



Mobility During the 6th Italian War

Through the « Mémoires » of Martin DU Bellay



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ABSTRACT

Mobility has always been a key factor for victory in any era. Whether battles are fought in orderly fashion or in guerrilla warfare, it is often the faction with the best logistical organization that will be victorious. Contemporary and modern times offer numerous examples, such as the Second World War and the Thirty Years' War respectively. On the other hand, little research has been done on the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The Italian Wars of Francis I provide an opportunity to observe the transition from the medieval model of chivalric warfare to that of guns and cannons which will characterise the modern period. What is interesting about this conflict is the appearance, in its second phase, of simultaneous fronts on two distant territories: Picardy and Champagne in the north and Navarre and Italy in the south. France had to face alone several enemies who surrounded it: Spain, the Holy Roman Empire of Germany, Italy with the exception of Genoa and Venice, and finally England. The study of this war led by Francis I is divided into two distinct phases that can be delimited chronologically. From 1515 to 1520 we witness the French domination with the victory of Marignan and the reconquest of the Duchy of Milan. From 1520 to 1525, the defeat of Francis I in the race for the election to the throne of the Holy Empire against Charles V triggered the second phase of the war, which was characterised by the opening of several simultaneous fronts, opening up a real game of chess that would end in the defeat of Pavia. The study through the prism of the first two books of the Memoirs (period 1515-1525) of Martin Bellay, an officer in the royal army of Francis I during this war, provides a good understanding of what was at stake. Martin du Bellay, witness, actor and observer of this conflict, moved a lot during this war. He was indeed present in Marignan and Picardy and as such his testimonies are essential in the approach .

Mobility /

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Introduction

Mobility has always been, no matter the time, a key factor in winning. Whether the battles are fought in order or in guerrilla model, it is often the faction with the best logistical organization that will be victorious. Contemporary and modern periods respectively offers many examples such as World War II and the Thirty Years War. On the other hand, few studies have been made on the question during the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance or « *Modern age* ». The Italian wars of Francis I gave the opportunity to observe the passage from the model of chivalrous warfare of the Middle Ages to the firearms and cannons which would characterize the modern period. What is interesting in this conflict is the appearance, during its second phase, of simultaneous fronts on two distant territories that are Picardy and Champagne in the north and Navarre and Italy in the south. France must face alone several enemies who surround her: Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, Italy except Genoa and Venice and finally England. The study of this war led by François Ier is divided into two distinct phases that can be delimited chronologically. From 1515 to 1520 we witness the French domination with the victory of Marignan and the reconquest of the Duchy of Milan. From 1520 to 1525, the defeat of François I in the race for the election to the throne of the Holy Empire against Charles V triggered the second phase of the war, which was characterized by the opening of several simultaneous fronts, thus opening a real period of failures which will end to the defeat of Pavia. The study through the prism that are the first two books of the Memoirs (period 1515-1525) of Martin Bellay, officer of the royal army of François Ier during this war, allows to understand well the stake of the mobility. Martin du Bellay, actor and observer of this conflict, traveled a lot during this war. He was indeed present in Marignan and Picardy and as such his testimonies are essential in the approach to the problem of mobility.



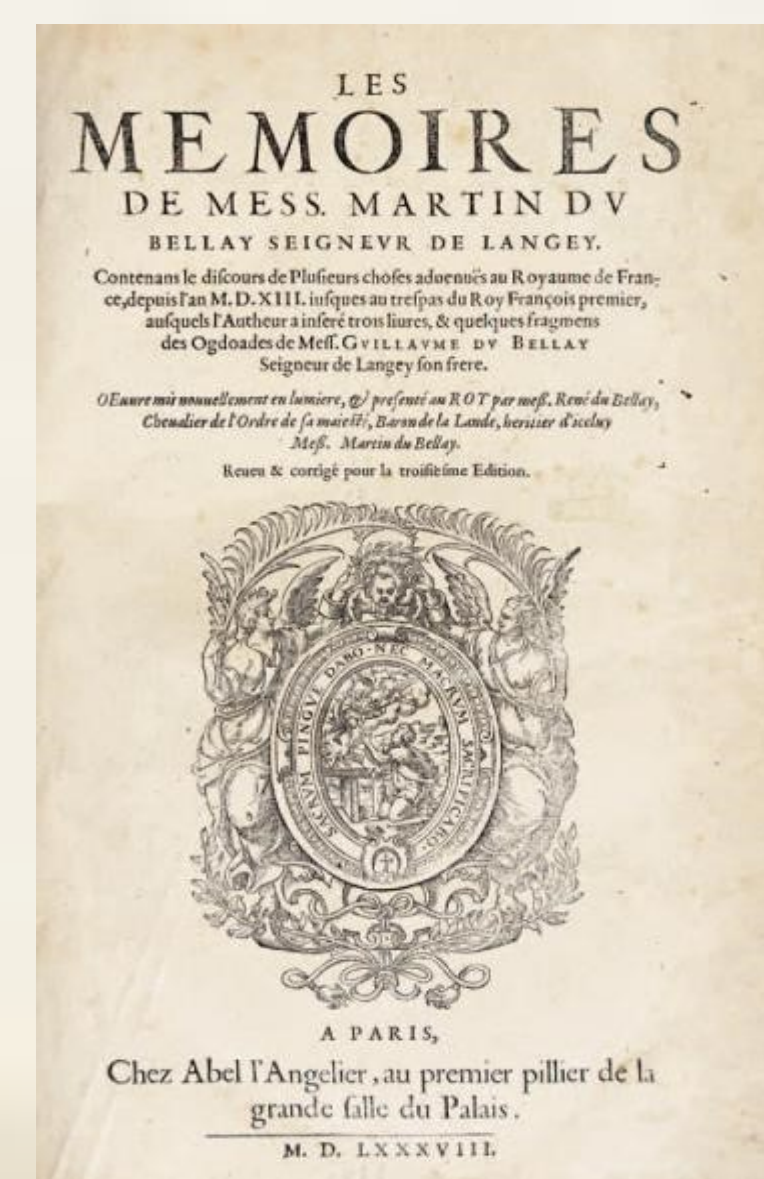
Map of the trajet in direction of Marignan, in 1515 as described by Martin du Bellay



Pierre Bourcy l'Ancien : la conversion de Saul, 1562: An example of an army moving

Materials and Methods

Although the link between War and Mobility seems to be obvious, studies and books on the subject in modern times are rare. Considering that the Italian wars are one of the most studied subjects of modern history, this observation may seem surprising but corresponds to a reality. At no time was it given to me to find a book or an article dealing with this subject. Of course, this concept is mentioned in a number of papers but has not been taken up in a comprehensive study. The definition of the term mobility should be examined. We think of the ability to move from point A to point B. But mobility requires first of all the organization of a movement, the management of many people, coherence within a moving army, the conduct of troops on the battlefield in real time . It should be noted that the concept of journey is only partially taken into account here. Little attention will be paid to landscape description or narration of events occurring on the traveler's route. These elements that serve as illustrations weren't used as analysis elements.



Reisläufer Luzerner Schilling, representation of Swiss returning home after the cremona mas-

Results

When it comes to mobility we had noticed that for Bellay, although a leading actor and witness, mobility is not necessarily a subject in itself because it is an integral part of his life. For him the displacements result from negotiations, negotiations, strategies, the stakes put at the service of the realization of the royal ambitions. Mobility comes to serve a cause, it is a tool that makes it possible to achieve an objective which is here the conquest of the Milanese, but also to defend oneself against 4 different armies. This is an army moving from front to front. So mobility is not described in detail. We have therefore extended our research to other books and authors to analyse in detail what mobility covers, how it is organised. We found out that It was clear that mobility is inherent in the military condition. It is then necessary to decode the written and the facts, to observe the European area in a global way in order to see the limit of the displacements, To grasp the words belonging to the lexical field of mobility in order to better approach the perception that a man of arms such as Du Bellay may have of this question. The form of writing necessarily influences the way of apprehending events. To really understand mobility and how it is perceived by the men of that time, one must be attentive to the writings relating to the movements leading from city to city between battles but also when a clash takes place.



Use of a hoist to move the cannons in the mountain: Tomb of Francis I, Basilica of Saint-Denis



Maître à la Ratière (16th century), according to his engraver's mark. (Brulliot 1832) - RMN (Domaine de Chantilly) René-Gabriel Ojéda:

Discussion

The notion of mobility was a normality for people like Martin Du bellay, it was their everyday life, going on the horse for the major part of the year is an everyday action. It might look like an evidence, understanding that it was one gives us hints on the perception of life by those soldiers, their preoccupations, how they did adapt to special circumstances and their evolution in a time which is located on a turning point chronologically speaking, bringing in the particularities that will characterize the modern period. That work of understanding comes in the way of Stéphane Gal's work with project called March'Alpes. Which was a physical reproduction of Francis I's armies crossing the alps with the same equipments as the soldiers of Martin du Bellay times. And on a larger point of view the notion of movements and perception of renaissance armies. What is interesting to point out for further researches are the relation between armies and civilians of the territories which the armed forces are going by. Because despite the common belief that every army during that period was robbing people of their goods, they needed the local people to advance with safety on those territories with guides and a constant food chain to keep the army in shape and discipline.