THE WESTERN EUROPEAN MERCENARY SOLDIER OF THE FOURTEENTH AND EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

VINCENT CLARK CAIN

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Vincent Clark Cain entitled "The Western European Mercenary Soldier of the Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

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THE WESTERN EUROPEAN MERCENARY SOLDIER OF THE FOURTEENTH AND EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

An Abstract

Presented to

the Graduate Council of

Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

Vincent Clark Cain

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ABSTRACT

The use of mercenary soldiers during the fourteenth century in western Europe was introduced by England during the Hundred Years War because of the shortcomings of the feudal army. The use of mercenaries spread rapidly through Europe. The mercenary soldier represented every nationality and social class. Individuals were attracted to this profession because it offered the opportunity to gain wealth and immortality.

The mercenaries usually organized themselves into companies of about three hundred men and elected their captain, who in turn appointed the other officers within the command. On occasion several companies would band together to make a larger force, depending on the need. It was the captain's responsibility to arm his men. Each soldier's responsibility was to comply with a code of laws referred to as the law of arms. This code governed the soldier's actions relative to taking plunder, the treatment and ransom of prisoners, to whom and under what conditions he could sell his services, and how spoils, taken in a just war, were divided.

Their exploits may be traced throughout western Europe. Many significant incidents illustrating the breakdown of public order in late medieval times may be recounted. The forcible coercion and humiliation of the Pope at Avignon is an example; or the putting of Henry of Trastamere on the

Castilian throne in the place of Pedro the Cruel; or the execution of a raid near Ghent; or the steady chore of protecting the French king at Paris. These were all facets of the activity of the mercenaries in this period.

The major contribution made to history by the western European mercenary soldier was that it was he who formed the nucleus of the national army of France. Indirectly he contributed to the rise of nationalism by influencing the Frenchman to recognize his government and detest the "foreigners."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

In the transitory period of history when feudalism was dying and nationalism was emerging in western Europe, military service was generally obtained through the procedure of hiring professional men-at-arms or, as they are commonly called, mercenary soldiers. It is not our purpose here to enquire into the reasons why there was a shift from feudal soldiery to mercenaries, but certainly the substitution of scutage for military service and the use of mercenaries as early as the reigns of Stephen and John in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries indicates some dissatisfaction with traditional feudal military service as far as rulers were concerned. The existence of a large body of men who, when employed, were loyal to their ruler tended to foster the development of a strong bureaucracy and of taxing machinery to support payments to these men. And these men, when unemployed, could make not only the population but the king himself sorry he had not hired them.

Thus the mercenaries, employed or unemployed, contributed to the rise of the national state and contributed to the rise of nationalism generally, as well as to the emergence of public international law in regard to warfare.

Little, too, has been recorded on the pages of history

concerning the exploits of these men and it is the purpose of this paper to elaborate on their contribution to history.

I. INTRODUCTION

Feudalism and military service. In the Middle Ages the need for mounted soldiers to combat on equal terms the Saracens and Mongolians was critical and the cost of equipping such a soldier was high. Money was scarce but land was plentiful and to obtain the services of a properly equipped soldier, the monarch executed a "benefice" or a "fief," as it was later called when it became hereditary, in return for military service at the monarch's beckoning. This was a grant, usually in the form of land, which allowed the receiver to make a profit from the land and support himself as a combatant as required by the feudal contract. Feudal armies were small, comprised of landowners, and could operate for only a limited period of time, as it was necessary for the landowning combatants to return home frequently to manage their estates. Subinfeudation became the common practice by which individuals lesser than the monarch could field an army. Since both king and lesser magnates could thus have armies, the feudal system was only successful in preventing feudal wars when a strong king could overawe his frequently rebellious subjects.[1]

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[1]James Westfall Thompson and Edgar Nathaniel Johnson, Medieval Europe 300-1500 (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1937), pp. 290-326.

Decline of feudalism. As subinfeudation spread, the feudal system became weaker. The chief vassals to the king usurped the monarch's power. But the revival of trade and other economic developments in the later middle ages required a strong central government which could provide the security for this new economic phenomenon to nurture itself. As sentiment for this security of nationalism developed, the feudal army became obsolete. It became obsolete because of its limited size, short annual period of service, lack of discipline, and a change in the status of the mounted knight. The mounted knight, though heavily armored, was no longer invincible on the battlefield because of the appearance of the English longbow and the use of lightly armored, highly mobile infantry as was demonstrated by the battles of Morgarten (1315), Crécy (1346), and Sempach (1386). By the end of the thirteenth century, especially in England, the duties of the knight had been regulated to affairs of the state and a fee was accepted by the monarch in lieu of military service.[2]

The new found wealth of the king permitted him to hire professional soldiers to provide security for the realm. These hired professional soldiers proved to be everything that the feudal army was not. The use of professional soldiers spread rapidly throughout western Europe so that by the

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[2]Richard A. Preston, Sydney F. Wise, and Herman O. Werner, Men in Arms (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1956), pp. 78-83; Sir Charles William Chadwick Oman, A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages (London: Burt Franklin, 1924), II, pp. 233-4.

fifteenth century it almost entirely replaced, or greatly augmented, the feudal armies.[3] These individuals have come to be referred to as mercenary soldiers and have unjustly inherited a tradition of being nothing more than armed bands of cutthroat robbers of the late middle ages.

The mercenary traditions. "The Prince whose state depends upon the aid of hired soldiers ... shall never be secure, for these mercenary men are seditious, ambitious, without all discipline, without all faith or honesty, cruel to their friends, slothful, and cowards among their enemies, neither fearing God nor carnage of men." The above quotation was taken from Machiavelli's The Prince.[4] This coupled with his description of the battle of Zagonara (1423) in The History of Florence where he states, "No deaths occurred except those of Ludovici degli Obize and two of his people, who having fallen from their horses were smothered in the morass," has probably contributed greatly to the idea of the questionable character of the mercenary soldier.[5] Such writings of Machiavelli and his contemporaries were reinforced by our twentieth century prejudices based on nationalism, and

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, ed. and trans. Hardin Craig (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp. 51-52.

[5] Niccolo Machiavelli, The History of Florence, trans. Allan Gilbert, 3 vols. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), III, pp. 1191-1192.

have never been examined in an unbiased manner. It is necessary, therefore, to see if the fourteenth century mercenary soldier was indeed without discipline, loyalty, and honesty, and was cruel, slothful, a coward, and so on. He must be judged in the perspective of his own times to evaluate correctly his contribution to history and to the art of war.

II. OBJECTIVES AND SOURCES

This study is an attempt to portray the western European mercenary soldiers of the fourteenth century as they were as individuals or as they operated as a unit, and to describe the effect their actions had on the development of national armies. To keep from going afield on narration of military operations, little attention will be given here to kings, national goals and major battles. This material is discussed adequately by national histories, it does not directly pertain to our present task, and will only be included to maintain continuity and understanding of the role of the mercenaries.

Literature on this subject is extremely scarce and often contradictory. The primary sources consulted are the chronicles of Froissart and Monstrelet and Christine de Pisan's work, The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyvalrye. These works supply most of the specific examples. Most general statements and background material relating to

general warfare have been obtained from Charles Oman while that pertaining to law has been obtained from Maurice Keen. Other works have been consulted but are not considered significant enough to deserve mention here.

CHAPTER II

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

To understand the mercenary soldier in his fourteenth century environment, we must determine his origins, how he organized his units, and what regulations or controls he was required to honor.

I. ORIGINS

Tradition established. The use of mercenary soldiers was not an invention of the middle ages but their use was peculiar to the feudal system. England established the tradition in western Europe by the extended use of mercenary soldiers beginning with King Stephen (1135-1154). During his struggle with Empress Matilda for the throne of England, many of his feudal vassals deserted him and Stephen hired large bodies of Flemings commanded by William of Ypres and Brabançons commanded by Alan of Dinan to replace his feudal army.[1] Richard I, of England, after his release from capture in 1194, pursued Philip Augustus with Saracen and Syrian units in his army.[2] King John, after being evicted from

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[1] Charles Oman, A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages (New York: Burt Franklin, 1924), I, p. 368.

[2] James Westfall Thompson and Edgar Nathaniel Johnson, An Introduction to Medieval Europe 300-1500 (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1937), p. 484.

Normandy, brought many of the mercenary troops whom he had employed there back to England. John's English vassals were so infuriated at the favors which he bestowed on these mercenaries at their expense that in the Magna Carta John was forced to accept a clause promising to dismiss his mercenaries. Several were listed by name.[3]

Perhaps the conflict which did more to help mercenary activity than any other was the Hundred Years War. Edward III of England, shortly after his accession to the English throne, laid claim to the French one through his mother, who was a French princess. The French king, an uncle, had died without heirs.[4] The feudal army which Edward could muster would serve him for only forty days per year. This would be adequate to conduct campaigns on the British Isles themselves but, being limited to forty days per year, it could not be used on the continent. By the time it was assembled and transported to the continent the period of service would have expired. To meet this problem Edward III and his successors relied almost completely on hired soldiers to fill the ranks of their continental armies and thus infected continental Europe with the mercenary spirit which was to continue for the next three centuries.[5]

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[3] Magna Carta, Chapters 50-51.

[4] Norman Kotker (ed.), The Horizon Book of the Middle Ages (New York: American Heritage Publishing Company, 1968), p. 382.

[5] Oman, op. cit., I, pp. 368-369.

Geographical origins. The fourteenth century mercenaries varied in their nationalities almost to the extent of their numbers. They came from every corner of Europe. A summons for men-at-arms issued by King David of Scotland in 1341 to campaign against England was answered by many from Sweden, Norway and Denmark.[6] Froissart relates the story of the young page from Holland who joined a company of men-at-arms and he was so successful that in later life his estate was valued at 40,000 crowns.[7] Edward III announced in 1359 his intentions to invade France and many "mercenary Germans, Bohemians, Brabanters, Flemings, Hainaulters both poor and rich, wait ... at Calais."[8] In Spain in 1381 English and Gascons were in the employ of the King of Portugal.[9] In the year 1410 the Duke of Orleans employed mercenaries who were Lombards or Gascons.[10] Richard's use of Saracens and Syrians has previously been mentioned.

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[6]Sir John Froissart, The Chronicles of England, France, and Adjoining Countries from the Latter Part of the Reign of Edward II to the Coronation of Henry IV, trans. Thomas Johnes (London: William Smith, 1803-1810), I, p. 98.

[7]Ibid., p. 191-192.

[8]Ibid., p. 266.

[9]Ibid., p. 688.

[10]Enguerrand de Monstrelet, The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet, trans. Thomas Johnes (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, Pater-Noster-Row; and J. White and Company, 1810), II, p. 205.

These are but a few of the many examples showing that no country or nationality had a monopoly on supplying mercenary soldiers for western Europe. It is also interesting to note that during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there were few, if any, Swiss mercenaries operating in western Europe.

Social origins. The social origins of the fourteenth century mercenary soldiers is the most difficult area of investigation because of lack of evidence concerning their family background. A general statement may be made that a representation of all social classes may be found within their ranks. From the evidence in our sources, there are indications that the majority of these men-at-arms were descendants of the lesser nobility but were not in line to receive an inheritance. This would be an individual who was in the category of not being the firstborn male or was a bastard offspring of the local lord.

The highest ranking nobility usually acted as the field commanders of the mercenary armies or employed the mercenaries directly themselves for their private campaigns. The role of field commander and employer of mercenaries is exemplified by the expedition of Prince Edward in 1355 on the continent of Europe.[11] On the continent two lords who consistently filled this role were the Duke of Burgundy and

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[11]Herbert James Hewitt, The Black Prince's Expedition of 1355-1357 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958).

Duke of Orleans.[12] Exceptions may be found where high nobles have joined the ranks of the mercenaries. In 1361 a large number of unemployed mercenaries were threatening the pope at Avignon. The pope contracted with the Marquis of Montferrat to have them removed, and paid him a large sum of money. The Marquis pocketed the money, joined the mercenary companies to him with the papal funds, and moved into Lombardy, thus discharging his contract with the pope without immediate bloodshed.[13] In 1408 the Earl of Mar of Scotland contracted with the Duke of Burgundy to supply the Duke with a company of men-at-arms and in 1410 the Count de Armagnac and his company were hired by the Duke of Orleans.[14]

The largest social group of professional soldiers included descendants of nobles who had little hope of inheriting property, sons of landed gentry, and bastard offspring. The chronicles are filled with their names but only a few will be mentioned here to demonstrate a cross section of their heritage.[15] In 1340 Lord Bailleul was elected as

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[12]Monstrelet, op. cit., II, pp. 19, 40, 205-207, 287, 306.

[13]Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 299.

[14]Monstrelet, op. cit., pp. 21, 205.

[15]The method used to determine this is that the author of the chronicles refers to the individual as "lord" or "sir" which would indicate nobility or gentry, respectively, but refrains from associating a title with this individual; therefore, indicating by the use of this terminology that the individual was a family member only, as was the custom of the times. In the instance of the bastard descendants only those who were offspring of important personages were given recognition.

captain of a company of Hainaulters of about one hundred twenty knights and squires.[16] Lord Clifford of England had one hundred men-at-arms and 200 archers in his command when he was fighting for the Duke of Orleans in the early 1400's.[17] Bertrand du Guesclin was only a squire in 1342 defending the town of Rennes against the English.[18] Some of the leaders of men-at-arms in 1358 mentioned by Froissart were Rabigois of Derry, an Irishman; Franklin and Hawkins (probably should be Hawkwood), who were English squires; and Sir Robert Knolles, also English.[19] A few of the bastard offspring who followed the men-at-arms and became leaders of companies were Le Bourge de L'Espare, Le Bourg Eamus, Le Bourg de Breteuil, Le Bourg de Copane, Le Bourg Anglois, Le Bourg Carlat, Bastard Jacob, and many others.[20] These and many more not mentioned sought their fortune as men-at-arms.

There were many of the peasant class to follow the trail of the professional combatants, through which warfare some gained riches and recognition. Of the many examples of those who did so, only two will be mentioned here. Froissart

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[16]Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 80.

[17]Monstrelet, op. cit., II, p. 324.

[18]Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 123.

[19]Ibid., p. 248.

[20]Ibid., pp. 294, II, 320; Monstrelet, op. cit., II, p. 307.

relates the story of a poor boy from Brittany who became a page to Lord d'Ercle as his first experience in war. He did well, learned fast, and in 1346 the company elected him as their captain.[21] In France a Welshman named Ruffin commanded a company located between the Loire and Seine rivers. He became rich and the members of the company which he commanded declared him to be a knight.[22]

There was little concern given to the status of one's birth within the ranks of the hired soldiers. They felt there was room for all and welcomed newcomers from all walks of life; their primary concern being how effective an individual was as a soldier.

Incentive. The attraction of the first importance which enticed men to join the ranks of the fourteenth century professional soldier was opportunity: opportunity to gain wealth beyond imagination, opportunity to advance in social prestige, opportunity to gain immortality.[23] No other occupation offered such rewards to the youth of Europe since the Crusades and there was little difficulty in filling the ranks.

The possibilities of success are best illustrated by

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[21] Froissart, op. cit., I, pp. 191-192.

[22] Ibid., p. 238.

[23] M. H. Keen, The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 70.

a reconsideration of the career of our page from Brittany and of Ruffin the Welshman. Croquart, the page, after having been elected captain of the company, made such a profit from his endeavors that his estate was valued at 40,000 crowns. Although he generally hired himself to the English, King John of France offered to make him a knight, to marry him to wealth, and to provide him with a pension of 2,000 livres annually if he would quit them.[24] Ruffin the Welshman became "rich beyond counting," and controlled every inch of territory between the Loire and Seine rivers except the most heavily fortified towns.[25] A captain called Robber Bacon who operated in southern France with a small company was very successful in gaining wealth and recognition. He captured the castle of Cobourne in Limousin in 1346 and the lord with it. He held the castle for some time and pillaged the countryside until the King of France paid him 20,000 crowns for the castle, made him Usher at Arms, and bestowed other honors upon him. He dressed as an earl, rode only the finest of horses, and maintained this standard of living for the remainder of his life.[26] Not a great amount of wealth was gained by an Englishman named Sir John Chandos but he did achieve fame and social prestige. John Chandos first distinguished himself as

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[24]Froissart, op. cit., I, pp. 191-192.

[25]Ibid., p. 238.

[26]Ibid., pp. 190-191.

a combatant at the Battle of Cambray in 1327. By 1356 he had become an advisor and bodyguard for the Black Prince at the Battle of Poitiers. In 1360 Sir John Chandos returned to France as regent and lieutenant of the King of England to take possession of all territories given to England as a result of the Treaty of Brétigny. He was killed in battle at St. Salvin in 1369.[27] Not all who marched with the men-at-arms were as successful as these examples indicate and, to be sure, great risks of life, limb, and fortune were involved; nevertheless, this profession did offer the opportunity for an individual to rise to wealth and glory which he could not find elsewhere in fourteenth century Europe.

II. ORGANIZATION

Strength. The art of war had not advanced to the state of standardization of units by the fourteenth century and the size of the mercenary companies varied greatly; however, most companies appeared to be organized into an optimum size of about three hundred men. This would seem to be a logical size force to be effective on the battlefield and still retain some degree of control and maneuverability for the commander. This company was usually comprised of soldiers and archers, either group including mounted or foot. This gave the commander a combined arms team from which he could

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[27] Ibid., pp. 51, 218, 293, 435.

draw on the best capabilities of each element for success in combat. By changing the number of these elements the commander could tailor his force to best meet the needs for completing his task.[28]

Exact figures of numbers of members of large companies are elusive and at times may be judged only by their accomplishments. Arnold de Cervole, called The Archpriest, collected a large body of men-at-arms and successfully threatened the Pope at Avignon to the extent that the Pope paid him 40,000 crowns, entertained him, and gave him absolution for his sins prior to his departure.[29] No mention is made of the number of followers The Archpriest had at this time, but to carry out a threat as effectively as he did against a powerful Pope, it could be estimated that there were at least two thousand men under his command. Sir Clugnet de Brabant, who called himself Admiral of France, assembled a group of two thousand combatants from various garrisons in France and plundered the countryside in the vicinity of Ham.[30] In both of the above instances no mention is made of any subdivision within the forces. But in groups this large, intermediate leaders were a necessity, if for no other reason than to maintain control. In the case of Clugnet, his force was

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[28]Preston, op. cit., p. 92.

[29]Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 238-239.

[30]Monstrelet, op. cit., II, pp. 281-284.

composed of men from several garrisons, indicating that the captains commanding the garrisons had merged their companies for a joint operation under the leadership of Clugnet. A more specific example of companies banding together is rendered by Froissart. This concerned a force of 16,000 men-at-arms pillaging their way to Avignon. Here he lists by name twenty-one who had been elected as captain and states that there were several others so elected but not named.[31] This presents a clear picture that though the total strength was 16,000 (which is probably an overestimate), it was in reality made up of many small groups or companies of men-at-arms.

Evidence exists which indicates the size of a company as it merged with a larger force and this will present an accurate picture of the probable size of a mercenary company. A famed captain of men-at-arms, Sir Perducas d' Albret, had upwards of three hundred men when he withdrew his force from the service of the Duke of Anjou in 1369.[32] Captain Oriole of Gascony was made a prisoner and had commanded a force of one hundred lances at the time of his capture.[33] Ame de Viry from Savoy commanded a force of three hundred soldiers in the service of a duke.[34] Lord de Clifford had one hundred

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[31] Froissart, op. cit., I, pp. 294-295.

[32] Ibid., pp. 413-414.

[33] Monstrelet, op. cit., XI, pp. 307-308.

[34] Ibid., II, p. 41.

men-at-arms and two hundred archers from the county of Bourdelois when he was in the service of the Duke of Orleans.[35] William Baldock, Lieutenant of Calais, answered a summons of the Duke of Burgundy in September 1411 with a total of three hundred English combatants, whereas a total of sixty thousand were assembled.[36] Of a force of two thousand assembled at St. Omer in 1359 to assist Edward III on a possible excursion into France, one portion was commanded by Sir Henry of Flanders with two hundred lances.[37] Though many large forces existed, the majority of the men-at-arms organized companies of about three hundred members.

Command structure. The command structure of the mercenary companies adjusted itself to the needs of the particular company rather than conform to a set pattern. The title of "captain" was used to designate the commander of a unit regardless of size and on all levels of command. The exceptions to this were the instances when several captains had joined their forces. They then selected one of their number as their leader and he was referred to as Captain General.[38]

Captains were elected and their positions were secure

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[35] Ibid., p. 324.

[36] Ibid., pp. 287-306.

[37] Froissart, op. cit., I, pp. 266-267.

[38] John Temple-Leader and Guiseppi Marcotti, Sir John Hawkwood - The Story of a Condottiere (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1889), p. 24.

as long as their operations were successful and profitable.[39] It was the duty of the captain to appoint subordinate officers for each certain number of men with his company and maintain a close observation of his men-at-arms during drill, and retain only those whom he felt would be the best soldiers. The captain also appointed a paymaster and insured that this individual paid the soldiers honestly.[40]

In the second echelon of command is found a constable or lieutenant. In this rank of command the two are used interchangeably. In Normandy the king's representative issued an ordinance to all soldiers in his territory, most of whom were mercenaries, to halt their pillaging and required them to pay for any articles which they received from the civilian populace. This ordinance stipulated that the actions of the soldiers would be the responsibility of the captains and their lieutenants.[41] Monstrelet refers to William Baldock, a Lieutenant of Calais.[42] Directly under Sir John Hawkwood, the great condottiere commander who was then captain of the White Company in Italy, were two constables: one was a German

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[39]Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 294.

[40]Christine de Pisan, The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyvalrye, trans. William Claxton (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 40-41.

[41]B. J. H. Rowe, "Discipline in the Norman Garrisons Under Bedford 1422-35," English Historical Review, XLVI (April 1931), p. 195.

[42]Monstrelet, op. cit., II, p. 292.

named Albert Sterz, and one an Englishman, Andrew de Belmonte. Two constables were also in Hawkwood's personal bodyguard, which consisted of forty-eight men.[43] Many titles given mercenary commanders were of an honorary and feudal nature, such as Marshal of Burgundy and Constable of Aquitaine. Others relate to a location, such as Lieutenant of Calais, and indicate his duties involved command of a garrison there. Still others are honorary titles affixed to a person's name, such as Marshal d' Audreham, Constable de Hawkwood, and the Lieutenant of the Captain of Auge.[44]

Little evidence is found to substantiate any command structure below the senior officer grade of the unit, but in large units a group which would today be called a commander's staff existed. In 1353 Walter of Montreal, also known as Fra Moriale because he had been expelled from the order of Knights of St. John, commanded a force of seven thousand soldiers in central Italy. In his command he had appointed "a council [of eight], secretaries, accountants, camp-judges, a provost-marshal, and a gallows."[45] Sir John Hawkwood had in his service in 1363 in Italy an Englishman named William Turton as treasurer of the company.[46]

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[43]Temple-Leader, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

[44]Keen, op. cit., pp. 27-35; Rowe, op. cit., p. 199.

[45]Oman, op. cit., II, pp. 292-293.

[46]Temple-Leader, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

A command structure did exist in the fourteenth century mercenary companies. Captains were elected and subordinate officers were appointed based on their efficiency in combat, and their ability to realize a profit for the particular company. There was no consideration for titles of nobility, though nobles could and did occupy these positions as previously demonstrated in the subheading, Social origins, of this paper. This policy was of prime importance in making the hired professional army much more effective in combat operations than its feudal ancestor. The feudal army was plagued with commanders who gained their positions by heredity, not by efficiency. In the feudal army political axes had to be ground.

Arms and armor. There was much variation in the arms and armor used by the mercenary soldiers. The usual weapon of the foot soldier was some variation of the pike or halberd. The pike was an ashen shaft which could be up to eighteen feet long and usually had a ten inch metal point. It was held with both hands by the soldier. In the assault it was held about shoulder high with the point slightly lowered allowing him to deliver a powerful downward thrust against his opponent. When used in the defense, especially against cavalry, it was held with both hands with the butt end resting on the ground and the shaft at about a twenty-five degree angle with the ground. A very close square or round formation would be maintained so that a cavalry charge would impale

itself against the pike much like a dog attempting to bite a porcupine. The halberd was similar to the pike except that it was only about eight feet long and on its point a blade, much like a hatchet blade, extended to one side and opposite this blade was a hook-like projection. This weapon was held with both hands and the hook projection used for catching the horse's reins or pulling a knight from his mount. The hatchet blade was for chopping through heavy armor when the knight was dismounted and the point could be used as a pike. Many times this halberdier, though a foot soldier, would ride to battle, there dismounting to fight, leaving his horse with the baggage train.[47]

The English introduced the use of archers in their campaigns against Scotland and on the European continent in the early fourteenth century.[48] The mercenaries were quick to realize the importance of the use of archers on the battlefield. They adopted the crossbow and longbow, but generally preference was given to the latter.[49]

The crossbow was a mechanical device which placed a great amount of tension on a horn or iron bow of about two feet in length. It discharged a short bolt at a very high velocity which could penetrate armor plate but only at a close

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[47] Oman, op. cit., II, pp. 253-255.

[48] Kotker, op. cit., p. 382.

[49] Oman, op. cit., II, pp. 189-190.

range.[50] The longbow was shaped as the conventional bow of today except that it was six to six and one-half feet long. The ends of the bow were capped with slotted pieces of horn which held the bowstring. It had a pull pressure of about one hundred pounds and took all the strength of a stout man to operate. It shot an arrow which was a cloth yard long (thirty-seven inches) and could engage a target by aiming directly at the target or by shooting into the air and lobbing the arrow on the target, much like the trajectory of a mortar. The arrow was metal tipped, for killing power, with a feathered end for stability in flight. The longbow had the ability to pierce chain mail or kill a horse at a range of two hundred yards. In one case a soldier was pinned to his horse by an arrow shot through both legs and the horse.[51] The archer usually fought from behind a large shield or sharpened stakes set into the ground at an angle to protect him from a cavalry charge.[52] Most of the archers carried with them a maul or hammer attached on their back to use in close combat or when their supply of arrows was exhausted.[53]

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[50] Ibid., I, pp. 137-139.

[51] Edwin Tunis, Weapons A Pictorial History (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1954), pp. 57-59.

[52] Geoffrey Barraclough, Social Life in Early England (New York: Barns and Noble, 1961), p. 132.

[53] Tunis, op. cit., p. 58.

The use of gunpowder was not unknown to this period. It was used at Crécy, but was not very effective except to make a loud noise and scare the horses.[54] There is no evidence to indicate that it was ever used by the mercenaries of the fourteenth century, probably because they realized its relative uselessness on the battlefield at this stage of its development and because of its prohibitive cost and difficulty in transporting.

Armor was used by the paid soldiers of western Europe as they salvaged pieces of it from the battlefield or from discard. Normally they did not have the money to buy it, and since they were generally landless they did not have serfs to act as blacksmiths, as the landed gentry did. Consequently they learned to do without it. The infantry often went to battle with nothing more than a hard, boiled leather jerkin or jacket. Some had a simple helmet and many attached armor plates to their leather jackets.[55] Monstrelet relates that in 1410 some Flemish companies in service of the Duke of Burgundy almost to a man wore leg armor.[56] A fifteenth century woodcut depicts mounted mercenaries in camp wearing open faced helmets, breastplates, gloves, and what appears to be a mail shirt.[57] The Hungarians and then the English were

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[54] Ibid., p. 68.

[55] Kotker, op. cit., p. 66; Barraclough, op. cit., p. 131.

[56] Monstrelet, op. cit., II, p. 289.

[57] Froissart, op. cit., II, p. 320.

the lightest armored soldiers in Europe and seldom wore leg armor.[58]

All the soldiers carried a small sword or dagger of some description which was their last means of self-defense. This was usually hung on a belt around the waist opposite the large sword, or carried in the middle of the back at the waist so that it could be reached with either hand.[59]

The feudal soldier was heavily armored, always mounted, and felt it was beneath his dignity to fight on foot. He also considered the use of missile throwing weapons, such as the crossbow and the longbow, to be unchristian and not within the bounds of honorable warfare.[60] His full suit of armor weighed about sixty pounds; therefore, he was at the mercy of the foot soldiers when dismounted because of his inability to maneuver.[61] The mercenary was quick to take advantage of this. Against the feudal army he employed infantry supported by cavalry, with extensive use of archers.[62] This would force the feudal soldier to dismount and at this point the lightly armored, offensively oriented mercenary soldier gained a distinct advantage through his ability to maneuver. Tactics and position became the queen of the

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[58] Temple-Leader, op. cit., p. 39.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Kotker, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

[61] Barraclough, op. cit., p. 131.

[62] Oman, op. cit., II, pp. 189-190, 234, 257.

battlefield, not the thickness of armor.[63]

Supplies. During the fourteenth century each soldier was expected to supply himself with everything except weapons. No special logistical services such as we are familiar with in our modern armies today existed in the mercenary companies or feudal armies. Any conveniences carried as part of the baggage train were property of the commanders and officers for their use only as well as their personal responsibility.[64] The feudal army and its mercenary offspring lived off the land as it moved, and each individual was responsible for his own necessities. The baggage train existed for the purpose of transporting equipment (arms) and the company's plunder. No, or very limited, medical services existed.[65] The chroniclers, Froissart and Monstrelet, made no mention of care for the sick or treatment of wounded soldiers.

The weapons used by the mercenary soldier were either furnished by the captain or were made available to him by plunder or requisition. Though the mercenary company was a society of a common enterprise, the captain was held responsible for all their actions. He, therefore, had the responsibility of seeing that they were properly armed.[66] An

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[63]Kotker, op. cit., p. 382.

[64]John Ulric Nef, War and Human Progress (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 95.

[65]Kotker, op. cit., p. 66.

[66]Keen, op. cit., pp. 147, 149, 151.

example of a commander supplying the means for soldiers to arm themselves is demonstrated by the actions of the Duke of Lancaster. Mercenaries had gathered at Calais in 1359 in anticipation of an excursion into France by the duke, but, because of the long wait for him, were forced to sell much of their equipment and arms. The duke recognized his responsibility for their plight by lending them a sum of money to re-equip themselves.[67]

The mercenaries made little advancement in development of vital logistics to support their forces. The failure of the fourteenth century armies to supply themselves dictated that the assembling of large armies, as we know them today, was impossible.

III. RECOGNIZED TRADITIONS

Contracts. Some type of contract was necessary to permit the mercenary soldier to survive. The contracts adapted themselves to the particular situation but basically all stated the conditions to which both parties would have to comply. They stated the type and size of force, length of service, objectives, wages and division of spoils, responsibilities for losses in battle, and any other provisions which were desirable for this particular period. Many times the king would contract with one of his subjects, usually a well-known commander who could attract followers, to supply a

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[67]Froissart, op. cit., I, pp. 266-267.

specified type force for a specified period of time in return for a determined amount of money.[68] The individual so commissioned would then hire the force needed and execute the assigned mission. Sir Thomas Dagworth contracted with the king of England to serve in Brittany with a force consisting of two hundred men-at-arms of his own (fourteen knights, sixty-five men-at-arms, and 120 horse archers) plus three hundred extra men-at-arms and six hundred horse archers for a period of three months for the lump sum payment of £2880. He was also to receive compensation for any losses which he experienced on the battlefield at a rate of £10 for each horse of a man-at-arms and £1 for each archer's hackney.[69]

Wages. Little evidence exists concerning the pay received by the mercenary soldier for his services in western Europe. There is evidence indicating the wages received by the English soldier during the fourteenth century for his service in England, Scotland, and on the continent of Europe, and from this an assumption could be made that the mercenary soldier received approximately the same wages, as they often served side by side in the same army. During the reign of Edward II a heavy cavalryman (that is an armored cavalryman

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[68] Preston, op. cit., p. 87.

[69] J. E. Morris, "Mounted Infantry in Medieval Warfare," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, series 3, VIII (1914), p. 97.

who is mounted on a horse covered with armor) was entitled to receive one shilling per day for his service.[70] When England was fighting Scotland in 1337, a horse archer received 4d per day.[71] At this same time £500 would supply the services of one hundred knights and men-at-arms for about two months.[72] Disregarding that a knight would receive a little more pay than a man-at-arms this would figure out to be that each received £2.5 per month for their services. The foot archers who accompanied Edward III to the continent in 1338 were paid 2d per day and horse archers in the same instance were paid 4d per day, and by 1346 their pay had risen to 3d and 6d respectively.[73] Pay for the Welsh foot soldiers and the hired mercenary soldiers at the Battle of Crécy was 2d per day.[74] A. E. Prince also states that the foot archers in service on the continent received 3d per day.[75]

Many examples indicate that often the mercenary served for no wages at all, expecting to earn his reward for his efforts through his share of spoils taken in battle. Several

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[70] Ibid., p. 79.

[71] Ibid., p. 94.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., p. 95.

[74] Ibid., p. 97.

[75] A. E. Prince, "The Strength of English Armies in the Reign of Edward III," English Historical Review, XLVI (July, 1931), p. 362.

mercenary leaders met with Edward III in 1359 and offered him their services in return for wages as they had spent their money and pawned their weapons and were indeed in need of money. The king advised them that he would consider their proposition and send them an answer in two days. His answer was that he could not support them financially but "that if any thought proper to accompany him, and partake of his good and bad fortune should any success ensue, they should partake of it, and largely; but that he would not be understood as obliged to pay them any wages, nor anything for horses destroyed, or other expenses which they might be put to." Some chose to follow, others departed.[76] Another example of this concerns a squire named Geronnet de Maudrant. He, with about thirty companions, attempted a raid without the permission or knowledge of his captain, Perrot Le Béarnois, in 1388. The squire was captured and some of his friends were allowed to return to request that his captain ransom him. When the captain was approached about this, he said, "I know nothing of gain or loss, but this I know, you will get nothing from me. I did not send you on this excursion; it was your own free election to seek adventure. Send to tell your companions when you see them that adventure must deliver them ... I will not therefore ransom any man belonging to me unless he be taken when in my company."[77] It must be remembered here

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[76]Froissart, op. cit., I, pp. 267-268.

[77]Ibid., II, p. 317.

that the largest source of income for the mercenary was his opportunity to take plunder and gain ransom. The payment of wages was of prime importance in determining how this spoil was to be divided, but this will be discussed later in this paper.

Responsibilities. To the fourteenth and fifteenth century soldier plunder was a natural pastime.[78] To partake legally of any plunder the soldier had the responsibility to be sure that he was engaged in a just war in accordance with the law of arms; otherwise, he could be tried, convicted, and punished for his actions and often was.[79] More will be said later but, basically, a just war is one which is waged under the name of a prince.[80] This does not mean that the right to plunder was limited to the battlefield but was limited by the existing conditions under which it was accomplished; that is, the state of war and its cause.[81] There were many violators of this code but the majority complied with its provisions. King Charles V hired many companies of mercenaries in 1368 in France but they were forced to refrain from pillaging or any other actions as he would not let them use his name in war at this time because he was in the process

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[78] Rowe, op. cit., p. 194.

[79] Pisan, op. cit., p. 219; Keen, op. cit., pp. 97-100.

[80] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[81] Keen, op. cit., p. 140.

of conducting diplomatic negotiations which he did not want to jeopardize.[82] To comply with the letter of the law but not the spirit of the law, John of Verney led a company of mercenaries in support of a lunatic who claimed to be the rightful king of France.[83] Another means of circumventing the law of arms was to conceal or hide one's identity. Estienne Oyn put the lands of Crevant to ransom but did not indicate to anyone under whose name he was conducting these operations so that his victims could not bring him to court.[84] The significance of these last examples is that the soldiers recognized their responsibilities in complying with the traditional law of arms.

Captains were responsible for the actions of their soldiers as well as their own and could be held accountable for violations of the law of arms. In 1389 Aymerigot Marcel, a mercenary captain, was made a prisoner and the king of France had him brought to Paris to stand trial for the actions of his company on previous excursions. He was found guilty, beheaded, quartered, and displayed in the city.[85] Sir Vauflart de La Croix led his company on an excursion against Liege in 1340 but was defeated and his company destroyed. He

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[82] Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 398.

[83] Keen, op. cit., p. 85.

[84] Ibid., p. 102.

[85] Froissart, op. cit., II, p. 464.

hid in a thorn bush but was later captured. The king of France gave him over to the town of Lisle which he had previously illegally pillaged and its inhabitants immediately put him to death.[86]

Soldiers did have to account for their actions when captured and so they gave close attention to their actions being within the bounds of the law of arms. The soldier had other responsibilities to prisoners, acknowledgment of spoils, and brothers-in-arms but these will be discussed later.

The beginnings of the use of the mercenary soldiers in western Europe has been discussed revealing who they were, from whence they came, and why they selected their profession. Information presented has developed some idea of the size of the units and how they were led. Some materials contained herein described how they were armed and paid. A short discussion of the law with which they had to comply was presented. This renders some of the basic facts pertinent to the internal operations but now from these an expansion into their external operations must be made to place the mercenary soldier properly in his society.

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[86] Ibid., I, p. 80.

CHAPTER III

EXTERNAL ORGANIZATION

Thus far consideration has been given only to the internal activities of the mercenary soldiers and now this must be expanded to include an examination of their activities in relation to their environment. This will consist of an inquiry into the types of war of this period, a brief explanation of the law of arms and its manifestations, and an evaluation of the loyalty of the mercenary to his employer.

I. TYPES OF WAR

Conditions of war. Basically there were four recognized conditions of warfare: war to the death, public war, feudal or covered war, and truce. It was important for the soldier to know and understand under which of these conditions he was fighting because they established the legality for his actions and informed him what treatment he would receive if captured. Each of these conditions of war were communicated by the warring parties through a system of recognized signals which allowed each side to know by what rules they were to abide and under what authority the war was being conducted. Let us now study each of these conditions separately.[1]

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[1] Keen, op. cit., p. 104.

War to the death. War to the death, as the name implies, indicated a condition of war in which the losers were slain or enslaved. It was a condition of war of the ancients and seldom pronounced between Christian princes. There would be no privilege of ransom. The signal which indicated war to the death was the display of a solid red flag or banner. It was usually displayed in the vicinity of the prince's standard and was, as said previously, rarely used. The French displayed this banner at the battle of Crécy but failed to fulfil their intentions when they were defeated by the English. The flaming banner was unfurled at Roosebeque because the Flemings were thought of as being little better than infidels and enemies of the faith.[2] At Montiel in 1369 DuGuesclin ordered that no prisoners would be taken because there "were numerous Jews and infidels in Don Pedro's army."[3]

Public war. Public war, or open war as it was sometimes called, was a condition of war which most precisely fits our twentieth century definition of war. It was the type of war to which opposing Christian princes resorted. The victors could take spoils and prisoners. Quarter would be given usually and prisoners could not be enslaved but had a right to ransom themselves if the terms were within reason.

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[2] Ibid., pp. 103-106; Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 744.

[3] Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 386.

An individual on many occasions could also ransom his property. The usual signal depicting that these conditions of war existed was the display of the banner of the prince in whose name the war was to be conducted. It could also be proclaimed by a herald holding a drawn sword in his right hand and a flaming torch in his left. Once the prince's banner was displayed he had given a challenge and at that instant a state of public war existed. His opponent was free to act as he saw fit as deeds done from this point on were legal. The display of the banner was evidence to prove the breach of a truce, or that public war had been levied as the banner was the prince's personal emblem and when displayed, he was committed on his honor. Every battle that was fought normally had the banner of the prince on whose authority it was being fought displayed and little would be gained by recording here specific examples of this.[4]

Feudal war. Feudal war would be the most difficult to assess because of its limited scale and myriad causes. It was important only when a case had to be considered in court. The wars of the higher feudal lords would be on a scale large enough to be classified as public wars. Many times a feudal war resulted from these because a participant failed to meet his obligations in regards to ransom, treatment of prisoners, or destruction of property. Under these conditions the

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[4]Keen, op. cit., pp. 106-108.

warring parties could kill his enemy, but could not burn or plunder the land. The war was restricted to the property of the individuals concerned and could not expand into open country; therefore, this type of warfare was most unattractive to the mercenary soldier. No indication of any pattern for a signal for initiating this condition of war could be found.[5]

Truce. A truce suspended hostilities for a period of time and it could be local as well as nationwide. A truce could apply to a person as well as a place. White was the color displayed to indicate a condition of truce and could be in the form of a flag on the battlefield, a wand carried by a herald, a white paper in the headgear of a prisoner, or a baton indicating its bearer had a pass of safe conduct. During the period when conditions of truce existed no acts of war could be engaged in. This had a disastrous effect on the mercenary soldier because this removed his right to plunder and on this right he staked his future. A truce existed between France and England in 1364. But in the same year the Navarrese war broke out, and many captains who had been fighting for the English immediately took up the cry of Navarre. This allowed them to return to their old habits of pillaging the countryside.[6]

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[5] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

[6] Ibid., pp. 109-111.

Cry of arms. A cry of arms by a soldier on the battlefield indicated his allegiance but care had to be exercised because they could so easily be used without the authority of the commander. In 1451 the town of Fronsac had been surrendered peacefully to the French, which meant that no plunder could be taken. While the senior officers were eating dinner two pages appeared on the walls of the town and compromised the situation. One shouted, "St. Denis," the cry of the French, and the other shouted, "St. George," the cry of the English. At this same instant a group of horses stampeded. Word immediately spread that the noise of the stampede was really a cavalry charge. Pandemonium resulted. By the time officers arrived at their stations, looting had begun on a large scale, so the officers also joined in the general frolic.[7] In 1369, at the battle of Montiel, the Spanish and French forces which caught Don Pedro's army by surprise used the cry, "Castile for King Henry!" and "Our Lady for Guesclin!" respectively.[8] Harsh disciplinary measures were taken against any violation of this sign because of the implications it could have on a prince, especially if he were engaged in diplomatic negotiations. The cry of arms had the same significance as the display of a prince's banner, and might involve him in war without his consent.

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[7] Ibid., pp. 111-117.

[8] Froissart, op. cit., p. 387.

Many mercenary companies used the name of a prince to pillage the countryside and did this with his encouragement though not in his pay. The prince would permit this to keep his potential enemies off guard and in a constant war of attrition.[9]

II. JUSTIFICATION OF WAR

Just war. Christine de Pisan stated that a war for the execution of justice was permissible in the sight of God and was, therefore, considered to be a just war.[10] She clarifies her statement by presenting five basic causes or reasons for a just war. These five causes are subdivided into lawful causes and willful causes.[11] She was careful to explain that war under any conditions may be lawfully waged only if all attempts at a peaceful settlement have been exhausted, and that only a sovereign prince whose duty it was to protect his subjects declared the war.[12] The fourteenth century interpretation of a sovereign prince differs greatly from our twentieth century definition. Christine de Pisan defines a sovereign prince as "prynces souerayn lyke as emperours, kynges, dukes, and other lordes teryens whiche

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[9]Keen, op. cit., p. 117.

[10]Pisan, op. cit., p. 9.

[11]Ibid., pp. 10-12.

[12]Ibid., p. 11.

ben merely princypall heedes of iuredictions."[13] From this definition of a sovereign prince the authority to wage open warfare was in the hands of many.

Lawful causes. Justice was the first lawful cause for the justification of war and may best be defined as a war against a people or city who have neglected to make amends for injuries done by their subjects. The two remaining lawful causes for a just war were war against oppression and usurpation which need no explanation.[14]

Willful causes. The two willful causes which Christine de Pisan indicated would justify war were revenge and aggression. In all of these cases war had to be waged by a valid authority, could not be the result of passion or hatred, and absolutely no other alternative means of reaching a settlement existed.[15]

It is readily seen that some of these statements are contradictory by proclaiming that war could not be waged as a result of passion or hatred but indicating that revenge was a valid reason for justifying war. Christine de Pisan has also limited the authority to wage war to a sovereign prince but then defines a sovereign prince as almost any lord who had a flag. It is not within the scope of this paper to defend her

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 11-12.

[15] Ibid.

philosophies on the justification of war, but to relate as simply as possible the laws as they were in the fourteenth century.

III. GAINS OF WAR

Spoils. The most important provision of the law of arms for the mercenary soldier was his opportunity to gather spoils.[16] To our thinking today this is nothing more than organized robbery, but in his world it was a way of life and to him it was a livelihood.[17] Spoils were defined as any property which had come into the possession of a military force as a result of actions taken while participating in a legal and just war. Spoils did not necessarily have to belong to the enemy or be taken only from the battlefield but could be taken from anyplace along the route of march, either in friendly or hostile territory. Lands and fixed property so taken usually became the property of the leader of the force while movable property was divided among the members of the force.[18]

All the goods taken as spoils were usually processed by assembling them in one central location where they were sold, generally by auction, and the profits distributed among

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[16]Keen, op. cit., p. 70.

[17]Kotker, op. cit., p. 66.

[18]Pisan, op. cit., p. 219; Keen, op. cit., p. 140.

the members of the company according to rank. Any attempt by an individual soldier to conceal any of the spoils would result in the forfeiture of his right to any portion of the spoils.[19] At this point it became important whether the soldiers had or had not been paid wages as this was the key factor in determining the amount of the captain's share of the spoils.

If the captain had paid his soldiers a wage, then he was entitled to receive one-third of the spoils and ownership of all the non-movable property (the latter should be, in the strictest interpretation of the law of arms, the property of the prince under whose banner the captain was fighting). If the captain had paid no wages and had only furnished arms, his share then would be one-tenth of the spoils and property rights.

For example, in the case previously mentioned of Edward III, he invited the mercenary companies to join his excursion but refused to pay them or assume financial liability for their losses. For their part, they would give no spoils to the king; furthermore, the captains of the companies would get one-third or one-tenth of the spoils, depending on internal arrangements with their men. The captain always received the lion's share of the spoils because it was he who had the greatest risk and responsibility.[20]

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[19] Keen, op. cit., p. 148.

[20] Ibid., pp. 140-151.

After the captain had been paid his share, the rest of the spoils were divided. The mounted soldier got the greatest share, the foot soldier the next largest, and the archer the least.[21] This is not proportionately aligned with their wages but it is assumed this division is based on risk taken in battle as opposed to specialized skill. When two or more mercenary companies were operating together each could be allowed to take booty separately if so stipulated in their agreement prior to the engagement.[22]

Prisoners. The enslavement of captives was prohibited in wars between Christians and this led to the practice of demanding a ransom of a prisoner.[23] After spoils, ransom became the next most important source of income to the mercenary. The mercenary was restricted in whom he could take as a prisoner; and consequently he was limited for whom he could demand ransom. He could not make prisoners of common people or clergy unless they were actively engaged in the war (this was not always respected). He must refrain from capturing the blind, crippled, or very young. The soldier had the responsibility for the care and safety of his captive. The captor was permitted to ask only a just ransom for the prisoner's release.[24] Once the prisoner had recognized his status as a

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[21] Ibid., p. 147.

[22] Ibid., p. 152.

[23] Ibid., p. 70-71.

[24] Pisan, op. cit., pp. 220-227.

prisoner, he could not escape but could be given his liberty by his captor to obtain his ransom and could not actively engage in war against his captor again until it was paid. His only justifiable reason for not meeting these commitments was that his captor had not treated him in accordance with the law of arms.[25] This seems extremely idealistic but most of the mercenary soldiers respected it as the tables could be turned in favor of the other side at the next battle, and then, if he had defaulted, he would probably pay for it with his life. This system may be considered out-and-out kidnapping in our world but in the fourteenth century it did prevent much bloodshed on the battlefield.[26] Prisoners almost always enjoyed a safe conduct out of the battle area.[27]

Ransom. Ransom was not limited just to prisoners but could also be demanded for real property. Many times friendly peasants were forced to pay a ransom called "appatis" to protect their fields from destruction.[28] The collection of a ransom was the individual responsibility of the prisoner and his captor but once the ransom was collected, the captor had to share it with his companions as a portion of the spoils.[29]

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[25] Ibid., pp. 236-237; Keen, op. cit., p. 160.

[26] Keen, op. cit., p. 243.

[27] Ibid., p. 160.

[28] Ibid., pp. 138, 243.

[29] Ibid., p. 159.

After the 1350's the right to a ransom became hereditary and could be passed from father to son, as often the court proceedings necessary to collect certain ransoms lasted several years. Anyone who killed another's prisoner was responsible to pay the ransom that prisoner would have brought.[30] Because of the many inconsistencies in the law of arms regarding the collection of a ransom, many cases were brought to court before they were paid in an attempt to have the court declare that the conditions of war on capture were invalid, thereby releasing the prisoner from his obligations. Mercenary soldiers sold their rights to ransom to a "broker" or "dealer" at a reduced rate for ready cash. One such "dealer" in the mid-1400's was Bernard, the rich English merchant.[31]

The king of France requested in 1413 that several captains, who had been in the service of Burgundy, be tried for their crimes if and when they were captured. Some of these captains were captured and brought to trial where they were found guilty and executed. The king promptly paid their ransoms to their captors.[32]

The treatment of peasants and clergy was not always according to the standards of the law of arms. The mercenary

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[30] Ibid., pp. 159-160.

[31] Ibid., p. 184.

[32] Monstrelet, op. cit., IV, p. 96.

had little respect for these because they could do little for the proud mercenary soldier who was attempting to impress his peers and advance his social position in a restricted society. Keen states that peasants were hanged, roasted, dragged behind horses, and suffered many other atrocities just to obtain a few pennies ransom.[33]

IV. LOYALTY

The loyalty of the mercenary soldier within his organization has not been questioned, but his loyalty to his employer should be considered. This is a most difficult problem and only generalizations can be made based on the evidence available. In general the mercenaries fulfilled the terms of their agreements; and nowhere in western Europe is there an example of a mercenary unit changing employers during the heat of battle unless its contract had expired or it had not been paid according to the stipulated agreement. In 1411 the Duke of Burgundy had contracted with a group of Flemish companies for service against the Duke of Orleans; and as the two forces drew near each other, the time had expired on the Flemings' contract and the Duke of Burgundy in no way could entice them to remain in his service. They left the service of the Duke, but returned home and did not associate themselves with the Duke of Orleans.[34]

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[33]Keen, op. cit., p. 243.

[34]Monstrelet, op. cit., pp. 287-306.

It could be said that those captains who fought against the French continued to do so and those who fought against the English in France also did in Spain. These captains also developed a certain amount of devotion to their preferred states. Sir Perducas d' Albret was in the employ of the Duke of Anjou when Sir Robert Knowells arrived in Agen. Perducas in the past had worked for the English and Sir Robert convinced him that he should return to service with the English. This he did, taking his company with him.[35] Lord de Clifford, who was employed by the Duke of Orleans, requested that he be allowed to terminate his contract because the English king was supporting the Duke of Burgundy, opponent of the Duke of Orleans. His request was granted with the stipulation that he would not fight against the Duke of Orleans and he returned to England.[36]

There were indeed exceptions to this loyalty. The most violent exceptions are illustrated by the actions of the Latecomers, Skinners, and The Archpriest, which will be discussed in the next chapter. It must be remembered that these were soldiers of fortune who had already earned a reputation of not complying with the law of arms and knew they would be held accountable if they fell into the hands of the authorities. These particular groups of mercenaries had little loyalty to

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[35]Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 413.

[36]Monstrelet, op. cit., II, p. 324.

anyone and could well be classified as organized robbers. There is also an account of seven captains switching from the service of the English to take service with the French as a result of the coaching of the Duke of Anjou.[37]

An accepted practice of the fourteenth century soldiers which would bring great discredit on twentieth century soldiers was that they could work out their ransom by service with their captors and former enemies. This practice was generally limited to the foot soldiers and archers who had little value in respect to ransom as they generally were not very wealthy.[38]

As can be seen, the loyalty of mercenaries to their employer is a difficult question, with examples available showing both loyalty and disloyalty. However, the supposition lies heavily in favor of the professional soldier's loyalty to his employer. It lies there not only because of self-interest, but also because the rules of war and of his profession required it for his safety. If we have examples of disloyalty recounted for us by the chroniclers, it is because exceptions to the general rule are always more worthy of note. Generally speaking, the mercenary soldier was loyal to whomever he was serving and usually chose, or worked continuously for, one employer.

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[37]Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 403.

[38]Keen, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

This discussion has been devoted almost entirely to the environment in which the mercenary soldier existed. It is time now to examine his exploits.

CHAPTER IV

EXPLOITS

In order to give the mercenary his proper place in medieval society, some account should be given of his role in war and of his military exploits. Not only do such accounts give us an insight into the aims, morals, and mores of the mercenary, but they help us to understand the reaction of civilians and governments to him and his actions. Emphasis will be placed here on exploits that were done maninly by mercenaries rather than feudal forces. It is the writer's hope that this chapter will reveal something of the mercenary's appetites and character.

I. FOURTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

The Archpriest. One of the more colorful of the mercenary leaders was a knight by the name of Arnold de Cervole, commonly called The Archpriest. The decisive victory by the English at Poitiers in 1356 probably put him out of work because in 1357 he collected a large body of men-at-arms from all parts of France and marched to Provence. There he ruined all the country by pillaging, except for the towns which were strong enough to defend themselves. Arnold then led his force to Avignon and plundered the countryside. Pope Innocent VI became alarmed because of Arnold's actions and prepared his forces as best he could for war. But he then realized that he had little chance of success, and entered into negotiations

with Arnold. An agreement was reached by which Avignon was spared from the pillagers. The Archpriest triumphantly entered Avignon with all the pomp and ceremony of a conquering emperor. He was wined and dined by the Pope in grand style on several occasions. Prior to his departure, the Pope and all the Cardinals, as per terms of the agreement, gave The Archpriest and his followers absolution for their sins and a parting gift of forty thousand crowns.

The next major episode in the exploits of The Archpriest occurs at the Battle of Brignais in the service of James de Bourbon. Here he commanded a battalion and led the assault against the Late-comers about which more will be said later. This attack was against his estimate of situation; nevertheless, he executed it with the best of his ability. The Late-comers soundly defeated the French and Arnold was taken prisoner.

Arnold ransomed himself and for the next few years was in and out of the king's service. He remained in favor with the king because he had never fought for the Navarrese and had on many occasions assisted in destroying marauding bands of pillagers. The Archpriest met his death in an insignificant assassination plot in southeastern France.[1]

The Late-comers. The Treaty of Bretigny in 1360 stipulated that England would evacuate a number of castles which

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[1] Froissart, op. cit., I, pp. 238-239, 296-297, 323; Oman, op. cit., II, p. 294.

she held as a result of the recent wars on the continent.[2] Generally these castles were held by men-at-arms of all nationalities under the name of the King of England. Edward III ordered these to be surrendered to the French under pain of death. Some of these captains declared their allegiance to the king of Navarre. Others just refused to leave. Some, who had bad reputations, feared being captured and held accountable for their actions, so they banded together in large companies and began to move across France pillaging all they could lay their hands on. They were called Late-comers in Burgundy and Champagne because as yet they had not plundered that part of France. From the plunder of Joinville, the Late-comers enriched themselves by one hundred thousand francs and as they departed they sold the castle back to the citizens of Joinville for one thousand francs.

This band of Late-comers numbered about sixteen thousand members. They organized themselves into companies and appointed Sequin de Batefol, Tallebert Tallabaton, Guy du Pin, Espiote, Le Petit Mechin, Battaliller, Hannequin Francois, Le Bourg de L'Espare, Nandoz de Bauguerant, Le Bourg Eamus, Le Bourg de Breteuil, La Nuyt, Arbrethoury the Scot, Bourdonnelle the German, Bernard de La Salle, Robert Briquet, Carnelle, Aimenon d'Ortige, and many others as their captains. They set forth down the valleys of the Saone and Rhone river

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[2]Keen, op. cit., p. 149; Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 293.

with the rich city of Avignon as their objective, looting everything as they traveled.

The actions of the Late-comers so enraged the king of France that he commissioned Lord James de Bourbon to halt their activities with the use of arms. Lord James assembled an army of about seven thousand men which included the famed captain, Arnold de Cervole, in the city of Lyons. The Late-comers took up a position on a high plain north of Lyons and allowed the French to scout their position, being careful to display only about five thousand poorly equipped men-at-arms while hiding the remaining eleven thousand in the hills. When Lord James received the intelligence that there were only five thousand soldiers in position, he decided to attack immediately but was cautioned by The Archpriest that possibly there were more in the enemy camp than was reported, and that it would be difficult to attack up the steep slope to the Late-comers' position. James de Bourbon did not heed this advice and launched the attack with The Archpriest leading the first battalion. The French attack ground to a halt short of their objective because of fatigue and a barrage of large stones and other missiles hurled on them by the defenders. At this time the hidden force of the mercenaries fell on the French from the rear which put James de Bourbon's force in complete rout. The news spread that the French force was defeated at the Battle of Brignais in 1362 and that The Archpriest and many others were taken prisoner. Now there was

nothing which could stop the Late-comers from capturing Avignon.

The Late-comers divided their force because it was too large to permit subsistence in foraging over a narrow area on their way to "visit the pope." The country was rich and plunder plentiful because no war had been fought in this section of France recently. The mercenaries received information that all the wealth of the area had been placed in the town of Pont du St. Esprit. This attracted the two captains, Guy du Pin and Le Petit Mechin, so they mustered their units and rode hard all through the night arriving at the edge of Pont du St. Esprit just at daybreak. They had completely surprised the town and it fell into their hands with little effort. From this operation they gained enough wealth and supplies to last a full year.

Pope Innocent VI preached a crusade against this group of pillagers and selected Cardinal d'Ostia to lead it. The Cardinal established headquarters in the town of Carpentras and attempted to raise an army. The recruitment was slow because the only reimbursement offered for service was absolution for past sins. Those who were attracted to the Pope's cause, after discovering what the pay would be, joined the Late-comers. The Pope, in desperation to save his territory, contacted the Marquis de Montferrat asking if he would help in protecting his property. An agreement was reached in which the marquis received a large sum of money from the Pope if he

would rid the area of Avignon of the threat of the pillagers. The Marquis then made an agreement with the captains to follow him for sixty thousand florins and marched most of them into Italy to make war against Milan. The Marquis pocketed a fine profit. Again Avignon was spared from plunder and France was relieved of a great problem. This group eventually became known in Italy as the White Company and was commanded by Sir John Hawkwood.[3]

Adventure. A Gascon squire named Geronnet de Maudurant, who was under the command of Captain Perrot de Béarnois in Limousin, and forty companions, mostly English, decided to seek adventure in Auvergne. This area of Auvergne was defended by a knight named John Bonne-Lance. The party set out without the sanction of their captain and with no definite plans except to see what could be found in Auvergne. John Bonne-Lance received information that Geronnet and his party were approaching and by what road they were traveling so John laid an ambush for them. Geronnet and his followers advanced unsuspectingly and Bonne-Lance fell on them. The English were defeated after a short but fierce battle which left sixteen dead and twenty-two, including Geronnet, were taken prisoner by Bonne-Lance.

John Bonne-Lance had promised his ladyfriend that if the opportunity presented itself whereby he should capture a

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[3]Froissart, op. cit., I, pp. 293-300.

prisoner, he would bring him to Montferrant to show her what an Englishman looked like so he promptly marched Geronnet and his party there. He was well received by the citizens and his ladyfriend was overjoyed. Bonne-Lance remained there about a week reaping the fruits of his ladyfriend's appreciation of his endeavors and then had to depart on business. Prior to his departure he charged Geronnet and his companions to pay a ransom of 2,200 francs for their freedom and permitted three soldiers to depart Montferrant to obtain this ransom.

Geronnet lived in style enjoying good treatment at Montferrant while the soldiers returned home for the ransom money, but he kept a sharp eye on the security measures used by the town of Montferrant.[4] Shortly the soldiers returned stating that Captain Perrot de Béarnois refused to pay any ransom, for reasons recounted in the previous chapter. Geronnet instructed the soldiers to return and tell Captain Perrot that if he would ransom him, Geronnet would tell the captain of a place that was worth one hundred thousand francs which was ready for taking. Upon hearing this, Captain Perrot immediately ransomed Geronnet who, according to his bargain, outlined plans for the taking of Montferrant to his captain.

Geronnet and eleven other soldiers dressed themselves as traders and each led a horse loaded with merchandise,

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[4]Near the present Clermont-Ferrand.

supposedly to be sold at the fair, entered Montferrant, and secured lodging at the Crown Inn. At the same time Perrot had his captains and their companies assembled close by Montferrant that night. It was cold and the gate guard was very lax, as the captain of the guard had sent his son to check the guard that night. All this was closely observed by Geronnet.

Captain Perrot and his force arrived at Montferrant about midnight and were contacted by Geronnet from the wall. Geronnet informed him to bring the ladders and scale the wall, but Perrot insisted on entering through the gate. A tailor who was working late in a nearby hut overheard this conversation, and attempted to give the alarm, but was halted by a mercenary soldier. Geronnet used this tailor under threat of death to inform the gate guard that the Governor had ordered the gate to be lowered to allow some merchants to enter with goods for the fair, and as proof of authenticity, he was to say that it was the son of the captain of the guard who checked the guard earlier that evening. The gate guard gave the tailor the keys for him to open the gate, since he did not want to get out in the cold. Geronnet picked up the keys and opened the inner gate, but could not open the outer gate, so it was chopped down by Perrot's men who were waiting outside.

The mercenaries entered the town and looted it very systematically. The next day news spread to Clermont about what had happened at Montferrant, and a party of brave

warriors sallied forth from Clermont to rescue Montferrant. The security which the mercenaries had posted informed Perrot's men of the approaching rescue attempt. Perrot organized a small group to meet the party from Clermont and defeated them soundly. This engagement ended when the first blow was struck and the French retreated as fast as possible back to Clermont.

The next day Perrot and his men departed Montferrant at six in the evening, many having to go on foot because the horses were used to pack booty. In all there was an estimated four hundred horses loaded with loot and in just eighteen short hours the mercenaries had gained over 130,000 francs.[5]

Another noteworthy exploit occurred in September of 1383. Francis Atremen, Peter du Bois, Peter Le Nuitre and other captains were returning to their garrison in Ghent. Atremen received intelligence that the Governor and his men-at-arms were absent from the town of Oudenarde and that the town ditches had been drained recently. It was decided by the captains to take the town by use of scaling ladders. Atremen selected four hundred men and moved to Oudenarde under the cover of darkness. As they were slipping through the ditches, they were observed by an old woman who was cutting some hay and she immediately slipped off and warned the guard.

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[5] Ibid., I, pp. 316-326.

Atremen sent out his scouts and they returned reporting that they had seen or heard nothing. Atremen then moved his men through the ditches to the vicinity of the Ghent Gate of the town. Again the woman returned to warn the guard but the guard insisted that what she had observed was only cattle which were loose. Atremen and his men placed their ladders and entered the town with no opposition. At the marketplace a small skirmish took place when about thirty men-at-arms attempted to make a defense against Atremen but they were immediately overwhelmed and all were slain. The city was looted and much wealth was gained by the mercenaries. Atremen remained there as the new Governor.[6]

II. IBERIAN PENINSULA

Spain. At this time (1365) Pedro the Cruel was king of Castile. He had gained his name by committing many murders, including many members of his own family, over a period of about fifteen years. The king of France was much displeased with him because Pedro had murdered his wife, the queen, who was a cousin to the king of France. Pope Urban V disliked Pedro very much because Pedro had plundered several monasteries in Spain. Pedro robbed his bastard half-brother, Henry of the county of Trastamere, and would have killed him if he could have laid his hands on him. Henry of Trastamere

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[6] Ibid., II, pp. 7-8.

was in France serving as a man-at-arms with the mercenary companies and conceived the idea of banding many of these companies together, marching into Castile, and regaining his lost heritage. King Charles V of France accepted this idea joyfully as he desired to rid France of the many marauding bands of mercenaries, mostly English, now plaguing his kingdom. The king immediately commissioned Bertrand du Guesclin to contract with these companies and lead them into Spain in support of Henry's cause.[7]

Pope Urban V was much upset over Pedro's actions and also gave his full support to Henry. The Pope summoned Pedro to a papal court to answer charges against him. Pedro refused to appear. The Pope excommunicated him, declared he was not fit to be a king, legitimatized Henry of Trastamere thus giving him a rightful claim to the throne. He then supported Henry with money and secured for him a safe passage for his forces through Aragon.

The mercenaries readily accepted the offer of du Guesclin and Henry of Trastamere because of the fat sum offered them and also for the attraction of having a new territory to plunder. Those mercenaries who, with their companies, joined the forces of du Guesclin were Sir Eustace d'Ambreticourt, Sir Hugh Calverly, Sir Walter Huet, Sir Mathew

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[7]Donald E. Smith (ed.), The New Larned History for Ready Reference Reading and Research (Springfield: C. A. Nichols Publishing Company, 1913), IX, pp. 7910-7911; Froissart, op. cit., I, p. 340.

Gourney, Sir Perducas d'Albret, Robert Briquet, John Carsneille, Nanndon de Bagerant, La Nuit, Le Petit Mechin, Le Bourg Eamus, Le Bourg de l'Esparre, Battiller, Espiote and others. Many of these had previously worked for the Black Prince.

Pedro the Cruel received word of this operation and summoned his forces to meet those of Henry. Henry and his army marched through Aragon and into Castile and when this news was received in Castile, few of the Castilians answered Pedro's summons and Pedro was forced to flee. The populace welcomed Henry with open arms and he was crowned at Burgos in 1366. Henry then wisely stated that he desired to make an excursion into Granada and solicited the services of the mercenaries for this, which they accepted as, again, they would have new territory to plunder.

Pedro sought and received the support of the Black Prince in regaining his kingdom. In return he agreed to cede to him the county of Biscay, make his son ruler of Galicia, and bestow on him great riches which he had cached in Castile. To obtain men for this expedition, the Black Prince sent his heralds to inform the mercenaries in Spain working for King Henry that he had new work for them. Many answered the call immediately taking leave of King Henry with good feelings and not knowing what the new work would be. Henry did not know of this plan either as he had the authority to retain the free companies if he so desired.

Henry received word of the plan and began to muster his forces, sending du Guesclin into France to obtain more soldiers. The Black Prince moved his army into Castile and met Henry's force at the Battle of Navarretta and soundly defeated him.[8]

It should be noted that in this struggle for possession of the throne of Castile, the opposing parties both employed the same mercenary force at different times. When this force was in their employ, they were victorious. In each instance of the seesaw battle the victorious force consisted almost entirely of mercenary troops. Another point which should be noted is that the princes accepted and condoned the practice of the hired soldiers changing sides. Though this would not be allowed in our society, it was allowed in the 1300's.

Portugal. Some English and Gascon companies were in the employ of the king of Portugal in 1381 and were complaining strongly because they had not been paid for some time. These companies elected Sir Talbot to act as their spokesman to request payment from the king. The king answered Talbot that he would not pay the companies because they had executed two excursions without his permission. The companies then met in a church at the town of Besiouse, near where their commander lived, to debate what action to take because they

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[8]Froissart, op. cit., I, pp. 340-374.

felt that he had received some pay. They all stated their complaints and there was with them the bastard brother of the king of England, a knight named Sir John Sounder, who was complaining much louder than any of the others. The decision was to take matters into their own hands, elect a leader, and begin to plunder. Sir John was elected leader and their cry was, "A Sounder, a Sounder, that valiant bastard! Friends to God, and enemies to all mankind."

They were quieted somewhat by a more cautious knight and all agreed for Sounder to discuss this situation with their commander, whereupon all seven hundred marched to his quarters. Their commander said that if they laid spoil to the country it would bring a state of war between England and Portugal and they should petition the king of Portugal again before taking this action. The king was advised that they were to be paid or they would take their pay from the country. The king haltingly agreed to pay them every farthing due them. Shortly thereafter they were paid the amount due them, peace was made between Castile and Portugal and the mercenaries departed in search of new adventure.[9]

Aragon. In 1387 four companies of mercenaries in the employ of the Duke of Lancaster captured the town of Duren in Aragon during a war between Aragon and the Duke of Lancaster, who was lieutenant for the king of England for Bordeaux,

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[9] Ibid., pp. 687-690.

Bayonne, and Aquitaine. These companies desired to establish a system whereby the surrounding merchants would pay composition-money for their safety in conducting their trade. Many citizens roundabout complained of this to the king of Aragon who had no immediate solution to the problem. The king commissioned Sir Raymond de Bachez, his cousin, to rid the country of these soldiers by fair means or foul.

Raymond negotiated with Montfaucon and the other captains of the mercenaries. The soldiers demanded sixty thousand francs for the ransom of the town. Since there were four companies, each would get fifteen thousand francs. Raymond said that it was a fair price and he would attempt to obtain the money, but if the companies would make a show of force on the town of Perpignan to alarm the people, it would be easier for him to raise the money. The captains agreed to comply with his instructions.

Raymond had raised five hundred men-at-arms and had placed them in an ambush prior to Montfaucon's departure. As the mercenaries approached Perpignan to make a show of attacking the place, the ambush fell on them and all were slain or taken prisoner. Peter de Montfaucon was one of the prisoners and was jeered at by all the inhabitants as he was marched through the streets of Perpignan. He was later claimed by the Duke of Berry or he surely would have been put to death.[10]

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[10] Ibid., II, pp. 208-210.

Skinners. King Charles VII of France departed Paris in 1437 which resulted in loss of work for several captains who were in his hire. They banded together with their companies and mustered about two thousand men-at-arms. Their names were Anthony de Chabannes, Blanchefort, Gaultin de Bron, Floquet, Pierre, Regnault Chapelle, Mathelin d'Escouvet, and others. They laid waste to the countryside following a route from Vimeu to Blanchetaque, Ponthieu, Dourlens, Orville, Santerre and other places. They attacked any town or castle which they thought they could take. When they reached Hainault, the bailiff attempted to defend against their pillaging. The Skinners received word of this and turned their efforts toward Champagne. They were named Skinners because whoever they met they stripped him of all his clothes except his shirt and then laughed with great joy when he marched off for home. These actions continued throughout France for several years.[11]

Internal struggle. The Duke of Burgundy assembled a large force of several companies of men-at-arms at Pontoise in 1411 and moved this force to Paris, entering by the gate of St. Jacques. This force was well greeted by the citizens of Paris and they quartered themselves in the city. An excursion was made against the Armagnacs at La Chapelle and

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[11] Monstrelet, op. cit., pp. 60-66.

several were killed. The English soldiers made good use of their bows against the Armagnacs at this time. The Duke of Orleans ordered all the Armagnacs to quarter themselves at St. Denis because of the size of the force opposing them. To obtain food and horses for the soldiers, the Armagnacs scoured the countryside on the St. Denis side of the Seine while the king's forces under the Duke of Burgundy were doing likewise on the other side. Encounters by small numbers of men were engaged in daily but little was accomplished. The Armagnacs moved some of their forces to St. Cloud and the Duke of Burgundy marched at midnight from Paris to within one league of St. Cloud. He detailed part of his forces to block a bridge across the Seine to halt any attempts by the Armagnacs to reinforce St. Cloud. An attack was launched at St. Cloud and the Armagnacs were overwhelmed. Some of the captains who defended St. Cloud were Sir James de Plachiel, William Batillier, Sir Mansart du Bos, Bastard Jacob, and others, and though they fought bravely, they were soundly defeated. Their casualties were estimated at nine hundred killed and five hundred prisoners. The Duke of Orleans, after considering his losses, withdrew his forces to his own country hoping to return again after rebuilding his army.[12]

Development of national army. After the peace of Arras in 1435 France was overrun with companies of unemployed

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[12] Ibid., pp. 321-331.

mercenary soldiers who laid waste to the countryside. The Skinners previously discussed were a part of these unemployed companies.[13] In 1444 the king of France, Charles VII, hired many mercenary companies to make an excursion into Germany. On completion of this excursion, to gain control of the free companies and to prevent the looting of the French countryside again, the king issued a series of ordinances. These ordinances provided for the retention on a selected basis of fifteen of the best captains who had accompanied him to Germany. They were to receive regular pay and were to be garrisoned at strategic locations throughout France to maintain order. Each captain had a company of one hundred lances and an appropriate number of archers. These were to be permanent and in the future no soldier would be allowed to plunder at his wishes as he would receive regular pay.[14]

Through these ordinances a solution was found for controlling the mercenary companies when they were disbanded from service. These ordinances also established the nucleus for the French National Army on a permanent basis and brought security to the country.

Accuracy of the chroniclers. It must be realized that the strength of military forces quoted from the chroniclers

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[13]John Fredrick Charles Fuller, A Military History of the Western World (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1954), p. 494.

[14]Monstrelet, op. cit., VIII, pp. 398-420.

at times are vastly exaggerated. This has been proved by J. H. Ramsay and A. E. Prince through the use of the financial records of the Black Prince, which indicate that his forces were consistently much smaller than stated by the chroniclers.[15] This would apply when considering the strength figures of forces other than those of the Black Prince mentioned by the chroniclers during this period.

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[15] J. H. Ramsay, "The Strength of English Armies in the Middle Ages," English Historical Review, XXIX (1914), pp. 221-227; Prince, op. cit., pp. 353-371.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION

An evaluation must be made of the mercenary soldier to determine what influence he had on the history of western Europe. To accomplish this, consideration will be given to his activities as a pillager, what contribution he made to the art of war, how he indirectly influenced the nationalist feeling, and the development of the national army.

I. PILLAGING

If any one type of action gave the mercenary soldier of the fourteenth century a bad name by historians, it was pillaging. The only justification for these tragic events is that the mercenary was only following the footsteps of his feudal ancestor. The feudal army lived off the land as it traveled and plundered its foe as deliberately as any mercenary. One of the objectives of the feudal army was to destroy the wealth of its neighbor.[1] The feudal army remained in one location and was not as large as the banded mercenaries; therefore, it did not, as individual units, pillage as much territory. When the feudal lord disbanded his host after the war was over, the members of the host returned to

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[1] Kotker, op. cit., p. 66.

managing their lands. The mercenary force when disbanded had no such opportunity to seek such gainful employment. The feudal knight has been portrayed by the writers of the period as an idealistic "do-gooder" emphasizing his wonderful and heroic deeds with little mention of the devastation which he brought on the peasants.[2] The mercenary has been constantly condemned for these same actions. The mercenary respected and complied with the law of arms which grew out of the feudal system. This law was violated as often by the feudal nobleman as by the mercenary.[3] Again, there is no justification for pillaging, but in the fourteenth century it was a way of life. The seeds for the solution of this problem were planted in Normandy by Lord Bedford in 1422 but it was not until the reign of Charles VII that the final solution was reached. The final solution was the creation of a national army from mercenary soldiers.[4]

II. ART OF WAR

The professional soldier contributed little directly to the development of the art of war but indirectly his influence was strong. He used caution, reason, and discipline on the battlefield which has carried into the modern armies

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[2] Ibid., p. 64.

[3] Keen, op. cit., pp. 52-74.

[4] Rowe, op. cit., pp. 194-208; Fuller, op. cit., p. 494.

of today. He demonstrated to the nobility that rash judgment and false courage in defense of one's "honor" had no place on the battlefield. He influenced political leaders to select military leaders by ability, not by birthright.

In his actions the professional soldier consistently used the terrain to further his objectives and whenever possible chose the site himself, not affording his opponent this privilege. He also used deception in gaining victory by attacking in darkness and where the opponent was the weakest. If he estimated that he had little chance of victory, he would not become engaged in combat but would wait until a more opportune situation presented itself.

The mercenary was careful to make his choice of weapons so that he could capitalize on their individual capabilities within his battle plan and for the terrain on which he was operating. He developed a combined arms team tailored to fit his immediate needs to capture his objective.

By the careful arrangement of his forces, the mercenary soldier demonstrated that the mounted feudal knight was not invincible on the battlefield but quite vulnerable. He thus restored infantry and cavalry to the proper relationship.

The one important step the mercenary failed to take was to develop the use of gunpowder, but he did not have the technology, financial resources, or the time to accomplish this. He was not very inventive on his own and failed to experiment with new ideas, but he was very flexible in

adopting the best qualities of new procedures which he observed.

III. NATIONALISM

The mercenary soldier played an important role in polarizing the populace toward their national heritage. A hatred of the English was fostered in the French people because of the many mercenary companies which had plundered their lands and did so under the English flag. The victims also realized the need of a strong central government to control the acts of violence committed under the guise of open warfare. This resulted in those citizens becoming ardent Frenchmen, recognizing their nationalist state, and also becoming lasting opponents of the English.[5]

IV. NATIONAL ARMY

The most important influence that the mercenaries made was their contribution to the establishment of the French army on a permanent basis. This was accomplished during the years 1444-1448 and gave France the military power it needed to gain the edge of final victory in the Hundred Years War.[6]

The mercenary soldier provided the needed military forces in western Europe during the transition period when feudalism was declining and before nationalism became a reality.

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[5]Edouard Perroy, The Hundred Years War (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), pp. 210-211.

[6]Preston, op. cit., p. 88.

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