

MILITARY HISTORY IN EDUCATIONAL ATLASES

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Abstract: *Military history is an important part of history. The representation of military events in historical maps is one of the most important pieces of thematic information in education. I analysed three Central European countries (Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic) educational maps from the point of view of military history. According to my analysis I would like to emphasize two crucial problems of these maps. The first is the thematic generalization that sometimes results in inconsistent maps. There is no general rule which information is important to represent a specific theme and which are not. The second problem is the representation of relief in battle maps.*

Importance of military history

Military history is quite an important segment of history. Wars, battles and peace are the milestones of history. Students both at elementary and secondary schools have to learn more or less on militarism and military history as a part of history.

Each nation has its own great campaigns and famous commanders, who are national heroes now (like Jan Ziska, king Matthias or Pilsudski). These military operations form a very important part of national and sometimes world history (both world wars are essential for all students to know).

Probably battles are the most decisive events of all military affairs. A defeat can result in a collapse of a regime or a subjection for a long time. These battles are major turning points in the nations history. All nations have their national tragedies like:

- the first battle of Kosovo (Rigómező) in 1389; when the Turks conquered the Serbs and the Serb Kingdom lost its independence for several hundred years,
- the battle of Mohács in 1526; when the Hungarians lost the battle against the Turks and the country lost its independence also for 150 years,
- the siege of Byzantine in 1453; when once again the Turks conquered the remaining part of the Byzantine Empire,
- the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, when the Spaniards defeated the Moors and conquered irrevocably the Southern part of the Iberian peninsula (except Granada),

As military history is an essential part of national and world history, the appearance of it is also significant in educational atlases. I have analysed three Central European countries' (Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) secondary educational atlases from the point of view of military history. These countries' history has a lot of common features (foundation of these states almost the same time, fights against the German influence, invasion from the East (Mongolians, Russians), long periods under other countries' rules (the Habsburg Empire, Russia, Germany) and rebellions, independence wars over and over again).

Analysis of educational atlases

In my analysis I only examined the historical atlases in the secondary education because students learn the most about history at that time. Furthermore the basis of general knowledge of history is what students can get in the secondary education. Therefore the historical atlases have double as much importance. Additionally in a lot of families the historical school atlas is the only existing and available historical atlas for several reasons (lack of money, or lack of interest in history etc.). So it is the only mapping source where they can look after anything that is related to history.

The representation of military history is not an ancillary question. The number of maps in the examined three national atlases are rather different. (For instance Hungarian students have only one volume atlas of 100 maps, while the Bohemian students have a four volume one, two on world and two on their national history), and each atlas contains around 70 maps).

Although the size and the number of maps are different in the examined three countries the main features, and problems are common. To categorize the maps according to military history I set up two basic classes:

- In the maps of the first class the background is usually a political map in a specific time, and there are more or less military information from a certain period (hundred year or more). This information is usually about the places of battles and sometimes the movements of armies. These maps represent a region or a continent. These sorts of historical maps are applied in the presentation of world history. A subtype of this category is when only one county is in the focus of the map. On that type we can find the movements of armies in more details and more places of battles, while the background is only one country and its neighbouring countries political borders. But the background is variable. Sometimes inner administrative districts also appear in these maps.
- The second important class is battle maps. These maps represent a narrow area. It depends on the age because in the medieval age the places of battles were only a few square kilometres (battle of Hastings, 1066) while those in the 20th century were hundreds of square kilometres (e.g. battle of Stalingrad). The scales of these maps are absolutely different from those of the first class because of the difference of the presented areas.

About 50-60 % of the maps in the examined atlases contain military historical information. The most typical information is the places of battles and the movements of campaigns. This sort of maps far outnumbers the other type of historical maps in educational atlases (for example city maps, maps of the religions, discoveries). So this kind of maps has a dominant role in educational atlases. The second class of maps (battle maps) is only a supplemental part of the military historical maps in educational atlases. The ratio of this kind of maps is around 5 %.

Thematic generalization

Thematic generalization is one of the greatest problems of the first class of historical maps. Borders changed according to the result of wars. But the representation of the changes of borders is dissimilar in the three examined atlases. Sometimes a representation suggests a false picture of a period if the presentation of the borders is not consistent. For instance the approach of Croatia in the same period (from the 11th to 13th centuries) is absolutely dissimilar in Figure 1 and Figure 3. In the first it is a part of the Hungarian Kingdom, while in the other map we can see it as an independent country. Actually it became a part of Hungary after 998, and it was the beginning of a thousand year long union.



Figure 1: Crusade wars in the Hungarian atlas

The delineation of military information is more controversial. In those maps whose themes are related to national history (e.g. revolutions, independence wars) the problem of thematic generalization does not exist. But on those whose theme is

non-national this problem is crucial. The problem of thematic generalization in the following:

We can find absolutely different maps from a certain period. The represented theme is different although the historical period is fix. Historians can make a list of the important military events in a specific period (e.g. the 11th and the 13th centuries) in a specific area (e.g. Europe).

There were important battles, important campaigns in this period but the delineation of these events in educational maps are absolutely haphazard. There is no basic level of military historical data (or any part of historical data) which could be compulsory represented of those in the educational atlases independently from the country. In my opinion an agreed basic level would have been particular important in the case of maps of world history.

As a result of my examination I made a list of the major historical events in the 11th and 13th centuries, the represented period is between 1096 and 1270, the time of the crusade wars.

- There were seven crusade campaigns altogether. The first was in 1096-99, and eventually the knights captured Jerusalem in 1099, and it was the foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. It was the most successful campaign. The following ones tried to consolidate the position of the new Christian kingdom. The greatest battle in the Holy Land was the battle of Hattin (1187) when Saladin conquered the knights. That was the turning point in the crusade wars.
- But the crusade wars have another military theatre as in Spain (reconquest). There was also a crucial battle in Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) when the Spaniards defeated the Moors and conquered a huge part of the Iberian peninsula.
- Another theatre of the crusade war was in Eastern Europe where the Teutonic Order began to conquer the Prussians.
- The last theatre of the crusade war was in Provence (France) where there was a bloody campaign against the Waldensians (1206-1229).



Figure 2: Crusade wars in the Polish atlas

Other important military events and campaigns in the examined period:

- One of the most important ones was the Mongolian invasion in 1240-1241. (Two crucial battles are related to it: the battle of Muhi (1241) where the Hungarian army suffered a crushing defeat, and the battle of Leignitz (1241), where the German-Polish army lost the battle against the Mongolians. (There were other significant battles in the East)

The Hungarian map (Figure 1) deals with not only the crusade wars but other military events as well while several important events of the crusade wars are missing: the battle of Hattin, the campaign in Provence and the Teutonic Order's campaign against Prussia. Additionally some other important military historical events are missing as the battle of Bouvines and the rebellion of barons in England.

Although several thematic information is missing from the examined map in the Czech atlas there are some other maps of the examined period (unlike the Hungarian one where there is only one map). There is a map of Holy Land, another one of fights in the Iberian peninsula (as a military theatre of the crusade wars) and independent maps of England and France. All in all only the Mongolian invasion in Europe and its battles, furthermore the battle of Legano and the campaign in Provence are missing from the atlas.



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According to my examples we can see that the representation of the military information is not consistent. The reason is the thematic generalization. The list of the major historical events in the period is fix but all atlases selected different events. There were some in common (like the seven crusade campaigns) and there were dissimilar ones.

The reason of the thematic generalization is multiple: first these educational atlases are based on the historical textbooks and these vary in different the countries. But students can find more information of a certain period in an atlas than in their textbooks. For instance all the maps represent the seven crusade campaigns but at the lessons only the first and the fourth ones are discovered while the others were not present. The campaign of II Andrew (Hungarian king) was an unimportant operation. His army burned up some villages in the Holy Land and sailed back to Hungary. It was only an episode of the crusade war and even in Hungarian education the students do not learn anything about it. But all the atlases sign his campaigns while the battle of Hattin map (that was the turning point in the crusade war and it is in the textbook) is missing from the Hungarian. The battle of Las Navas de Tolosa is missing from the Polish maps. These are the greatest military actions in the examined period.

The reason of the representation of that information that is not a part of the official education is also multiple. The background shows for a specific time while these kinds of maps present a longer period. To solve this contradiction the delineation of the changes of borders is important. Thus we can find all the significant changes of borders in these kinds of maps although for example a Hungarian student learns nothing of the history of Ireland or Norway, but the changes of the borders are on their educational maps.

Another reason besides the well-balanced representation of the background theme is that educational atlases are the only available historical atlases in a lot of families. Therefore these kinds of atlases are of importance not only from educational but cultural point of view as well. So the representation of those themes is not a fault. In fact it is desirable: these atlases become more informative, and they can be used not only for educational purposes. But the selection of the represented information is haphazard and it is undesirable.

I think that the problem of the thematic generalization shows that educational maps are not consistent enough (in those maps, which represent world history). There is not a general agreement which events are essential to represent a period and its events. I suppose this problem is not solvable on national level. A database as a result of an international co-operation could handle it.

Battle maps

Battle maps are the second major class of military maps in educational atlases. These maps represent a relatively small area. Therefore these maps theoretically can be very detailed but they are usually simplified. The major military historical information is the position of the fighting units (battalions, regiments, corps, armies etc.) and the manoeuvres of these units but in a generalized way.

The problem with these maps from the point of view of military history is the representation of relief. Although in a battle the terrain is essential and determine a lot of things: position of batteries, possible defence lines, protected flanks, possible ways of attacks and retreats etc.

For a long time wars favoured battles in flat areas in contrast with hilly or mountainous territories. All the great battles of the ancient time were in plain areas, because to manoeuvre on hillsides was quite a difficult task. In the medieval age it was the same, hilly or mountainous areas did not favourable for mounted charges which was the basic tactic for a long time. After the rise of infantry (the reason was the invention of gunpowder) it became more and more common for a battle to take place in not plain area. At last in the 20th centuries armies fought battles in high mountains (e.g. the First World War in the Alps).

In the delineation of battles where relief is of importance its descriptonal representation is important respectively: for example in the siege of Buda in 1849. It was a famous part of the Hungarian revolution and the independence war in 1848-49. The Habsburg armies left the country for a short time and there was a chance to recapture Buda, which had been fortified by the Habsburgs. In Buda the Castle hill is about 150 to 180 m high, while the surrounding hills are higher (Gellért hill is 230 m, Sváb hill 250 m). The Hungarian batteries were set up on the top of these higher hills and fired at the wall of the Buda castle. Their fire was fairly effective and at last the infantry attacked the collapsed parts of the wall and captured the city.

We can not disregard the knowledge of the terrain in this battle. The relief determined the position of batteries. There are three examples of the representation of this battle in educational atlases. On the first map (Figure 4) there is no delineation of relief, only the names of the hills refer to their situation. On the second map (Figure 5) shade relief representation refers to heights. Both solutions are quite poor because neither of them is measurable. While on the third map (Figure 6) contour lines give a more proper information on the terrain.

In educational atlases we can find numerous battle maps and sketches but the representation of terrain is usually missing although sometimes the knowledge of terrain is the key to understand a battle. This problem can be solved – I suppose – by the application of contour lines or a moderate hypsography.



Figure 4: Siege of Buda (1849)



Figure 5: Siege of Buda (1849)



Figure 5: Siege of Buda (1849)

CONCLUSION

In educational atlases maps that contain military historical information have a dominant role but the representation and selection (thematic generalization) of the represented military theme is sometimes controversial and inconsistent.

In battle maps the representation of terrain are missing or not proper. Contour lines or hydrography can be the best solution in the representation of relief when it is of great importance. (In case of battles in flat areas the delineation of relief is of importance.)

The thematic generalization is also a difficult task. Each country has its educational atlases and the presented historical theme on world history is the same, while the maps show a different view from specific ages. I suppose the regulation of the selection of the historical information to represent would be practical. The easiest way to handle this question is an international database.

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