



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

# Låtsaskrigen

Föreläsningar om krig, maskulinitet och historia i krigsspel under 200 år

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## Akademisk avhandling

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Pretend Wars. Notions of War, Masculinity and History in 200 Years of Wargames

**Abstract**

This thesis investigates how different wargames relate to notions of war, masculinity and history. It poses the question how the concept of authenticity is used in relation to wargames portrayal of war, masculinity and history. The outline of the thesis is chronological, spanning roughly from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. It follows the development and use of wargames, predominately, but not exclusively in a Swedish setting. In the analysis a number of different sources are used, including wargaming rulebooks, computer wargames, wargaming magazines for hobbyists, research reports and works of military theory.

In the military setting, wargames could be used to show how war functioned and to some degree what participating in war was like and how a future war would be fought. In that regard, the analysis show that one aspect of authenticity can be linked to the military utility of wargames as these were used as training tools and instructional devices within the military establishment. From a historical cultural viewpoint however, notions of authenticity in historical wargames can be linked to the construction and presentation of historical narratives and characters, predominantly masculine warrior heroes.

The thesis shows that authenticity in wargames can be understood relating both to a military theoretical regime of knowledge as well as a form of history culture propagating notions of idealized masculinity. As wars are oftentimes portrayed as progressive historical events populated by masculine stereotypical heroes, great commanders are viewed as agents of history, and individual soldiers as eye-witnesses and participators in great events in history. In recreational wargames gamers are invited to play these roles. In military wargames, historical events and decisions made by historical characters can be discussed and analyzed. As such wargames in both the military and recreational setting are part and parcel of an idealized masculine military-themed history culture.

To a notable degree, changes in media-technology influenced the notion and presentation of authenticity in wargames and the portrayal of war, masculinity and history in wargames varied as the way wars were being fought changed. Changes in media technology used to portray war also influenced the way these themes were presented in wargames. However, in both the military and recreational setting, notions of the masculine warrior hero in the shape of the great commander or in the shape of the technologically proficient, brave and reliable individual soldier was a recurring theme for 200 years.

**Keywords**

Wargame, masculinity, gender studies, history, computer games, video games, board games, miniature games, history culture, media archeology, media war, mediation, authenticity, simulation, play, military history, Reisswitz, Game Studies, counter factual history, historical accounts, warriors.

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