

Mercenaries and the Grim Reaper in the Second Half of the 14th Century

Mercenarios y la Parca en la segunda mitad del siglo XIV

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Abstract

“War was endemic in the late Middle Ages,” as Kelly deVries writes about the time of the Hundred Years War¹. Since mercenaries were an indispensable part of warfare in the mid-14th century, the concepts of mercenaries and death have always been inextricably linked. The routiers’ relationship with death was multifaceted. They were, naturally, the cause of death but the routiers themselves also suffered various forms of death at the hands of the locals. However, for them, death had a far more significant consequence because they were regularly excommunicated. Thus, their relationship to salvation is arguably ambiguous. When they rarely had the opportunity to obtain absolution and pardon from the Church, they endeavoured to ensure their safe passage to the afterlife in their treaties of peace or in their letters of remission.

In this paper, a meticulous selection of the abundant sources will be presented to delineate the intricate interrelationship between mercenaries and the local population, particularly in the context of death.

Keywords

Mercenaries, 14th Century, Violence, Crusades, War, Death, Salvation

1 DeVries, Kelly - Medieval Warfare 1300-1450. p. XI.

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Resumen

“La guerra era endémica en la Baja Edad Media”, como escribe Kelly deVries sobre la época de la Guerra de los Cien Años. Dado que los mercenarios eran una parte indispensable de la guerra a mediados del siglo XIV, los conceptos de mercenarios y muerte siempre han estado estrechamente vinculados. La relación de los routiers con la muerte era multifacética. Ellos eran, naturalmente, la causa de la muerte, pero los propios routiers también sufrían diversas formas de muerte a manos de los locales. Sin embargo, para ellos, la muerte tenía una consecuencia mucho más significativa porque eran regularmente excomulgados. Por lo tanto, su relación con la salvación es, indudablemente, ambigua. Cuando rara vez tenían la oportunidad de obtener absolución y perdón de la Iglesia, se esforzaban por asegurar su paso seguro al más allá en sus tratados de paz o en sus cartas de remisión.

En este artículo, se presentará una selección meticulosa de las abundantes fuentes para delinear la intrincada interrelación entre los mercenarios y la población local, particularmente en el contexto de la muerte.

Palabras clave

Mercenarios, Siglo XIV, Violencia, Cruzadas, Guerra, Muerte, Salvación

Introduction

In 1359, German mercenary companies, particularly those of Konrad von Landau and Hanneken von Bongard, wrought havoc on the Italian peninsula, bringing destruction and death to the people of Northern and Central Italy. Their actions were immortalized in the papal request written by Innocent VI to Louis the Great, King of Hungary:

“the evil-doing devilish company, spreading its wings and its many powers, incited by the enemy of the human race....sheds its venom like a basilisk on the land of the said parts of the Church of Italy, and kills and destroys all who look upon it, the castles he overturns, the fortresses he razes to the ground, the lands he deserts, he spares not the women with child, nor the infant in the cradle, he tears apart and dismembers the devoted faithful of the Church, and breaks to pieces, slaughters and devours all of the Churchmen”.²

2 Ludovico regi Hungariae ut legato apostolico gentes armigeras ad resistendum magnae societati mittat n° LXXV. THEINER, Augustin ed. - *Vetera Monumenta Historica* - pp. 41-42.

Such a request could not be denied, and Louis dispatched what is believed to be the largest Hungarian mercenary army to Italy in the 14th century³. Ugolino Gonzaga, Lord of Mantua, played a significant role in the organization of the campaign, and there were several exchanges of envoys between Louis I and Ugolino⁴. Finally, after the diplomatic preparations, Medgyesaljai Mórócz Simon of the Pok kindred⁵, sheriff of three Hungarian counties, member of the high nobility of Angevin Hungary⁶, arrived with several thousand light cavalry units under the walls of Bologna on 30 September 1360. However, his visit proved to be even more problematic for the people in the regions around Modena and Parma than that of the Germans.

“And on Saturday, 21 November, the said Hungarian troop, traveling through the Parma territory, came to those lands with strong warfare and committing ungodly deeds and capturing men and women and children and torturing them cruelly and tormenting them with unspeakable harsh punishments”⁷.

Wherever Simon led his army on his *chevauchées*, he blazed a path of destruction, accompanied by a constant burning of houses, robbing and killing of peasants⁸ and other non-combatants, everywhere for “forty long days”⁹. In the village of Sant’ Egidio he terrorised the locals and committed particularly cruel crimes with such zeal that he alone, from among all the ‘Trecento’ foreign and Italian condottieri, carried death in his name, as he was called “*messer Simone della Morte*” by the Italian chronicles¹⁰.

The sources employed in this study were presented as a result of an European archival research conducted over the preceding decade. Archival sources pertaining to 14th-century mercenaries are remarkably

3 VILLANI, Giovanni, Matteo e Filippo - *Croniche*. Libro Decimo, Capitolo II p. 332.

4 Mantua, ASM Copialettere, Busta 2881, libro III. n. 638.

5 LUKCSICS, Pál - “Magyar zsoldosok a pápaság szolgálatában a XIV. században”. pp. 125-57.

6 BÁRÁNY, Attila - “Az Anjou-kor hadtörténete, in Magyarország Hadtörténete». p. 56.

7 BAZANO, Johannis de - *Chronicon Mutiense*. p. 174.

8 VILLANI, Giovanni, Matteo e Filippo - *Croniche*. Capitolo XV, p. 335.

9 CIUCCIOVINO, Carlo - *La Cronaca del Trecento Italiano*. p. 424.

10 CARDUCCI Giosuè, FIORINI, Vittorio ed. - *Corpus Chronicorum Bononiensium Cronaca B* p. 123.

diverse, encompassing correspondence and accounting records issued by papal, royal, and princely administrations. For example, such entries relating to mercenaries can be found in account books such as the “Dimanche Vitel” in Dijon and the “Comptes Consulaires de Saint-Antonin”. The cited sources include records relating to nobles who were captured by mercenaries. Examples of these records can be located in the archives of Turin and Burgos. The “Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris” is of particular importance in this field of research because it provides a significant amount of information on convicted mercenaries. The Letters of Remission, published in the books of various 19th-century authors, also contain rich information. Documents of this nature invariably provide comprehensive coverage of the acts of the individuals to whom pardon was granted. The Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Latin, and German chronicles and Annales were used, supplemented by various sources from archives and already published sources, thereby enriching the treatment of the topic of mercenaries and death.

1. The Violence of the Mercenaries, the Suffering and Death of the Non-combatants

1.1. *Barjat and Co.*

The late medieval chronicles attribute most of the violence to the mercenaries rather than their employers, depicting them as the agents of violence par excellence and the primary source of death. Their captains' names are closely linked to the suffering of the population¹¹. Medgyesaljai Móróc Simon's example illustrates perfectly the lethal relation between mercenaries and their victims. Studying the history of the Hundred Years War, the letters of remission give invaluable details on the routiers' personal approach to life and death. Jean Petit, called Barjat, was a simple member of the companies originating from Pierre-couverte in the region of Limousin. He obtained his letter of remission from Charles V in which he declared that “I have been compelled to deplete the fields, to use your lands and subjects, to plunder, rob, and hold to ransom all manner of people, whether they be churchmen, nobles, burghers, or merchants”¹².

11 CROUCH, David -” William Marshal and the Mercenariat.” p. 30.

12 FUNK-BRENTANO, Franz - *Les Brigands*. p. 30-31.

He committed crimes that “I could not, here, say or express”. Barjat’s example may lead to some conclusions that were generally true for the “perverse people”¹³ in the middle of the 14th century. The type of crimes he testified to, the life he lived maybe considered as an arch example of an average soldier’s life regardless of his origin or in which part of Europe he was active. In the *Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris*, there are several similar life-paths of the members of companies. Simon de Verrue, who was considered to be “a very strong robber”¹⁴ during most of his career he committed crimes such as robbing women, pillaging churches or abbeys, stealing horses, and participating in may be considered as an arch example of an average chevauchées¹⁵. He was hanged. Guillaume de Bruc, an esquire, robbed a hotel, he was an accomplished thief with a number of cases of sneaking into houses by different means, he naturally participated in chevauchées with other soldiers of fortune, and he raped women, and ransomed the land. He was a member of Geoffroy Tête-Noire’s route and was decapitated¹⁶. Besides the already mentioned crimes, another interesting case was Hennequin du Bos, called the Bastard of Gommignies, who was of noble origin and had a somewhat different career due to his social standing. The crimes he carried out were regarded as *Lèse-majesté*¹⁷ and it is mentioned several times that he had given advice to the English about the potential ransom of the captured French nobles¹⁸. He was also decapitated and his body was hanged. In 1370, Guillen de la Hala, provost of Navarrería sentenced to death a French soldier, Johan de Villanova who was drowned for stealing his lord’s purse and having made counter-keys of his lord’s ark, from which he stole 20 gold pieces. No executioner could be found in the town of Navarrería, so a person was entrusted to execute him, to whom 10 sueldos were paid¹⁹.

13 Avignon, 19 March 1364, Urbain V déclare à Jean, roi de France, qu’il ne pourra lui accorder la levée d’une décime pour solder des gens d’armes contre les compagnies. PROU, Maurice - *Études*, Pièces justificatives XXIX, p. 121.

14 LA SOCIÉTÉ DES BIBLIOPHILES FRANÇOIS ed. (1861) *Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris du 6 Septembre 1389 au 18 Mai 1392*. Paris:Ch. Lahure Vol. 1. p. 8.

15 LA SOCIÉTÉ DES BIBLIOPHILES FRANÇOIS ed. (1861) *Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris du 6 Septembre 1389 au 18 Mai 1392*. Paris:Ch. Lahure Vol. 1. pp. 6-8.

16 LA SOCIÉTÉ DES BIBLIOPHILES FRANÇOIS ed. (1861) *Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris du 6 Septembre 1389 au 18 Mai 1392*. Paris:Ch. Lahure Vol. 1. pp. 20-26.

17 LA SOCIÉTÉ DES BIBLIOPHILES FRANÇOIS ed. (1861) *Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris du 6 Septembre 1389 au 18 Mai 1392*. Paris:Ch. Lahure Vol. 1. p. 381.

18 LA SOCIÉTÉ DES BIBLIOPHILES FRANÇOIS ed. (1861) *Registre criminel du Châtelet de Paris du 6 Septembre 1389 au 18 Mai 1392*. Paris:Ch. Lahure Vol. 1. p. 387.

19 Pamplona, ARGN Reg. 138. fols. 112-113.

Letters of remission were not only issued to the members of the companies but to commoners or nobles who had anything to do with the mercenaries' death. These letters also provide important information on the routiers' life. In August 1397, this kind of letter was commissioned to Jean Josselin from Azay-le-Brulé, who participated in Laignes in hunting down a soldier of the companies called Turpelin, who was a "thief, a looter and a robber, pursuer of the companies" from the castle of Saint-Maixent²⁰. Another letter of remission was entitled to the dame of Chauceris who just before the Battle of Brignais caught a spy of the companies named Gieffroy, accompanied by four female companions, who was sent to Burgundy to gain information on the state of the duchy. He appeared suspicious and therefore was interrogated. Under torture, he confessed that he had worked for the companies. According to his confession, he was forced to travel with the companies and during his voyage he committed petty crimes like theft. The dame of Chauceris possessed high, middle and low justice, thus she beheaded Gieffroy Charpi and hanged his headless body on a tree²¹.

1.2. *Rinaldo di Montiverde in Fermo*

In general, the urban population did not get on well with the mercenaries. Contemporary accounts are full of atrocities committed by mercenaries: drunkenness, public brawls, and murders. In one of Petrarch's letters, he spoke of mercenaries as turning towns into brothels.²² In Pisa, they restricted contact with the mercenaries, allowing them to eat and drink only in the places designated for them. In Siena, mercenaries in the service of the city had to take a solemn oath not to harm the city.²³ The situation was very different when a town fell into the hands of a mercenary captain. Then the personality of the condottiere was very much a factor in the direction that events would take: either he was able to hold on to the town and consolidate his rule, or he proved too

20 GUÉRIN, Paul ed., - Recueil des Documents concernant Le Poitou contenus dans les Registres de la Chancellerie de France. n. DCCCXXXV p. 287.

21 Lettre de rémission pour la dame de Chauceris, May 1362 GUIGUE, Georges - *Récits de la guerre de cent ans. Les tard-venus en Lyonnais, Forez et Beaujolais, 1359-1369*. Piece justificatives XXXVIII, p. 291-293.

22 CAFERRO, William - Italy and the Companies of Adventure in the Fourteenth Century. p. 345.

23 CAFERRO, William - Italy and the Companies of Adventure in the Fourteenth Century. p. 345.

bloodthirsty, in which case the townspeople rebelled against him. Rinaldo di Montiverde, a condottiere who earned renown for his service to Florence during the War of the Eight Saints, assumed the role of despot of Fermo in September 1376. His reign commenced with a series of public executions, setting a tone of brutal terror that persisted over the subsequent three years. Such relentless oppression served to estrange the entirety of the populace²⁴.

“When miser Rainaldo became the lord of Fermo, he did not want to rule according to his wisdom, but rather ... by stealing citizens, living in luxury; in short, he was so strongly hated by every person, by friends and by enemies”²⁵.

This hatred led to a revolution against his rule on 25 August 1379²⁶. His family, along with the remaining faithful soldiers, barricaded themselves in the citadel but he was betrayed by one of his companions who wanted to save his own life. Rinaldo di Montiverde’s execution on 2 June 1380 was a real festival for the citizens of Fermo. His last moments in the square of San Martino were spent amidst the jubilation of the people. He was beheaded together with his sons Mercenario and Luchino²⁷.

1.3. The Sack of Limoges

The fate that awaited the non-combatant population of a town besieged by a vengeful leader of a Hundred Years War army can be illustrated by the sack of Limoges in 1370, one of the most notorious examples of successful assault-based sieges during that period²⁸. On 19 September 1370, the Black Prince’s army besieged and sacked the town of Limoges. Toward 1368, the hostilities between the English and French were renewed in Gascony and in Languedoc. The liege lord of Limoges had been Edward, the Black Prince since 1364. In July 1370 Jean de Cros, the bishop of Limoges agreed to the terms offered by the French and the

24 PIRANI Francesco “Crudelissimo Nerone”: la memoria damnata di Rinaldo da Monteverde signore di Fermo († 1380)”. p. 95.

25 MASSÈRA, Aldo, Francesco ed. - *Cronache malatestiane dei secoli XIV e XV* p. 49.

26 PIRANI Francesco “Crudelissimo Nerone”: la memoria damnata di Rinaldo da Monteverde signore di Fermo († 1380)”. p. 95.

27 MASSÈRA, Aldo, Francesco ed. - *Cronache malatestiane dei secoli XIV e XV* p. 50. n. 2.

28 GILBERT, James E. “A Medieval “Rosie the Riveter”? Women in France and Southern England during the Hundred Years War” p. 350.

cit   of Limoges changed sides on 24 August 1370. It was treason from the English point of view and the retaliation was swift and extremely severe. The Black prince's outrage did not have limits, and despite his sickness he quickly gathered an army of 6400 soldiers including the troops of the duke of Lancaster, and the counts of Cambridge and Pembroke as well²⁹. The Black Prince's punitive expedition included famous captains such as the Captal de Buch, Bertucat d'Albret³⁰, Arnaut-Bernard IV de Preissac or Soudan de la Trau³¹, and the famous Eustache d'Abrichecourt³². The siege did not last long, because the English miners collapsed the walls³³ and through the gap the English-Gascon troops infested Limoges in the morning of 19 September 1370. Limoges had around 3000 citizens and 500 defenders. When the English entered the city and overcame the resisters, the massacre and the looting began. They did not have mercy on anyone: men, women and children were gutted and mutilated on the spot. Edward and the other leaders of the army let the soldiers continue their bloody work³⁴, in the meantime Jean de Cros was captured and dragged in front of the victors. According to Froissart the surviving population kneeled in front of Edward and begged him for mercy but he set an example for the other Limousin communities so all the burghers were massacred. In the afternoon, Edward razed the houses of the *cit  * to the ground and at the end of the day he left the ruins of what was once the lower city of Limoges³⁵. Indeed, historical accounts regarding the number of victims in the sack of Limoges vary significantly, ranging from 300 to 3,000, which would have represented the entire population of Limoges at the time. The true number likely falls somewhere between these extremes, but due to the passage of time and the challenges of accurately documenting such events, it is impossible to provide an exact figure today.

29 FROISSART, Jean - *Cronique*. Vol. VII. p. 243.

30 FROISSART, Jean - *Cronique*. Vol. VII. p. 243.

31 P  PIN, Guilhem - "Les Soudans de Pressiac ou de la Trau: de Cl  ment V    l'order de la Jarreti  re". p. 34.

32 FROISSART, Jean - *Cronique*. Vol. VII. p. 243.

33 LUCE, Sim  on ed. - *Chronique des quatre premiers Valois*. p. 209.

34 MOLINIER, August et   mile ed. - *Chronique Normande du XIV   si  cle* p. 195.

35 LEROUX, Alfred - "Le sac de la cit   de Limoge et son rel  vement 1370-1464". p. 192.

1.4. Violence and Death in Contemporary Correspondence

No wonder that such blatant forms of violence left a deep impression not only on chroniclers like Froissart, but also on contemporaries, whose letters express both compassion for the suffering of the non-combatant population and antipathy towards mercenaries. In this respect, it makes no difference whether the letters are those of a future king or of a citizen of a town, because they are all of the same opinion. The future Charles V, who in 1362 was still Charles, son and lieutenant of the king of France, Duke of Normandy and Dauphin of Viennois³⁶, wrote in his letter to the bailiff of Saint Pierre:

“many of the enemies and wrongdoers gathered together in many parts of the kingdom of France, and they took many fortresses plundering, robbing, ravishing and sacking the Flat Country causing great evil, destruction and inconvenience to the subjects of the Kingdom”³⁷.

A few years later, in 1366 the same description of the suffering of the local population caused by the ‘Britons’ was reported from the region of Reims to the council of Strasbourg:

“First of all in our region, and certainly in the towns surrounding Reims and Châlon-sur-Marne a multitude of armed men, who are commonly referred to as the Britons, held the rural villages, countryside and the region occupied for three weeks and took almost all the goods and possessions of the villages, robbed the inhabitants, held some hostage and demanded ransom, but also slew many by sword, the virgins and widows and all women they took a liking to they raped, set fire to many a place, so that it is deplorable how they devastated almost the entire region....”³⁸.

36 Lille, ADN B. 757, n. 8060.

37 Lille, ADN B. 757, n. 8060.

38 Strasbourg, AVES AA. 81. n.1. Ein Bürger von Rheims an den Ammeter Kunz Müller: giebt Nachricht über die Engländer, 31 July 1366. ed. H. White et Georg Wolfram Urkundenbuch der Stadt Strassburg. Politische Urkunden von 1332 bis 1380 (Strasbourg, 1896), Vol. V. n. 724, pp. 561-562.

1.5. *Friendly Armies Crossing Allied Kingdoms*

In late medieval warfare, while there are a few instances of logistical preparation for marching armies, much of it proved inadequate. Edward III's campaign to capture Reims in 1359 serves as a prime example, where despite extensive preparations, reserves were largely depleted upon reaching the city walls, leading to the eventual abandonment of the winter siege. However, in the majority of campaigns, armies were supposed to live off the land as they advanced through the region. This, of course, meant widespread devastation. Armies frequently resorted to burning the countryside, looting towns, and targeting civilians throughout their passage through a region. They seized whatever valuables they could transport and left the remainder in flames. The scale of destruction notably escalated with the enlargement of armies and the heightened emphasis on mobility, especially evident in the fourteenth century³⁹. Consequently, there was often little distinction between armies moving peacefully and those with explicitly hostile intentions. The repercussions of friendly troops passing through allied territories on the Iberian Peninsula in the late 1360s are exemplified by two cases: Bertrand du Guesclin's forces traversing the kingdom of Aragon in 1366 and the Black Prince's troops marching through the kingdom of Navarre in 1367.

The mercenary army of Enrique de Trastámara led by Bertrand du Guesclin had to cross the kingdom of Aragon when he returned to Castille, at the end of 1365 to fight against his half-brother the "tirant malo" Pedro I, the Cruel⁴⁰. Peter IV of Aragon authorized Enrique's companies to enter the kingdom of Aragon, implementing measures to prevent fatalities and plundering.⁴¹ The French, German and English mercenaries were allowed to cross Aragon only in small groups escorted by a party of two hundred Aragonese knights⁴². Adequate supply was also assured to avoid the pillage and destruction⁴³. Despite all these efforts,

39 SMITH, Trevol Russel - Willing Body, Willing Mind: Non-Combatant Culpability According to English Combatant Writers, 1327-1377. p. 81.

40 Julio VALDEÓN BARUQUE, "La propaganda ideológica arma de combat de Enrique de Trastamara 1366-1389)", p. 461.

41 Carlos Andrés Gonzales PAZ, "The role of mercenary troops in Spain in the fourteenth century: the civil war." p. 333.

42 Kenneth FOWLER, *Medieval Mercenaries: The Great Companies*, p. 165.

43 Jerónimo ZURITA, *Anales de Aragón*, Libro IX. De las compañías de gente de armas de Francia que vinieron a servir al rey en la guerra contra el rey de Castilla; y que los castellanos desampararon todas las villas y castillos que habían ocupado en los reinos de Aragón y Valencia.

as the chronicle of Diego de Espés states, when the companies of Henrique of Trastámara crossed the region of Zaragoza they “robbed the land” and “committed great crimes...”⁴⁴. The population in the valley of Llobregat⁴⁵, particularly the inhabitants of Sant Cugat del Vallès, were pillaged and violated to such a degree that on 3 December Peter IV the Ceremonious had to write a letter to du Guesclin reprehending him for the actions of his men:

*“you should know that we have received complaints about your companies committing depredation and violence in the place of Sant Cugat del Vallès, which we are very surprised about, because this is not something which is in keeping with the good service which you intend to give us. We therefore want and ask you to put an end to such things from now on, for since you have come to serve us, you must be careful not to damage our land”*⁴⁶.

On this occasion, the town of Zuera and its surroundings suffered so much from the passage of the companies led by the “Count of Trastámara” that certain parts of the region were completely depopulated:

*“by reason of the march of the French, [the provinces] were deserted, ruined, robbed, burnt, and otherwise made desolate, and their inhabitants thus deprived of their possessions and burdened with debts which they could not in any way meet...”*⁴⁷.

Towns and villages had to be repopulated and rebuilt. Because of the level of destruction, Peter IV the Ceremonious asked for one tenth of the original tax for 20 years. The worst incidents happened in the small episcopal town of Barbastro, 54 km of Huesca, which was sacked by the companies on 2 February 1366. Two hundred of the inhabitants sought refuge in the bell tower of the main church. The routiers set fire

44 Zaragoza, BCZ sig. 20-47 Vol. 1. y 20-48 vol. 2.

45 Jerónimo ZURITA, - *Anales de Aragón* Libro IX. De las compañías de gente de armas de Francia que vinieron a servir al rey en la guerra contra el rey de Castilla; y que los castellanos desampararon todas las villas y castillos que habían ocupado en los reinos de Aragón y Valencia. Fiestas y mercedes que hizo el rey [de Aragón] a los capitanes que le vinieron de Francia.

46 DELACHENAL, Roland - *Histoire de Charles V (1364-1386)*, Vol. III p. 317.

47 Zaragoza, AMZ 1-1-1-R-118.

to the church and as a consequence all of the 200 refugees perished in the flames⁴⁸.

In a comparable situation, the King of Aragon, Charles II, not long before, permitted Edward to enter his kingdom with his troops in order to reinstate Peter the Cruel to the throne of Castille. Jurisdiction was suspended in several parts of Navarre⁴⁹ when the English companies led by the Black Prince crossed the kingdom in order to enter Castile in 1367. Charles II asked for a subsidy of 50,000 florins from Álava, Guipúzcoa, and La Rioja to cover his war costs. In his letters, he granted exemptions to certain settlements, “because in the said kingdom there are some towns that have been robbed, pillaged when companies had occupied them”⁵⁰ such as Valtierra, Citruénigo, Cascante, Monteagudo, Ablitas, Pedriz, Muchante, Cortes, Buñuel, Ribaforada y Fontellas⁵¹. According to the chronicler Jerónimo Zurita, the companies attacked the town of Jaca, killed its captain García de Latrás, and destroyed its surroundings⁵². As a consequence of the long list of similar atrocities, the tax revenues dropped drastically. Lands could not be rented out, and farmers were afraid of cultivating the land due to the “passage of the companies”⁵³. The same happened when French companies were released from Enrique’s service and returned to France; in Borja, simply “everything was wasted” by the “*bretones*”⁵⁴.

48 ZURITA, Jerónimo - *Anales de Aragón* El daño que los soldados franceses hicieron en Barbastro y la exención que el rey [de Aragón] dio a los de aquella ciudad. CAPÍTULO LXII De las compañías de gente de armas de Francia que vinieron a servir al rey en la guerra contra el rey de Castilla; y que los castellanos desampararon todas las villas y castillos que habían ocupado en los reinos de Aragón y Valencia. Libro IX.

49 Pamplona, ARGN Reg. 119, fol. 342r

50 AGUILAR-AMAT Pilar-Azcárate - “El Azote de las Compañías y sun estranges en Navarra (1366-1367)” n. 177. p. 80.

51 AGUILAR-AMAT Pilar-Azcárate - “El Azote de las Compañías y sun estranges en Navarra (1366-1367)” p. 80.

52 ZURITA, Jerónimo - *Anales de Aragón* Libro IX. De las compañías de gente de armas de Francia que vinieron a servir al rey en la guerra contra el rey de Castilla; y que los castellanos desampararon todas las villas y castillos que habían ocupado en los reinos de Aragón y Valencia. Cerco y combate de la ciudad de Jaca y muerte de García de Latrás.

53 Pamplona, ARGN Reg. 119, fol. 262r

54 Pamplona, ARGN Reg. 122, fol. 2r

1.6. John Harleston and Bruno von Rappoltstein: Death in a Private War

In exploring aristocratic customs such as ‘feud’, ‘vengeance’, or ‘private war’, historians have discovered that these practices cannot be reconciled within the framework of a public state that opposes the exercise of private power. It is now acknowledged that aristocrats, especially lords, fulfilled roles within medieval societies and political systems that rendered their use of violence not only permissible but also essential.⁵⁵ It is very rare to gain an insight into the private war between a mercenary captain and an aristocrat which is not motivated by any material considerations, but purely by a deep mutual animosity in a conflict that resulted in the death of dozens of defenceless people on the borders of the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire. A blood feud developed during the last campaign of Edward III, before the Treaty of Brétigny between the English mercenary captain John Harleston and the powerful Alsatian lord Bruno von Rappoltstein that resulted in the destruction of a number of settlements in Burgundy, Lorraine and Champagne.

In 1359, during the English campaign, Harleston, an English mercenary captain, was entrusted by King Edward III with the task of capturing the castle of Flavigny, situated in the northern part of Burgundy. From Flavigny, John Harleston led several expeditions into Burgundy, during which Bruno, sire of Rappolstein, succeeded in capturing Harleston. However, he was compelled to release the English captain due to the latter’s party having seized 160 nobles and commoners from the town of “Schexye”⁵⁶. Upon his release, Harleston proceeded to attack the lands of the Sire of Rappolstein. In accordance with the testimony of his arch-enemy⁵⁷, Harleston:

“burnt down the villages and [killed] four of my men of good reputation, the damage amounts to 80 francs, not counting the losses we do not know about. He caused further damage in Champagne County, in Humbescort, worth 2019 francs in the form of small cattle and livestock and moveables, taken by him and his servant, without counting the fire and the 8 men they beat to death, drowned in water or hanged on trees. He and

55 FIRNHABER-BAKER. Justine - “Seigneurial Violence in Medieval Europe” p. 249.

56 *Rappoltsteinisches Urkundenbuch*, n. 246, p. 205.

57 *Rappoltsteinisches Urkundenbuch*, n. 246, p. 205.

his servants also caused me damage in Urvil, by Marne, in Champagne County, worth 7406 francs, not counting the damage caused by burning down the village and the church and the men they beat to death there, and they knocked out the teeth of one man, and then there were the four women and maidens they raped, held captive and took with them. Because of him I suffered further damage in Ruffier, in Champagne, worth 390 francs, because of taxation, pillaging and scorching, all this adding up to further losses and he beat 5 of my men to death. In total the damage caused amounted to 15 022 francs and the murder of 24 of my men, in addition to all other losses, as can be seen from above.”⁵⁸

2. The Revenge of the Population, the Suffering and Death of the Mercenaries

The religiously motivated opposition to mercenaries has a tradition dating back several centuries. As early as 1180, visions related to Mary led to the formation of the *pacis fraternitas* in Auvergne. Their followers, who were mostly commoners, could be recognized by their characteristic white hoods. The Capuciati were already taking action against the mercenaries who had occupied the area.⁵⁹ In the 14th century, the same attitude characterized the feelings of the population towards mercenaries, as the appearance of the great companies further increased the sense of threat in the middle of the 14th century in the territory of the French kingdom or on the Iberian Peninsula. However, it was in Italy that mercenary companies consisting of thousands of men posed a constant threat⁶⁰. The suffering and impoverishment of the population in the *contado*⁶¹ of Italian cities led to an escalating spiral of violence, where the population took revenge on the mercenaries whenever they had the opportunity. Mercenaries could easily meet their destiny in these raids on numerous occasions when they already felt safe on the way home. Konrad von Landau's substantial mercenary company was annihilated by the impoverished peasants who had set up a trap in a valley through which the road led from Biforco to Belforte. The peasants

58 *Rappoltsteinisches Urkundenbuch*, n. 246, p. 205.

59 BUC, Philippe - *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror. Christianity, Violence and The West. ca. 70 C.E. to the Iraq War.* p.183.

60 BECKER, Marvin B. - "Changing Patterns of Violence and Justice in Fourteenth-and Fifteenth-Century Florence" p. 289.

61 The region surrounding the Italian cities.

stoned down the mercenaries⁶², and this resulted in the death of several hundred German and Hungarian mercenaries⁶³.

2.1. *Enguerrand VII, Sire of Coucy and the Bear of Bern*

After the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War, the threat of mercenaries was well known in the eastern provinces of the Holy Roman Empire, which were close to the French kingdom. A number of defensive alliances were formed following the Peace of Brétigny⁶⁴ (8 May 1360) to counter the threat of the unemployed mercenaries.⁶⁵ Finally, in 1365, Alsace and the border regions saw the power of the mercenary companies led by Arnaud de Cervole on a crusade to drive the Ottomans out of Europe. They had to cross the Holy Roman Empire and Hungary to reach the Balkans. The crusade led by Arnaud de Cervole exhausted Alsace and served as an example to the population of the Holy Roman Empire of what mercenaries were capable of. So when they returned 10 years later under the leadership of a French nobleman who was also the Earl of Bedford, Enguerrand VII, the last lord of Coucy, the population of the Swiss cantons left nothing to chance. Enguerrand entered to the Holy Roman Empire to reclaim his heritage which laid in the Swiss cantons. The scorched earth tactics that the defender, Albert of Austria, applied, coupled with the winter campaign meant unbearable hardships for the routiers. Adding the three battles of Christmas of 1375, in which they had suffered considerable losses, was more than enough for those 25 captains who managed to survive the campaign to protest loudly against staying among the "savage Germans". Enguerrand protested in vain, the captains decided to return to France. During Christmas 1375, the peasants and citizens of the Swiss cantons and the city of Bern killed several hundreds of soldiers of the

62 VILLANI, Giovanni, Matteo e Filippo - *Croniche*. Libro Ottavo, Capitolo LXXIV p. 269. CIUCCIOVINO, Carlo - *La Cronaca del Trecento Italiano*. p. 338.

63 RÁZSÓ, Gyula - "A zsoldosintézmény kezdetei Magyarországon". pp. 107-43.

64 The peace ended the first phase of the Hundred Years' War. This was the period of total dominance of English arms on French battlefields.

65 After the Franco-British peace, many mercenaries lost their certain livelihood. Under the treaty, many garrisons were abolished, and the soldiers who had been paid there did not receive their pay from either the French or the English king. As a result, the captains at the head of the companies had to look for other sources of subsistence. The solutions were private wars, new theatres of wars such as Italy and the plunder.

invading army in three battles at Buttisholz, Ins and Fraubrunnen⁶⁶. In all these three battles the mercenaries were taken by surprise by the local army. In the monastery of Fraubrunnen, Owain Lawgoch's troops⁶⁷ were surprised by the army of Bern while they were sleeping.⁶⁸ Eight hundred mercenaries were either massacred, or burnt in the monastery, Owain could barely escape by leaving everything behind. To commemorate the victory a monument was erected in Fraubrunnen and a ballade was written, called the Bear Song (the bear is the emblem of the city of Bern):

“Duke Owen of Wales came to Fraubrunnen. The Bear roared You cannot escape me. I shall slay you and stab you and burn you to the death’. In England and in France the widows all cried together ‘Alas! Alas! against Bern no one will march again’”⁶⁹.

News about the retreating companies of Enguerrand VII of Coucy caused concerns and urged preparations at the same time, and not without reason. The mercenaries were not spared by the locals whenever the occasion occurred: When the English arrived in Guebwiller, they felt safe and did not expect an attack. The villagers - men and women - of the neighbouring settlements gathered and armed themselves ready for battle. In Dietler's account of the events, it was the brave women who began the attack against the mercenaries. The men followed them and surprised the companies so much that the peasants massacred the English on the spot, the routiers “did not know who the friend and who the enemy was. They killed many of their own and later they escaped”⁷⁰.

2.2. Wrong Decisions in the Border Region of the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of France

It is clear from the above examples that companies were an indispensable part of warfare at the time; and some captains managed to in-

66 At Buttisholz (24-25 December 1375), at Ins (25-26 December 1375) and at Fraubrunnen (26-27 December 1375)

67 Owain Lawgoch was the greatest Welsh conttoriere in the 14th century. see A. D. Carr, *Welshmen and the Hundred Years War*.

68 The Welsh captain was one of the leaders of the campaign in the service of the Lord of Coucy in his search for his heritage.

69 JUSTINGERS, Konrad - *Berner- Chronik*, p. 192.

70 DIETLER, Seraphin - *Die Gebweiler Chronik*, p. 38-39.

tegrate, to some degree, into the local aristocracy, and some even came from it; and those who did not, could still expect regular commissions from the towns of the region and from lords waging private wars. However, it was enough for the captains and lieutenants of the companies to make a single mistake or to make a wrong decision that would cost them their lives. Jean de Neufchatel made this mistake when, as a loyal ally of King Charles the Bad, King of Navarre, he attacked the town of Pontailleur-sur-Saône in the duchy of Burgundy on 21 March 1365⁷¹. Having misjudged the situation, he thought that the attack would take Burgundy by surprise, as the princely troops were busy elsewhere. But troops were no longer needed as the Burgundian lords, with their quick reflexes to danger, quickly captured the careless Neufchatel. They threw Neufchatel into the prison of Semur where he died five years later⁷². Another captain, Perrin d'Athier, also made a bad decision, similarly to Neufchatel, when he thought he could take the town of Semur by deception, but he was exposed, interrogated⁷³ and then executed with his companions in 1362⁷⁴. Guiot de Pin emerged as one of the most renowned captains of the 1360s, serving under Seguin de Badefol during that period. However, he fell into a trap and was subsequently captured by Renaut de Monbelot and taken to Châlon. Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy and brother of Charles V, offered Renaut de Monbelot 200 florins of Florence as payment for the capture of Guiot de Pin⁷⁵. Guiot de Pin met his end through decapitation and subsequent quartering, with his severed head prominently displayed above the city gate. His remains were later retrieved by comrades and delivered to Seguin de Badefol in Anse. However, Guiot de Pin was not the only victim under Badefol's command. During another unfortunate raid, Louis Roubaud, an associate of Guiot de Pin, suffered a similar fate, being lynched at Graix, southeast of Saint-Etienne. Thus, six of the seven lieutenants of Seguin de Badefol lost their lives during the 10 months when the Margot occupied the town of Anse. Almost at the same time, in October 1364⁷⁶ another captain, Gille Trou-

71 Dijon, ADCO, B. 1417 f. 36v

72 CHÉREST, Aimé - *L' Archiprêtre: épisodes de la guerre de cent ans au XIVe siècle*. p. 298.

73 Dijon, ADCO B. 2749 fol. 9v

74 Dijon, ADCO, 1. fol. 365. *Compte de Baillage de Auxois* B. 2749 fol. 4r

75 Mandement du duc de Bourgogne, Philippe le Hardi, relatif à prise de Guiot du Pin, 22 Octobre 1364, Dijon, ADCO B. 359, CHÉREST, Aimé - *L' Archiprêtre: épisodes de la guerre de cent ans au XIVe siècle*. Pièce justificative XIX, p. 402.

76 CHÉREST, Aimé - *L' Archiprêtre: épisodes de la guerre de cent ans au XIVe siècle*. p. 286.

sevache, followed in the footsteps of Guiot de Pin, after Philip the Bold bought him from the castle of Arcy-sur-Cure⁷⁷, south of Auxerre, occupied by Guiot. A nobleman from Avalon, Guillaume de Rally, captured Gille Trousevache and received 160 florins from Florence, 40 less than for Guiot de Pin's head⁷⁸.

Mercenary captains in the borderlands of the Holy Roman Empire and in the Kingdom of France were relatively safe as long as they stayed within the accepted rules of warfare of the time: that is, if they were under contract with someone else. If this was not the case, they could seize a castle or settlement on their own and raid the surrounding area, or receive patis in the region, relying on the strength of their own troops as they could not rely on any external protection. If the landlords and surrounding settlements were strong enough to oppose the company, then parties that were otherwise hostile to each other, even at war with each other, would often temporarily ally themselves against the company. It was the truce between Charles V and Charles the Bad in Burgundy that caused the fate of the two brothers, Jean and Thibeaute Chaffour who occupied the fortified town of Dampierre-sur-Salon and terrorised the two Burgundies from there. The Chaffour brothers were independent captains who, taking advantage of the feud between the County and the Duchy of Burgundy, thought the time was right to act. But such was the damage done to both the county and the duchy that the warring parties even suspended hostilities to end the Chaffour brothers' adventure. The town was besieged by the united troops of Somberton and the Count of Montbéliard, leaders of the ducal and countal armies. The siege lasted eight days⁷⁹ and when Jehan de Chaffour realised that there was no chance of resistance, he tried to escape with his young son by disguising himself as a simple routier. Nevertheless, the ducal troops caught them. In exchange for his life he offered to return the town to them. However, in August 1364 Somberton had him beheaded in Langres⁸⁰. The sources do not mention his brother, but he probably did not escape his fate either⁸¹. The mistake they made was that they did not commit themselves to any side: as independent captains, they plundered everyone, drawing

77 FOWLER, Kenneth - *Medieval Mercenaries: The Great Companies*.. p. 104.

78 Dijon, ADCO Compte de Baillage de Auxois 1. fol. 365 46v, B. 2751. fol. 9v

79 Dijon, ADCO B. 1416 fol. 58v

80 CHÉREST, Aimé - *L' Archiprêtre: épisodes de la guerre de cent ans au XIVe siècle*. p. 275.

81 FOWLER, Kenneth - *Medieval Mercenaries: The Great Companies*.. p. 285.

the wrath of the nobility of Franche-Comté and the Duchy of Burgundy upon them. Their history shows the limits of the integration of mercenary captains: had they participated in a just war, since they were rich, they would have had the chance to save themselves.

The hatred of the population sometimes overrode a royal pardon when a mercenary was forgiven and when he returned to society, leaving the companies behind. In this case, it proved to be a bad decision not to assess the risk of returning to the scene of his previous acts of violence. Jean Doublet is a perfect case of those among the routiers who made a conscious effort to reintegrate into society by leaving behind the life of a mercenary, and for this purpose they were prepared to make financial sacrifices. Doublet was a member of the companies, under the leadership of Petit Meschin and Seguin de Badefol, which completely destroyed the royal army at Brignais on 6 April 1362. During the battle he had the chance to capture Gérard de Toury, marshal of Burgundy, whom he let go without ransom, to gain forgiveness for his earlier crimes; which he dully received from King John II. Finally, he was unlucky, because when he arrived in Lyon with a royal officer and five of his companions a year later, on 13 March 1363, the inhabitants recognised him, and he was captured. The chapter of Lyon condemned him along with his companions so “they were all hanged or drowned”.

3. And When Revered Mercenaries Were Respected in their Death

So far, the encounter of mercenaries and the local population with death has been presented in the context of coexistence, dealing with its many violent forms in a fundamentally hostile environment. There are, however, several examples from the second half of the 14th century of mercenaries, integrated into local society, who lived the last years of their lives under relatively peaceful conditions and remained respected members of the community after their death. Thanks to Stephen Selzer's research on the presence of German mercenaries in Trecento Italy, modern historiography does have such records.⁸² William Caferro's studies of German and Hungarian mercenaries in Florence, and my own research have shown the long-term service of Hungarian mercenaries, in some

82 SELZER, Stephan- *Deutsche Söldner im Italien des Trecento*. pp. 170-180.

cases for several years in succession.⁸³ Mercenaries who had served an Italian city-state faithfully for more than a decade would settle down, raise a family and stay in that city until their death⁸⁴. These mercenaries usually had a higher social standing: they were often knights and sometimes banneret knights. A document dated 13 January 1348, gives an account of a certain Isfart Buch, son of the knight Gerhard Buch from the diocese of Cologne, living in the cathedral parish (Sta. Maria Maggiore) of Pisa, who had married the noble lady Tedda, daughter of Cimeo of Settimo near Pisa. At that time, both were already quite old, about 60 years old⁸⁵. It is enough to mention more examples of the several German knights who settled down in Italian cities: In 1377, Johann Konrad, the young Duke of Teck, came to Ferrara with 133 German knights and married Viridis the daughter of Margrave Aldobrandini. Ten years later, he fell in a battle near the city and was buried in Ferrara⁸⁶. Konrad von Prasberg, who appeared in Lucca in 1393 as a mercenary, won the hand of the 14 year-old Katharina, daughter of the famous English condottiere John Hawkwood⁸⁷. When these German noble mercenaries died in battle in the service of their chosen Italian cities, they were venerated and buried with respect in the local churches. In the cathedral of Lucca, there is the full armoured marble statue of Johannes Vinkher von Ercheimb who died in the battle of August in 1359⁸⁸. He was a banneret lord in the service of Lucca who fought in Italy for the middle of the 1350s.

The relationship between non-combatant members of society and mercenaries was primarily hostile in France as well, but it is clear from the examples presented in the study that mercenaries did not exist outside society. In Brioud, mercenaries were required to surrender their weapons to the town guards and were then allowed to enter the town freely. In 1364, Louis Robaut was sent to Brioud by Seguin de Badefol to collect the money owed by the town, which was a leftover from the previous year. The mercenary also had the opportunity to visit his mistress.⁸⁹ On 10 February 1371, John, Duke of Berry, in a letter to the con-

83 CAFERRO, William - *The Florentine Army in the Age of the Companies of Adventure*. pp. 138-139. ÖLBEI, Tamás - *Hungarian Mercenaries*. pp. 229-230.

84 MUSI, Carla Corradi - *L'eco dell'Ungheria di Luigi nell'Italia Settentrionale*. p. 27.

85 SCHÄFER, Karl Heinrich - *Deutsche Ritter und Edelknechte in Italien*. p. 162.

86 SCHÄFER, Karl Heinrich - *Deutsche Ritter und Edelknechte in Italien*. p. 48.

87 SCHÄFER, Karl Heinrich - *Deutsche Ritter und Edelknechte in Italien*. p. 47.

88 SCHÄFER, Karl Heinrich - *Deutsche Ritter und Edelknechte in Italien*. p. 42.

89 SAVY, Nicolas - *Bertucat d'Albret* p. 149.

suls of Montferrand (Puy-le-Dôme), instructs the leaders of the town that the mercenaries of Bertrand du Guesclin be admitted to the town of Clermont only in small groups of 10-12 men.⁹⁰ On the same day, in another letter, John, Duke of Berry, instructs the consuls of Saint-Flour to allow Bertrand du Guesclin and his entourage of 8-10 men to enter the city.⁹¹ In the same way, we have seen the practices of different cities in Italy with regard to mercenaries living in their city, where German mercenaries went even further in terms of social integration. In Sant' Antonio, Vicenza, Pisa, they donated large sums to hospitals and churches.⁹²

The limits of integration and coexistence are shown in an unpublished 4,000-word source in the Lille archives, which tells us that two Bretons arrived in Nevers at the same time, one of them was the lieutenant of the captain of l'Arche, the other the connétable of the Flory garrison. The two Bretons arrived in the town accompanied by two noblewomen, Nicole de Lignes and Madame de la Marche, who had welcomed the mercenaries, who held relatively high positions in the company hierarchy, so that they could move around the region in complete safety. They were paid a lot for this, 240 francs in total. The two Bretons were allowed to enter the town on condition that they left the next morning, but they stayed on despite their promise, causing some confusion, with residents claiming that they were behaving suspiciously as they roamed the town. While the Bretons were in the town, their companions left the Château d'Arche for a chevauchée and captured men, goods and livestock in the area around Nevers. Then, led by the prévôt / marshal, the inhabitants went to the house of Madame de la Marche, where the two routiers stayed, and, despite the vehement protests of the noblewoman, caught the Bretons and imprisoned them. Madame de La Marche later wrote numerous letters of protest to the governor about the captured mercenaries, but without success. The inhabitants, recognising the two Bretons, drew up a long list of the crimes they had committed including murder and looting.⁹³ Naturally, the garrison of the two castles could not let this pass without warning and they shouted to the town of Nevers that *"they would fight the country harder than they had done."*⁹⁴ because they feared that the two officers would be executed.

90 JONES, Michael - Letters, Orders and Musters of Bertand du Guesclin. n. 384. p. 144.

91 JONES, Michael - Letters, Orders and Musters of Bertand du Guesclin. n. 385. p. 145.

92 SELZER, Stephan- *Deutsche Söldner im Italien des Trecento*. p. 176.

93 Lille, Archives départementales du Nord, B.757 n. 8060.

94 Lille, Archives départementales du Nord, B.757 n. 8060.

4. Avoiding Death

In the mid-14th century, the local population had to learn survival techniques to avoid being killed by mercenaries. Naturally, the odds of survival varied significantly. Those with more money and higher social status had better chances of surviving encounters with mercenaries. As Philippe Contamine has noted, the primary objective of mercenaries was to acquire wealth and become rich⁹⁵. However, avoiding death was crucial not only for the local population but also for the mercenaries themselves, as they too faced numerous threats to their lives. The survival techniques employed by both groups, along with the unpredictable agents of fate that could dramatically alter individual destinies like a *deus ex machina*, are described below.

4.1. Travelling Safely

The practice of travel was a significant aspect of coexistence, as the local population had a refuge in fortified towns and castles when mercenaries were permanently present in the area. The roads of the 14th century were not uninhabited; a considerable number of people used them for a multitude of reasons⁹⁶. During the mid-14th century, the notion of travelling safely was more of an illusion than a reality. Despite the numerous perils that confronted them, some travelers were undaunted, traversing hundreds of kilometers through territories under the control of mercenaries to reach their destinations and, subsequently, some of them recounted their experiences in letters or poems. It can be argued that they were the fortunate ones. In particular, two Italian poets provided accounts that were both authentic and detailed: Petrarch, who crossed the border of France and the Holy Roman Empire shortly after King Edward III's campaign and observed the devastation caused by the English army, and Fazio degli Uberti, who had travelled from Normandy to Paris a few years earlier. The two accounts are strikingly similar, with both describing the devastation of abandoned and burnt down towns: "I saw the land burnt and devastated"⁹⁷ writes Fazio degli Uberti in *Il Dittamondo*, while Petrarch paints a similar picture of the border region: "Everywhere you turn, there is loneliness, mourning, ruin: the

95 CONTAMINE, Philippe - Les compagnies d'aventure en France. p. 367.

96 TOUREILLE, Valérie - *Crime et Châtiment* (location) 2229.

97 UBERTI, Fazio degli - *Il Dittamondo*, ed, Vincenzo Monti, Milano, 1826, p. 330.

fields are horrible, the houses are abandoned and deserted, without the protection of fortress walls or city gates: in every place, the fateful imprint of the enemy's foot."⁹⁸ It is of particular interest to note that Fazio degli Uberti traversed a region that had been devastated for decades, while Petrarch's description of the frontier was written in 1360, at a time when the companies had only been present for three years.

To avoid death when living close to mercenaries, one had to be fortunate or prudent. It was of the utmost importance for the traveler to have access to accurate and up-to-date information about the region he was passing through. On 24 August 1364, for example, the bailiff of Dijon informed Philip, Duke of Burgundy, which roads were safe for the duke to use and which to avoid because of the mercenaries on the payroll of the Navarrese king occupying La Charité⁹⁹. Envoys from Avignon who were travelling to the frontier were informed in advance of the whereabouts of company members, if such information was available. In 1362, the envoy Henri de Tonges spent eight days in a fortified village in the Comtat Venaissin, as a result of having been informed in advance of the arrival of bands of soldiers¹⁰⁰. Sometimes the situation in the countryside was so precarious that it was best not to travel. Simon Christophe, captain of the Château de Champagne in Burgundy, did not dare leave Troyes because of the situation around Villaines-les-Prévôtes in 1364.¹⁰¹

As a result, alternative solutions had to be devised for those wishing to traverse the territory. Some believed that by paying a mercenary captain for safe conduct, they could cross the territory under the control of the mercenaries in complete safety. Following the occupation of Anse by Seguin de Badefol in 1364, on behalf of Charles II, king of Navarre, a safe-conduct was issued. This was to be obtained for a fee. In 1365, a safe conduct was granted to "Maistres Richert, Doien de Besantzon, and Estienne de Sauzet". The document delineates the precise circumstances under which they could have traversed the territory under Margot's control¹⁰². In this instance, the number of horses permitted is limited to a maximum of twenty, with a further five individuals permitted to trav-

98 FRANCESCO PETRARCA - *Lettere*, ed, Giuseppe Francassetti t. 4, Firenze, 1866, Lettera XIV. Al Medesimo, pp. 478-479.

99 Dijon, ADCO B. 1417. 40r

100 HAYEZ, Anne-Marie - *Les courriers des papes d'Avignon sous Innocent VI et Urbain V* p. 55.

101 PETIT, Ernest - *Ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois*, p. 154.

102 The name of Seguin de Badefol's great company

el on foot. Once the border has been crossed, it is specified that they may proceed in either direction, either to the Kingdom of France or the Holy Roman Empire. Seguin de Badefol instructs the members of the Margot that the bearer of the pass and his escort are not to be impeded until the expiration of the duration of the pass¹⁰³.

4.2. *Divine or Royal Interventions*

It was possible for the soldiers of fortune to avoid death, namely if there was any kind of royal interest or even thanks to a divine intervention. On one occasion, the royal pardon resulted in the commutation of severe penalties, which in turn led to the inception of a mercenary expedition. Johan de Eslava was sentenced to 50 pounds and was informed that he might lose his wrist for brandishing a knife against two men of Olite. However, Charles II, king of Navarre, reduced his penalty for services rendered in France¹⁰⁴.

In April 1361, the companies, led by Seguin de Badefol, the most effective commander of the time, Petit Mechin, and thousands of troops, devastated south-eastern France, threatening Pope himself at Avignon. Innocent VI found himself, along with the entire Sacred College, effectively besieged by these mercenaries. Seguin de Badefol, leading a company called “Margot,” specifically targeted the seneschal jurisdictions of Beaucaire and Nîmes.¹⁰⁵ A few years after the events, in February 1365, Guillaume Sauvent, a member of Petit Meschin’s company, appealed to Charles V for pardon for crimes he committed in Beaujolais, Lyonnais, and Pont-Saint-Esprit in 1361. His crimes are not specified but they must have been serious enough for him to feel his life was in danger when he returned home and settled down after seven years of service with Petit Meschin’s company.¹⁰⁶ He was able to lead a respectable life on the money he had collected during his life, as the letter of remission shows, but it says a lot about the way mercenaries were treated in France that when the locals were aware of a settled mercenary’s past, the hatred for mer-

103 DESCROIX, Bernard - *Seguin de Badefol*, p. 53.

104 Pamplona, ARGN Reg. 119, fol. 346v

105 GUIGUE, Georges - *Récits de la guerre de cent ans. Les tard-venus en Lyonnais, Forez et Beaulolais, 1359-1369*. p. 56.

106 Remissio facta Guillelmo Sauvent, February 1365. GUIGUE, Georges - *Récits de la guerre de cent ans. Les tard-venus en Lyonnais, Forez et Beaulolais, 1359-1369*. Piece justificatives XXXIII, p. 281-282.

cenaries was such that they had to answer for their crimes even if they had not been committed in their immediate environment but in other parts of the Kingdom of France. For this reason, Guillaume Sauvent could only live in peace with a royal pardon in his pocket.

In 1388, during the ostension of Saint Martial's head at the Abbey of Saint-Martial in Limoges, one of the two penitentiaries, a monk of the abbey, documented the accounts of all who experienced a miracle through the saint's intercession between May 8 and June 14. This was done in hopes of restoring the Church's unity (as it was the time of the Great Schism) and promoting peace between France and England. Although the original record has been lost, a contemporary copy is preserved in the municipal archives of Nîmes. The monk from the abbey, meticulously documented the testimonies of all those who had experienced miraculous interventions through the saint's intercession during the period of the ostentation, spanning from 8 May to 14 June. A total of 73 miracles were documented, with the majority of cases involving individuals from Limoges and the surrounding diocese. The names and geographical origins of these individuals are often provided¹⁰⁷.

Among the miracles attributed to Saint Martial are instances where the saint is said to have saved the lives of English mercenaries. A knight who had participated in a chevauchée fell into the Dordogne River due to a broken girth that held his saddle in place. He was on the verge of drowning, but his final prayer to Saint Martial spared his life. He swore that he would never again attack another fellow Christian. He was miraculously saved along with his horse¹⁰⁸. Another Englishman was apprehended by the garrison of Saint-Jean-de-Côle and subsequently sentenced to death by hanging. Upon being placed under the noose, the condemned man began to sob and implored Saint Martial to intercede on his behalf and save his soul. He pledged that should he be pardoned, he would walk barefoot with a considerable quantity of wax to venerate Saint Martial's head. Upon the completion of the vow, he was immediately released and proceeded to Saint Martial's shrine, where he offered his gratitude and fulfilled his promise¹⁰⁹.

107 LEMAITRE, Jean-Loup - *Miracles de guerre, miracles de paix en Limousin d'après les miracles de saint Martial* (1388). p. 64.

108 LEMAITRE, Jean-Loup - *Miracles de guerre, miracles de paix en Limousin d'après les miracles de saint Martial* (1388). p. 71.

109 LEMAITRE, Jean-Loup - *Miracles de guerre, miracles de paix en Limousin d'après les miracles de saint Martial* (1388). p. 71.

4.3. Ransom and Patis

Clifford R. Rogers states about the mercenaries that in border areas, where chevauchées were constant, terrorizing the enemy and destroying the territory was one of the most reliable sources of income for mercenaries, along with taking prisoners and then ransoming them.¹¹⁰ Indeed, those captured by mercenaries had no a priori choice but to pay the ransom in order to survive. Juan González of Villodro serves as a notable example. After paying his ransom following his capture at the Battle of Najera, he was released. This allowed him to fulfill the oath he had made while imprisoned by the English: to donate substantial properties in Villodro to the Cathedral of Burgos.¹¹¹ Amadeus VI, the Green Count of Savoy, hosted a party for his friends¹¹² while awaiting the arrival of his army to engage in combat with Robin du Pin and his company¹¹³. He felt completely secure in Lanzo, which lacked any defensive walls, except for those surrounding the castle¹¹⁴. The companies surprised the young count and his followers. He was compelled to pay a substantial ransom of 180,000 florins. But it was not enough. His captured entourage also had to pay a ransom, which the members of the count's escort held him accountable after their release.¹¹⁵

Alternatively, the survivors of the Battle of Brignais were ransomed and compensated for their losses. This is evidenced by the receipt of the tax-collector Henry de Lorny, the Sire of Raon, who received 5,500 Florentine florins from the Count of Tancarville, the lieutenant of the King in Burgundy. This was to compensate a number of knights, mercenary captains and their troops who served in the royal army at that battle for their loss and damage and for the ransom they had to pay¹¹⁶. Nevertheless, all the cruelty practiced by the mercenaries was not without objectives, it served the specific purpose of the ancient tool of the invading armies: deterrence. To convince the locals that it was in their own

110 ROGERS, Clifford R. - *By Fire and Sword: Bellum Hostile and 'Civilians' in the Hundred Years War*. p. 59.

111 Burgos, AHCB V-37. f. 50. 6 September 1373

112 SERVION, Jehan - *Geste et croniques de la Mayson de Savoye*. p. 119.

113 ¹¹¹ COX, Eugene L. - *The Green Count of Savoy, Amadeus VI and Transalpine Savoy in the Fourteenth-Century*. p. 158.

114 Dijon, ADCO B. 1412. fol. 40r

115 Torino, ASCT Gonans prt. 23 fol. 42v

116 Dijon, ADCO B. 11735, Receipt of Henry de Lorny, seigneur de Raon, 26 juin 1363.

profound interest to pay the ‘patis,’ the special tax of the mercenaries¹¹⁷. In the beginning of 1362, Gascon, Breton, Flemish, English and Spanish companies devastated the province of Languedoc led by the most redoubtable captains: Hogre, Brisbarre, Trousevache, Tallecol. By killing and mutilating men and children, by raping women what they really wanted to achieve was that the people pay the patis¹¹⁸. A year later, Jean Aimeric, another mercenary captain took the castles of Bruniquel¹¹⁹, Arnac¹²⁰ and Lexos and attacked Milhars¹²¹, menacing the city of Saint Antonin, located between 12 to 15 kilometers away from those places. The town had no choice but to pay handsomely to Jean Aimeric. Records show not less than eleven different payments related to Aimeric’s company in the consular accounts of Saint Antonin, between 2 February and 25 March 1363¹²².

In his 1360 campaign, Edward III ensured the provision of sufficient supplies for his army and proceeded towards Nevers. Upon arriving in Nivernois, it was not Edward himself who was engaged in the plundering of the county of Nevers and the barony of Donzy, but rather two of his captains, John Wynn, the Pursuant of Love, and Garciot Chastel. These two captains demanded ransom from the inhabitants of the aforementioned counties. The way John Wynn was able to extort 7,000 florins from the nobles and cities of Florence is a typical example of the patis. He initially occupied the town of Clemency¹²³ without much difficulty and then entered into negotiations with the towns and the nobility of the surrounding area, while Garciot Chastel received 5,000 florins for the castles he had occupied in the region. This was a relatively modest sum, given the number of castles he had taken, and was made possible by the contribution of Jean d’Armagnac, the son of the renowned count, who

117 In order to avoid regular looting and other related atrocities, the settlements in the areas occupied by the companies paid the tribute of patis or appatis. The agreement was even put in paper.

118 DONAT, Jean, *Histoire de Saint-Antonin*, p. 85.

119 Montauban, ADTG Bib art 72 Comptes Consulaires de Saint-Antonin 1362-1363 fol. 19r, LATOUCHE, Robert - *Comptes Consulaires de Saint-Antonin du XIV^{me} siècle*, p. 51.

120 Montauban, ADTG Bib art 72 Comptes Consulaires de Saint-Antonin 1362-1363 fol. 19r, LATOUCHE, Robert - *Comptes Consulaires de Saint-Antonin du XIV^{me} siècle*, p. 51.

121 DONAT Jean - *Histoire de Saint-Antonin*, p. 86.

122 Montauban, ADTG Bib art 72 Comptes Consulaires de Saint-Antonin 1362-1363 fols.18r- 22r, LATOUCHE, Robert - *Comptes Consulaires de Saint-Antonin du XIV^{me} siècle*, pp. 50-55.

123 Chèrest: 87., M. Luce *Histoire du Guesclin*, t.I. p. 490.

was residing at his mother's castle in Burgundy. Garciot Chastel originated from Gascony, where the Armagnac family enjoyed a considerable reputation. Furthermore, Jean d'Armagnac advanced 2,000 florins to Garciot Chastel's company on behalf of local nobles. The transaction was, of course, the subject of a contract, in which the signatories undertook to settle their debts to Jean d'Armagnac within a certain period of time. However, this did not happen. Hence Johannes Maurelli, provost of the Holy Cross chapel of Liège, to send a letter on 4 March 1361 to the nobles. In the letter, he threatened them that if they did not settle their debts within 30 days, they would be excommunicated¹²⁴.

Consequently, if a captain was perceived as having a bad reputation among the local population, it was enough for him to announce his intention to reside in a particular region, at which point the towns and villages would offer him voluntary hospitality. Another celebrated captain of the period was Bertucat d'Albret, a member of one of the most prominent families in Gascony. He was renowned for his exploits, and when, in the middle of May 1358, he traversed the Dordogne Valley, occupying the castle of Floriac on the left riverbank, he extended an invitation to the representatives of the settlements of the Dordogne Valley, offering them the opportunity to purchase peace with the patis¹²⁵. In the wake of numerous deaths and acts of cruelty, the local population, comprising both nobles and peasants, were acutely aware that failure to pay the patis would result in the complete destruction of their land¹²⁶.

5. Salvation and the Afterlife of the Mercenaries

As has been shown, death was an integral part of the mercenaries' every day. However, what was their relation to the afterlife? Whether they sought peace of their consciousness, or they really "did not fear to risk the perdition of their souls"?¹²⁷ The answer is not easy to find. As Pope Urban V wrote in the Clamat as Nos bull: "fortresses, and properties of churches monasteries, other pious places...were the prey of their heinous assaults"¹²⁸. In fact religious places were one of the mercenaries' favourite targets, and they often

124 Dijon, ADCO B. 11875.

125 SAVY, Nicolas - *Bertucat d'Albret: ou le destin d'un capitaine gascon du Roi d'Angleterre pendant la guerre de Cent Ans*. Location: 978.

126 Lille, ADN B. 757. n. 8060.

127 Clamat ad Nos bull of Urbain V, RINALDI, Odorico - *Annales Ecclesiastici*, p. 446.

128 Clamat ad Nos bull of Urbain V, RINALDI, Odorico - *Annales Ecclesiastici*, p. 466.

captured and ransomed priests. One of their many victims was Bouchard, the priest of Molème who had to follow the company from garrison to garrison, he had to write letters to the captains, and he even accompanied them in chevauchées. When the time came for his release, the English put him in jail without food and water and demanded 50 florins from him. Finally, he was released without safe conduct¹²⁹.

Most crimes Barjat carried out were punishable by death: pillage, theft especially in sacred places, churches, monasteries were regarded as sacrilege¹³⁰. In the same way, the pleas of the members of the church did not move the mercenaries much. The routiers did not care when a priest asked for mercy in the name of the Lord. When the English companies besieged the castle of Cortijo in 1382, the defenders killed an English squire and another Portuguese squire. When they saw that they could not defend the castle anymore, then “Then the priests climbed to the top of the wall and showed the body of Christ and begged them to leave for the love of the Lord, but the English did not care...”¹³¹.

Nevertheless, their relation to religion was not characterized by mere ignorance or lack of faith: one of Bouchard’s tasks during his captivity was preaching to the company. John Hawkwood, who was a ruthless man, asked and received permission from the pope to have a portable shrine to conduct mass while on a campaign¹³². In 1387, Sir Hugh Calveley received a to found and endow a college at Bunbury with a master or warden, a sub-warden, two chaplains, two chanters and two choristers to say daily prayers for his soul, and he devoted a good deal of money to rebuild his parish church¹³³. In 1385, Sir Robert Knolles, ‘citizen of London’, and his wife Constance founded a college or chantry in honour of the Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary in Pontefract, which he acquired from Thomas Sherwind¹³⁴. When Geoffroi Tête Noir was fatally wounded by a crossbow stroke at the siege of Ventadour, he gave 1500 francs to the church and the chapel of Saint Georges in the castle of Ventadour¹³⁵. Stephen Selzer’s research revealed that German merce-

129 PETIT Ernest - *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne, La Race Capétienne*. pp. 173-174.

130 TOUREILLE, Valérie - *Vol et brigandage au Moyen Âge*. location 662.

131 LOPES, Fernão - *Crónica de D. Fernando*. Chapter CXLIX, p. 521.

132 CAFERRO, William - *John Hawkwood : An English Mercenary in Fourteenth-Century Italy*. p.18.

133 BOSTOCK, Tony - *Dogs of War: Sir Hugh Calveley & Sir Robert Knolles*. p. 135.

134 BOSTOCK, Tony - *Dogs of War: Sir Hugh Calveley & Sir Robert Knolles*. p. 136.

135 FUNK-BRENTANO, Franz - *Les Brigands*. p. 37.

naries, who were buried with respect in the local cathedral after their deaths, had on various occasions spent considerable sums of money to honor their memory in prayers¹³⁶. For example, in Lucca in 1359, a German mercenary benefactor, Gerhard Chasinchel de Alamania, painted a picture of the Virgin Mary with a child in her arms. The painting was valued by local experts at 22 Florentine florins. The German banneret knight spent a month's salary on the painting¹³⁷. In Vicenza, another banneret knight, Albert Bilant, had repeatedly given a large amount to the church and hospital of San Antonio. The inscriptions on the entrance of the hospital and church commemorate this. After his death in 1378, he and his wife were buried in the church¹³⁸.

Malatesta Guastafamiglia, Lord of Rimini, referred to by Matteo Villani as "*cavaliere di grande e maestro di guerra*"¹³⁹ was one of the famous and notorious condottieri of Trecento Italy. The Guastafamiglia - Family Destroyer - earned his nickname with "his sinister family etiquette"¹⁴⁰ by inviting his family members and then killing them on the spot, thereby achieving supremacy over his own bloodline¹⁴¹. After decades of intrigue and war for power, on his deathbed he repented of all his sins and deceit and did everything he could to save his soul.¹⁴² Following his confessor's instructions, he compensated the families of his former victims, weeping loudly for them. On one of the days immediately preceding his death, 11 August 1364, he summoned 50 noble citizens of Rimini and begged their forgiveness. He then made his children swear to carry out his will and blessed them¹⁴³. On August 17, three days before his death, he released his enemies who were imprisoned in the towns of Armino, Pesaro, Fano, and Fossombrone¹⁴⁴. Finally, on August 20, 1364, he distributed grain among the citizens of beautiful Rimini, and seven days later he died¹⁴⁵.

136 SELZER, Stephan - *Deutsche Söldner im Italien des Trecento*. p. 175.

137 SELZER, Stephan - *Deutsche Söldner im Italien des Trecento*. p. 176.

138 SELZER, Stephan - *Deutsche Söldner im Italien des Trecento*. p. 177.

139 VILLANI, Matteo - *Cronica*. Libro Decimo, Capitolo LIX. p. 75.

140 BAROLINI, Teodolinda - Dante and Francesca da Rimini: Realpolitik, Romance, Gender. p. 23.

141 BAROLINI, Teodolinda - Dante and Francesca da Rimini: Realpolitik, Romance, Gender. p. 23.

142 TONINI, Carlo - *Compendio della Storia di Rimini*. p. 400.

143 CIUCCIOVINO, Carlo - *La Cronaca del Trecento Italiano*. p. 599.

144 MASSÈRA, Aldo, Francesco ed. - *Cronache malatestiane dei secoli XIV e XV*. p. 28-29.

145 MASSÈRA, Aldo, Francesco ed. - *Cronache malatestiane dei secoli XIV e XV*. p. 28-29.

5.1. *Saint Patrik's Purgatory, Ireland*

However, this did not mark the end of the Malatesta condottieri's attempts to save their souls in the 14th century. Malatesta Guastafamiglia's son, Malatesta Ungaro, went even further than his father, undertaking long journeys and pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Ireland in order to save his soul. He received the nickname 'Ungaro' because King Louis I of Hungary knighted him¹⁴⁶ when he stopped in Rimini on his way to Naples¹⁴⁷. It is not known exactly when, but Malatesta Ungaro, together with Galeotto Malatesta and Pandolfo di Galeotto, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land¹⁴⁸. However, he was not satisfied with just that; Malatesta Ungaro needed more to obtain forgiveness for his sins. Therefore, on one of his trips to Avignon, he decided to go to Ireland in 1358 to delve into "St. Patrick's Purgatory"¹⁴⁹. The cave, which was visited by Malatesta Ungaro and other mercenaries in the 14th century to save their souls, is located in the southern tip of County Donegal, on one of 40 islands in the middle of a lake surrounded by mountains¹⁵⁰. According to legend, it was here that Jesus showed St. Patrick the cave where a sinful soul was willing to descend and spend a day and a night locked away from everyone, and was then completely cleansed of sin.¹⁵¹ The descent was not easy, as applicants had to undergo an entire ritual. Only with the permission of the local bishop was it possible to approach the cave, as many could not endure the trials and paid with their lives. Pilgrims were persuaded to choose another path to save their souls. If this failed and the pilgrim proved unshakeable, they had to spend 15 days praying in the church. Before descending into the cave, they attended Holy Mass and were anointed with holy water. They then accompanied him to the door sealing the cave, which the prior opened, reminding the pilgrim of the presence of demons and the many disappearances in the cave. The priests then blessed him, and the pilgrim entered the cave, making the sign of the cross. If the candidate survived the day spent in the cave, he returned and spent another 15 days in prayer¹⁵².

146 CSUKOVITS, Enikő- I. (Nagy) *Lajos Magyar király útja Nápolyba*. p. 1172. MASSÈRA, Aldo, Francesco ed. - *Cronache malatestiane dei secoli XIV e XV* p. 16.

147 JONES, P. J. - *The Malatesta of Rimini and The Papal States*. p. 70.

148 JONES, P. J. - *The Malatesta of Rimini and The Papal States*. p. 128. n. 4.

149 MASCANZONI, Leardo - "Il pellegrinaggio di Malatesta "Ungaro" al cosiddetto "Purgatorio di S. Patrizio" (Irlanda, a. 1358)." p. 249.

150 D. SEYMOUR, St. John - *St. Patrick's Purgatory. A Medieval Pilgrimage in Ireland*. p. 7.

151 MASCANZONI, Leardo - "Il pellegrinaggio di Malatesta "Ungaro" p. 243.

152 MASCANZONI, Leardo - "Il pellegrinaggio di Malatesta "Ungaro" p. 243.

Froissart recounts these events when, during his travels in England, he met an English nobleman, Sir William Lisle, who told him about his experiences during the day spent in the cave. Froissart traveled between Leeds and Eltham with William Lisle, who, according to Froissart, belonged to the king's privy chamber. During their conversation on the road, Froissart asked his traveling companion about William's visions. Warm steam filled the cave, and after they fell asleep, they had all kinds of visions, Froissart continues, "they entered into great imaginations, and marvellous dreams" but when they woke up in the morning, "they issued out and within short season clean forgot their dreams and visions, wherefore he said he thought all that matter was but fantasy"¹⁵³.

More accurate and detailed accounts remain of a Hungarian knight who served in Louis I's army during the Neapolitan campaigns. The strongly built Becsei Vesszős György belonged to the Hungarian Angevin elite,¹⁵⁴ was the *comes* of Bars County, and was a member of the royal guard. He took part in Louis's first Neapolitan campaign, where the king appointed him governor of occupied Apulia. By his own admission, he was responsible for the deaths of 250 innocent people.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, he was the one who, on the king's orders, beheaded Prince Charles of Durazzo on January 23, 1348.¹⁵⁶ He made several pilgrimages to atone for his crimes committed during the war. First, he sought absolution in Compostela, but when he still felt uneasy, he ended up in St. Patrick's purgatory.¹⁵⁷ His experiences in the cave were recorded in numerous medieval chronicles, which consisted of 29 chapters.¹⁵⁸ Based on the Prague manuscript, György's visions included 3,000 devils, 2,000 horsemen, a large city from which a very beautiful lady emerged, and then another city in which he saw a great fire with countless devils ap-

153 *The Chronicles of Froissart* p. 425.

154 "Georgius, iuvenis homo et robusus" TOLDY, Ferenc - "Egy XIV. századbeli magyar vezeklő Írlandban sz. patrik purgatóriumában. Adalékul a középkori erkölcstörténehez." p. 231. n. 2.

155 "Georgius in officio sibi commissio ultra modum persecutus et insecutus est partem adversam. In qua quidem persecucione tam ipse, quam per alios, multa dampna et innumerabiles videlicet depredaciones quam per alios, multa dampna et innumerabiles videlicet depredaciones quam plurimas, et homicidia adminus CC et L personarum iniuste et contra christianam iustitiam perpetravit." TOLDY, Ferenc - "Egy XIV. századbeli magyar vezeklő Írlandban sz. patrik purgatóriumában. Adalékul a középkori erkölcstörténehez." p. 232. n. 6.

156 *Chronicon Dubnicense* p.151.

157 LENGVÁRI, István - "Becses Vesszős György pokoljárása és különitélete" p. 67.

158 LENGVÁRI, István - "Becses Vesszős György pokoljárása és különitélete" p. 67.

pearing in the smoke. The devil tempted him several times, saying to György: “Jesus Christ, a wicked sinner, was deservedly crucified for His misdeeds by the Jews and Pilate. He did not rise for the dead, but for His evil works is plunged in hell, there to be crucified for ever.”¹⁵⁹ However, neither these words nor other temptations could deter Knight György, who, praying continuously to *Domine Jesu Christe*, ultimately escaped from hell, so that the flames that surrounded him left no trace on his clothes¹⁶⁰.

5.2. Excommunicated Mercenaries

There are countless examples from the mid-14th century similar to the deeds of Becsei Vesszős György in Appulia, which the Church could not ignore, if only because, as it was seen earlier, the Holy See itself was sometimes threatened by mercenaries in Avignon during the Hundred Years' War. One of the tools at the Church's disposal was excommunication, which the Church used to let the mercenaries know that they could not expect salvation. Evidence of this can be found in the papal bulls issued during this period concerning papal mercenaries. In the complex system of relationships that characterized the mercenaries' interaction with death, expressions used in papal bulls about mercenaries, such as *virī nefarii*¹⁶¹ or *iniquitatis filii*¹⁶² did not bode well for the salvation of their souls. Both the church and the companies used excommunication as a bargaining chip in their dealings with each other. In terms of consequences, the excommunications were, if not entirely ineffective, certainly did not stop mercenaries from enforcing their will.¹⁶³ Seguin de Badefol asked and obtained forgiveness from the pope twice. On both occasions, he made a special effort for lifting the excommunication¹⁶⁴.

159 D. SEYMOUR, St. John - *St. Patrick's Purgatory. A Medieval Pilgrimage in Ireland*. pp. 35-36.

160 D. SEYMOUR, St. John - *St. Patrick's Purgatory. A Medieval Pilgrimage in Ireland*. p. 31.

161 Ad reprimendas insolentias bull of Innocent VI. DENIFLE, Henri P. - “La désolution des église, monastères et Hopitaux en france pendant la guerre de Cent Ans”. p. 182.

162 Ad reprimendas insolentias bull of Innocent VI. DENIFLE, Henri P. - *La désolution des église*. p. 182.

163 DELACHENAL, Roland - *Histoire de Charles V (1364-1386)*, Vol. III p. 27.

164 Traité conclu par la médiation d'Arnaud Amanieu, seigneur d'Albret, entre les gouverneurs du duc de Berry et d'Auvergne, le comte de Boulogne et d'Auvergne, le dauphin d'Auvergne, et les gens de pays d'Auvergne, d'une part, et Séguin de Badefol, Bérard d'albert et autres capitaines des compagnies de Brioude et de Varennes, près Monlet, d'autre part, pour que lesdites compagnies évacuent le pays et crescent tote hostalitié

In Poitou, on 17 March 1358, the canon of Saint-Hilaire de Poitiers was kidnapped by mercenaries on his way to Avignon. They deprived him of the money and his horse, and locked him up in the castle of Rehué until they extorted a promise to pay a ransom of several thousand forints. On the orders of Innocent VI, the Archbishop of Bordeaux excommunicated the mercenaries, who occupied several monasteries until they received the promise of papal absolution.¹⁶⁵

In church politics, the use of excommunication as one of the primary instruments for dealing with mercenaries in the mid-14th century coincided with the emergence of the great companies. In this way, excommunication was used to maintain social order by punishing with anathema anyone who attacked churches or other ecclesial properties, priests or persons in the service of the church. The “Peace of God” was first applied in Provence by Raimbaud de Reillanne, Archbishop of Arles. He cursed anyone who committed violence from Wednesday evening to Monday morning, extending the period to all church holidays¹⁶⁶. Ironically, Provence was also the region where Arnaud de Cervole, with the first French great company, destroyed, robbed and ransomed a series of ecclesiastical estates in 1357-1358. Of course, papal policy was much more complicated in reality: it was Cardinal Talleyrand-Périgord, one of the most influential ecclesiastical politicians of his time, who had supported and prepared Arnaud de Cervole’s arrival in Provence¹⁶⁷. The Pope would have cursed Arnaud de Cervole only if he had attacked territories belonging directly to the Papal States¹⁶⁸. Again, *Realpolitik* played a part, as the departure of the leader of the great company operating in the immediate vicinity of defenseless Avignon was rather paid, and however much the Archpriest’s presence threatened Avignon, he was not excommunicated. The negotiations between Naples and the Arnaud de Cervole were even mediated by Innocent VI¹⁶⁹. Not long after, thanks

dans les montages d’Auvergne et de Velay et dans la party du Gévaudan dependant du dauphins d’Auvergne, ensemble la ratification de ce traité par les deputies des bonnes villas d’Auvergne 4 30 avril 1364 in: CHASSAING, Augustine - *Spicilegium brivatense*, p. 367. Lyon, ADR 10G1931.

165 DENIFLE, Henri P. - *La désolution des église*. pp. 184-185.

166 BUTAUD Germain - «L’excommunication des agresseurs des terras de l’Église (Avignon, Comtat-Venaissin) aux XIV^e et XV^e siècle”. p. 225.

167 CHÉREST, Aimé - *L’Archiprêtre: épisodes de la guerre de cent ans au XIV^e siècle*. p. 46.

168 DENIFLE, Henri P. - *La désolution des église*. pp. 196-197. n. 2.

169 CHÉREST, Aimé - *L’Archiprêtre: épisodes de la guerre de cent ans au XIV^e siècle*. pp. 62-63.

to Arnaud de Cervole, the walls of Avignon were quickly rebuilt, so Innocent VI was a little more courageous in 1361 in his dealings with the mercenaries who occupied Pont-Saint-Espirit¹⁷⁰. Innocent VI announced a crusade against the mercenaries. It was preached for in France and in the Holy Roman Empire and to cover its expenses the pope ordered special taxes in several dioceses.

According to the papal instructions on 17 January 1361, Bishop Aymo of Lausanne levied a tax on all the clergy and monasteries of his diocese for this crusade¹⁷¹. Cardinal Pierre Bertrand, bishop of Ostie was nominated to be the captain of the crusade, however, despite all preparations, Avignon had to broker an agreement with the leaders of the great companies. The Bishop felt that his army was not strong enough to face the embattled mercenary army in open battle, and the Crusaders were gradually disbanding, so there was no chance of any real success.¹⁷² The best example for the controversial papal policy toward the mercenaries is that the Papacy even excommunicated the Provençals who opposed the mercenary companies and did not want to give them free passage toward Piedmont¹⁷³. Even excommunicating a mercenary captain was not always so easy and sometimes the pope acted cautiously. In 1368, Urban V feared that Bertrand du Guesclin's excommunication would worsen the situation because of the invasion of Comtat-Venaissin and asked the rector Philippe Cabassole not proceed with it unless it was really necessary¹⁷⁴.

However, if neither excommunication nor crusades against mercenaries proved effective enough, the Church had another solution at its disposal, which would allow it to get rid of mercenaries and offer them salvation at the same time. The result of this process were the four Crusades, which in the second half of the 14th century had a deadly impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people from Portugal to Bulgaria. Pope Urban V specifically planned the crusades with the partici-

170 BUTAUD Germain - «L'excommunication des agresseurs des terras de l'Église (Avignon, Comtat-Venaissin) aux XIV^e et XV^e siècle». p. 228.

171 Bern, SCB Fontes 8. 409, 1084.

172 BUTAUD Germain - «L'excommunication des agresseurs des terras de l'Église (Avignon, Comtat-Venaissin) aux XIV^e et XV^e siècle». p. 229.

173 BUTAUD Germain - «L'excommunication des agresseurs des terres de l'Église (Avignon, Comtat-Venaissin) aux XIV^e et XV^e siècle». p. 229.

174 BUTAUD Germain - «L'excommunication des agresseurs des terres de l'Église (Avignon, Comtat-Venaissin) aux XIV^e et XV^e siècle». p. 238.

pation of mercenaries, as a result of which the crusading mercenaries plundered Gallipoli, Alexandria, the borderlands of the Holy Roman Empire and the French kingdom, and the coastal cities of Bulgaria, but the same fate befell several smaller and larger settlements on the Iberian Peninsula, where both sides involved in the war sought the help of mercenaries.¹⁷⁵ Mercenaries played an active role in all four crusades. Only the crusade led by Arnaud de Cervole in 1365 had more participants than the English army at Poitiers in 1356 or the French royal army at Brignais in 1362. According to a contemporary source, the marching mercenaries toward Strasbourg numbered 30,000. According to a contemporary source, the number of mercenaries marching towards Strasbourg was 30,000¹⁷⁶. The mercenary companies that took the cross were willing to participate in a crusade against the Ottomans, not exclusively for money, but also to save their souls.

Conclusions

By examining the relationship between mercenaries and the population through death and salvation in the second half of the fourteenth century in western Europe, a number of general conclusions can be drawn. In Italy, the great companies first appeared in the theatres of war studied in this paper, then spread to France around the time of the Peace Treaty of Brétigny some ten years later, and finally appeared in the Iberian Peninsula in the mid-1360s. The great companies, the most advanced military units of the time, immediately became indispensable in late medieval warfare. Nevertheless, as we have seen in the study, the mercenaries themselves were subject to a variety of types of deaths, and as the table in the appendix shows, even the leadership of a mercenary company was no life insurance. Kenneth Fowler collected information on the mercenary captains of the great companies of the first generation who were active in 1360s: 18 out of 92 lost their lives in combat or were executed until 1374¹⁷⁷. On the other hand, in Germain Butaud's study, the losses of the captains of the 1360s are more dramatic. He counted 124 captains of the great companies, but only 24 of them continued their ca-

175 FRANCE, John - *Mercenaries and Paid Men*. p. 9.

176 AVES AA, 81. fol. 37, WITTE, Hans, WOLFRAM, Georg (1896) *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Strassburg, Politische Urkunden von 1332 bis 1380 von Strassbourg*. T. V. n. 697, pp. 545-546.

177 FOWLER, Kenneth - *Medieval Mercenaries: The Great Companies..* pp. 321-325.

reer in the 1370s. The others died or became second rank or simply disappeared. At the beginning of the 1370s he counted 99 new captains¹⁷⁸. I also drafted a table of the captains who were active in the Eastern part of the kingdom of France and the western provinces of the Holy Roman Empire and whose type of death is known. If we take a look at the table we can see that only three of them died of a natural cause. All three belong to the group of the most successful captains of their generations: Robert Knolles, Bertrucat d'Albret, and Eustache d'Abricécourt. All the other captains in this list died a violent death, which seems to have been a natural phenomenon of their destiny. (See Appendix).

The population had learnt survival techniques that at least increased their chances of survival when living with mercenaries. At the same time, it can be seen that those mercenaries who had survived the hardships of the mercenary life, had settled down and become respected citizens of their community and had gone on to the other world, living a religious life similar to the rest of the local community compared to their previous lives. The mercenaries who took part in the four crusades of 1365/66 with Peter I, King of Cyprus, Amadeus VI, Count of Savoy, Bertrand du Guesclin and Arnaud de Cervole were absolved of their sins and assured of a peaceful passage to the other world. The mercenaries undoubtedly shocked society at the time with their cruelty, but just as their contemporaries, they ultimately tried to find peace in the afterlife by any means.

178 BUTAUD, Germain - *Les campagnes de routiers en France 1357-1393*. p. 55.

APPENDIX

Death of the Captains who were active in the frontier regions of the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire in the 1357-1370

Name	Nationality	Year of Death	Mode of Death
Albret, Bertrucat de	Gascon	1383	Died of a natural cause
Athie, Perin de	French	1363	Executed
Abrichecourt, Eustache de	Hainauter	1373	Died of a natural cause
Badefol, Seguin de	Gascon	1366	Poisoned
Badefol, Tonnet de	Gascon	1368	Died in battle
Battaillier, Munde	French	1368	Executed
Baudoncourt, Jacques de	French	1360	Executed
Camus, le bourc	Gascon	1369	Executed
Cervole, Arnaud de	French	1365	Stabbed in the back
Chauffour, Thibeaut de	French	1364	Executed
Cornuailles, Jean	French	1365	Executed
Darre, Frère	French	1366	Died in battle
Guillampot	French	1364	Executed
Geoffroi Tête Noir	Breton	1388	Died in battle
Knolles, Robert	English	1407	Died of a natural cause
Lamit	Gascon	1364	Died in battle
Marey, Girard de	French	1360	Executed
Meschin, Petit	Gascon	1369	Executed
Neufchatel, Jean de	French	1369	Died in prison
Pin, Guiot de	French	1365	Executed
Rousbaud, Louis	French	1365	Lynched
Salle, Bernard de la	Gascon	1391	Died in battle
Ségur, Jean de	French	1360	Lynched
Solier, Arnaud de alas “Le Limosusin)	Breton	1385	Died in battle

Name	Nationality	Year of Death	Mode of Death
Tête Noire, Geoffroy	Breton	1388	Died in battle
Troussevache, Gille	French	1364	Executed
Villers, Menaud de alias Espiothe	French	1369	Executed

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