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## **In search of common standards: The 1650 computer of Casimir Simienowicz for weight conversions**

LONG BEFORE THE DEVELOPMENT of the metric system during the French Revolution, there were developments that were anticipating various types of numerate integrations within Europe. Several such trends are worth exploring because they were attempts at resolving the chaotic situation when proliferation of standards was imposing constraints on commerce, industry and scientific communications.

The first ones to experience the urgent need for integration and some sort of common standards were the merchants. There were many publications listing the weight, volume and other measures used in European cities. Many such booklets were published in Amsterdam, as by 1600 the Dutch were clearly in the lead in European trade. Another equally urgent need was felt among artillerymen, one of whose proposed solutions we shall examine here in greater detail.

Casimir Simienowicz published his proposal in 1650 in his book, *The Great Art of Artillery*. It was published in Amsterdam in Latin but was translated into the main European languages (French 1651, German 1676, English 1729). In its opening section, Simienowicz reviewed the chaotic situation of cannon calibers and different weight standards all over Europe and introduced a simple paper computer to convert quickly a given weight from any of the 228 cities into another city's equivalent weight through a conversion to a common standard that he arbitrarily picked.

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