

Thomas Ernst, Die zifra picolominea. Eine Geheimschrift der Habsburger während des Dreißigjährigen Krieges

Abstract: The zifra picolominea. A Habsburg cipher during the Thirty Years' War.

The following article details my solution of a 400-year old cipher that was used between Emperor Ferdinand III. and his brother Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in their private correspondence, during the final years of the Thirty Years' War. The making of the cipher is explained in the context of Early Modern cryptography, followed by a commented edition of six letters written in 1640/41 by the Emperor to his brother and preserved in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna.

Ferdinand used a mixed style of plain handwriting and ciphers. The latter, often containing scathing remarks on noble courtiers and officers, are reproduced in their original appearance and transcribed with normal letters, allowing a glimpse behind the façade of diplomatic communication.

Keywords: Cryptography; Thirty Years' War; Emperor Ferdinand III; Archduke Leopold Wilhelm; private correspondence

Schlagworte: Geheimschriften; Dreißigjähriger Krieg; Kaiser Ferdinand III.; Erzherzog Leopold Wilhelm; Privatbriefe