governmental structures were intertwined with a change in daily practice in early modern European armies.² The thesis that war and the needs of the military led to the development of the modern state is well-developed.³ Arguments relating to this thesis are

¹ Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Harmless People* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1959); Colin Turnbull, *The Forest People: A Study of the Pygmies of the Congo* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961); Napoleon Chagnon, *Yanomano: The Fierce People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968); Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972). None of these works is without controversy.

² Otto Hintze, “Military Organization and the Organization of the State,” in *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, trans. F. Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 178–215. Gerhard Oestrich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, ed. Brigitta Oestrich and H. G. Koenigsberger, trans. David McLintock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

³ Samuel Finer, “State and Nation-building in Europe: The Role of the Military,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Charles Tilly, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 84–163; Charles Tilly, “Reflections on the History of European State-Making,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Charles Tilly, ed.

varied.⁴ State developments from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century varied substantially, but in the classic formulation fiscal-military states funded increased military spending through taxation and financial infrastructure.⁵ The social disciplining of soldiers was supposedly one element of this complex of processes: In this argument, early-modern states increased their control over their civilian populations in part to raise tax money for larger armies, that were inhabited by soldiers who were themselves increasingly well-disciplined.⁶ Military changes not only had an impact on society in general, they had an impact on the society of soldiers. A soldier's daily routine would have changed. The way he interacted with his fellows would have been different. Since this contains a microhistorical argument, it can be investigated by microhistorical means.

Historians study how seventeenth-century armies were supplied and how they traveled.⁷ We study how they were raised and financed,

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 73–76; Richard Bean, “War and the Birth of the Nation State,” *Journal of Economic History* 33 (1973), 203–221; William McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since AD 1000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Brian Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁴ For an introduction to state-building theories, see Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1–34; Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2003), chapter 4.

⁵ Michael Duffy, ed., *The Military Revolution and the State, 1500–1800* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1980); M. S. Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime, 1618–1780* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988); John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War and the English State, 1688–1783* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic, and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Christopher Storrs, ed., *The Fiscal-Military State in Eighteenth-Century Europe: Essays in Honor of P. G. M. Dickson* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

⁶ Michael Roberts, “The Military Revolution, 1560–1660,” reprinted in Clifford J. Rogers, ed., *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995) 13–36, 14.

⁷ Geza Perjés, “Army Provisioning, Logistics and Strategy in the Second Half of the 17th Century,” *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* XVI (1970); Bernhard Kroener, *Les Routes et les Étapes: Die Versorgung der französischen Armeen in Nordostfrankreich (1635–1661): Ein Beitrag zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des Ancien Régime* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1980); Jürgen Pohl, “Die Profiantur der Keiserlichen Armaden Ahnbelangend:” *Studien zur Versorgung der Kaiserlichen Armee 1634/1635* (Horn: F. Berger & Söhne, 1994); Cordula Kapsler, *Die bayerische Kriegsorganisation in der zweiten Hälfte des dreissigjährigen Krieges 1635–1648/49* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1997); Erik A. Lund, *War for the Every Day: Generals, Knowledge, and Warfare in Early Modern Europe, 1680–1740* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999); John Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siècle: The French Army, 1610–1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Guy Rowlands, “Review of *Giant of the Grand Siècle* and *The Wars of Louis XIV*, by John Lynn,” *French History*, 14 (2000), 450–454.

especially in the second half of the century.⁸ We study their operations and the battles they fought.⁹ But discussions of the way these soldiers lived with one another and their superiors are often based on inference from normative texts. For instance, Peter Burschel used articles of war to argue that discipline and control over the common soldier seemed to increase from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century.¹⁰

Arguments like these sit oddly alongside other impressions of early seventeenth-century military life, like Fritz Redlich's classic presentation of German "military enterprisers" or the diary of the mercenary Peter Hagendorf.¹¹ Geoffrey Parker's seminal early work on the Spanish Army of Flanders presented proud soldiers willing to agitate for their rights through mutiny, and who did so successfully.¹² The social relations apparent in these accounts include command and obedience, but in this context the frequent calls for military discipline by officers seem more like contemporary non-military laws: Made in profusion but often disobeyed.¹³ Meanwhile, David Parrott pointed out that early seventeenth-century French soldiers do not appear to have been trained by drilling but learned how to fight gradually through participation in the military

⁸ Hubert Salm, *Armeefinanzierung im Dreißigjährigen Krieg: Die Niederrheinisch-Westfälische Reichskreis 1635–1650* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1990); David Parrott, *Richelieu's Army: War, Government, and Society in France, 1624–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Guy Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV: Royal Service and Private Interest 1661–1701* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁹ To cite only some recent books, William P. Guthrie, *Battles of the Thirty Years War: From White Mountain to Nördlingen, 1618–1635* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001); William P. Guthrie, *The Later Thirty Years War: From the Battle of Wittstock to the Treaty of Westphalia* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003); Pavel Hrnčíř, *Spanier auf dem Albuch: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Schlacht bei Nördlingen im Jahre 1634* (Maastricht: Shaker, 2007); Peter Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Years War* (London: Penguin Books, 2009); Lothar Höbelt, *Von Nördlingen bis Janckau: Kaiserliche Strategie und Kriegführung 1634–1645* (Vienna: Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, 2016); Peter Wilson, *Lützen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹⁰ Peter Burschel, *Söldner in Nordwestdeutschland des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994). See also Jan Willem Huntebrinker, "Fromme Knechte" und "Garteteufel." *Söldner als soziale Gruppe im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Konstanz: UVK, 2010).

¹¹ Fritz Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser and his Work Force*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1964–1965). Peter Hagendorf, *Ein Söldnerleben im Dreißigjährigen Krieg: Eine Quelle zur Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Jan Peters (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993); Geoff Mortimer, *Eyewitness Accounts of the Thirty Years War 1618–1648* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), chapter 3.

¹² Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567–1659: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries' Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Geoffrey Parker, "Mutiny and Discontent in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1572–1607," *Past & Present* 58 (1973), 38–52.

¹³ Jürgen Schlumbohm, "Gesetze, die nicht durchgesetzt werden: ein Strukturmerkmal des frühneuzeitlichen Staates?," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 23.4 (1997), 647–663.

way of life. If two armies of comparable size met in the field, the deciding factor was probably the length of service of the troops.¹⁴

Seventeenth-century soldiers and minor officers were often feared and hated by non-soldiers. Whether or not their commanders received glory and honor in the profession of arms, these people were forgotten. Most did not get the chance to articulate their own history. They are therefore an ideal topic for history from below.¹⁵ But, although historians have explored the daily lives of common soldiers, most have focused on the eighteenth century to the present day, not the seventeenth century.¹⁶ On the other hand, many German works on war and society in the early seventeenth century explore non-soldiers' experiences of war or interactions between soldiers and civilians, rather than soldiers' interactions with one another.¹⁷

This book aims to present this history from below through the microhistorical account of a single regiment raised in Saxony by Wolf von Mansfeld in spring 1625 in the service of the King of Spain. The infantry had 2,545 men on the rolls at its highest recorded point and the cavalry comprised 979 horses.¹⁸ This regiment traveled from Dresden to northern Italy in summer 1625, where it settled near Milan. Because the governments of Alessandria and Cremona could not obtain financing at the right time, it mutinied and fell apart in 1627.

¹⁴ David Parrott, "Strategy and Tactics in the Thirty Years War: The 'Military Revolution'," in *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, Clifford J. Rogers, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995); Parrott, *Richelieu's Army*.

¹⁵ E. P. Thompson, "History from Below," *The Times Literary Supplement* (1966), 279; Tim Hitchcock, Peter King, and Pamela Sharpe, eds. *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997); Tim Hitchcock, "A New History from Below," *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004), 294–298.

¹⁶ Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755–1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ilya Berkovich, *Motivation in War: The Experience of Common Soldiers in Old-Regime Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹⁷ Benigna von Krusenstjern and Hans Medick, eds. *Zwischen Alltag und Katastrophe: Der Dreißigjährige Krieg aus der Nähe* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); the works put out by the Arbeitskreis Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit eV; Maron Lorenz, *Das Rad der Gewalt: Militär und Zivilbevölkerung in Norddeutschland nach dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007); Huntebrinker, "Fromme Knechte" und "Garteteufel."

¹⁸ Figures derived from lists in SHStADr 10024 9239/2, *Die Beiden in Italien Stehenden Regimenten des Graffen Wolfgang von Mansfeld: Schreibern Desselben An die Unterbefehlshaber, des Rechnungswerk, die Abdankung d.a. bet 1626–28*, 54–82; StadtA Ulm Kriegsamt A [5556], *Verzeichnis des Kriegsvolks zu Pferd und Fuß* by Wachmeister Christoph Revelheimer, Aufstellung der Mansfeldischen Kavallerie.

This unimportant regiment happens to be unusually well-documented. Its passage and its quartering are recorded in primary-source documents from southern Germany and northern Italy, while I analyze the effect of its presence on local Italian communities by tracking demographic data from unpublished parish archival records. Strikingly, most of this regiment's internal legal documents also survive. Mattheus Steiner, regimental secretary, not only copied the transcripts of the trials over which he presided, but also records of inquests, soldiers' IOUs, letters to members of the regiment relating to legal cases, last testaments, criminal investigations, and tickets certifying the bearer was honorable. The first two of these three *Gerichtsbücher*, "court books," handle the legal matters of the Mansfeld infantry. The third, incomplete, covers the cavalry. The historian Jan Wilem Huntebrinker cited the first book, but the investigation of this regiment, and what a Saxon regiment was doing in Philip IV's service, was outside the scope of his work.¹⁹ The other two Mansfeld Regiment books were filed separately from the first and may never have been seen after 1628. Although these three are the only regimental legal books I have seen, they were almost certainly not the only ones that were produced.

These big flat Mansfeld legal books seized and still seize me with what Arlette Farge described when encountering eighteenth-century Paris police archives. "It is a rare and precious feeling to suddenly come across so many forgotten lives, haphazard and full, juxtaposing and entangling the close with the distant, the departed." The ordinary records of a working legal apparatus like eighteenth-century Paris police records or early seventeenth-century regimental documents (regiments were legal establishments) are not the same as documents which were deliberately framed for some posterity: "Even the most intimate personal notebook ... nonetheless presupposes that whoever wrote it was in some fundamental way looking for it to be discovered, in the belief that the events of his or her life called for a written record. There is none of this in the archives." The Mansfelders wanted to leave written records, like last testaments. Their trial transcripts, their lawsuits and squabbles, like Farge's subjects' records, "were recorded for an altogether different reason. This changes everything ... the relationship we have to it, particularly our feeling of being in contact with the real." Whether or not it is accurate, this feeling "is intense and stubborn, perhaps even invasive."²⁰

¹⁹ Huntebrinker, "Fromme Knechte" und "Garteteufel," 40. Mansfeld's Italian expedition is also documented in Barbara Stadler, *Pappenheim und die Zeit des Dreissigjährigen Krieges* (Winterthur: Gernsberg-Verlag, 1991), 154–156.

²⁰ Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 7–9.

Supplementing these sources, I also use seventeenth-century documents which describe other soldiers and other armies. These works are variegated and idiosyncratic; they were produced for many reasons and cannot be constrained in a single genre. They are rich sources for early modern society and the lives of ordinary human beings.²¹ Although the writings of ordinary people are not clear windows on the past, if we read them actively and critically, they enable us to analyze the interactions of the people recorded in them. Through close reading, I attempt to piece together the lives of the Mansfelders and other soldiers to analyze common soldiers' words and actions within the social and economic contexts of central Europe in the 1620s.

All the human chatter on which I eavesdrop here took place in German, French, Latin, Spanish, and Italian, the native language of the civilians in the area, and the administrative language of many Spanish officials. The snappy polyglot sizzle of seventeenth-century soldiers' German is difficult to translate. The Mansfeld Regiment had its own slang. To *pull from leather* is to draw your sword, to *take care of your own earthworks* is to mind your business. On Christmas Eve 1626, Stefan Spizer was sitting in front of the door to his quarters when a tailor came running down from the village. As Mattheus Steiner recorded it, the tailor yelled what sounded like "*Für dich, Soldat, Becce futui.*" "For you, soldier, I fucked your mouth!" in German, Italian, and perfect Latin. As the tailor had probably said it, it was "becco fottuto," the billy goat, a common slur in this region for soldiers. In any language, the tailor had been looking for a fight, and he got one. The two chased each other through town until Spizer cornered him behind a woodpile and killed him.²²

These were violent men. If soldiers were not becoming more disciplined during the early seventeenth century, we might be able to conclude that they were the rootless, marauding thugs of stereotypes of the Thirty Years War. However, a statistical analysis of soldiers from the entire Saxon army during the entire war indicates that most Saxon soldiers were recruited near their homes and, unlike the Mansfelders, probably served

²¹ The literature on ego-documents, self-writing, and self-narrative is vast. See, for instance, Mary Fullbrook and Ulinka Rublack, "In Relation: The 'Social Self' and Ego-Documents," *German History* 28.3 (2010), 263–272; Kaspar von Greyerz, "Observation on the Historiographical Status of Research on Self-Writing," in *Mapping the "I": Research on Self-Narratives in Germany and Switzerland*, Claudia Ulbrich, Lorenz Heiligensetzer, and Kaspar von Greyerz, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 34–57; Lorenz Heiligensetzer, "Swiss-German Self-Narratives: The Archival Project as a Rich Vein of Research," in *Mapping the "I": Research on Self-Narratives in Germany and Switzerland*, Claudia Ulbrich, Lorenz Heiligensetzer, and Kaspar von Greyerz, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 58–75.

²² SHStAdr 10024 9739/6, 110.

nearby. This large statistical study also enabled me to analyze pay in the Saxon army in the 1620s. Since soldiers' pay can be used as a proxy for their social status within the regiment, my study of pay also functions as an analysis of the unexpectedly high social complexity within military units.

This book follows the Mansfeld Regiment from mustering-in to dissolution, with breaks for topics like soldiers' places of origin, pay, religion, or social class, and with flash-backs and flash-forwards. The "thick descriptions" of the interactions of Mansfelders with one another and outsiders demonstrate social organization within the regiment, and personal relationships at the intersection of structural organization and individual emotion.

The story of these men suggests that some older interpretations of early seventeenth-century military life need revision. While the Mansfeld Regiment's career and statistical studies of the Saxon army demonstrate the expanding and ramifying networks of international military finance that developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I found neither an intensification of military discipline nor unadulterated thuggishness. The military community was made up of systems of relationships that were subtle, intricate, and disorganized. Changing opinions of elites about drill and discipline rarely touched daily life in the regiment, but the Mansfeld Regiment's career and its collapse were influenced by developments in Italian and German finance, which were broad and spreading, but deeply imperfect.