



Fencing: A Renaissance Treatise

By Camillo Agrippa

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Camillo Agrippa's widely influential Treatise was a turning point in the history of fencing. The author - an engineer, not a professional master of arms - was able to radically re-imagine the art of fencing. His treatise is the fundamental text of Western swordsmanship and also a microcosm of 16th-century thought. It examines the art, reduces it to its very principles, and reconstructs it according to a way of thinking that incorporated new concepts of art, science and philosophy. Every other treatise had to deal explicitly or implicitly with Agrippa's startling transformation of the art and science of self-defense with the sword. All of the fundamental ideas used today - distance, time, line, blade opposition, counterattacks and countertime - are expressed in this paradigm-shifting treatise. This book should be on the shelf of anyone interested in the history, practice or teaching of fencing. 234 pages, 65 illustrations, introduction, bibliography, glossary, appendix, index.

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Editorial Review

Review

"[O]ne of the most important texts in the history of European martial arts.... Mondschein's introduction to his work helps the reader understand Agrippa -- and the martial practices themselves -- as pivotal agents in the evolving cultural and intellectual systems of the sixteenth century."

-- *Dr. Jeffrey L. Forgeng*

About the Author

Camillo Agrippa was a noted fencer, architect, engineer and mathematician of the Renaissance. He is considered to be one of the greatest fencing theorists of all time. Though born in Milan, Agrippa lived and worked in Rome, where he was associated with the Confraternity of St. Joseph of the Holy Land and the literary and artistic circle around Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. He is most renowned for applying geometric theory to solve problems in armed combat. In his *Treatise on the Science of Arms with Philosophical Dialogue* (published in 1553), he proposed dramatic changes in the way swordsmanship was practiced at the time. He is also regarded as the man who most contributed to the development of the rapier as a primarily thrusting weapon. Agrippa was a contemporary of Michelangelo, and the two were probably acquainted.

Ken Mondschein holds a Ph.D. in History from Fordham University and is a Prévôt d'Escrime (the teaching rank just below Master). He teaches historical fencing at the Higgins Armory Museum in Worcester, MA, where he is a Research Fellow.

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