

5-1993

## **Literature, Warfare & Society: The Reality of Chivalry**

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**Literature, Warfare & Society: The Reality of Chivalry**

A Thesis  
Presented to  
Professor Randall Rogers  
Department of History  
Louisiana State University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Attainment of  
Upper Division Honors Distinction

by  
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May 1993

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European History, from the time of the First Crusade (c. 1095) to the Albigensian Crusade (c. 1213), is crowded with events which define the central Middle Ages. From the rise and fall of magnates and monarchies, to the repeated recovery and loss of the Holy Land, there are many events which overlap and intertwine with one another. A thorough examination of the development of chivalry, however, exposes the intersections between the diverse and tangled elements of warfare and society during this era. Maurice Keen argues that chivalry was of tremendous social influence and significance rather than a mere matter of forms, or polite veneer which coated the events and people of this age as those such as Huizinga have claimed.<sup>1</sup> Keen argues that chivalry is "an ethos in which martial, aristocratic and Christian elements fused together."<sup>2</sup> In order to discover how these elements fused together to form the compound of chivalry and to prove its tremendous influence on this age, we must examine the political, military, social, religious and literary developments of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries.

The period in European history between the tenth and eleventh centuries was a time of increasing political fragmentation. Despite the survival of a few earlier political institutions and creation of new states, such as the Norman kingdoms of England and Sicily, duchies, baronies, and simple lordships multiplied. These lords built their own political units which enjoyed tremendous autonomy. Philippe Contamine explains that even "more than the relationships between one man and another, the rites of homage and vassalship, this is the outstanding feature of that complex phenomenon which historians call feudalism."<sup>3</sup> Principalities of every size covered the country side, especially in Francia, and formed independent military systems. They each had their own means of attack and defense and the right and power to declare, pursue and terminate war which led to a multitude of skirmishes, raids, encounters and battles. Although some major military

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<sup>1</sup>Keen, Maurice. *Chivalry*. New Haven: Yale, 1984, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Keen., p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Contamine, Philippe. *War in the Middle Ages*. trans. Micheal Jones. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984, p.

expeditions arose, such as the crusades, that necessitated armies from various principalities and kingdoms, it was this warfare of short duration that predominated in the middle ages.<sup>4</sup>

These skirmishes were set amidst a struggle for power on a larger scale between the Capetians and the Plantagenets in Western Europe. The conflict was ignited when William, duke of Normandy, conquered England in 1066. He brought across the channel French men, customs, interests, and obligations and although he was now a king in his own right, William still owed homage to the king of France for his fief of Normandy. Now that the duke of Normandy's strength and influence surpassed that of his sovereign, the Capetians' primary goal was to diminish the power of their over-mighty subject.

The French kings' fear grew as did this inequality in the mid-twelfth century, as England fell into the hands of William's granddaughter and her husband, another powerful French vassal, Geoffrey of Anjou. When their son Henry ascended to the English throne in 1154, he not only inherited the French domains of Normandy and Anjou from his parents, but increased the extent of his power by acquiring the wife of Louis VII, Eleanor, and thereby adding Poitou and Aquitaine to his possessions in France. The Plantagenet domains now extended over half of France and reached within a few miles of Paris. Hostilities between the two therefore ensued and continued, although intermittently interrupted by those crusades called against the infidel and heretic, throughout the central Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup>

Philippe Contamine contends that the structure of military society which grew to take advantage of this time of unrest and opportunity "reflected more or less faithfully the structure of society as a whole, to the extent that, for secular society, the place of any given individual in the army was in direct relation to his place in the hierarchy of powers, even to his wealth."<sup>6</sup> It is easy to see, from written battle accounts, that knights were

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<sup>4</sup>Contamine, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup>Georges Duby, *William Marshal: The Flower of Chivalry*, trans. Richard Howard. New York: Pantheon, 1985, p. 56-7.

<sup>6</sup>Contamine, p. 238.

divided into two groups of combatants. The much smaller group was comprised of the mounted *milites* who through noble birth, or through the accumulation of wealth and prestige from displays of military prowess, were at the top of both the military and social order. While this term originally distinguished the mounted knight from the footsoldier, its meaning shifted over the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It also came to distinguish knights by their martial function from the other two segments in society comprised of those who worked and those who prayed. Later, it was used on charters to denote an individual's standing. This extended use of the term "*miles*" as a title gave the greater and lesser knights and nobles a sense of social cohesion giving the term functional and social overtones. The lesser group of combatants, although more numerous, were the foot soldiers whose ranks were derived from the lower class of freemen and later in the twelfth century from the villeins, the poor.

As Duby explains, this "was a fundamental split which at that time underlay all views of society and had done so for at least the previous two centuries."<sup>7</sup> This division is linked to the formulation of the three *ordos* which the church had formulated at the dawn of the eleventh century in order to bolster its prestige. Every man was assigned a role in the social order according to the functions he performed in society. Those who worked formed the largest group, but held the lowest position in the *ordo*. Their manual labor supported the members of the other two *ordos*. It enabled those of higher prestige to carry out their own designated tasks. Those who prayed comprised one of the two privileged *ordos*. They functioned to bring the grace of heaven down to their fellow men. Those who fought composed the second group. Through their blood or prowess, they had been granted the arms with which to protect the members of the other two ranks. The

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<sup>7</sup>Georges Duby, *The Legend of Bouvines*, trans. Cynthia Tihanyi. Berkely: University of California Press, 1990, p. 14.

policies and practices of these two privileged groups were the primary social forces in the Middle Ages.<sup>8</sup>

Besides these political and social developments, there were significant advancements made in military techniques and technology which also contributed to the growth and strength of the knightly *ordo* and military aristocracy. In cavalry tactics, the stirrup spurred the development of the couched lance style of fighting on horseback. The Bayeux Tapestry (c. 1080) which illustrates the Battle of Hastings, depicts the ways in which a lance could be used by a mounted knight. It could be carried under the arm to deliver a blow, held over arm to deliver a thrust, used as a projectile, or couched. When using the latter technique, a knight would tuck the lance firmly under his armpit and level it at the enemy. Because of the stirrup, he could virtually stand in the saddle in order to improve the shock of the horse's charge and to ensure that he would not also be unhorsed or hurt during the encounter.<sup>9</sup>

Among the many tactical and technical advancements of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, including those in siege warfare and castle building, the development of the couched lance style was the most important. With no standing armies or institutionalized training, the tournament evolved to provide the needed military, social and courtly training and services for the growing warrior class. The tourney was a perfect training ground for the new techniques and provided the knights an opportunity to meet and mingle, to spread the ethos of chivalry, and for minstrels and writers to mark these events. "New tactics and improved technology at each step strengthened the aristocratic bias of recruitment into knighthood, and sharpened in its ranks the awareness of a common bond, called chivalry, uniting all who could aspire to ride to wars and tournaments."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Duby. *The Legend of Bouvines*, p. 51.

<sup>9</sup>Keen, p. 23-4.

<sup>10</sup>Keen, p. 25-7.

Because of their mutual need of one another, knights from each side of the social spectrum were drawn together. To be a cavalryman implied substantial patronage or private resources because the tools of the trade, such as a lance, shield, sword shirt of mail, a good horse plus remounts and a man to assist, was very high. Therefore, aristocratic associations were very important to established or aspirant knights. While the lesser knights were seeking patronage, the great territorial lords were seeking fighters. The great lords needed help from those practiced in the art of swordsmanship and mounted combat who could be called upon at a moments notice in order to assist them in their struggles against other great lords or the powerful castellans in their region.

The relationship between a lord and his vassal was sealed in the ceremony of homage and investiture. During this exchange of vows, a series of mutual obligations were exchanged and sworn to. Lords invited these willing knights to become their vassals in exchange for providing a court, which served as a legal authority and institution as well as a social center, protection, arms, and in the form of a benefice or fief, land and possibly money or the hand of a rich heiress. The vassals in turn would swear fealty to their lord, supply the needed military service and perform other functions such as attendance at the lord's court and hospitality if needed. Knight errants, therefore knew they needed the generosity of those on the wealthier end of the social spectrum.<sup>11</sup>

While this complex series of relationships grew in this society that was war-centered , so did the power and influence of the church. This institution also cast its threads into the tangled skein of political, martial and social relationships, and, as will later be discovered, played its own part in weaving the web of chivalry. Contamine states that medieval

military activities and attitudes were more or less deeply effected by the influence of the church which proposed or prescribed a new ideal of Christian soldier, sometimes seeking to exhalt

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<sup>11</sup>Contamine, p. 47.



(sic.) military virtues when it was a question of fighting the infidel, sometimes seeking to limit and purge them when it was a matter of internal disputes.<sup>12</sup>

The role of a true Christian knight during the Middle Ages was very ambiguous. How could a man whose primary activities were killing and maiming heed the Christian command to "turn the other cheek," or accept that "the meek shall inherit the earth." Thus, when, where, and if warfare was justified became a major debate that stretched from antiquity throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>13</sup>

In the Imperial Age, Augustine developed the theory of Just War in order to justify Christians fighting heathens as well as other Christians in the growing Christian empire. This theory stated that the only just wars were defensive wars or those offensive campaigns pursued in order to justify some wrong. The church felt the ultimate goal of battles should be justice rather than personal gain. Then as Rome fell and political fragmentation increased in the tenth century, the church issued orders intended to curb bellicose tendencies and to protect the innocent. The "Peace of God" condemned violence on sacred ground or near the lands of the innocent. The "Truce of God" went one step further by declaring that no fighting could occur on Sundays and other holy days of obligation as designated by the church.

In the eleventh century, the church finally issued a challenge to Christian knighthood which it hoped would decrease fighting among Christians in the West while helping the church to achieve some goals of its own. In order to accomplish these goals, Urban II asked the knights present at the Council of Clermont in 1095 to take the cross and drive the infidel from the Holy Land. For serving Christendom in this manner, they would gain the approval of the church and receive remission from their sins. The duty of the ideal Christian knight was established. With the First Crusade's success, knighthood began to be viewed as a holy rather than a condemned vocation. This situation was

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<sup>12</sup>Contamine, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup>Keen, p. 45.

exemplified by the words of one of the crusade's contemporaries, Guibert of Nogent. He wrote,

In our own time, God has instituted a Holy War, so that the order of knights and unstable multitude who used to engage in mutual slaughter in the manner of ancient paganism may find a new way of gaining salvation: so that now they seek God's grace in their wonted habit, and in the discharge of their own office, and no longer need to be drawn to seek salvation by utterly renouncing the world in profession of the monk.<sup>14</sup>

The church now blessed the knight's vocation in hopes that by redirecting these fierce tendencies against the infidels in the East, they would recover the Holy Land, reunite the church under the superiority of the pope, and decrease the extent of fighting between Christians in the West. Simultaneously, knights could achieve a few of their own goals. Fighting was no longer condemned but glorified. They could now pursue their desire to fight, attain glory and spoils in the East with the blessings of the church. Later, as crusading accounts are examined, much evidence arises to prove that the achievement of these temporal goals was definitely primary to the spiritual task the church set before them.

The church's involvement in these secular military affairs affected its own policies and practices as well. Holy men began to consider themselves to be the spiritual soldiers of God. A few even fought beside laymen in temporal battles. In order to channel these spiritual and temporal desires, from the beginning of the early twelfth century, military monastic orders, such as the Templars and Hospitalers, began to arise. These knights took the triple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but could also fight and kill pagans and infidels in the name of God with a free conscience. These orders represented "a real fusion of ecclesiastical (as opposed to simply Christian) and martial ideals."<sup>15</sup>

These strands of political, martial, social and religious elements which comprised the Middle Ages and contributed greatly to shaping the face of chivalry are seen very vividly through an examination of medieval literature, histories, chronicles and poetry.

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<sup>14</sup>Keen citing the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup>Keen, p. 49.

The clerics, knights, poets and storytellers of the central Middle Ages left behind a long legacy of written works that serve as mirrors which reflect this era. The different genres and subjects of these works provide us with mirrors of different sizes, shapes and facets which reflect every aspect of the central medieval period. Nevertheless, no matter what their differences may be, each work from this era reflects how thoroughly warfare and chivalry permeated medieval society. Even romances provide lessons in the ideals, methods, and practices of medieval warfare and chivalry.

One can examine the evolution of warfare, society and religion throughout the central Middle Ages by studying actual and fictional accounts of various conflicts and battles from the period. The decisive campaigns and battles of the day, as well as innovations in military technology, influenced religious and romantic thought which, in turn, gave rise to the cult of chivalry and the crusading ideal of the Christian knight. These trends are seen in the works of the historians, poets, chroniclers and other writers of the central Middle Ages. By examining the medieval world through the mirrors that they provide, one discovers that warfare and chivalry influenced and was reflected in every individual and institution in medieval society.

One of the greatest works in medieval French literature is the **Song of Roland**. It was one of the first *chansons de geste*, great deeds of men, to be recorded in the vernacular French. The existing copy of this epic was written in the early twelfth century in the Norman dialect but the author is unknown. The work is the result of a remarkable outburst of literary activity that occurred in France in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries that centered on events which happened over three centuries earlier during the reign of Charlemagne.<sup>16</sup> Tales such as these were passed down orally for ages; they were nothing new. But images were superimposed over the traditional characters of the medieval French aristocracy as they aspired to be. Although **Roland's** theme concerns the

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<sup>16</sup>Barber, Richard. **The Knight and Chivalry**. Ipswich: Boydell Press, 1974, p. 51.

struggle between Charlemagne's Franks and the Saracens in the eighth century, it reflects ideals that arose "directly out of the nature of [eleventh century] feudal society."<sup>17</sup>

**Roland** portrays a "warlike, virile, unsentimental society, whose chief occupation was fighting, and whose dominant ideals were faith in God, loyalty to feudal and family ties, and bravery in battle."<sup>18</sup> Its heroes, Roland and Oliver, embody the crusading ideal of the eleventh century. Just as Urban II absolved the crusaders of 1095, Archbishop Turpin absolved Roland's knights of their sins just before he joined them in fighting the pagan horde. Brutal fighting was permissible: it was Christians fighting infidels in the name of the Lord with the approval of the church. We see many instances in the work of the impact of Christianity on knighthood. As the epic unfolds, Roland proclaims that he is justified in fighting because the "Pagans are wrong and Christians are right!"<sup>19</sup> We see the angel Gabriel standing guard beside Charlemagne as he sleeps and at Roland's side during his last breath as the knight raised his right gauntlet to the sky as an expression of his vassalage to God while asking for the forgiveness of his sins.<sup>20</sup>

Keen assists in clarifying this portrayal of the ideal Christian knight.

Here, in the context of heroic struggles with the heathen, we are brought face to face with the strong religious emotions of truly Christian soldiers. We are also brought up against their complete lack of self-consciousness about their role as Christian warriors. They are soldiers at once of God and their earthly lords ... They are 'Christian soldiers' because they are both Christians and knights, and not because of any special commission that the authority of the church has given them.<sup>21</sup>

Roland and Oliver are much more conscious of their duties to their secular lord and of those of their profession, such as to fight bravely and skillfully, than of their duty to the church. Combined, these two characters symbolize the ultimate vassal of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. In one famous scene, Roland refuses to blow his ivory horn,

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<sup>17</sup>Barber. **The Knight and Chivalry**. p. 63.

<sup>18</sup>Chretien de Troyes. **Arthurian Romances**. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1952, p. xv.

<sup>19</sup>**The Song of Roland**. trans. Frederick Goldin. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup>Painter, Sidney. **French Chivalry**. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1940, p. 74.

<sup>21</sup>Keen, p. 51.

Olifant, which would call reinforcements because it would compromise his duty to his secular lord and God. Agreeing, Turpin says, "We know our duty: to die like good men for our King. / Fight to defend the Holy Christian faith."<sup>22</sup>

Besides providing an outline for how to be the ideal Christian knight, **Roland** also offers many detailed accounts of the eleventh century battle, from the weapons and clothing of the knights to the methods and battle techniques which they used. The work provides us with some valuable lessons in medieval warfare through its illustrations of valiant Christian knights killing pagans:

And Anseis gives his war horse its head,  
comes on to strike Turgis of Tuteluse;  
smashes his shield under the golden boss  
and breaks apart the hauberk's double rings;  
sends the good lance's head ripping through his body,  
drives it in well, gets all the iron through,  
knocks him back, lance straight out, dead on the field.  
And Roland said: "That's how a good man strikes!"<sup>23</sup>

The insight gained into the late eleventh century warfare and images of the ideal Christian soldier can also be gained from one of **Roland's** contemporaries, a cycle of *chansons de gestes* whose hero was another of Charlemagne's vassals, William Count of Orange. The origins of the *laissez* of this collection of vernacular poems which originated in Southern France and Provence are as unclear as those of **The Song of Roland**. Passed orally from minstrels and jongleurs, the tales were finally recorded by the monks of Gellone in the *Vita Sancti Wilhelmi* in the early twelfth century.<sup>24</sup>

Although the poems are set, like **Roland**, in the fictitious France of the late eighth and early ninth century amidst the struggles between Saracens and Christians, the tale does become entangled with historical fact. William, Count of Toulouse, Charlemagne's nephew, like the William of Orange of epic fame, did retire to a monastery towards the

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<sup>22</sup>Goldin, p. 84.

<sup>23</sup>Goldin, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup>**William, Count of Orange: Four Old French Epics.** ed. Glanville Price. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1975, p. v.

end of his days. The *Vita* combines the epic hero and real man so that these men are considered to be one in the same.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, whatever their origins or the modifications which they have undergone, these poems leave us with much the same picture of the ideal Christian soldier in action, loyal to his king and fighting in the defense of Christendom, as well as some evidence of courtly chivalry which is absent in **Roland**.

In these epic *chansons*, the influence of the Christian church is seen again and again. Some examples are in the real religious feeling that can be seen in the prayers of William and his nephew in *La Chanson de Guillaume*.<sup>26</sup> Vivien, William's nephew, sternly reproaches himself for asking God to save him from death in battle against the Saracens as he prays, "Truly that was a stupid, foolish thought, to seek to save myself from death, when the Lord God Himself did not, who suffered upon the Cross to save us from our deadly foe. I do not ask you, Lord, to save me from death, since you did not save yourself from it. Send me then William, Hooknose, or Louis who has all France to care for, with his aid we will win the battle."<sup>27</sup>

Later, when William arrived at the battle scene only to find his nephew dying and a peer, Guy, surrounded by Saracens, he appealed to God, "Oh God!" he said, 'who dwells in Trinity and rules the earth and the starry heavens, what a decline in my great noble family and what destruction of my mighty kindred! Guy, my friend, now you are a prisoner! May he deliver you, who suffered on Good Friday to save Christians!'"<sup>28</sup> But once again, the knights emphasize the fulfillment of their secular duties.

William displays his generosity as a secular lord in *Le Charroi de Nimes* by calling to the "needy young men, to the squires with their tattered garments: if they come with me to conquer Spain, and help me to liberate the country and exalt true faith, I will give them in abundance money and shining silver, castles and borderlands, strongholds and

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<sup>25</sup>Price, p. v.

<sup>26</sup>Keen, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup>Price, p. 148.

<sup>28</sup>Price, p. 172.

fortresses, and Spanish horses, and they shall be dubbed knights."<sup>29</sup> This work accurately mirrors these knights' mutual need for each other as well as the social distinctions between these two groups of knights.

In these two *chansons*, as in **Roland**, the vivid descriptions of the tools and techniques of warfare, as well as its brutality and gruesomeness are quite prevalent. The Saracens' attack on Vivien and the knight's suffering is described in *La Chanson de Guillaume*. "They threw at him darts and sharp spears which beat on every side of the count's hauberk. The sharp steel cut through the slender iron rings of the mail that covered his body. His entrails hung to the ground. There is no man who could longer endure it."<sup>30</sup>

Another *chanson* in this cycle, *La Prise d'Orange*, also contains examples of the shape of the cult of courtly love which was beginning to take form during this period. William is the ideal courtier and proves his talent in this pursuit by stating that "A man who truly loves is quite beyond reason. Not for fear of being hacked to pieces nor for any man who might entreat me, will I give up the idea of going to see what Orange is like and the Lady Orable, who is so highly favored. Love for her has overwhelmed me so much that I cannot rest or sleep at night, nor can I eat or drink, bear arms or mount a horse, go to mass or enter a church."<sup>31</sup>

These epic *chansons* of William, Count of Orange, clearly reflect the various religious, social, martial, and courtly strands which become so interwoven during this period. They begin to show the important role the courts played in shaping chivalry into its final form. The court was the meeting ground for knights from every level of aristocratic society as well as the center of secular literary culture. These knights and their ladies were the audiences whom these great *chansons* were directed to. But the genre which most

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<sup>29</sup>Price, p. 73-4.

<sup>30</sup>Price, p. 149.

<sup>31</sup>Price, p. 99-100.

successfully reflects how the strands of medieval religious, martial, social and courtly chivalry and love melded together were the courtly romances which grew out of these arenas.<sup>32</sup> The courtly romances of Chretien de Troyes are a few of the many important works of this new literary development which must be examined in order to discern the meaning of chivalry.

Probably a professional jongleur, Chretien composed the majority of his works during the twelfth century while under the patronage of Marie de Champagne. He set his vernacular French verse romances in the court of King Arthur and his knights. Keen argues that these romances "enlarged another dimension of the model of the ideal knight, his courtoisie, laying emphasis on courtly and civilized behavior worthy of a society that was becoming more refined and literate."<sup>33</sup> The heroes of courtly romances represent true models of chivalry. Chretien, as well as other romantic authors, often came to associate certain qualities which ultimately were regarded as the classic virtues of chivalry: prowess, largesse, loyalty, courtesy and franchise (the "free and frank bearing that is visible testimony to the combination of good birth and virtue").<sup>34</sup> This stereotype which Chretien and his peers established lasted throughout the remainder of the Middle Ages.

The heroes of the epic chansons certainly possessed many of the ideal knightly qualities which Chretien identified, but the courtly romances emphasized a knight's display of courtly love and chivalry to a greater extent. Participants in the cult of courtly love found their ultimate reward in the love of a lady, not in fulfilling their duty to their secular lord or God. Jessie Crosland explains that

A sort of revolution in ideas had taken place [by the middle of the twelfth century]. The religious element, so prominent in earlier poems, is almost completely absent from Romances. The Church as such no longer has the same grip over men's minds. An occasional formal reference to God, a visit to a hermit when life has been rendered hard by sinful conduct, is the most that we find in Chretien and his followers. The inspired army has been replaced by the individual knight; the Church with its hierarchy of priests and monks by the solitary hermit who does not

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<sup>32</sup>Keen, p. 31.

<sup>33</sup>Keen, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup>Keen, p. 2.



figure in the earliest *chansons-de-geste* and but rarely in the Carolingian chronicles. The knight of the romances is willing to fight for his own (or his lady's) honour in an adventure, but has no desire to die for his religion or his country. His enemy is another individual knight, whereas in the earlier poems, the combat is between the armies of the true faith and massed hordes of the heathen - be they Norman, Huns, or Saracens only slightly disguised under the names of pagans.<sup>35</sup>

Men sacrifice all for courtly love in Chretien's tales. The most extreme example of this courtly chivalry can be found in his work entitled **Lancelot**, or the *Chevalier de la Charette*. Lancelot violates most of the codes of feudal chivalry for the love of Guinevere, his lord's wife. He commits adultery, takes a beating on the tournament field at her command, and subjects himself to ridicule by riding in a dwarf's cart like a condemned man.<sup>36</sup>

R.H. Bloch finds the Lancelot tale to be more than a treatise on twelfth century courtly chivalry or love. He argues that this poem as well as Chretien's **Yvain**, offers us even more insight into this period. Bloch states that "Pushed beyond reasonable limits, love as obsession assumes the status of destiny; and the power of Guinevere and Laudine over Lancelot and Yvain not only menaces the independence of the lover, but negates the autonomy of feudal nobility as well."<sup>37</sup> However, while the work does "menace the independence of the lover" and places the aristocratic knight in a subversive position to love, it is more a result of the author attempting to emphasize the power of love and the ideal of a knightly courtier in the Middle Ages than the negation of the autonomy of the feudal nobility.

Chretien's works also reflects another element of the twelfth century - martial combat. As in the earlier *chansons de geste*, Chretien's romances spare no detail in offering vivid descriptions of the actuality of combat. In **Percival** a joust is portrayed during which "Sir Gawain struck him [his opponent] on the top of his shield, running at

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<sup>35</sup>Crosland, Jessie. **The Old French Epic**. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1951, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup>Painter, **French Chivalry**, p. 123.

<sup>37</sup>Bloch, R.H. **Medieval French Literature and Law**. Berkely: University of California Press, 1977, p. 222.

him with such strength that his lance smashed through both shield and hauberk and knocked him on the fine sand."<sup>38</sup> Once again, realistic conflicts were placed in idealized, fictional settings.

These works helped to spread the common code of chivalry across cultural and political lines throughout Western Europe as French and Norman knights spread into Southern Italy, Sicily, and Spain on their conquests as well as to the East on their crusades to the Holy Land. The literature helped to sustain the ethos of warrior groups by reinforcing notions of their martial skill as horsemen, pride in their ancestry, and status in service. The ideal knight possessed martial skill in the saddle, lineage, largesse, and courtly cultivation; piety was kept in a separate sphere. Chivalry's essentially secular emphasis was reinforced by these works.<sup>39</sup>

While the literature of this period does offer insight into the society which produced them and the resulting influence the works had on those exposed to them, the idealized portrayals found therein are wide open to the charges made by those such as Huizinga that "outside literature, chivalry really was no more than a polite veneer, a thing of forms and words and ceremonies which provided a means whereby the well-born could relieve the bloodiness of life by decking their activities with a tinsel gloss borrowed from romance."<sup>40</sup> The quest for the reality of chivalry must now turn to secular chronicles, histories and biographies in order to conduct a historical search for those whose lives fit the established romantic mold. Simultaneously, while achieving this task, the origins of the religious element of chivalry and how it influenced this ethos must also be studied in more detail. Only in this way can the true social significance and influence of chivalry be proven.

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<sup>38</sup>Chretien de Troyes, p. 428.

<sup>39</sup>Keen, p. 34-42.

<sup>40</sup>Keen, p. 3.

**The Crusade, the Church and Chivalry**  
*Chivalry and Warfare during the Third and Fourth Crusade*

Accounts of the Third and Fourth Crusades provide valuable insight into the chivalry and warfare of the crusaders of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Their authors identified the presence of any man who fit, or failed to fit, the mold of the ideal chivalric knight as established in the literature of the day. They recorded the knight's chivalrous attributes as well as the events of battle with a knowledgeable and practiced eye. Besides the martial and chivalrous evidence in the works, one can also see ample evidence of the power of the Christian church during this period. What is difficult to discern, however, is the degree to which Christianity and the crusading ideal of the eleventh century permeated the nature of chivalry in the twelfth and thirteenth century, and how this, in turn, effected the practice of warfare and knights' lifestyles during this era.

Two scholars, Sidney Painter and Maurice Keen, have studied this question in depth and have reached very different conclusions in answer to this query. Painter represents one school of thought which argues that religion is one of the essential elements comprising chivalry alongside feudalism and courtly love. In the eleventh century, on the eve of the First Crusade, a reform movement swept the church which changed its policy of condemning the violence so endemic to the feudal world, and attempting to curb it, to control and redirect it to suit the church's purposes. Rapine and slaughter was approved of if its objects were infidels rather than fellow Christians. The church propagated its own version of 'religious chivalry' which dictated appropriate knightly priorities and behavior. A knight's first duty was to obey the law of the church and to use the sword in its defense; his second was to his secular lord and state. A model chivalric knight would therefore "obey the church and practice Christian values in every respect."<sup>41</sup>

Painter finds evidence that religion was an essential ingredient in chivalry within the *chansons de geste* of the day. In the **Song of Roland**, Painter interprets the scene in which

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<sup>41</sup>Painter. **French Chivalry**, p. 92.

Roland lay dying upon the battlefield and lifted his gauntlet to the sky indicating his homage to the Lord was evidence that religious chivalry was already established and played a large part in knightly behavior and sentiment. He does acknowledge that knights often failed to meet this ideal and were sometimes motivated by secular interests rather than piety, as when they took the cross in order to gain wealth and prestige rather than their sole motivation being to serve their church and Christianity. But Painter asserts that although some knights did deviate from the dictates of this code of behavior, most "knights accepted without question the faith preached by the church and observed more or less carefully the established forms of the Christian cult."<sup>42</sup>

The accomplished scholarship of Maurice Keen in the history of chivalry, however, brings new interpretations and evidence to view which when applied, make Painter's argument obsolete. Keen argues that the cult of chivalry was essentially secular in origin and that religion was not an elemental ingredient its makeup at all. He agrees with Waas' concept that medieval combatants had a knightly piety all their own, *Ritterfrommigkeit*, in which they adapted Christian values that conformed to their already established code of priorities, goals and practices.<sup>43</sup> Keen argues that one must search further back than the eleventh century for its origins and its secular nature. This evidence can be found upon further examination of the origins *chansons de geste*, of which Painter spoke.

Keen asserts that the virtues of the warrior society as exemplified in **Roland** were the same as those heralded as the heroic epics of the pre-Christian past. In **Beowulf**, as in many *chansons*, a youth could be found who possessed great fidelity to his lord and who sought and adventure in far away lands fighting monsters as well as enemies. When the jump is made from pagan to Christian poetry, the plot is primarily the same although the characters are now fighting infidels. The new religious virtues and old heroic ones have been assimilated into one another. Therefore, it is evident that knightly piety "owes more

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<sup>42</sup>Painter. **French Chivalry**. p. 92.

<sup>43</sup>Keen, p. 51, referring to A. Wass. *Geschichte des Kreuzzuges*. Frieberg: 1956.

to the Christian penetration of the old once autonomous heroic ethic, infusing it with a new religious color than to later ecclesiastical prompting."<sup>44</sup>

The ecclesiastics of the eleventh century attempted to redefine chivalry in terms of the church's priorities. But because these goals were contradictory to the practice of the knight's craft, the members of the knightly class would not submit to the church's new creation. By the twelfth century, the period of the flowering of chivalry as well as the crusades, knights took the cross in hopes of enhancing their world in this life and the next through earning wealth and glory on their adventures abroad as well as for indulgences for their sins. The majority of the crusaders, those not belonging to a religious military order, were not willing to devote their swords to a lifetime in the service of the church, rather, they were out to achieve the Christian and chivalrous goals they decided worthy to pursue and return home. Keen observes that the normal chivalrous conception of the crusade, that it was a knightly duty, did add some small dimension to knightly piety, but that it "mostly served to thicken the Christian veneer with which the old heroic values were already deeply encrusted: it did not as the ecclesiastics hope it would, substitute for something all together different."<sup>45</sup>

By comparing chronicles and poems which record the great deeds of men and events of the crusades, one finds more evidence in favor of Keen's theory of the ideal chivalric crusader and much insight into Latin siege and field warfare techniques of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. One such work is that of the Norman jongleur, Ambroise. He joined the host of the Third Crusade in order to record the tales of great men and their deeds while seeking to achieve his own salvation on the pilgrimage. His work is primarily a panegyric of Richard's accomplishments on the crusade and in the manner of one of his near contemporaries, Jordan Fantosme, Ambroise's work is a poem epic in style and proportion.

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<sup>44</sup>Keen, p. 54.

<sup>45</sup>Keen, p. 57.

The events of the Fourth Crusade were also recorded but by men of the sword, not of letters. They too were concerned with telling the deeds of chivalric Christian knights but also included their own exemplary deeds and the extent of their involvement in the expedition. The various aspects of the campaign are seen through the eyes and memories of two men, a nobleman, Geoffrey de Villehardouin, and a common knight, Robert de Clari, who each composed a chronicle of the conquest of Constantinople. Their works are the first prose histories of their kind to be recorded in vernacular French. Although both men primarily recorded the same events, their different roles had a clear effect on their accounts. While Robert's vivid battle scenes bring the reader into the world of the ordinary medieval knight, Geoffrey's descriptions of such things as discussions among the leaders of the crusade and negotiations with the enemy, brings the reader into the world of the medieval nobleman, military leader and diplomat.

Each of these three works has its own strengths and weaknesses as source material. We must consider each author's viewpoint and past experiences, critical ability, purpose, and how he obtained the information he includes. Once these tasks are accomplished, the reader leaves with much insight into the chivalric Christian ideal as well as near accurate battle scenes, and engine and landscape descriptions. These accounts also reveal the techniques and developments of Latin siege and field warfare during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Ambroise's **Crusade of Richard the Lion Heart** must be examined in light of another contemporary account of the Third Crusade, the **Itinerarium**, which closely parallels Ambroise's work. Though there is much debate over which author derived his work from whom, and whether or not an original unknown document existed which each author used as a source, it is widely believed that Ambroise used the **Itinerarium** as a source for the events which proceeded Richard's departure and arrival at Acre. The remainder of the work is his eyewitness account. His work is significant in that it

illuminates every aspect of the warfare of the Third Crusade from its ideology to its practice.

Merton states that Ambroise's work is valuable in that

It is precisely because Ambroise was of the "lesser folk" of the host that he was able to give us so precious an account, not merely of events, but of the mental and spiritual background of events. He pictures the soul of the Crusader, with all of its curious melange of confusion and lucidity.<sup>46</sup>

Although Ambroise was not a knight, he expresses the same bloodthirsty desire to crush the infidels and revels in each battle. He also has a keen eye for acts of chivalry and valor amongst the knights, his king and their enemies.

Because Ambroise was a mere historian, poet and pilgrim, he did not participate in the inner council meetings of the king or witness the diplomatic exchanges between the Muslim and Christian leaders which he cites in his work. For this information, Ambroise probably had to rely on those who did witness those exchanges or gather it from the host's gossip. Ambroise was also took the liberty to place speeches into the mouths of prominent figures of the crusade. Despite this propensity and a few miscalculations in the number of forces engaged in a battle or a date, when measured with other contemporary sources and current research, his work is remarkably accurate and detailed.

Ambroise is very biased in his portrayal of Richard and the host's performance in the crusade. But whether this bias is due to the fact that he was employed to give the "official" account of the crusade by the king, or from his genuine admiration of and loyalty to his king is hard to determine. It is probably a combination of both of these factors. Of Richard's performance during the crusade, Ambroise states that "Richard, the king of England, wrought / Such deeds of courtesy as ought / Be told for he showed nobleness / As well as valor and largesse."<sup>47</sup> By examining the work of one of Ambroise's fellow subjects, Richard of Devizes, we can see that the love of Richard and support of his

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<sup>46</sup>Ambroise. **The Crusade of Richard the Lion Heart**. trans. Jerome Hubert Merton. New York: Columbia, 1941, p. 19.

<sup>47</sup>Ambroise, p. 193.

crusading endeavors was not unique. This clerk's work is a work of Latin prose which praises and records the events of the Lion Heart's reign. This simple monk had no reason to embellish his work with undue praise as the king would probably never hear of him or his work. He expresses not only his own admiration for the king but that of the realm as well when he tells of the hosts response to one of Richard's speeches made to rally their support.

The king had scarcely finished his speech when all the brave men roared, disturbed only by the fact that their lord seemed not to trust his men. They promised from their hearts to be ready to do whatever he ordered, ready to scale mountains and to break though walls of bronze. Let him lay aside his frown; they would make all Sicily subject to him by their sweat, if he so ordered. They would all wade the Pillars of Hercules in blood, if he so desired.<sup>48</sup>

Ambroise also displays his affection for his lord by taking Richard's side in any dispute and by defending him against any criticism. He especially admired Richard's support of Guy de Lusignan as King of Jerusalem even though Phillip wanted to replace Guy with Conrad of Montferrat. But even when Richard later realizes the futility of this endeavor and at last approves the election of Conrad as king, Ambroise records the occurrence but glosses over the event rather than glorifying Richard's decisions and actions. In this way, he did not misrepresent Richard or the events of the crusade. Ambroise merely highlights those events and decisions which are successful and glorify the king and his host's accomplishments. He accentuates their strengths rather than their failures or mistakes.

One of the greatest accomplishments of his work, besides the ability to paint an idealized picture of his king and host, was his eye for, and tales of, the wondrous displays of chivalry during the Third Crusade. Ambroise's work exemplifies Keen's theory. He illustrates the intertwining of religious, secular and heroic ideals through his observations of the deeds of participants of the Third Crusade. He is fully aware of the crusades religious

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<sup>48</sup>The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First.  
ed. John T. Appleby. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1963, p. 70.



goals, and that the participants were essentially pilgrims who rallied to Pope Gregory's promise

That he should have all sins forgiven  
Who should attack those foes of heaven  
Who had despoiled in very sooth  
The great and noble King of Truth;  
And for this many a count and king  
And other men past numbering  
Took on, to follow God's command,  
The cross and sought the Holy Land.<sup>49</sup>

But rather than a treatise on religious chivalry as Painter would expect, Ambroise's work reads more like an epic poem or *chanson* in that he revels the most in the chivalric qualities of members of the host as well as of the infidels. For example, he even hails the largesse of the infidel, Saphadin, Saladin's brother

Who did things like a generous  
And noble man and courteous.  
As I say he came rapidly  
With two good steeds of Araby  
And to the king of England sent  
Them, asking him that he consent -  
For the brave deeds that he had done  
And all the prowess he had won -  
To mount them.<sup>50</sup>

He also praises Saladin for the concessions to the Christian clergy and pilgrims regarding prayer within and visitation to the Sepulcher.

Nevertheless, as Richard is Ambroise's king and hero of this work, most of the chivalric actions recorded in the poem are those of Richard. He extols Richard's generosity when he offers four besants, more than Phillip's promised three, for any man who would fight beneath his banner. Ambroise states that this "was the rightful pay and fair / Given to men for service there."<sup>51</sup> He also records Richard's prowess: "He smote the loathesome enemy / That with bewilderment they viewed / His chivalry and fortitude."<sup>52</sup> And additional examples such as Geoffrey de Lusignan's stand in the trenches at Acre. "He sent ten foes

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<sup>49</sup>Ambroise, p. 32.

<sup>50</sup>Ambroise, p. 423.

<sup>51</sup>Ambroise, p. 193.

<sup>52</sup>Ambroise, p. 264.

to their grave, / Dealing them blows so stout and brave / That no knight e'er deserved such praise since Oliver and Roland's days."<sup>53</sup> As Keen attests, the crusade was "one great chivalrous adventure in which the service of God and the quest for earthly renown and reward have become so interlaced that it is no longer practical to seek to unravel the strands."<sup>54</sup>

In his work, Ambroise also illustrates how the crusaders' goals, which emerged from chivalric knightly piety, manifested themselves during the campaign. The knights were most definitely not willing to remain in the Holy Land forever working to restore Jerusalem. They were generally interested in reaching Jerusalem through the quickest way possible so that they might complete their pilgrimage and vow and return home. This was especially true of the French host which resented the long duration of the campaign as well as Richard's leadership. At the first opportunity, those who had not already sailed with their king took advantage of Conrad's summons to Tyre during the re-fortification of Ascalon, to abandon the campaign, leaving the work they had begun there unfinished. Many of Richard's own knights also took advantage after the acquisition of Joffa to "take the backward road / To Acre and in the taverns to abode."<sup>55</sup> There was much dissention in the host and among the pilgrims. Many, with no concern for strategic goals or danger, beseeched Richard to take the quickest route to Jerusalem. It is clearly evident that the crusaders had not adopted the wish of the Church to become completely loyal supporters to her cause or the ideals of 'religious chivalry.'

Not only can lessons be gleaned from Ambroise's work on the ideology of knighthood in the twelfth century but on the practice of warfare as well. By examining Richard's military progress during the Third Crusade, we gain much insight into his strategy, ability as the campaign leader, and the nature of Latin siege and field warfare.

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<sup>53</sup>Ambroise, p. 198.

<sup>54</sup>Ambroise, p. 55.

<sup>55</sup>Ambroise, p. 278

Norgate and Gillingham's examinations of Richard's campaigns, complimented by Roger's explanation of the technology of Latin siege warfare and Ambroise's pictures, illuminate the warfare of the Third Crusade.

Norgate effectively assesses the needs of the crusaders in 1190. On the eve of Richard's arrival to the Holy Land, Guy de Lusignan had positioned forces for the siege of Acre. The capture of this fortress was crucial for their success in regaining Jerusalem. Its coastal location was essential. Acre's port would provide the crusaders with a direct base in the Otremer for supplies and it also lay within the central line of communication for the East and West. It also had a strong fortification which was built by the first Franks in the Levant. In order to take Acre, the crusaders had to be ready to face a war of attrition with the constant harassment of the Muslim forces which had surrounded their entrenched position around the city. This situation continued until the arrival of the kings of France and England with fresh men, supplies and siege artillery.<sup>56</sup>

Richard's first move was to secure Cyprus as a base for supplies throughout the crusade. When he arrived, he begrudgingly combined efforts with Phillip in order to break the city's will and ability to withstand the siege. Rogers explains that after the crusaders made effective attempts to blockade Acre and cut off its pathway to supplies, reinforcements, and escape, the host's efforts then centered on the assault. Not content to wait for a long delayed submission, they continually assaulted the city with siege artillery and missile weapons. The "weakening of defensive capabilities was a prerequisite to seizing the walls."<sup>57</sup>

Ambroise brings these events to life with vivid descriptions of the siege towers and mangonels in action. He explains that Richard "built a belfry of great height / which filled the Turkish foe with freight. / It was so clad and sheathed outside / with wood, with

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<sup>56</sup>Norgate, Kate. **Richard the Lion Heart**. New York: Russell & Russell, 1924, p. 124.

<sup>57</sup>Rogers, Randall. **Latin Siege Warfare in the 12th Century**. Oxford: Oxford. 1992.

cordage, and with hide / That it feared not the Greek fire's blast or any stone or missile cast."<sup>58</sup> Ambroise also describes the Muslim's counter-fire:

The engines towards the wall released  
 Their missiles, and they never ceased.  
 The king had one called Male Voisine  
 But in Acre was one named Male Cousine  
 Which ever damaged it and wrecked.  
 The king would then set it erect  
 Once more, and it would beat and maul  
 Until it breached the master wall  
 And did great damage as it beat  
 Upon the tower known as Maudite.<sup>59</sup>

Ambroise not only offers detailed illustrations of siege machinery, but also of the risks of battle. He spares no gory detail as he describes scenes of the wounded and slain members of the host. He explains that at one exchange there could be "Seen sword blows which upon them beat / And lopped off hands and heads and feet, / Split eyes and mouths with many a wound, / Seen corpses strewn upon the ground / Like logs, making our soldiers tread / And stumble o'er the piles of dead."<sup>60</sup>

One of the most valuable insights gained through his account of the siege of Acre was Richard's heroic personal involvement in the fighting, unlike Phillip, who directed affairs from afar. The best example of this is that even when ill, Richard nevertheless directs the attack. When the wall was undermined, he offered to pay anyone brave enough to risk their lives to bring back a stone from the rubble to clear the way for an assault. This hard work and sacrifice, resulted in triumph for the crusading force. Acre surrendered 12 July 1191.

Gillingham closely examines Richard's strategy and progress up the coast from Acre on the road to Jerusalem. He explains how Richard's cautious strategy earned him the distinction of being a 'model of medieval generalship.' Gillingham agrees with an element of Smail's thesis that in medieval warfare, the acquisition and defence of fortified places

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<sup>58</sup>Ambroise, p. 202.

<sup>59</sup>Ambroise, p. 201.

<sup>60</sup>Ambroise, p. 388.

was essential. But those on the offensive had to conduct successful sieges such as Acre. Richard knew battle against an enemy with strong defensive positions did little good and thus never sought Saladin out in attempts to decisively defeat him.

The king's primary objective on the host's march to Jerusalem was to keep his field army unified as it marched down the coast where it could easily be supplied. The crusaders showed their ability to accomplish this at Arsuf. Despite a premature charge by two knights, the force was able to retain its cohesion and disperse the defenders. Gillingham also praises Richard for standing so long against the decision to head directly to Jerusalem. Richard's own desire, to march down the coast and sever the caravan route between Egypt and Syria, and then to conquer Egypt, may have worked if his own health and the host's impatience had not turned them down the road to Jerusalem prematurely. Despite the host's failure to succeed at its goal, Richard had nonetheless confirmed his ability as a general and retained the love and respect of his subjects.<sup>61</sup> Richard of Devizes depicts the defeated Richard as the condemned Christ. He writes that on the day Richard was forced to admit the crusade's failure, the king

"gave vent to his indignation in these words 'O God,' he said, 'O God. O God, Why Hast thou forsaken me' ... Oh, how unwillingly would I desert Thee in such a grave hour of need, if I were to Thee what Thou art to me, my lord and advocate! Henceforth my banners will lie prostrate, not for me, indeed, but for Thee. Not because of the cowardice of my army, indeed, art Thou, my king and my God, and not Thy wretched little king, this Richard defeated this day."<sup>62</sup>

Without Ambroise's rich depiction of the Third Crusade, the scope of our image of the religion, chivalry and techniques of warfare of the Third Crusaders would have been much less wide and vivid.

The chronicles of Geoffrey de Villehardouin and Robert de Clari provide an even wider scope through which to view the men and events of the Fourth Crusade. By comparing two coherent accounts which emerged from the memories of these two men,

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<sup>61</sup>Gillingham, John. "Richard I and the Science of War." **War and Government in the Middle Ages.** ed. John Gillingham and J.C. Holt. Suffolk: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1984.

<sup>62</sup>Devizes, p. 82.

one discovers hidden agendas, biased remarks, missing details and overemphasized passages which reveal much about each author personally and provides the reader with a much clearer picture of the Crusade.

Each man's background and the resulting role they played in the crusade determines what they emphasize within their tales. Born to a noble family in the late twelfth century, Geoffrey eventually became Marshall of his birthplace, Champagne, and of Romania as well. His counsel was greatly respected by the leaders of the expedition and he often participated in the decision making process. Robert, on the other hand, was a simple knight with less wealth and status whose lord, Pierre of Amiens, was associated with the powerful barons of Pol. He served only in a combative capacity during the Crusade. He was forced to surmise his leader's motivations from camp gossip and any formal announcements which were made to the host. The different roles each man played on this crusade not only determined their sources, but also led to them approaching their roles as chroniclers in different ways as well.

Many times while dictating his work, Geoffrey claimed authorship of the chronicle and was quick to announce his presence and role in the decision making processes during the campaign. The purpose of his work appears to be threefold: one, to record for posterity the events of the crusade and his role in them; two, to explain the actions and decisions made by the leaders of the crusade; and three, to exculpate himself from any responsibility for the crusade's failure. After each turn of events, Geoffrey takes care to explain in detail each debate that led to the council's decision and his role in the proceedings. For example, Geoffrey is sure to include why the Doge of Venice and Comte Louis sent him to Adrianople to try to put an end to the strife there. It was because Geoffrey was on such "good terms with the marquis" and would "have more

influence on him than anyone else."<sup>63</sup> He is quick to point out at every turn his influence and the important role he played on the crusade.

Robert de Clari, on the other hand, takes a very different approach in telling his story of the events of the Fourth Crusade. While dictating his tale, he claimed authorship of the work once, not many times, at the end of the work. He also humbly acknowledges that "it may be that he has not told the conquest as finely as many a good teller would have told it, none the less he has told the very truth" as he knew it to be.<sup>64</sup> This contrasts greatly with Geoffrey's bold reminder that he, "Geoffrey de Villehardouin, Marshall of Champagne, and the author of this work - who has never, to his knowledge, put anything in it contrary to the truth, and who was present, moreover, at all of the conferences recorded in its pages."<sup>65</sup> Robert is also not as quick to brag about his importance and accomplishments. He mentions himself only once during the tale while extoling his brother's bravery. Robert's primary goal in composing this work is simply to record the events.

When combined, the inherent differences in these works assist in determining the veracity of each tale while simultaneously offering a more complete picture of the Crusade. The authors' accounts depict many of the same events in a different light. They even disagree on the reason why the host ended up fighting Christians in Constantinople rather than the infidels further East. Geoffrey explains that the fleet which the Venetians built for the Crusaders in order to transport them to the Holy Land put the host into enormous debt. This was because many of the members of their party decided to travel by alternate means from other locations, therefore, the men in Venice could not raise the funds necessary to pay the remainder of their bill to their creditors.

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<sup>63</sup>Geoffrey de Villehardouin. *The Conquest of Constantinople*. ed. M.R.B. Shaw. London: Penguin, 1963.

<sup>64</sup>Robert de Clari. *The Conquest of Constantinople*. trans. Edgar Holmes McNeal. New York: Columbia, 1936.

<sup>65</sup>Geoffrey de Villehardouin, p. 57.

While the host was stranded without transport or funds, it heard from the wrongfully deposed son of the emperor, Prince Alexius of Constantinople. They agreed to help him regain his kingdom in return for monetary and physical support for their Crusade. The Pope did not stop the crusaders from fighting their fellow Christians because of his hope that the expedition would be conducted in such a way as to bring about the reunion of the Orthodox and Roman Churches. The leaders were unaware that they would never reach their destination and that this hope of an ecumenical union would never be fulfilled.<sup>66</sup> This is the explanation which Geoffrey provides from his own involvement in the decision making processes of the crusade.

Robert, possibly through a combination of camp gossip and the formal announcements made by the leaders of the crusade, arrived at a very different conclusion for the reason for Constantinople's conquest. He asserts that the Doge recommended that the Crusaders find a way to plunder the riches of Greece in order to pay their debt. This suggestion gave the leaders of the expedition the idea of contacting Alexius, exiled in Germany and looking for help to regain his kingdom. Robert was not of the opinion that they had stumbled upon Alexius by accident. He states that there was also another motivation behind the resulting expedition: the marquis' desire to avenge his brother Conrad for the evil done him by the Greek emperor.

These two different accounts reveal the accessibility that each author had to the machinations behind the campaign as well as their different points of view. Robert did not see the necessity for this campaign as did Villehardouin. Unlike Geoffrey, he had no access to the council rooms, and although he claimed that his tale was true, he did not, or could not, actually weigh the evidence in order to prove that the conclusions that he had reached were true.

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<sup>66</sup>Geoffrey de Villehardouin, p. 13.



Another topic to which both men refer, deals with the collection and distribution of the spoils of war. These passages hint at the hierarchy which existed within the knightly class, and the animosity these various groups held for each other. Both men state that the members of the host were ordered to bring all of their spoils to a designated spot. What they disagree on is who was to blame for the depletion of the booty. Robert de Clari claims that

each one of the rich men took gold ornaments or cloth of silk and gold or anything else he wanted and carried it off. So in this way they began to rob the treasure, so that nothing was shared with the common people of the host or the poor knights or the sargeants who had helped to win the treasure, save the plain silver.<sup>67</sup>

Robert states again and again throughout this section of his work the animosity he felt towards his lords for acting so selfishly.

Geoffrey de Villehardouin, however, declares that this vice was spread evenly throughout the host. He says that when asked to bring their booty to the appointed spot

Some performed this duty conscientiously, others prompted by covetousness, that never-failing source of all evil, proved less than honest. From the very first, those who were prone to this vice began to keep things back.<sup>68</sup>

Once again, the reader is provided with the ability to see the same scene through different sets of eyes. He is given the opinion of a member of the lower and upper strata of the knightly class and is left to determine which viewpoint is more justified or accurate for himself.

There is one section in each of these men's works which correspond almost completely. Combined, they leave no confusion as to the actual course of events of the first or second sieges of Constantinople. These passages provide much insight into the siege warfare and battle tactics used by the knights during this crusade. Although Robert offers more detail on the types of weapons and machines used during the siege and Geoffrey offers more information on the plans of the crusade's leaders, their accounts of

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<sup>67</sup>Robert de Clari, p. 102.

<sup>68</sup>Geoffrey de Villehardouin, p. 95.

the first siege of Constantinople, and their depictions of the battles in the harbor and along the land and sea walls during the siege are almost identical.

Both Robert and Geoffrey explain that once the host won entry into the port, their fleet was brought into the harbour. It was decided that in order to make use of the strengths of the various parts of the Latin contingent, the Venetians would attack by sea while the barons and their men attacked by land. The Venetians blocked one side of the city while the knights blocked the other at the gate of Blacherane. Just as with the siege of Acre, it was essential to weaken the enemy's defensive capabilities in order to capture the walls. After ten days had passed the main assault was made.<sup>69</sup>

Both Geoffrey and Robert bring these events to life by depicting the ships, transports and men in action. Robert tells of the effectiveness of the knights' use of sea power: as "soon as they [the knights] had made land, the knights issued forth from the transports on their horses; for the transports were made in such a way that there was a door that could be opened and a bridge thrust out by which the knights could come out on land all mounted. When the fleet had made land and the Greeks who had drawn back saw that they were all come out, they were greatly dismayed at it."<sup>70</sup> Geoffrey also writes of the vicious hand to hand combat. He recalls one moment when fifteen knights had successfully scaled a Greek barbican close to the sea who "were quickly engaged in a hand-to-hand contest of battle-axes against swords."<sup>71</sup> Robert once again describes the heat of the fighting between the Greeks and the fleet, illustrating the effective use of naval power during this crusade.

When [the fleet] reached the shore and had drawn up as close as they could to the walls, they cast anchor. And when they were at anchor, they began to attack vigorously and to shoot and hurl stones and Greek fire on the towers, but the fire could not take hold on them because of the hides with which they were covered. And those within the city defended themselves right hardily, and they had fully sixty petraries hurling missiles, and at each cast they hit the ships, but the ships

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<sup>69</sup>Geoffrey de Villehardouin, p. 70.

<sup>70</sup>Robert de Clari, p. 68.

<sup>71</sup>Geoffrey de Villehardouin, p. 70.

were so well covered with planks and grapevines that they did not do them any harm, and the stones were so large that a man could not lift one of them from the ground."<sup>72</sup>

Geoffrey and Robert discuss the hardships of the campaign as well as the combat.

Geoffrey states that while preparing for the main assault on Constantinople, that no one "was able to stir in search of food any farther than four bowshots from the camp ... the troops had no fresh meat at all, except what they got from the horses that were killed."<sup>73</sup>

As can be expected, the most vivid and accurate accounts each author provides are those which they participated personally. Geoffrey recalls the names of the men involved in the campaign, and the words exchanged during many diplomatic exchanges, such as his trip with a small delegation to the palace in order to request payment for the services they rendered Alexius. Robert, on the other hand, was involved in different activities. After the host's victory, he toured the city and examined its many marvelous relics and works of art. Because these men pursued different interests and had different obligations during their stay in Constantinople, the reader is provided, once again, with a more complete picture of the crusade.

These works illustrate the manifestations of chivalry during the Fourth Crusade as well. Like Ambroise, Robert and Geoffrey exemplify Keen's theory by illustrating the intertwining of religious, secular and heroic ideals through their observations of the deeds of the crusaders. Each man is fully aware of the Crusade's purpose - for knights to undertake a penitential pilgrimage in order to restore the Holy Land to Christian rule.

Geoffrey says that Pope Innocent had an

indulgence framed as follows: All those who take the Cross and remain for one year in the service of God in the army shall obtain remission of any sins they have committed, provided they have confessed them. The hearts of the people were greatly moved by the generous terms of this indulgence, and many, on that account, were moved to take the cross.<sup>74</sup>

As we have seen, even though the Crusade never reached the Holy Land, the host remained in the service of the church. The host fought to restore Constantinople to its

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<sup>72</sup>Robert de Clari, p. 95.

<sup>73</sup>Geoffrey de Villehardouin, p. 69.

<sup>74</sup>Geoffrey de Villehardouin, p. 1.

rightful ruler while simultaneously reuniting the Christian churches under Roman superiority and enriching itself.

But rather than dwelling on pious acts throughout their works, each author revels in the wondrous chivalric displays made by members of the host. For example, Geoffrey praises the Doge of Venice for the "outstanding deed of valour" he performed during the First siege of Constantinople. Hearing that the galleys feared to come ashore due to the intense fighting there, Geoffrey says that the Doge, in the manner of Charlemagne in the **Song of Roland**,

although an old man and completely blind, stood at the bow of his galley, with the banner of St. Mark unfurled before him. He cried out to his men to put him on shore, or else he himself would deal with them as they deserved. They obeyed him promptly, for the galley touched ground and the men leapt ashore.<sup>75</sup>

The scene which depicts the most gallant and touching feats of bravery and prowess, however, occurs in the work of Robert de Clari. He tells the tale of the feat his brother, the clerk, Aleamus de Clari, "who was so doughty in every need that he was the first in every assault where he was present." Robert explains that under heavy fire, Aleamus and a group under the direction of Pierre of Amiens, managed to pierce the postern of the tower of Galata. No one but Aleamus was willing to be the first to move through the breach due to the large number of Greeks waiting for them. He willingly crouched down to move through the breach despite his brother's protestations and attempts to hold him back by the foot.

"When he was inside the Greeks ran at him more than a great many, and those on the walls began to throw enormous stones at him. When the clerk saw this, he drew his sword and ran at them and made them flee before him like cattle. And he called to those outside, to the Lord Pierre and his people: "Lords enter hardily!" In this passage, we not only catch a glimpse of amazingly successful fool-hardy bravery in a combatant, but we

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<sup>75</sup>Geoffrey de Villehardouin., p. 71.

also see the distinctions that were made between the common members of the host and those knights of higher status within this single warrior class.

Robert was appalled when some protested that his brother did not deserve fair share in the division of the spoils after the battle because he was not a knight, despite the fact that Aleaumus "had a horse and a hauberk like any knight and had done as many feats of arms as any knight that was there". But finally "the count of St. Pol gave judgment that he should share as a knight, because he had done more deeds of arms and prowess ... than any one of three hundred knights had done, and for that he ought to share as a knight."<sup>76</sup> This passage is evidence that the knightly class was becoming more exclusive and access to its ranks was harder to achieve no matter an individual's ability to arm himself or his chivalrous behavior.

Robert and Geoffrey, however, were just as quick to point out the absence of any chivalric traits, such as loyalty to one's secular lord or God, as well as its presence, in the men of the host. For example, Geoffrey is quick to condemn those who did not live up to the chivalric code of honor by failing their lords and their God through desertion. Many knights who tired of the expedition or who wished to continue on in attempt to reach their original destination left the host of their own accord without the permission of their lords and superiors. Geoffrey remarks that even Robert's lord, Pierre of Amiens, was part of a faction at Corfu which tried to divide the army and prevent it from travelling to Constantinople. Robert, however, fails to mention his lords involvement in this affair. Even though he chose to omit this moment in his work, whether through ignorance or shame, it is clear that each author lived by the same chivalric code.

By combining Geoffrey de Villehardouin and Robert de Clari's chronicles, **The Conquest of Constantinople**, the reader gains a more complete picture of the Fourth Crusade than one of these works could have offered alone. Because of each author's

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<sup>76</sup>Robert de Clari, p. 117-8.

different social positions within the knightly class, emphasis on different events and unique styles, the works offer the reader different interpretations. Combined, the similar accounts enhance the events and the veracity of each work can be discerned.

Together these accounts not only fill in the details of the course of events, but also enable the reader to see the author's prejudices, exaggerations and embellishments more clearly. These men not only offer in their works a description of the events which occurred and experiences they had, but also give a clear image of how chivalry manifested itself in the thirteenth century and how this was reflected on the battlefield. Alone these chronicles are informative and insightful, but combined they are priceless because of the treasures that one reveals in the other.

Without these vivid accounts of the Third and Fourth Crusades by Ambroise, Robert de Clari and Geoffrey de Villehardouin, the size of our mirror to those times and places would be significantly smaller. Unfortunately, few realize the value of these author's work as important sources for these crusades or late twelfth and early thirteenth society. The insights which they provide are endless, from the tactics, strategies and practice of medieval warfare, and the politics and machinations which guided it, to the cult of chivalry during the Third and Fourth Crusades. As we have seen, these writers clearly make Keen's case that the influence of crusading ideology on the ethic of chivalry did add some small dimension to knightly piety, but it merely served to thicken the "Christian veneer" which already coated the old heroic values which paralleled those of medieval chivalry. It did not replace these old values with something completely different as ecclesiastics hoped. Without these tales we would be lacking any evidence to prove this truth and the scope of our knowledge of this era would be minute.

Now we must switch the focus of our study away from the Outremer to examine the ways in which the crusading ideal and chivalry influenced and were expressed in mock and real combat in Western Europe. The many biographies, histories and chronicles written during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries illustrate these influences and

expressions as well as show the changing face of chivalry and warfare over the course of this era. Through the study of these works we will find that chivalry was not, as Huizinga claimed, merely a cultural phenomenon that was becoming more and more divorced from the harsh realities of war as the Middle Ages progressed. Rather, we shall see that chivalry remained at "once a cultural and social phenomenon, which retained its vigor because it remained relevant to the social and political realities of the time."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Keen, p. 217.

### **Chivalry in Mock and Real Combat in Western Europe and the Changing Face of Chivalry**

As the social and political climate of the central Middle Ages developed and changed, so did the technology, tactics and strategies of medieval warfare. Therefore, new social institutions and values arose to accommodate these developments. One such institution that emerged during this time of change was the tournament. It served an important chivalric and military function throughout the Middle Ages.

With no standing armies or institutionalized training for knights, tourneys arose during the period between the late eleventh and early twelfth century as a means of practicing the new form of mounted shock combat, the couched lance style. Throughout this era, mock combat and martial training were practically inseparable from one another. Tournaments trained knights in the use of the sword, the heavier longer lance and in horsemanship so that they could guarantee the ability to maintain close ranks during a charge. Tourneys also provided opportunities for men to display their martial prowess during periods of peace and truce, to earn booty and possibly patronage, and allowed men to practice fighting in groups with those whom they would fight beside in the event of 'real' combat.<sup>78</sup> Examination of the tournament *melee*, or mock battle between two teams, in the twelfth century make it clear that mock combat closely resembled real war. Men and horses were mutilated and killed just as they were in real combat.

In preparation for a tournament, the great lord or lords sponsoring the event would have it announced and widely publicized by messengers two to three weeks before hand. Knights would meet at a predetermined site which would cover a large amount of area, including open countryside and villages. There were no lists, only 'refuges' where knights were permitted to rest, disarm, nurse wounds or wait for friends, lords or vassals to pay a ransom if captured. If the tournament was to be effective training for real combat, the fighting had to resemble that of the battlefield. Combatants were usually divided into two

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<sup>78</sup>Barker, Juliet. **The Tournament in England 1000-1400**. Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1986, p. 4 and Vale, Malcolm. **War and Chivalry**. Georgia: Georgia University Press, 1981, p. 68.



teams based on their homelands or mutual lords, and no prohibitions existed for the use of particular weapons, although the sword and lance were the principal ones used. Jousts, or mock duels between two combatants, also emerged at this time. They often preceded the beginning of the tournament. It was only later, in the fifteenth century, that jousts began to take the form we recognize today, of two men approaching each other at full charge on the opposite sides of tilts, or barriers, erected between the lists. Earlier, it was very easy for the opponents horses to swerve away or into each other rendering the charge useless and more dangerous to both combatants. The primary individual objective of both of these tourney events was for the knight to unhorse and disable his opponent and to capture the equipment and perhaps a ransom from the unhorsed knight. Many more serious injuries, however, such as death, were usually incurred by participants.<sup>79</sup>

The dangerous nature of the tournament and the ease with which an enemy could purposefully inflict harm, caused intermittent prohibitions of the tournament from political authorities and consistent censure from ecclesiastical authorities. Secular authorities were concerned that the number of fatalities decreased the number of available troops in case of a real campaign. They also disliked tournaments because of the opportunity they provided for great men and their followers to organize plans of resistance against royal power.<sup>80</sup> While the clergy was also disappointed with the large number of fatalities incurred during a tournament, they also considered these events to be a 'misdirection of knightly energies' and censured them harshly by even going so far as to forbid the Christian burial of any knight who had died on the tourney field.<sup>81</sup> The continued growth and success of the tournament over the course of two centuries despite this condemnation from the authorities not only attests to the tournament's popularity and influence among the knights and their sovereign's inability to stop them,<sup>82</sup> but also provides us with further evidence for

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<sup>79</sup>Keen, p. 86-7.

<sup>80</sup>Keen, p. 97.

<sup>81</sup>Barker, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup>Vale, p. 68.

the earlier argument that "the development of chivalrous attitudes and values progressed independent of the official climate of ecclesiastical opinion."<sup>83</sup>

The many literary works composed during the period between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries not only mirror the danger of the tournament and its important military function and popularity, but they also show the important role that tournaments played in "generalizing both the standards and rituals of European chivalry."<sup>84</sup> The tournament's popularity drew men together from throughout Western Europe, spreading chivalric as well as martial ideas and conventions among their ranks.

We find the same patrons of this courtly and chivalric literature to be the patrons of tournaments as well, such as the great men Henry of Champagne, Henry the Young King and Richard I. Chivalric literature offers detailed accounts of these events written by men who understood the practices and ideals of chivalry as well as the sport. Chretien's romances make it clear that while having the opportunity to display wonderful acts of prowess, the tournaments of the twelfth century were very dangerous for knights as well. Participants ran the same risks in tournaments as they did in real combat. In *Erec et Enide* we witness fierce fighting at the tournament at Tenebroc.

On either side the ranks tremble, and a roar rises from the fight. The shock of lances is very great. Lances break and shields are riddled, the hauberks receive bumps and are torn asunder, saddles go empty and horsemen tumble, while the horses sweat and foam. Swords are quickly drawn on those who tumble noisily, and some run to receive the promise of a ransom, others to stave off this disgrace.<sup>85</sup>

Chretien also describes Erec's joust with the King of the Red City in this tournament and hails Erec's display of prowess in the encounter.

They both had fine arms, and strong swift horses, and good shields, fresh and new. With such fury they strike each other that both their lances fly in splinters. Never was their seen such a blow. They rush together with shields, arms and horses. But neither girth nor rein nor breast-strap could prevent the king from coming to earth. So he flew from his steed, carrying with him saddle and stirrup, and even the reins of his bridle in his hand. All those who witnessed the jousting were filled with amazement, and said it cost him dear to joust with such a goodly knight.

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<sup>83</sup>Keen, p. 81.

<sup>84</sup>Keen, p. 81.

<sup>85</sup>Chretien de Troyes, p. 28-9.

Erec did not wish to stop to capture either horse or rider, but rather to joust and distinguish himself in order that his prowess might appear.<sup>86</sup>

In courtly romances, the chivalric and martial display in tournaments are accurately mirrored despite their fictional characters and settings. They established the romantic chivalric ideal which knights were to emulate. Each of Chretien's heros were masters of the tourney. Even Galahad enjoyed and excelled at the sport despite the church's censure.<sup>87</sup> And although romances encouraged the possession of every chivalric virtue in those they reached, one can clearly see the importance of possessing prowess above all others. If a knight was unable to excel in the use of arms on the tourney or battlefield, he was of no use to anyone. Barker elaborates on the tremendous influence of romances by stating that

Chivalric literature no doubt reflected the preoccupations of knightly life in the twelfth century by featuring the tournament so prominently (often to the detriment of the story-line) but on the other hand the glorification of chivalric virtues best displayed in literary tournaments increased the prestige of tourneying in real life and inspired knights to perform great feats of arms modelled on those of romance heroes.<sup>88</sup>

The inspiration which the romantic ideal inspired can clearly be seen in the lives and actions of members of the knightly class. It is particularly evident in the biography of a twelfth century Norman English knight, William Marshal. This work provides ample evidence which attests to the danger and popularity of the tournament during this period, while depicting the Marshal as the Erec of his day, skilled in tourney and battlefield combat and possessor of every chivalric virtue. His biography proves that the artists who drew word portraits of the heros of their works "were clearly conscious of the existence of a conventional model of the *preux chevalier* to which the outlines of their picture should conform."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Chretien de Troyes, p. 29.

<sup>87</sup>Keen, p. 81.

<sup>88</sup>Barker, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup>Keen, p. 18.

*L'Histoire de Guillaume le Marechal*, was commissioned shortly after William's death in 1219 by his eldest son. The *trouveur* found to record the Marshal's life, Jean, wrote his verse in the speech of England's kings, the Angevin dialect of western France. It is the earliest biography still extant in this language and therefore one of the first monuments of French literature.<sup>90</sup> Although the author writes a panegyric which polishes William's memory and depicts him as the 'flower of chivalry' as he was employed to do, Jean is careful to indicate his many sources, such as the memories of the Marshal's close friend, John d'Erley, and to verify this information. What we are left with is a relatively accurate life of William Marshal and history of his times which vividly mirrors the culture of chivalry in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

Born around 1144, the fourth son of John Fitzgilbert, a lesser English baron, William Marshal was placed in the household of his cousin, the Count of Tankerville, a powerful baron of the lower Seine, as a youth in order to learn the knight's trade. After he was dubbed around his eighteenth birthday, William began to distinguish himself at tournaments throughout Francia. As a landless knight, he had to fight hard in order to gain booty to support himself and eventually gain the patronage of a great lord. Luckily, it was only a year later when through his courageous performance in the Poitou campaign he came to the attention of Henry II's queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Through her favor, he was charged with the care and martial training of her son and heir to the throne of the Angevin Empire, the young Henry.

As the leader of the young King's *mesnie*, William participated in many tournaments in France with his young master's troops as the sport was prohibited in England during the reigns of Henrys I and II. It was not until the reign of Richard I that the sport was formally introduced to England. William must have played a part also in the young Henry's revolt of 1173-4, but we know little about his role. All that is certain is

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<sup>90</sup>Duby, *William Marshal*, p. 30.

that through his martial prowess, he gained wealth and prestige at tournaments, but remained a landless knight dependant on the patronage of his lord.

It was not until after he returned from fulfilling the young King's crusading vow in 1189, which he had sworn to do upon his lord's death, that he was finally given leave by Richard to marry the wealthy Isabel de Clare, heiress to the earldom of Pembroke, and thereby became a great feudal lord with fiefs in Normandy, England, Wales and Ireland. William was finally given the title and benefits which his service to the Plantagenets and renowned knightly prowess deserved. In his late forties, William had finally become a landed, titled knight, no longer dependant on living from tournament to tournament.

Under the reigns of Richard and John, William played a part in high politics and when he died in 1219, he was practically regent, *rector regis et regni*, for the young Henry III. From landless knight to powerful and influential feudal lord, William's is the story of a successful knight errant in the late twelfth century. His biography makes it clear that the pattern of chivalrous living which had been established by romances was well established. The young knight errant seeking fame, fortune, and adventure on the tourney field, battle field and in far off lands; this was the pattern of chivalric knightly pursuits. We see in the history of William Marshal that this pattern of living and the possession of the chivalric qualities which Jean hails in William, such as those of prowess, loyalty, courtesy, and largess, are not only found in knightly fiction but in knightly living as well.<sup>91</sup>

The *Histoire* provides us with many examples of William as the flower of twelfth century chivalry. If the extent of William's martial prowess and fame are not evident when both the Count of Flanders and Duke of Burgundy offer him lands and a pension for his service in 1182, the author provides us with numerous combat scenes in which we can see his martial talents first hand.<sup>92</sup> One of the most vivid tournament descriptions through

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<sup>91</sup>Keen, p. 20-1.

<sup>92</sup>*L'histoire de Guillaume le Marechal, comte de Striguil et de Pembroke*. trans. Paul Meyer. Paris, 1891-1901, II. 5940-6170, 6260-84.

which we see both the danger of mock combat as well as the Marshal's prowess, is of the tourney of Lagny.

Here you could hear the clash  
of lance against lance, the pieces  
falling so thick upon the ground  
the horses would not charge...  
On all sides were horses to be seen  
running and sweating with dread,  
prowess is quickly seen and shown...  
Upon him, [William] as in battle,  
they flung themselves to the assault  
and he defended himself against them,  
all that he strikes, he strikes down,  
cracks shields, splits helmets.  
So mightily did William Marshal fight  
that none of those who were there  
knew what had become of the king.  
Later on, the king was to say,  
and all those who had seen him,  
and those who heard speak of him,  
that never was such a feat seen  
or hears of from a single knight,  
finer than the marshal's on that day.  
The best men praised him mightily.<sup>93</sup>

Like the hero of a chivalric romance, William's actions are singled out and his prowess hailed. The tournament accounts in this historical source, which parallel those found in romances, reveals what dangerous affairs they really were and the accuracy of fictitious combat descriptions while emphasizing the importance of a knight's prowess.

The Marshal's additional chivalric virtues of courtesy and largesse are highlighted during the account of his actions at the tournament of Yonne, Joigny. Prior to the tourney, William entertained the knights and ladies with a song. Then, on the tourney field, encouraged by the eyes of the ladies present and the plea of a young minstrel for a good horse, William proceeded to engage and dismount the first knight of the opposing party on the field and present his horse to the minstrel.<sup>94</sup> At this one tournament, the Marshal exemplified the courtly virtues of courtesy, prowess and largesse. The *Histoire*

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<sup>93</sup>Duby. William Marshal. citing the *Histoire*, p. 105-6.

<sup>94</sup>*Histoire*, ll. 3426-3562.

vividly mirrors the chivalric culture, society, combat and politics of twelfth century England and France.

Without this legacy, our knowledge of the beginnings of the tournament and the chivalric society and culture which surrounded its formation and development would be minute. The evidence gleaned from this work supports Keen's argument that tournaments assisted in the creation and diffusion of chivalric culture and ideals because of their popularity and attraction for knight errants, great lords, jonglers and minstrels from far and wide.<sup>95</sup>

During the period following William Marshal's career, many changes and developments occurred in the form of the tournament as well as in the resulting expression of society. Through an examination of the form of the tournament in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we shall prove Keen and Barker's argument that although the appearance and conventions of the tournament and chivalry changed and developed as the centuries progressed, tourneying remained "as central to chivalric life and culture at the end of the fourteenth century as it had been in the twelfth."<sup>96</sup> Their studies negate "Huizinga's conclusion that the tournament's character as 'a contest of force and courage had been almost obliterated by its romantic purport' in the later Middle Ages." For Keen and Barker, the tournament had not "become a 'hollow pastime,' part of a code of chivalry which was 'a ridiculous anachronism, a piece of fictitious making-up.'"<sup>97</sup>

In the thirteenth century, the tournament became more regulated and ceremonious and therefore more distinguishable from real war. Although the tourney continued to be quite a dangerous affair, the extent of the ferocity seen in earlier tournaments did begin to abate. These events increasingly became a spectator sport at which the presence of ladies and other non-combatants was common. The influence of the presence of the gentler sex

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<sup>95</sup>Keen, p. 100.

<sup>96</sup>Barker, p. 16.

<sup>97</sup>Vale, p. 64 referring to J. Huizinga. *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. tr. F. Hopman. Harmondsworth, 1965, p. 77, 125.

and the desire of knights to imitate romance and display their courtesy, combined to increase the pageantry and ceremony of the tourney. Elaborate costumes were worn and role playing and masking became more prevalent. Extensive rules were also developed governing the sport, from limiting the number of participants on each team, to the use of bated weapons, *a plaisance*, rather than *a outrance*.<sup>98</sup> More emphasis was also placed on the individual joust rather than the tourney for the masses during this period as well because they offered a better opportunity for a knight to prove his prowess in the open rather than having to work to be noticed in the *melee*. This was somewhat to the detriment of martial training because although proficiency in the use of a lance was needed by all knights, the *melee* mirrored actual combat situations more vividly. As fewer number of combatants participated in the later tourneys because of rising costs due to the pageantry and limitations in the number of participants set by political authorities, tournament participants were a much more elite court-centered group in the later Middle Ages.<sup>99</sup>

Despite these changes in the form and expression of the tournament, many of its features remained the same. Knightly enthusiasm for the tournament continued to depend on the opportunity for knights to win renown and approval and the chance to gain training and practice in military techniques. And although tourneys did become more elite events, essentially the same sort of knights, with common backgrounds and upbringing, participated in later tournaments as did the participants in the earlier events. The tremendous hold which tourneying had on the knightly classes is seen in the growth and survival of the sport despite constant censure from both church and state. This was predominately due to the chivalric ideology exemplified and spread by the glorification of the tournament in the romance. Without it, the tourney may have been successfully suppressed. "With it, the tournament became not simply a military exercise but rather a

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<sup>98</sup>Barker, p. 111-2.

<sup>99</sup>Barker, p. 188-9.



celebration of all the values that chivalrous society held dear. The principles of courtly love, gentlemanly behavior and courage in adversity were carried over into a wider sphere of influence, but nowhere were they so strongly defined as in the [tournament]."<sup>100</sup>

We must now examine the ways in which knights expressed the martial and chivalric training they received on the tourney field on the battle field. Although it was more difficult for knight to fit into the ideal chivalric mold during real combat than in tourney combat, we shall see that despite the brutal fighting which they participated in, chivalry had not become divorced from the harsh realities of the period. Through an examination of historical literature which mirrors real combat as it was in Western Europe during the central Middle Ages, we continue to see the important relationship between chivalric ideals and their expression in war and society just as we had in romantic and historical tournament accounts and how these knights reconciled the brutalities of real combat with the cult of chivalry.

### *Chivalry and War*

As the power struggles between the Plantagenets and Capetians continued throughout the twelfth century, political tension and martial strife increased in Francia and England. More than ever these great lords needed available, capable, and preferably seasoned knights. Unfortunately for Henry II, however, the unrest within his own kingdom in the later part of the twelfth century almost helped the Capetians to achieve their goal of placing these vassals firmly under their thumbs once again. Henry II successfully created a strong central monarchy efficient in governing the vast Angevin Empire he acquired with its domains in England and Francia. Henry knew that it was essential for his domain to be ruled by a strong monarch if it was to withstand and survive

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<sup>100</sup>Barker, p. 190.

the machinations of his enemies. But Henry could "neither bring himself to delegate that power in an efficient and equitable manner, nor to encourage the prince's [his son's] interests in affairs other than high politics."<sup>101</sup> His sons and wife revolted against him in 1173, triggering a greater war involving the kings of France and Scotland, counts of Flanders, Boulogne and Blois and rebels throughout England, Brittany, Aquitaine and Anjou.

The revolt was instigated by his eldest son, the young king Henry, lord of William Marshal, who dissatisfied with his empty title of king was encouraged by his father-in-law, Louis VII of France, to demand corresponding power to match his station. The young Henry found eager barons on both sides of the channel willing to help him gain control of the throne and who yearned for the old freedom they had enjoyed before the strong central monarchy asserted its power under Henry II. Just after Easter in 1173, the young king led his brothers, fellow rebels, and enemies of his father into war.

The events of the ensuing revolt, primarily those occurring during the war between the Scots and English, was recorded by a contemporary in rhymed verse. His account is hailed as accomplishing the feat of achieving "historical accuracy with literary merit, a combination rarely found in works of the late twelfth century or indeed of any century."<sup>102</sup> This clever vernacular poem, composed in the Anglo-Norman dialect, is a straightforward history written by one who had some knowledge of the "symmetrical and numerical composition practiced in medieval Latin."<sup>103</sup> Although the definitive authorship of the work is unknown, credit is commonly given to Jordan Fantosme, a clerk of the bishop of Winchester, whose name appears on the surviving manuscripts. The accuracy of his account, and the favorable way in which he addresses and refers to King Henry II as the "Noble king of England" suggests that he existed on the fringes of the royal court, and

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<sup>101</sup>Barber, Richard. **Henry Plantagenet**. Barrie & Rockcliff, Ltd.: London, 1964,p. 123.

<sup>102</sup>MacDonald, Iain. "The Chronicle of Jordan Fantosme." **Studies in Medieval French**. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961, p. 242.

<sup>103</sup>**Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle**. trans. R.C. Johnston. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, p. xx.

although biased in his point of view, an eyewitness to most of the events which he recorded.<sup>104</sup>

As a historical source and literary achievement, the work has advantages and disadvantages. Because little is known of the author, other than that he was present during the events which he recorded, it is impossible to pinpoint the exact circumstances under which he acquired his information and his motivations for writing this historical poem. He may have wanted these events to serve as lessons for future generations, or he may have wanted to exculpate and uplift the name of Henry II in the midst of this harsh opposition. What we do know is that given the metrical restraints Fantosme placed upon himself, the accuracy of his account is surprising. It is only occasionally, under the confines of his art, that Fantosme, like Ambroise, exaggerated numerical amounts, such as when citing the number of troops in the field at a given moment, in order to denote important events rather than in an attempt to provide his readers with accurate figures. He also slightly embellishes his work by placing dialogue into the mouths of kings and princes throughout the work. Besides these obvious literary devices, embellishments and prejudices, however, Fantosme's chronicle is a straightforward political and military history of the war between the Scots and the English contained within the revolt of 1173-74.

The political historian or reader interested in the accomplishments of correspondence, conferences, and councils conducted during the campaigns gain much from this account. Fantosme offers much insight into the roles of the royal personalities. His work is unique from the others we have examined thus far in the small amount of space which is devoted to illustrating martial combat and displays of chivalry. But although Fantosme is more concerned with poetic meter and the political sequence of events during the revolt rather than in detailing battles and chivalric displays for the

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<sup>104</sup>Johnston, p. xx.

reader, those few passages in which he does provide these illustrations offer us much insight.

In *laisse* 16 of the chronicle, Fantosme provides us with a view of the use of mercenary troops in Henry's army. Gillingham argues that one of the reasons Henry was victorious over the coalition was because "as the richest king in western Europe, he had the cash resources which enabled him to hire mercenaries - usually known as Brabancons or routiers - on a scale which his enemies could not match."<sup>105</sup> Verbruggen notes that Fantosme's mention of the use of Brabancons by Henry in the revolt of 1173-1174 is the first explicit mention of their use by English sources.<sup>106</sup>

Keen explains that the costs of war and the lure of booty as well as the need of the great lords for more martial power, led to the rise in the demand for unaffiliated knights who were free for hire to the highest bidder. Twelfth century contemporaries saw mercenaries as the foil to the chivalric ideal because they intentionally killed "gentleman" knights rather than occasionally attempting to merely unhorse them in battle. Mercenaries also fought for any patron to acquire renown, wealth and loot rather than remaining loyal to one lord in order to achieve glory as ideal knight did.

Keen observes that despite these conceptions, these two types of knights were actually more alike than they appeared. Both mercenaries and gentlemen knights sought patrons who would support them in the pursuit of exercising their martial prowess in battle whenever the opportunity arose. And "ideal" knights as well as mercenaries did not hesitate to loot and pillage during a campaign when the opportunity arose. But because of the inconsistent nature of the status of their employment, Brabancons were more prone to living off the countryside during times of peace and truce than were the gentlemen knights

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<sup>105</sup>Gillingham, John. *The Angevin Empire*. Holmes & Meier: New York, 1984, p. 30.

<sup>106</sup>Verbruggen, J.F. *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages from the Eighth Century to 1340*. North-Holland: Amsterdam, 1979, p. 119.

whose patronage was more consistent. Nevertheless, these two groups of knights were the same in conduct, calculation and motivation.<sup>107</sup>

Besides illustrating Henry II's effective use of mercenary troops, Fantosme also illustrates the effective use of cavalry by the English loyalists during the battle of Fornham. The Earl of Leicester's army was shattered during this engagement by Henry's force which possessed a superior number of cavalry despite Leicester's much larger force which was comprised predominately of Flemish foot soldiers. We also see the role of the common villein in the revolt illustrated during this battle. In *laisse* 107, Fantosme explains that "In all the countryside there was neither villein nor peasant who did not go after the Flemings with fork and flial (sic.) to destroy them." He continues in *laisse* 108 by stating that the "knights in armour busied themselves with nothing more than knocking [the enemy] down and the villeins did the killing."

Fantosme continues to provide us with more insight into the horrors and dangers of medieval combat for innocents as well as combatants throughout the work. In *laisse* 118, Fantosme relates the atrocities committed by the Flemish knights as they moved through the English countryside. "You could have seen the Flemings tying up peasants and leading them roped off together like heathens. Women flee to the church only to be snatched away naked, leaving behind their garments and their valuables." But Fantosme also illustrates and praises the chivalric displays of knights in combat who fought loyally for Henry against the atrocious rebels. In *laisse* 155, he tells of a knight's brave stand against William's besiegers at Brough. He explains that

a newly dubbed knight had come amongst them that day. Now hear of his deeds and mighty acts! After his companions had surrendered, he remained in the tower and took two shields and hung them over the battlements. He held out for a long time and hurled three sharp javelins at the Scots and killed one of them with each of the javelins. Having no more of those, he picked up pointed stakes and hurled them at the Scots, and did them much mischief. And all the time he cries out: 'You'll all be defeated yet!' There never was a better battle fought by any lone knight!

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<sup>107</sup>Keen, p. 229-30.

It is evident in this example, that although Fantosme was not interested in noting the cultural trappings of the cult of chivalry on knights, such as beautiful costumes and displays of courtesy in combat, he was very concerned about recording the extent of a knight's prowess. The display of this ideal of the cult of chivalry during real combat was necessary above, and sometimes to the exclusion to, all others.

As we can see, Jordan Fantosme's chronicle accurately mirrors the military practices and trends as well as the expression of chivalric ideals in the real combat of the twelfth century. Although his battle accounts are not as detailed as combat descriptions in romances, Fantosme's work hails knightly bravery, loyalty and above all prowess, as avidly as Chretien. He also emphasizes the importance of a well organized force of calvary in real combat whose training and participation in tournaments was emphasized in the romance. Without this historical account depicting actual campaigns and combat, the application and expression of knightly martial and chivalric knowledge during the revolt of 1173-74 would be lost.

The primacy of prowess and the importance of having a well organized cavalry troop in battle is also seen at Bouvines in 1214 where the Plantagenet's tremendous power and possessions in Francia were removed forever. Phillip Augustus was much more capable in exploiting the quarrels among the Plantagenets than his father had been. Whether it was in pitting John against Richard or Arthur against John, Phillip was always there to assist Plantagenet in antagonizing one another.

With the dawn of the thirteenth century, Phillip was also presented with an opportunity to legally take possession of the Plantagenet possessions in France that was never available to his father. Through neglect and obstinacy on John's part, Phillip was able to claim that he had failed to do proper service for the lands he held from Phillip by not attending his suzerain's court when summoned. Phillip's court thus ruled according to feudal law and custom that John's lands were to be confiscated by the crown and Phillip wasted no time in working to enforce this judgment.

Although the Anglo-Norman feudal barony refused to assist John in the defense and recapture of his continental territory, he employed a vast number of mercenary troops and made powerful alliances with mutual enemies of Phillip's, Raymond, Count of Toulouse, Emperor Otto IV, Renaud de Dammartin and Ferrand, Count of Flanders. Nevertheless, despite this assistance, in only two years (1212-1214) the whole of Normandy was lost to Phillip.<sup>108</sup>

The climax of the war between the allies and the French king at which Phillip secured his victory, occurred at Bouvines on Sunday 27 July 1214. Thirteenth century martial and chivalric expression is exemplified during this exchange of blows. Bouvines provides more evidence for the argument that chivalry was truly secular in nature and that in real warfare, knightly display of prowess was of primary importance. While the atrocities which knights committed during combat were generally not Christian or chivalric, we shall see at Bouvines how knights could remain to be enthusiastic members of the cults of Christianity and chivalry while practicing their brutal profession.

In July of 1214, although John had suffered heavy losses in Francia, all was not yet lost if the allies could only defeat Phillip Augustus's force in the north. In order to divide and weaken Phillip's forces, John planned a simultaneous attack in which he would strike in the south and the allies under the Emperor's leadership would strike Phillip in the north. The fate of John's plans, however, were abruptly sealed at Bouvines on 27 July. On this day, each leader sought to fight a true *bellum*, which was a battle fought in order to "obtain a definitive decision over important objective. As a wager of total victory or loss, it was considered, in the final analysis. a judgment of God."<sup>109</sup>

Rather than waiting for Sunday to pass, which was a day Christians were forbidden to fight, and preparing and organizing his troops further, Otto moved his troops northwest

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<sup>108</sup>Davis, R.H.C. **A History of Medieval Europe**. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1985, p. 297.

<sup>109</sup>Baldwin, John. **The Government of Phillip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages**. Berkely: University of California Press, 1986, p. 215.

in order to intercept and engage Phillip's force as the king of France moved to cross the river Marq at the bridge of Bouvines. Phillip prepared to meet this challenge like a true chivalric Christian hero. He donned his beautiful armor and mounted his steed as though prepared to attend a "wedding feast." With Oriflamme, the flag of St. Denis, the patron saint of France and Capetain line, waving above his head, Phillip spoke to his troops. He asked them to fight heartily against these excommunicated enemies of the church who chose to fight on a holy day.<sup>110</sup> Phillip conveniently made this battle appear to be a holy war in which God would intervene on the side of the righteous to further justify this Battle against fellow Christians and to motivate his force.

The religious justification of this conflict fought to achieve or retain worldly power, glory and wealth as well as the decision for the battle to be fought on a Sunday shows how truly secular chivalry was. These knights were Christian soldiers merely because they were soldier and Christian. As in any conflict, including the crusades, their true motivation was worldly not spiritual gain. They felt perfectly comfortable in using God and the church to justify their purposes when convenient, or to side step its rules when it was not in order to achieve wealth and renown in this world rather than the next.

In Otto's haste to catch up with Phillip, he made some very devastating mistakes. The allies took the Roman military road which connected Mortagne and Tournai in hopes of saving time. They realized too late that because of the confines of the narrow road and the terrain, the cavalry was confined to marching in a slow thin column and therefore could not spread out in order to reach its goal more quickly. And although the allies gained a superior position and had superior number on the field at Bouvines, they were unable to utilize either because they arrived late to find themselves facing a well organized and prepared force with the sun in their eyes. There was no time to organize the allied force into tactical units and Phillip took full advantage of this situation.

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<sup>110</sup>baldwin, p. 216.



Phillip's force immediately issued an organized charge of lightly armored cavalry and although it was not effective in damaging the allies overmuch, it did further hinder the allied foot troops' ability to organize and prepare themselves to receive and counter the attack. This was not a tourney style battle, individual duels were sparse and the knights were out to maim and kill with tremendous enthusiasm. In essence, "the battle of Bouvines was an engagement between tactical units, between organized formations of horse and foot fighting units."<sup>111</sup>

While instances of chivalry were marked and hailed by the battle's chronicler, William the Breton, the illustration of the horrors of war and displays of prowess were more prevalent than anything else. We do not see demonstrations of Christian mercy or courtesy which would not assist the knights in achieving the victory they each sought but rather we see that they chose to personify those chivalric virtues which were essential for success in combat, such as loyalty to one's secular lord and the ability to display prowess. We see individual instances of chivalric gestures made by those such as the Count of St. Pol's placed himself in mortal danger to save one of his men, and Hugh of Maleveine, who when he was unhorsed, continued to fight on foot just as hard as they had in the saddle.<sup>112</sup> These were truly displays of prowess. These knights did not personify the aristocratic dictates of chivalry that they learned in court and on the tourney field such as largess and courtesy which dictated the proper social behavior for a knight and set them apart as an aristocratic class. On the tourney field, it was not approved of if knight fought on foot like a member of the lower class whether their lives and victory were on the line or not. These knights easily placed those lessons aside in order to achieve victory through prowess on the battlefield.

We also see at Bouvines evidence of the tremendous animosity which Phillip and John's forces held for each other as well as the gruesome brutality and more effective and

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<sup>111</sup>Verbruggen, p. 237.

<sup>112</sup>Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, p. 43.

aggressive tools with which they each fought to achieve victory. For example, when Eustace of Malenghin yelled out loud in the fray, "Death, death to the French!" the French began to surround him. "One stopped him and took hold of his head between his arm and his chest, then ripped his helmet off his head, while another struck him to his heart with a knife between the chin and the *ventaille* and made him feel through great pain of death with which he had threatened the French through great arrogance."<sup>113</sup>

We see the use of the more aggressive hooked and pointed tools added to the usual list of weapons at Bouvines, which was highly frowned upon by the flowers of chivalry. For these weapons were used not merely to unhorse and embarrass an opponent, but to kill him. They are much more effective and disruptive. As Duby explains,

"they disregard honor; they turn the rules of the game around. The hooks destroy the social order. With them, soldiers of low birth bring down from their mounts men of the highest ranks, they harpoon them by the edges of their armor and throw them in the dust - the hooks are the image of subversion itself. And then well-sharpened knives can penetrate the joints of the unhorsed knight's armor, reach up into the tenderness of the flesh and pierce it. In other words, they can kill, which is something not usually done amongst knights."<sup>114</sup>

The allies did not merely want to defeat Phillip at Bouvines, they wanted him dead. And although through the use of hooks they succeeded at unhorsing Phillip at one moment in the *melee*, it was Otto who fled from the fray when unhorsed by the French. As many of the allied leaders followed Otto in fleeing the battle and heavy losses continued as the allies were never able to engage their entire force due to lack of organization, Phillip gained his victory. John returned to England with the dissolution of his allied coalition after the defeat at Bouvines, never to leave the island again.<sup>115</sup>

At Bouvines in 1214 we see evidence that under the pretenses of chivalric and religious inspiration, knights in battle were purely motivated by the desire for victory and worldly gain and renown. They were able to justify not heeding many of the dictates of

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<sup>113</sup>Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, p. 42.

<sup>114</sup>Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, p. 17.

<sup>115</sup>Baldwin, p. 219.

the cults of chivalry and Christianity when it would have been to their detriment. Thus, at court it was appropriate to display Christian charity, courtesy and talent in the game of courtly love in order to achieve the approval of the ladies, but on the battlefield, only the personification of the chivalric virtues of prowess and loyalty was appropriate in achieving the victory and material goals at hand.

In the battle of Muret in 1213 during the Albigensian crusade in against the Cathar heretics in the Languedoc, we see once again the secular nature of the knightly ethic of chivalry, the primacy of prowess in battle, and the importance of a preparing a well organized cavalry force. At Muret as well as Bouvines, knights displayed their ability to easily pick and choose where and when to personify which Christian and chivalric virtues.

Once again, at the battle of Muret, religion was used as a tool and justification in order to disguise the true worldly ambitions of the knights involved. While the crusaders justified their gain of wealth and renown in the conquest of Southern France by arguing that they were fighting heretics and the protectors of heretics, the troubadours of Southern France were arguing that the pope should not use the crusade to stir up neighbor against neighbor while the real enemies - the Moslems - were left undisturbed in the Holy land.<sup>116</sup> Each faction wished to use religion to justify their actions and emotions.

We also see how secular chivalry truly was in the actions of Peter II of Aragon at Muret. Having just defeated Muslims on the Las Navas crusade, Peter was hailed as the champion of Christianity and the flower of chivalry in Western Europe. But as soon as a religious crusade threatened his interests on the northern border of his kingdom, he joined the side of the heretics, which was the army of his brother-in-law Raymond VI of Toulouse. Even when the representatives of the church attempted to persuade him to "abandon God's enemies" he dismissed them immediately. Once again, a knight's true secular motivations to fight for renown and wealth are revealed. As in other crusades,

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<sup>116</sup>Throop, Palmer, A. *Criticism of the Crusade*. Amsterdam: N.V. Swets & Zeitlinger, 1940, p. 35.

knights joined up not for indulgences or because of their duty to the church, those were just merely bonuses to the other opportunities available. Knights fought in the church's service primarily to benefit them in their worldly pursuits rather than their spiritual ones.

During the preparations and action of the battle, we once again witness the proper and misplaced applications of chivalric virtues. As the flower of chivalry that he is, Peter goes even further than Phillip did at Bouvines to completely personify this ethic. Successful in the game of courtly love, and true to chivalric form, Peter spends the night prior to the battle in the arms of his mistress. As he fulfils his Christian duty by attending mass in the morning, Peter can barely stand because he is so exhausted. Then he made an even more chivalric move than Phillip by donning the armor of a common knight and taking a place in the front of the force to lead it. And although Peter took the effort to emulate the chivalric ideals, he did not follow Phillip's example and abandon these chivalric trappings and pretensions in lieu of prowess during the battle. Like the allies at Bouvines, Peter had the advantages of both number and terrain but exploited neither. While he irresponsibly placed himself in front of his unorganized force, which was anticipating more of a tourney *melee* than a battle, Simon de Montfort and the crusader host stood ready to attack in battle array.<sup>117</sup>

While Simon was also an enthusiastic chivalric and Christian knight, he knew when to put aside the conventions of Christianity and chivalry in order to achieve victory in war. He organized his force into three squadrons and ordered them to charge in compact lines and not to dissipate during the hand to hand combat. In this way, Simon organized his fewer numbers to make an effective cavalry charge that when ordered, completely penetrated the enemy units. Unlike Peter who was unidentified at the front of the fray and therefore quickly killed, Simon knew the importance of a commander to stay with the reserve in order to survive so that he may continue to command his force and be prepared

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<sup>117</sup>Sumption, Johnathan *The Albigensian Crusade*. London: Faber & Faber, 1978, p.167.

to keep order after the charge. Therefore, it was Simon, rather than Peter, who was truly the model chivalric knight at Muret. Simon personified prowess in shattering "his enemies in a tactically well thought out and superbly executed attack"<sup>118</sup>

Muret, like Bouvines, mirrors the realities of thirteenth century warfare, society and chivalry. Although knights continued to be enthusiastic Christians and members of the cult of chivalry, they picked and chose from those aspects of each which they deemed appropriate to apply to their situation of the moment. While the personification of prowess was primary in both battles and tourneys, the victors of real combat knew that on the battlefield it was important to effectively organize their cavalry and to teach them that it was not only important to disable their opponents, but to kill them. This goal was to be achieved in any manner possible, whether it meant fighting on foot or fighting with equipment other than the lance and sword. The object of both forces on the battlefield and on the tourney field was to win, but on the battle field, there might not be a next time, and the object was to win for keeps.

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<sup>118</sup>Verbruggen, p. 252.

### Conclusion

Thus our study has proved the validity of Keen's argument that "Chivalry essentially was the secular code of honour of a martially oriented aristocracy."<sup>119</sup> Its origins were in the social code of honor of the earliest pre-Christian warrior groups. The knights of the Middle Ages, like the warriors, went in search of fame, fortune, and adventure, but religious priorities were not the driving force behind either group's actions. The pursuit of spiritual merit would have confounded their pursuits of martial glory and social esteem. Chivalry was Christian merely because it evolved within a Christian society. Although the societal, political and cultural conditions of the Middle Ages shaped chivalry and the ideals it emphasized, religion was not an elemental ingredient in its makeup.

The chivalric cult of martial values took form and strength from the fragmentation of the political and martial powers during a period which required a man to protect himself through his own resources or to seek the patronage of someone to who could provide resources and protection for him. This political fragmentation and the resulting fluid political boundaries assisted in the rapid spread of the cult of chivalry. Then the rise of institutions such as the court and the tournament helped to formalize the ideology, myths and rituals of this code turning it into an ethos which embodied this society and culture. Soon the stories of the chansons de geste and romances spread far and wide encouraging the emulation of the chivalric ideals.<sup>120</sup>

Although each member of the medieval aristocratic martial class became infused with the chivalric ethos, it did not blind them so much that they could not simultaneously aspire to achieve this ideal and adhere to the demands of their profession as well. They chose to be as chivalric as possible under given situations. Chivalry was not a garment these knights shed completely when it was hampering their actions, it was more like a set of accessories which they would pick and choose pieces from to wear when they were

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<sup>119</sup>Keen, p. 252.

<sup>120</sup>Keen, p. 252.

appropriate. But no matter that in certain situations some pieces were used more frequently than others, such as courtesy at court or prowess in battle, the complete cult of chivalry served many purposes in the Middle Ages.

Chivalry assisted in creating a class solidarity which helped to identify this aristocratic martial class from all other orders. It also reinforced that knights played a vital role in society. Although they engaged in brutal warfare, their individual martial talent and loyal service to their lords was needed in the face of the fragmented political, military and judicial powers of the period. Knights were not merely thugs who enjoyed participating in a good fight, they were the protectors of Christianity and womanhood as well. They deserved the acclaim and honor accorded to them, as the dangers and risks they faced were very real and often necessary.<sup>121</sup>

Chivalry was not divorced from the realities of war as Huizinga argued. These "harsh realities" instead "made it purposeful and useful for knights to hold up in contrast to them the chivalric ideal they distorted."<sup>122</sup> This ideal set an example for knights to follow so that they would remember the purpose of true and loyal chivalry, "dedicated to its traditional purpose of defending the weak and the common weal," in hopes that knights would not use chivalry merely as a tool with which to achieve status and fortune or be enveloped by the brutality of war.<sup>123</sup> And although the chivalric virtues of prowess, largesse, generosity, loyalty, and courtesy were sometimes impossible to reconcile with one another on the battlefield, together they formed an ideal which if the members of this martial class would seek to emulate, would lessen the atrocities of the day. This was the essence and beauty of the nature of chivalry.

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<sup>121</sup>Keen, p. 224.

<sup>122</sup>Keen, p. 237.

<sup>123</sup>Keen, p. 237.

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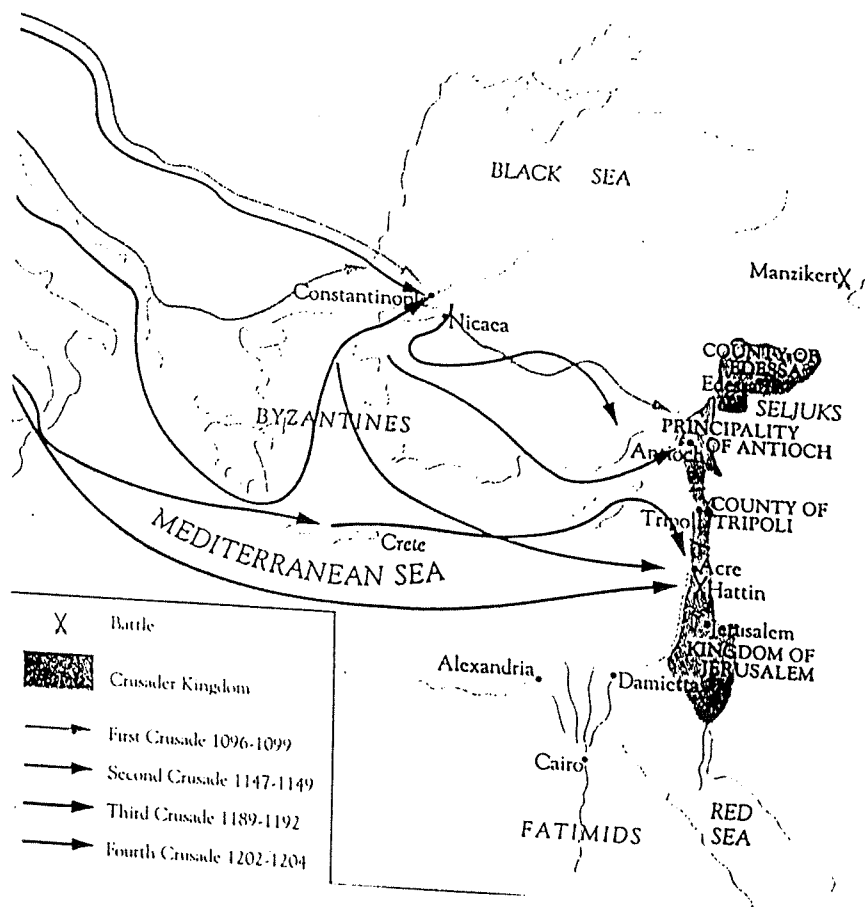
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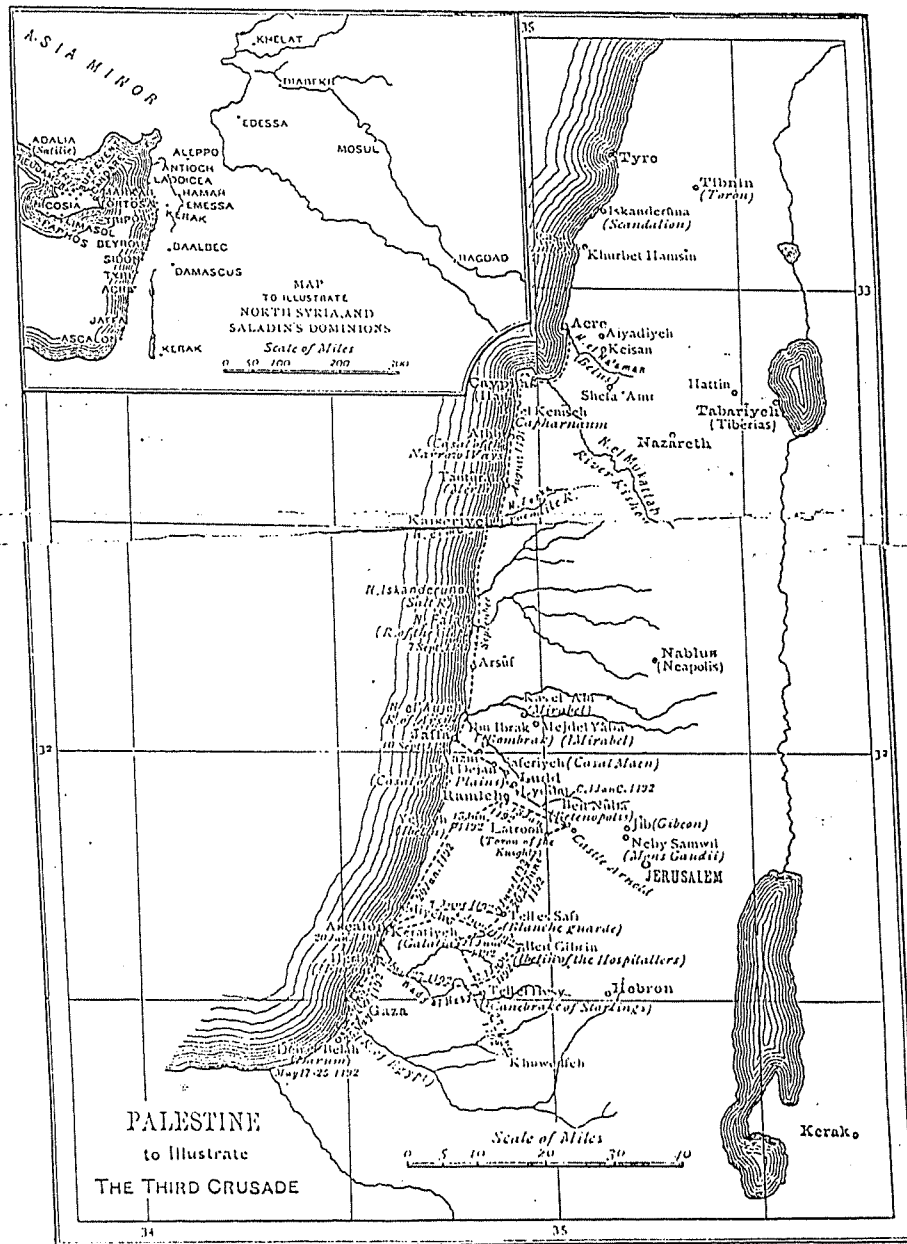
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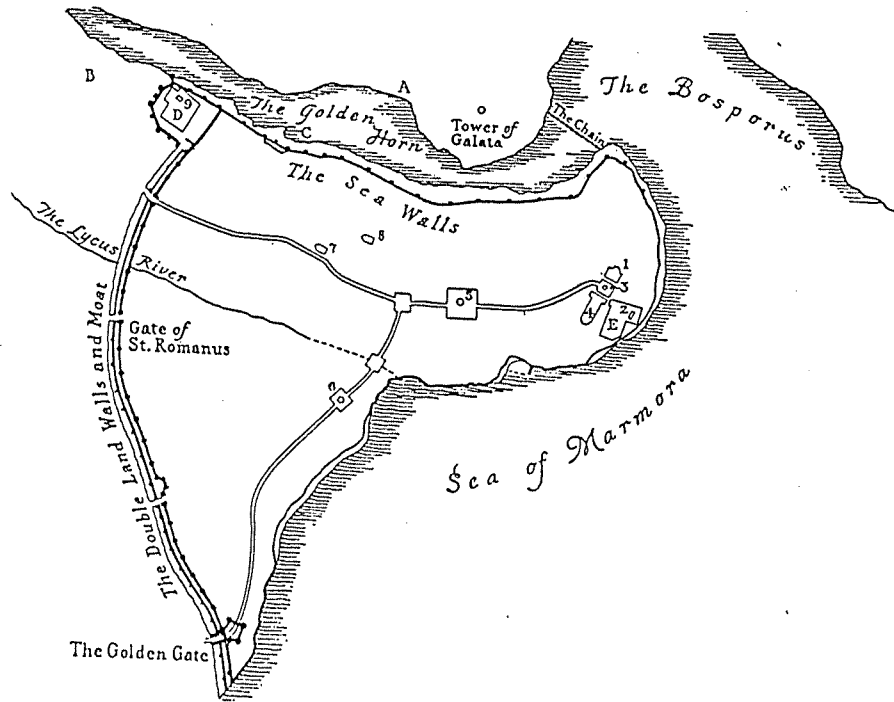
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## Maps



**Routes of the First through the Fourth Crusaders  
and the Crusader Kingdom**





### Robert's Constantinople

- A. Quarters of the Crusaders and Venetians across the Golden Horn
- B. Terrain of the Battle of July 17, 1203
- C. Place of the Great Attack on the Sea Walls, April 12, 1204
- D. The Palace of Blachernae
- E. The Great Palace (Boukolcon, Bouke de Lion)

1. Saint Sophia. 2. The Church of the Virgin of the Pharos (the Holy Chapel). 3. Column and Equestrian Statue of Justinian (Eracles the Emperor). 4. The Hippodrome (the Games of the Emperor). 5. Column of Theodosius. 6. Column of Arcadius. 7. The Church of the Holy Apostles. 8. The Church of Christ Pantocrator. 9. The Church of the Virgin of Blachernae.

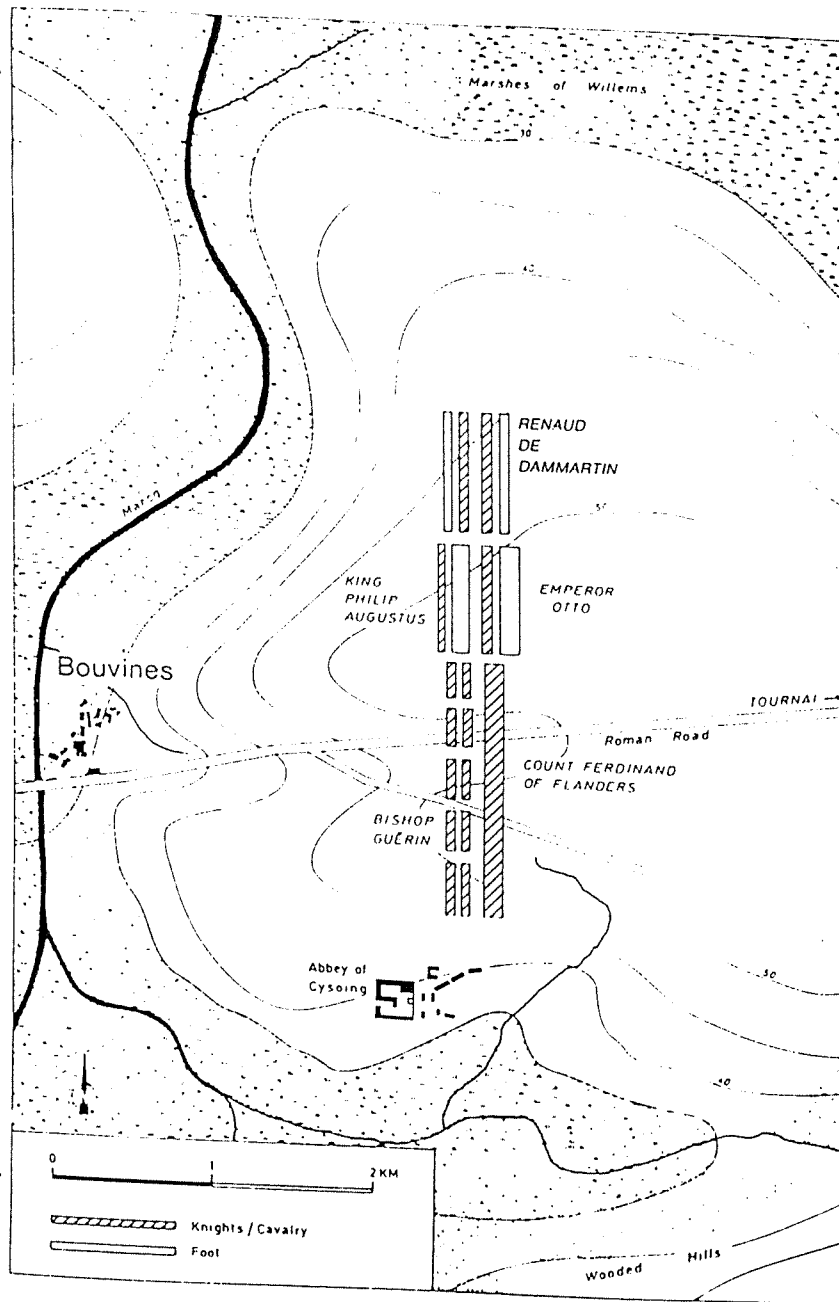
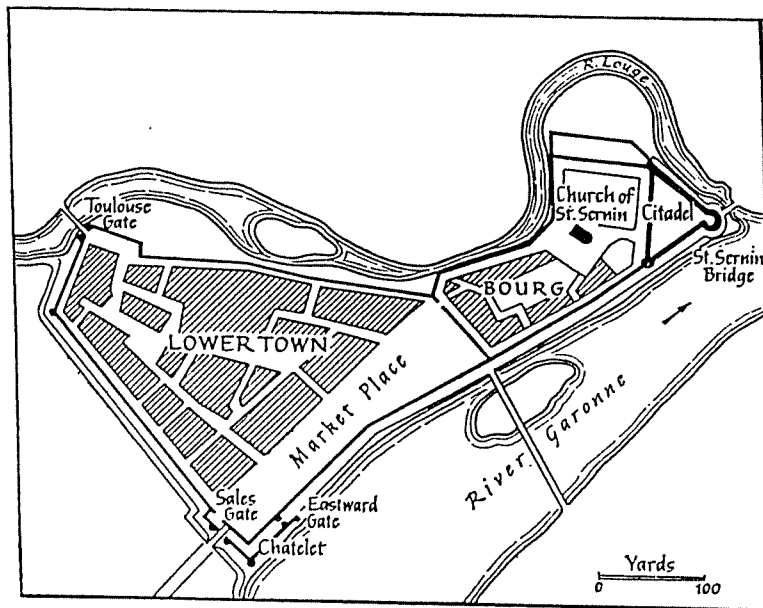
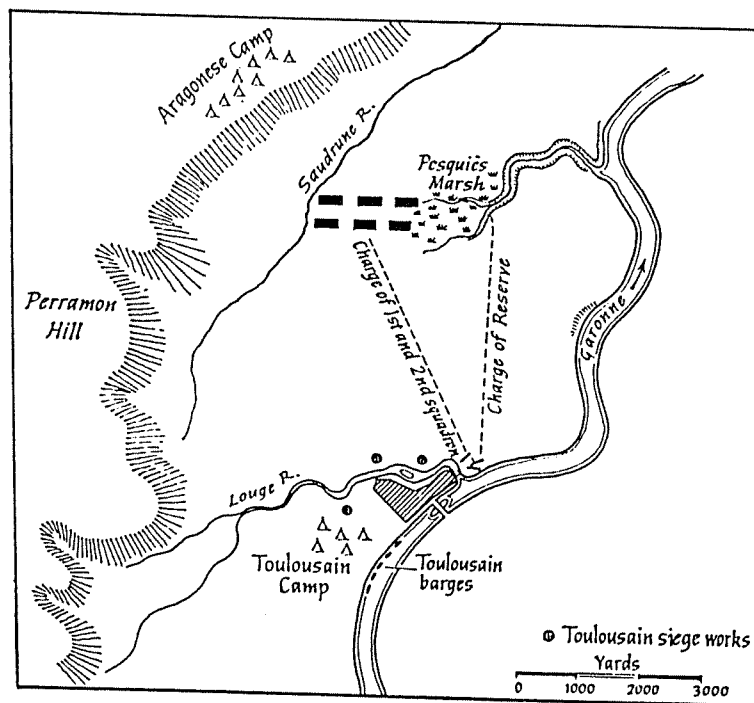


Fig. 4. Plan of the battle of Bouvines.



VII. Muret in 1213



VIII. Battle of Muret



