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A CHANGING BALANCE: CAVALRY AND INFANTRY, 1000-1300

Milites et pedites, that is how armies in the Middle Ages were usually described, and modern writing has provided an enormous focus on the former at the expense of the latter. We are, in fact, in the presence of a myth which dominated military history in the 12th and 13th centuries, the myth of the mounted knight and the idea that western soldiers "were accustomed only to one development of tactics - the shock-tactics of heavily-armed cavalry"⁽¹⁾. Despite much recent writing, this myth still has considerable influence. Oman, whose work was first published in 1898, is partly responsible for the view that by 1066 field-warfare was totally dominated by the heavily-armoured cavalrymen, lances couched under their arms, whose charge could sweep all before them. His treatment of the battles of Hastings and Dyrrachium (1081) was entitled "The Last Struggles of Infantry", and he went on, after an excursus on Byzantium, to a long treatment of the crusades which in his view pitted heavy western cavalry against lightly-armed Turkish horse. He was often more circumspect about the value of infantry but in his analysis they came into their own only with the longbow in the fourteenth century. Hans Delbrück's work, published in 1923, gave enormous prominence to the role of knights and saw their mounted style of war as *¹

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⁽¹⁾ For a very useful account of the origins of the myth see K. DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology*, Ontario, Broadview, 1992, pp. 95-110.

dominant until disciplined infantry appeared in the fourteenth century. Verbruggen, writing in 1954, enormously deepened our knowledge of knightly fighting methods, but his very careful treatment of footsoldiers emphasised their contribution to warfare after 1300⁽²⁾.

We were thus presented with an alluringly coherent view of medieval warfare: it was dominated by mounted knights whose tactics revolved around the charge with couched lance relying on "shock", and its development followed a pattern essentially dictated by technical change with the accoutrements of the knight, especially his stirrups, pushing mounted warfare into prominence only for this to be superseded by the infantry, often armed with the longbow, in the fourteenth century. There was never anything like this simple pattern of evolution which, it must be said, rested heavily upon a view of medieval military history based on battle. In the analysis which follows, account is taken of the whole experience of warfare in the period before 1300.

The discussion of *milites et pedites* has been enormously complicated by the use of the term knight (*chevalier* in French) to describe the horseman, because this word is loaded with implications of high social standing. The knight was a person of superior status, identified by the fact that he was mounted. By contrast the man who fought on foot was poor, and it was natural to see their military function in these very broadly opposed terms. In fact, it is now clear that the distinctively upper class character of the knight emerged only in the second half of the twelfth century, and that before then *milites* simply meant cavalry, and that these horse-soldiers included in their ranks many relatively humble men⁽³⁾. It was something quite new that in 1168 the count of Hainaut had his son made a knight, though by the end of the 12th century a knowledgeable author

⁽²⁾ C. W. C. Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages A.D. 378-1515*, Ithaca, Cornell, 1953, vol. 1, pp. 149-168, 231-352; vol. 2, pp. 52-108; H. Delbrück, *Medieval Warfare*, tr. W. J. Renfro, Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 1990, pp. 147-188, 225-312, 385-398, 429-452; J. F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages*, tr. S. Willard and R. W. Southern, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1997, pp. 19-110, 111-203.

⁽³⁾ See especially D. Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility. Constructing Aristocracy in England and France 900-1300*, Harlow, Pearson, 2005.

like Gilbert of Mons is careful to distinguish between *milites* and other mounted men, such as sergeants, while by the end of the 13th century knights were usually regarded as noble⁽⁴⁾.

But the functional description, *milites*, was in itself rather misleading. It was certainly a useful shorthand to speak of an army in this way because clearly cavalry have particular tactical uses. But these men were not bolted to their horses and we should not simply see the knight as a weapons system⁽⁵⁾. Rather, his true value was that the knight was a trained, or at least semi-trained warrior, who could fight in any capacity, though his preference was to be mounted. By the age of 16 Godfrey de Bouillon was a soldier, and at the siege of Jerusalem in 1099 he wielded a crossbow to some effect. William the Conqueror and his son, Robert Curthose, were both notable archers and there are illustrations of noblemen using bows even on horseback⁽⁶⁾. There were obvious reasons why such men should fight as infantry. Siege warfare was a commonplace of the age and while cavalry had a part to play, it was vital that the best soldiers in an army could participate in assaults - and horses were of little value on siege-ladders! Conditions of topography and weather were not always favourable to cavalry. In combat the horse provided rapid movement which could exploit opportunities, but infantry were vital to anchor a battle-line. It is not, therefore, difficult to find examples of knights fighting on foot.

The Anglo-Saxon army which confronted the Normans at Hastings in 1066 traditionally fought on foot, but its mass was stiffened by the *thegns*, great men and their military followers who were equipped exactly like

⁽⁴⁾ Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, ed. L. Napran, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2005, pp. 55-56, 99, 118.

⁽⁵⁾ M. Bennett, "The myth of the supremacy of knightly cavalry", in M. J. Strickland (ed.), *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare*, Stamford, R. Watkins, 1998; S. Morillo, "The 'Age of Cavalry' Revisited", in D. J. Kagay and L. J. Andrew Villalon (eds.), *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1999, pp. 45-59.

⁽⁶⁾ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana: history of the journey to Jerusalem*, ed. S. B. Edgington, Oxford, Clarendon, 2007, Bk VI:16, p. 425; S. Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora*, Aldershot, Scolar, 1987, Fig. 227, p. 383 showing Trinity College Dublin 177.

knights. This army on foot defied the Norman horse and infantry for a whole day's bitter fighting which suggests they were far from outmoded as Oman suggested⁽⁷⁾⁸⁹. At Tinchebrai, in 1106, Duke Robert of Normandy's massed charge of infantry and cavalry was held by Henry I of England's infantry and dismounted knights, then taken in the flank by Hélias of Le Mans and his mounted knights. At Brémule, in 1119, knights on foot stopped a mass cavalry charge in its tracks, while Bourghéroulde, in 1124, famously, was won by archers who cut down the French cavalry. In 1139 a Scottish army invaded northern England and confronted an English force at Northallerton. All the Scots were on foot except for a small force of knights led by King David's son. The English dismounted their knights to stiffen the archers and foot of the local levies. When the Scots charged, led by wild but unarmoured Galwegians, arrow fire caused heavy losses and their retreat sparked a general panic: David's son tried to rally the army by a cavalry charge: "But his mounted knights could by no means continue against knights in armour who fought on foot, close together in an immovable formation"⁽⁸⁾.

In 1192, during the Third Crusade, Muslim forces attacked a crusading force of 2000, of whom only about 10 were mounted, outside Jaffa. Richard of England organized his men into a tight formation. In the front rank kneeling men placed the butts of their spears in the ground presenting a bristling front, while behind them crossbowmen maintained a rapid fire against attack. The Turks declined to assault this formation and retired⁽⁹⁾. But without a fine leader it is unlikely that the result would have been the same.

The great value of the knight was as an all-round trained warrior and he could be deployed on horseback or foot according to circumstances.

⁽⁷⁾ S. Morillo, *The Battle of Hastings. Sources and Interpretation*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1996.

⁽⁸⁾ Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. D. Greenway, Oxford, Clarendon, 1996, p. 719; J. Bradbury, "Battles in England and Normandy 1066-1154", *Anglo-Norman Studies*, vol. 6, 1983, pp. 6-7, 8-9,10; J. France, "La guerre dans la France féodale", *Revue belge d'histoire militaire*, vol. 23,1979, pp. 190-191.

⁽⁹⁾ R. C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare 1097-1193*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1956, pp. 188-189.

Although they were not invariably nobles, knights were drawn from families with some means and leisure which enabled them to train for war - itself a hazardous business. Ordericus Vitalis tells us that one of the Giroie brothers was killed wrestling when he was thrown against the edge of a step springing his ribs, while another was stuck with a carelessly thrown lance during practice. The same relative wealth which provided time for training, also enabled knights to purchase good personal armour for protection. Ordericus commented *à propos* of the battle of Brémule in 1119:

"I have been told that in the battle of the two kings, in which about nine hundred knights were engaged, only three were killed. They were all clad in mail and spared each other on both sides, out of fear of God and fellowship in arms; they were more concerned to capture than to kill the fugitives. As Christian soldiers they did not thirst for the blood of their brothers, but rejoiced in a just victory given by God, for the good of holy Church and the peace of the faithful"⁽¹⁰⁾.

The knight was thus a well-armed and equipped all-round soldier who was very formidable on the battlefield and in sieges. Much of medieval warfare consisted in the deliberate business of destruction - ravaging the lands of an enemy to destroy his economic base and bring him to terms. William the Conqueror's biographer praised him because:

"This was his chosen way of attack: to strike fear into the settlement by frequent, lengthy expeditions in that territory, to lay waste the vines, fields and domains, to capture fortified places all around and put garrisons in them wherever it was desirable; finally to attack the region relentlessly with a great multitude of troubles"⁽¹¹⁾.

To achieve this end an attacking army would throw out detachments across the countryside, and these would often be challenged by defenders, producing small-scale skirmishes. In these the equipment, experience

⁽¹⁰⁾Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. M. Chibnall, 6 vols., Oxford, Clarendon, 1969-79, voi. 2, pp. 23-31, 357; voi. 6, pp. 238-239.

⁽¹¹⁾William of Poitiers, *The Deeds of William*, ed. R. H. C. Davies and M. Chibnall, Oxford, Clarendon, 1998, p. 61.

and personal valour of a knight would be vital, even if most of the actual destruction was carried out by humbler men.

The knight is too often seen simply as a weapons system in battle. Much scholarly attention has been paid to the issue of the supposed 'shock tactics' of cavalry. It was long thought that the chief weapon of the cavalry in battle was the mass charge of knights with their lances couched, that is held under the arm, so that the whole weight and momentum of the advancing unit would be concentrated at the point of the lance. As a result, much energy has been spent on establishing when the use of the couched lance became common: this has been taken as the indicator of the use of shock tactics. It is very evident from the Bayeux Tapestry that knights sometimes couched their lances, but at other times stabbed, jabbed and even threw them and no scholarly consensus has been reached on the vexed question of when couched lances became common with dates as far apart as about 1000 and 1150 being suggested⁽¹²⁾. But this is to ignore the really major problem raised by the notion of the shock charge - how to get the troops into coherent formation and hold them together. Because it was the mass which overwhelmed the enemy. The western cavalryman was impressive, and those who have studied him usually remember the comments of the Byzantine princess, Anna Comnena: "A mounted Kelt [Frank] is irresistible: he would bore his way through the walls of Babylon; but when he dismounts he becomes anyone's plaything"⁽¹³⁾.

But if the knights became separated from one another they would lose much of their impact. The problem was that endowed knights with land lived very local lives, and while they could practice with their neighbours and come to trust them as fighting companions, the opportunity to work in larger units was notably absent. Other knights were hired for

⁽¹²⁾ D. J. A. Ross, "L'originalité de 'Turolodus': le maniement de lance", *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, vol. 6, 1963, pp. 127-138; V. Cirlot, "Techniques guerrières en Catalogne féodale; le maniement de la lance", *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, vol. 28, 1985, pp. 36-43; J. Flori, "Encore l'usage de la lance: la technique du combat chevaleresque vers l'an 1000", *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, vol. 31, 1988, pp. 213-240.

⁽¹³⁾ Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, ed. E. R. A. Sewter, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969, XIII: 8, p. 416.

particular campaigns and might be very experienced, indeed, genuinely professional soldiers, but they would lack familiarity with the men amongst whom they had to fight. Modern armies can create solidarity and discipline by training units to work together, but no medieval army in Europe could afford a regular army on this model. This meant that when an army gathered, it was a fairly incoherent mass. It was unlikely to stay together very long because expense meant that leaders dispersed their forces as soon as possible. William the Conqueror's army in 1066 had to wait for a favourable wind at Dives for a month, and its soldiers exercised together, which may account for the remarkable discipline they showed at Hastings⁽¹⁴⁾.

To deliver a mass cavalry charge is a complex business which miscarried often enough in 18th and 19th century armies whose training and discipline were far in advance of anything in the 12th century. For the knightly cavalry, which lacked training in large units, it would have been very difficult indeed, and in fact it was rarely tried. At Brémule, in 1119, Louis VI of France lost patience and launched his horsemen at the army of Henry I with disastrous results: "Certainly the French launched the first fierce attack but, charging in disorder, they were beaten off and, quickly tiring, turned tail"⁽¹⁵⁾.

The key to understanding this passage is the phrase "charging in disorder". The charge needed mass and cohesion to be effective. Moreover, warhorses were comparatively heavy animals capable of only a fairly brief turn of speed, after which they would become "blown" and helpless. There was, therefore, only a single opportunity for a charge. It certainly could be done successfully but it was rare. At Axspoele, on 21 June 1128, Thierry of Alsace and William Clito, both claimants to the county of Flanders, met in battle. Thierry, with an army of about 300 knights and perhaps 1500 infantry, had besieged a supporter of Clito at Axspoele, but Clito came up with an army of knights estimated to be about 450 strong and had a careful look at the enemy force to see "how much of it was a band of auxiliaries and how much a real army". Encouraged by the results of this careful reconnaissance, he resolved on battle and on the morning of 21 June took up position in three units,

⁽¹⁴⁾William of Poitiers, p. 109.

⁽¹⁵⁾Ordericus Vitalis, vol. 6, pp. 238-239.

two in full view of the enemy on the brow of a hill overlooking the town and the third concealed behind the slope. Thierry's two units of knights attacked uphill first with lances and then with swords, hacking their way through the enemy who gave way, but this may have been deliberate feigned flight, for Clito's hidden reserve of fresh knights then fell upon Thierry's disordered forces and swept down through the infantry, scattering and slaughtering almost at will⁽¹⁶⁾. This was an unusually well controlled cavalry force and it achieved a remarkable success. At Muret, in 1213, during the Albigensian Crusade, Simon de Montfort and his 800 knights were shut in the town facing a Provençal and Aragonese alliance with about 1500 cavalry and many infantry. But the crusader knights were experienced in working together, and their well-organized charge fell upon divided and uncertain enemies who fled when Peter II of Aragon (1196-1213) was killed. Peter's son, James I (1213-1276), had no doubts about the reasons for the defeat:

'And thereon they [the French] came out to fight in a body. On my father's side the men did not know how to range for the battle, nor how to move together; every baron fought by himself and against the order of war. Thus through bad order, through our sins and through those from Muret fighting desperately since they found no mercy at my father's hands, the battle was lost'⁽¹⁷⁾.

Perhaps the most famous battle of the period was Bouvines (1214), when the French under Philip II Augustus (1180-1223) crushed a coalition of forces created by John of England (1199-1216) and led by Otto IV, pretender to the crown of Germany. Cavalry were a major element in both armies: the allies had 1400 knights, roughly the same as the French, but enjoyed an advantage in infantry with 7500 against 5-6000. In essence the allied army coming up from the south-east attempted to ambush the French army retreating westwards towards Lille as it passed over the bridge at Bouvines. Philip was caught with most of his infantry and some

⁽¹⁶⁾ Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*, ed. J. B. Ross, Medieval Academy of America, University of Toronto Press, 1982, pp. 297-300; Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, pp. 229-231, where it is referred to as the battle of Thielt which is the name used by Oman, *History of the Art of War*, vol. 1, pp. 443-445.

⁽¹⁷⁾ James I, *Chronicle*, ed. J. Forster, Farnborough, Gregg, 1968, pp. 17-18.

of his cavalry across the narrow bridge. Philip gathered all the cavalry on the east side of the river and threatened the allies as they emerged, somewhat disordered, from a march along a narrow road through the woods. He then handed over the command of this powerful cavalry force of roughly 700 knights to Guérin, a former Templar knight. Opposite him the allies marshalled their cavalry in a mass of about the same strength as the French. Both sides were masking the deployment of the remainder of their force. What is interesting is that neither attempted a mass charge against the other. Instead Guérin launched relatively small forces, each less than 200, the retinues of important men like the duke of Burgundy, which battered at and in the end broke into the enemy's mounted forces. Why did the French win? An excellent witness, the Anonymous of Béthune, testified that:

"The king [Philip] put his echelons in formation and they rode forward. You could see among them noblemen, much rich armour and many noble banners. The same was true for the opposite side, but I must tell you that they did not ride as well and in as orderly a manner as the French, and they became aware of it"⁽¹⁸⁾.

Again, organization and close-order were the key to victory, and we can get some idea of the organization which underlay this kind of action from the *Rule of the Templars*. A large section of this work is concerned with military affairs, including the business of organizing a charge. What it envisages is not simply a single all-out shock-effect cavalry charge. It insists firmly that the brothers should keep formation in units of ten - the *conrois* revealed by the work of Verbruggen - gathered close around a banner and under the control of a senior member of the Order - usually the Marshal. The squires stand in front with lances for the knights, but others hold spare mounts behind and they follow the main charge ready with the fresh horses. Thus if the charge turns into a *mêlée* the means exist to support the knights and enable them to attack again in their *conroi*. The internal organisation of the charge envisaged in the *Rule* would enable the cavalry to react to changing circumstances or to employ

⁽¹⁸⁾ Anonymous of Béthune, in G. Duby, *The Legend of Bouvines*, tr. C. Tihanyi, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990, p. 195.

different tactics if they were appropriate[^]. It is unlikely that Guérin could count on such an elaborate organization, but he was deploying his men in retinues whose members had a common commander, and most certainly would have known their immediate comrades in the *conroi* - he was thus playing to strength.

In fact it is likely that Oman and others overemphasized the role of cavalry in western warfare partly because their attention was caught by the drama of the crusades. In the East the Muslim enemy came to fear the "famous charge" of the Franks. What Oman and others failed to appreciate was how far this was actually a product of particular circumstances in the crusader states. The Frankish settlers were almost perpetually at war with a Turkish enemy whose forces were almost entirely mounted. Their battle technique relied heavily on manoeuvre. Turkish archers on light horses tried to surround the enemy, to break up their formations with arrow fire and thus to create gaps into which they could charge for hand-to-hand fighting. If the knights charged at them, they would retreat, only to come again:

"If they [the Turks] are hotly pursued a long way they flee on very fast horses. There are none nimbler in the world, with the swiftest gallop - like a flight of swallows. It is the Turks' habit, when they realise that their pursuit has stopped following them, to stop running away themselves - like an infuriating fire which flies away if you drive it off and returns when you stop"⁽²⁰⁾.

In a hot climate where horses tired easily, discipline was essential in the face of such provocation. In fact the mass charge seems to have been an eastern innovation, a development of western fighting methods. And it was possible precisely because in the principalities of the east

⁽¹⁹⁾ *The Rule of the Templars*, ed. J. M. Upton-Ward, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 1992, pp. 59-61; for a study see M. Bennett, "La Règle du Temple as a military manual, or How to deliver a cavalry charge", in C. Harper-Bill, J. Holdsworth & J. Nelson (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History presented to R. Allen-Brozvn*, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 1989, pp. 7-20, reprinted by Upton-Ward as an appendix, pp. 175-188. For the *conroi* see J. F. Verbruggen, "La tactique militaire des armées de chevaliers", *Revue du Nord*, vol. 29, 1947, pp. 163-168.

⁽²⁰⁾ H. Nicholson (ed.), *The Chronicle of the Third Crusade*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1997, p. 234.

war was so frequent that knights became used to fighting together and, therefore, had the discipline to manage and control a mass charge⁽²¹⁾. But while Oman and others were hypnotized by the knights, the superb study of Smail noticed that crusader discipline produced an even more innovative development, the fighting march⁽²²⁾.

In 1147 the Franks, under Baldwin III of Jerusalem (1143-63), marched on Bosra whose lord had offered to betray it to them. But they found their enemy, Nur ed-Din in great strength, so they formed a column to retreat through the hostile force:

"General orders had been given that the bodies of all the dead in the Christian ranks were to be placed upon camels and other pack animals, that the knowledge of the massacre of our forces might not tend to strengthen the enemy. The weak and wounded were also to be placed on beasts of burden so as to give the impression that not a single Christian had been killed or wounded. It was a source of amazement, therefore, to the wiser heads among the enemy that, after such a volley of arrow, such repeated conflicts, such torture of thirst, dust and unbearable heat, not a single dead Christian could be found. This people must indeed, be made of iron, they thought".

Again in 1170 at Gaza:

"Terrified by the vast numbers, they began to crowd together more than usual, with the result that the very density of their ranks almost prevented any further advance. The infidels at once charged and tried to force them apart, but the Christians, by divine help, massed themselves even more closely together and withstood the enemy's attack. Then at quickened pace they marched on to their destination where the entire army [250 knights & 2000 foot] halted and set up tents"⁽²³⁾.

⁽²¹⁾J. France, "Crusading Warfare and its Adaptation to Eastern Conditions in the Twelfth Century", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 15, 2000, pp. 49-66.

⁽²²⁾Smail, *Crusading Warfare*.

⁽²³⁾ William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, ed. E. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey, 2 vols., New York, Columbia, 1943, vol. 2, Bk. 16, Chap. 11, Bk. 20, Chap. 20.

But what is particularly interesting about this formation is that it employed cavalry and infantry. In fact the infantry marched around the cavalry. Their tactical purpose was to hold the horse-archers at a distance with their bows and spears so that they could not wound and kill the horses of the knights, who for their part could maintain formation until a favourable opportunity presented itself for a charge against the main mass of the enemy. At Hattin, in 1187, the army of Jerusalem marched against Saladin in just such a formation, but they were defeated because they were attempting a very long advance of 26 km through a waterless area in the face of an enemy with overwhelming numeric superiority⁽²⁴⁾.

But on the Third Crusade, Richard of England (1189-99) made the system work. After the fall of Acre on 12 July 1191 to the crusader host, Richard set out southwards down the coast to seize the port of Jaffa, with his cavalry in three sections surrounded by infantry. But water was plentiful because his fleet ruled the sea, and the infantry were rotated so that they could rest between the army and the coast. Saladin's mounted archers attacked the infantry screen but to little effect. One of Saladin's advisers commented:

"The enemy army was already in formation with the infantry surrounding it like a wall, wearing solid iron corselets and full-length well-made chain-mail, so that arrows were falling on them with no effect [...] I saw various individuals amongst the Franks with ten arrows fixed in their backs, pressing on in this fashion quite unconcerned".

On 7 September Saladin deployed his army for battle close to Arsuf. Richard wanted to hold his force together until he could, with a single charge, destroy his enemy totally. In the event such was the ferocity of the Muslim attack that elements of his cavalry began the charge prematurely. Even so, as the same Muslim eyewitness experienced, the impact of the western cavalry charge was devastating:

"The enemy's situation worsened still more and the Muslims thought they had them in their power. Eventually the first detachments

⁽²⁴⁾ B. Z. Kedar, "The Battle of Hattin Revisited", in B. Z. Kedar (ed.), *The Horns of Hattin*, Jerusalem, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1992, pp. 190-207.

of their infantry reached the plantations of Arsuf. Then their cavalry massed together and agreed on a charge, as they feared for their people and thought that only a charge would save them. I saw them grouped together in the middle of the foot-soldiers. They took their lances and gave a shout as one man. The infantry opened gaps for them and they charged in unison. One group charged our right wing, another our left, and the third our centre. It happened that I was in the centre which took to wholesale flight. My intention was to join the left wing, since it was nearer to me. I reached it after it had been broken utterly, so I thought to join the right wing, but then I saw that it had fled more calamitously than all the rest"⁽²⁵⁾.

Eastern conditions forced western forces operating there either to adopt a highly disciplined approach or perish, and the latter option was not unknown. On the Second Crusade, Louis VII of France (1137-1180) marched his army in column through Asia Minor with a strong vanguard. But this van decided to go ahead to make camp, exposing the mass of the army and non-combatants to Turkish attack and almost annihilation: "The Turks thrust and slashed, and the defenseless crowds fled or fell like sheep [...] exposed the king and his companions to death"⁽²⁶⁾.

Western soldiers were simply not used to the kind of discipline needed to hold off strong and persistent Turkish attack. Indeed, on the same crusade the army of Conrad III of Germany (1138-1152) was virtually destroyed⁽²⁷⁾.

It was not just the knights who were unused to such discipline. Infantry derive their effectiveness from mass, but to make this steady and effective requires firm discipline. It was very difficult to inculcate such a quality in medieval conditions. Without the infrastructure and training of a standing army, infantry had to learn their trade on the job. We know remarkably little about the recruitment and training of infantry in the 12th century because the narrative sources were written by clergy

⁽²⁵⁾ Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, tr. D. S. Richards, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002, pp. 170,175.

⁽²⁶⁾ Odo of Deuil, *Journey of Louis VII to the East*, ed. V. G. Berry, New York, Columbia University Press, 1948, pp. 117-118.

⁽²⁷⁾ J. Philips, *The Second Crusade*, New Haven, Yale, 2007, pp. 168-184.

who were members of the European elite and, therefore, focused on the doings of the knights and nobles. Amongst the non-knightly infantry there were certainly sergeants (*servientes, stratores*) who had small landholdings in return for which they rendered many kinds of service. Some were cavalry, albeit less well-armed than the knights, others were archers and crossbowmen, while Urricus, King John of England's (1199-1216) master of the royal machines, had this status. But in the west such men were relatively few, though it is a mark of their importance that sergeant was often used as a general name for infantry. How were quite large forces of foot raised? In most European monarchies there was a residual obligation on all freemen to serve the king in arms in time of need. In 1213, when England was threatened by foreign invasion, King John proclaimed a *levée-en-masse*: "It is provided that if aliens come to our land, all should unanimously go to oppose them with force and arms without any interference or delay"⁽²⁸⁾.

But this could only have raised an ill-trained militia with some value in defending their homes, but entirely useless for deployment in an expeditionary army. In 1164, Henry II of England (1154-1189) attempted to persuade his barons to raise infantry from their fiefs on a regular basis, but failed entirely⁽²⁹⁾. But there were other sources of troops. Knights on campaign needed servants, to do domestic duties like cooking, to look after their armour and, above all, to care for their horses. Such men were drawn from an armed society. In 1181, Henry II issued two *Assizes of Arms* which specified that all freemen should have arms according to status. This kind of legislation has many parallels in other European kingdoms, and in the numerous city-states of the age. Henry II's primary purpose was probably to ensure that in an age without police respectable people should have the means to resist criminals, but the legislation would hardly have been possible if they did not in fact already have such weapons. By 1242 a renewal of the *Assize* insisted that even poor men should possess bows. So a knight could probably recruit armed men, drawn from the more restless elements in rural society,

⁽²⁸⁾ M. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages. The English Experience*, New Haven, Yale, 1996, p. 121.

⁽²⁹⁾ P. Latimer, "Henry II's campaign against the Welsh in 1165", *Welsh History Review*, vol. 14, 1989, pp. 547-551.

to accompany him to war. Such men would become accustomed to fighting and perhaps form small units under the supervision of a local sergeant which would become elements of the infantry.

Such infantry, raised by *ad hoc* methods, could be very effective, especially when stiffened by knights. At Visé, on 22 March 1106, Henry IV (1056-1106) used his own knights to lure the cavalry of his son Henry into an ambush sprung by infantry. At Bourghéroulde, in March 1124, a well organized, though small, English army defeated the Norman rebels against Henry I (1100-1135) by using archers, backed up by dismounted knights, to shoot down the enemy horses⁽³⁰⁾. The Kings of Jerusalem, faced with continual warfare, seem to have insisted upon the right to call all able-bodied men to war, and the evidence suggests that they could raise at least 5025 sergeants, of whom 2000 were from cities. During the campaign against King John in 1202-1204, Philip Augustus seems to have been able to raise 8000 sergeants, of whom 5345 were drawn from the cities of the royal demesne. They fought well in the campaign which seized Normandy and the Loire principalities from King John in 1204 and were an important element in the army at Bouvines, in 1214⁽³¹⁾.

This association with cities is most certainly not accidental. The city provided a sense of solidarity to its soldiers because they knew that they were fighting for its privileges and thereby their own livelihoods, and, moreover, they were fighting alongside their kin and their neighbours. In Milan, statutes laid down the equipment which men should bring to war according to their economic status: the rich had to serve as knights, while the very poor need only be shield-bearers, but the bulk of the citizens were spearmen and archers. These regulations also made provision for training and penalized men who ran away. Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190) was determined to incorporate the cities of the Lombard Plain into his empire, but Milan led an alliance of Italian powers against him. On 9 August 1160, his small German army was defeated at

⁽³⁰⁾ C. Gaier, "Le combat de Visé", in C. Gaier (ed.), *Armes et combats dans l'Univers médiévale*, Brussels, De Boek-Wesmael, 1995, pp. 11-14; J. Bradbury, "Battles in England and Normandy", pp. 1-12.

⁽³¹⁾ Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, p. 162.

the battle of Carcano by the levies of the Milanese. Much more seriously, in 1176 Frederick encountered the Milanese army again at Legnano. His cavalry scattered the enemy horse, but the Milanese foot took refuge in a fortified camp and held off the whole of Barbarossa's army which lost heart at reports that the emperor had been killed in the press, and fled⁽³²⁾. When Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1197-1250) mounted a successful ambush of the Milanese army at Cortenuova in 1237, the foot, though caught by surprise, rallied around their *carroccio* and held up his attack for a while⁽³³⁾. This defiance of imperial power continued, and after the death of Frederick II Milan and other cities disputed the mastery of the plain of the Po. Flanders had a long tradition of providing soldiers and by the 13th century Gent was famed for its powerful militia which frequently defied the count⁽³⁴⁾.

But men who were prepared to fight could also make a living from war as mercenaries, and it was probably the sheer difficulty of recruiting footsoldiers on any other basis that led to the rise of the mercenary foot. Henry II of England employed these men on such a scale that we hear of three very notable mercenary commanders, Sancho de Savannac, Mercadier and Lupescar, while his younger contemporary, Philip II of France, placed great trust in Lambert Cadoc⁽³⁵⁾. Henry II placed such trust in these men that they seem to have made up the bulk of his armies and helped to give him a formidable military reputation. They were not always brilliant soldiers, for we hear of them being defeated by angry peasants, but they proved to be highly effective and they were deeply feared. But Henry was unusual in being able to tax his realm, and most

⁽³²⁾J. France, "The Battle of Carcano: the event and its importance", *War in History*, vol. 6, 1999, pp. 245-61; *Idem*, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades 1000-1300*, London, UCL Press, 1999, pp. 163-164.

⁽³³⁾*Idem*, *Western Warfare*, p. 155.

⁽³⁴⁾Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, p. 148.

⁽³⁵⁾ D. Crouch, "William Marshal and the Mercenariat", in J. France (ed.), *Mercenaries and Paid Men. The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, Brill, 2008, pp. 15-32; D. Powell, *The Norman Frontier in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 172.

rulers could afford only a relatively small mercenary component to stiffen their foot or provide specialists, such as crossbowmen⁽³⁶⁾.

Mercenaries went under many names, mostly referring to the areas they came from, such as Aragonese, Basques or, most commonly, Brabanters, but other terms include *routiers*, *conducticii* and *coterelles*, and all could be translated as gangsters or cut-throats in English and testify to the fear they inspired⁽³⁷⁾. Indeed, they were very effective. In 1173 Henry II faced a revolt by his sons, supported by many magnates in England and Europe, and backed by the king of France. In that year Henry attacked Louis VII who was besieging Verneuil and repulsed him with heavy losses. On 12 August, Henry sent his mercenaries to attack the Breton rebels. In seven days they marched 220 km and reached Dol where they totally destroyed the Breton rebels in battle⁽³⁸⁾. It is possible that at least some of the Brabanter mercenaries were on this occasion mounted. Henry then returned to England, but in the following year he used his mercenaries and Welsh troops in his service to raise Louis VII's siege of Rouen, effectively ending the revolt. All this demonstrated the remarkable speed of movement and skill in battle of these professional soldiers⁽³⁹⁾. At Bouvines, a group of Brabanter mercenaries under Reginald of Boulogne, numbering between 4 and 700, were on the losing

⁽³⁶⁾ J. Hosier, "Revisiting mercenaries under Henry Fitz Empress, 1167-1188", in J. France (ed.), *Mercenaries and Paid Men*, pp. 33-42.

⁽³⁷⁾ Amongst older surveys of the subject of mercenaries are: H. Grundmann, "Rotten und Brabazonen, Söldner-heere in 12. Jahrhundert", *Deutsches Archiv für die Erforschung des Mittelalters*, vol. 5, 1942, pp. 419-492; J. Boussard, "Les mercenaires au XII^e siècle. Henri II Plantagenet et les origines de l'armée de métier", *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, vol. 106, 1945-1946, pp. 189-224; J. Boussard, "Services féodaux, milices et mercenaires aux X et XI siècles", in *Ordinamenti militari in Occidenti nell'Alto Medioevo: Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo XV, Spoleto 30 March-5 April 1967*, Spoleto, C.I.S.A., 1968, pp. 131-68; J. Schlight, *Monarchs and Mercenaries*, Bridgeport, Bridgeport University Press, 1968; S. D. B. Brown, "The mercenary and his master: military service and monetary reward in the eleventh and twelfth century", *History*, vol. 74, 1989, pp. 20-38.

⁽³⁸⁾ Boussard, *Les mercenaires au XII^e siècle*, p. 206.

⁽³⁹⁾ Roger of Hoveden, *Chronica*, in *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden*, ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols., London, Bohn, 1853, vol. 2, pp. 51-55. On Henry II see J. Hosier, *Henry II. A Medieval Soldier*, Leiden, Brill, 2007.

side, but skillfully fought off their enemies until they were slaughtered by overwhelming numbers⁽⁴⁰⁾.

In the 13th century there were some battles in which cavalry were the predominant even only element. Muret has already been noted. In Italy the Siennese defeated the Florentines at Montaperti on 4 September 1260 by sending a strong mounted force around into their rear. At Benevento, Charles of Anjou faced Manfred of Sicily, and although both armies had strong infantry components, it seems to have been the cavalry which did most of the fighting. Manfred's German force of 800 knights cut their way into the enemy like a juggernaut, but were defeated when the French pushed in close as Charles waved his dagger crying "Thrust with the point, stick them with it!". At Tagliacozzo, on 23 August 1268, Conradin challenged Charles in a battle which was almost entirely a cavalry affair with about 5000 committed on both sides. It is remarkable because Charles's cavalry were at first scattered, but he rallied them and crushed his enemy who had scattered to plunder the dead. In all these battles it was organization which prevailed. At Benevento and Tagliacozzo the cavalry were deployed in divisions arrayed behind one another, from which formation they could manoeuvre. All this points to a greater discipline and cohesion which probably arose from two circumstances. The French under Charles had fought together for a long period before each battle, while their Italian enemies made use of mercenary knights and foot who had become common in the continuous fighting which wracked Italy in the 13th century⁽⁴¹⁾. At Worringen, near Cologne, on 5 June 1288 the Brabanters had about 2000 cavalry and 3000 foot against an allied force which was slightly bigger in both components. The battle raged all day, but victory went to the Brabanters whose formations were better formed:

"Thick and tight! Thick and tight!
Late every man press up stoutly
To his neighbour as close as he can.
So we shall certainly win
Glory today!"⁽⁴²⁾.

⁽⁴⁰⁾Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, p. 142.

⁽⁴¹⁾France, *Western Warfare*, pp. 178-84.

⁽⁴²⁾Jan van Heelu, *Rijmkronik*, vv. 4947-4951, in Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, p. 267.

By contrast some of their enemies went off to plunder the Brabanter camp. But it was the mounted knights who played the primary role.

In 1302, Flanders rebelled against their French masters, and a Flemish army, made up almost entirely of footsoldiers, defeated a large mounted French force at Courtrai. Later in the 14th century the English won a series of battles by fighting on foot. As a result, Courtrai has been seen as a turning point in western warfare, when the balance between infantry and cavalry changed. But infantry had won many battles before 1302 and cavalry went on to win many after, not least when French horsemen defeated the Flemings at Mons-en-Pévèle in 1304. Legnano (1176) is in many ways directly comparable to Courtrai, in that city levies took up strong positions in field fortifications to fight off mounted enemies⁽⁴³⁾. Archers have been given much credit for the English victories in France, but they were highly effective at Bourghéroulde in 1124, so what happened to them in between? Moreover recent research suggests that English men-at-arms, dismounted knights, were at least equally as important at Crécy and elsewhere⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Infantry, as a functional tactical group were clearly vital because they provided commanders with options. Whether they were successful, of course, depended upon a whole range of variables, including effective leadership. But infantry often included in its ranks many knights, simply because the tactical situation made this appropriate. In fact the one consistent pattern across the period 1000-1300 is that knights, whether mounted or on foot, were the dominant element in war. In battle, as cavalry, they always held the initiative and they were vital to stiffen infantry, but they were also important as leaders and fighters in the less spectacular but very important businesses of siege and in ravaging. According to the *Rijmkronik*, immediately before battle was

⁽⁴³⁾ J. F. Verbruggen, *The Battle of the Golden Spurs. Courtrai, 11 July 1302*, ed. K. DeVries, tr. D. R. Ferguson, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2002; and K. DeVries, *Infantry Warfare in the early Fourteenth Century*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1996, both provide excellent accounts of Courtrai.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ See for example A. Ayton and P. Preston, *The Battle of Crécy*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2005.

joined at Worringen (1288) a sergeant in the Brabant army exhorted his comrades:

"As each man comes to any noble, let him
Not turn aside until he has slain him.
For, were their army so great,
That it stretched from here to Cologne,
They will lose the battle if their nobles are killed"⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Only the cities provided the setting to create reasonably steady and consistent infantry who could face the knights, but they could generally do so only in favourable circumstances. It is no accident that the contending cities in the plain of the Po made considerable use of field fortifications which sheltered their foot from cavalry attacks⁽⁴⁶⁾. Most kings found it very difficult to recruit reliable infantry with the particular skills needed. The archers at Bourghéroulde were not replicated elsewhere, while really steady close-order infantry were rare - at Hattin they became disheartened and abandoned their cavalry⁽⁴⁷⁾. Mercenaries were good soldiers, but very expensive, and for long they seem to have been recruited as individuals and in small groups.

But things were changing in the 13th century. Ever improving castle design demanded able military architects. But to assault such fortresses demanded elaborate siege-machinery which could only be built and maintained by engineers. Royal records show that often cavalymen were paid professionals, and this was especially the case in Italy where warfare was endemic. These professionals as yet merely supplemented the city foot and mounted troops, but they were gaining in importance⁽⁴⁸⁾. What was emerging in the 13th century was the professionalization of war. Nobles and their knightly followers remained important, but increasingly armies like those of Charles of Anjou relied upon paid professionals, both as infantry and cavalry. This was especially important because

⁽⁴⁵⁾Jan van Heelu, *Rijmkronik*, vv. 4845-4861, in Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, p. 267.

⁽⁴⁶⁾France, *Western Warfare*, pp. 151-3.

⁽⁴⁷⁾Kedar, *The Battle of Hattin Revisited*, p. 208.

⁽⁴⁸⁾M. Mallet, *Mercenaries and their Masters. Warfare in Renaissance Italy*, London, Bodley Flead, 1974, pp. 6-24.

increasingly mercenaries were recruited as formed units, the famous (or notorious) "Companies" which recruited tough troops and provided regular systems of command. The Grand Catalan Company originated in Spain at the very end of the 13th century and recruited from *Almogávares*, the very able Spanish light infantry born of the long wars against Islam in Iberia, but they had cavalry and engineers as well, and even an administrator, Ramon Muntaner, who later recorded their history. In 1311 they crushed the Franks of Greece at the battle of Halmyros and established themselves as rulers of the duchy of Athens. They were able to incorporate Greeks, Turks and many other people into their army and yet maintain its fighting power through their vigorous training⁽⁴⁹⁾.

In England another system was emerging. The *Statute of Winchester* of 1285 consolidated the provisions of earlier *Assizes of Arms* and demanded that freemen hold and practice with arms. These county levies were from time to time paraded for inspection, and when he needed infantry for the wars in Wales and Scotland Edward I (1272-1307) recruited from them. Although his huge infantry forces deserted *en masse* and proved unwieldy, in the 14th century English captains could use the same mechanism to recruit selectively, and thus they were able to find willing soldiers with the right skills, notably in archery, to make up effective companies which were just as professional as the mercenary companies who came to dominate war in Italy. And the virtues of combining cavalry and infantry systematically became clear. In 1294, Edward I rashly advanced into North Wales and was trapped in Conwy, desperately short of food, by the rebel Madog. But on the night of 5 March the earl of Warwick, with 200 cavalry and 2000 infantry, caught Madog's army on open land. The Welsh, lacking a strong cavalry force, formed a circle bristling with spears to hold off the knights, but Warwick called up his archers who shot the Welsh down until they were so weakened that the cavalry could charge over them⁽⁵⁰⁾. Once the state was sufficiently able to profit from economic development to collect taxes efficiently and to devise methods of recruitment capable of delivering willing and skilled

⁽⁴⁹⁾Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, ed. A. Goodenough, 2 vols., London, Hakluyt Society, 1920.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ I. G. Edwards, "The battle of Maes Madog and the Welsh Campaign of 1294-5", *English Historical Review*, vol. 39,1924, pp. 1-12.

soldiers, the way was open for the development of a capable non-noble infantry. This in turn stimulated careful thinking about strategy and tactics to produce the innovative ideas which enabled Edward III (1327-77) to win remarkable victories in the "Hundred Years War"⁽⁵¹⁾.

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