

TAMPEREEN YLIOPISTO

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STAINS ON SHINING ARMOUR:

Perceptions of chivalry and knighthood during the reign of Edward III, 1327-1377

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Satavuotinen sota alkoi vain hieman sen jälkeen kun Edward III oli noussut valtaan Englannissa 1300-luvun alkupuolella. Hänen valtakaudellaan ja vuosikymmeniä sen jälkeen ei Englannissa koettu kuin muutamia hetkittäisiä rauhanvuosia. Vaikka sodankäynti ei ollutkaan jatkuvaa, niin sodan tuomat verot, sotilaiden värväykset ja muut vaikeudet olivat enemmän tai vähemmän pysyvässä asemassa koko 1300-luvun ajan. Vastaavaa jatkuvaa sodankäynnin tilaa ei ollut koettu aiemmin keskiajalla ja se toi mukanaan monia ongelmia ja vaikeuksissa oleville yhteiskunnille. Ritarikulttuuri ja ritarillisuuden ideologia olivat yksi tämän ajan keskeisiä tekijöitä, muun muassa sodankäynnin keskeisen aseman vuoksi. Silti ritaritkaan eivät selvinneet ongelmitta tästä muutosten ja kriisien ajanjaksosta.

Tutkin Pro gradu työssäni ritareiden näkemystä ritarillisuudesta ja sen ilmenemismuodoista käytännötasolla. Ajallisesti olen valinnut rajoittaa tutkimuskohteen Edward III:n valtakautteen sillä se käsittää juuri sopivasti Satavuotisen sodan alun, samoin kuin suurimmat muutokset sodankäynnissä. Samalla se on myös tarpeeksi laaja että tämän uuden pitkäaikaisen sodan jatkuvat vaikutukset pääsevät näkyviin. Toisaalta Edward III:tta ja hänen poikaansa Walesin Prinssi Edwardia (tunnetaan myös nimellä Black Prince) pidettiin oman aikansa ritarillisimpina miehinä, joten heidän aikanaan ritarikulttuurilla on ollut suurempi merkitys, kuin esimerkiksi Edward III:n isän Edward II:n aikakaudella, jota pidettiin yleisesti ottaen hyvin huonona ritarina. Edward III toi valtakaudellaan muun muassa turnaukset ja muut ritarilliset kilpailut takaisin suosioon ja perusti Sukkanauharitarikunnan (Order of the Garter) kuningas Arthurin tarujen aatteisiin pohjautuen.

Tutkimuslähteinä käytin 1300-luvulla kirjoitettuja kronikoita, kuten Froissartin Kronikoita ja englantilaisen Sir Thomas Grey'n kirjoittamaan *Scalacronica* teosta, *Chandos' Herald* kronikkaa sekä otteita Geoffrey le Bakerin kronikasta. Vertailin näitä kronikoita toisiinsa saadakseni paremman kuvan siitä yleiskuvasta minkä ne ritarillisuudesta ja ritarien käytöksestä antavat. Samoin kronikoiden heijastamaa ajatusmaailmaa ja kuvaa analysoimalla halusin päästä käsiksi aikalaisten näkemykseen siitä kuinka ritarillisuus toimi käytännön tasolla. Kronikkalähteiden lisäksi käytin Geoffroi de Charnyn ja Ramon Llullin kirjoittamia ritarin käytösoppaita ritarillisuuden ideologian analysointiin. Näiden oppaiden ritarikuvaa ja ideologiaa vertaamalla kronikoiden teksteihin ja tapahtumiin pystyin täydentämään molempien ristiriitaisuuksia ja ongelmakohtia ja näin ollen saamaan kuvan siitä kuinka ritarit itse omaa käytöstään ja ritarillisuutta tarkastelivat.

Tutkimuksen aikana kävi selväksi että moderni kuva ritarillisuudesta on hyvinkin ristiriitainen ja monet asiat mitkä nykylukijalle vaikuttavat olevan vastoin ritarillisuuden periaatteita ovatkin vain modernista tulkinnasta johtuvia väärinkäsityksiä tai vajavaisia tulkintoja. Ritarillisuus 1300-luvulla oli hyvin vahvassa asemassa ritarien joukossa. Se oli vahvasti

rajoittunut ainoastaan ritarien yhteiskuntaluokkaan ja ritarillisuuden periaatteet eivät tuntuneet vaikuttavan muiden yhteiskuntaluokkien edustajiin. Tämä vallitseva ritarikulttuuri oli hyvinkin selkeästi määritelty ja kansallisuudesta riippumaton. Niin englantilaiset kuin ranskalaisetkin tuntuivat ymmärtävän yhteisen pelinsä säännöt, ja peli se myös olikin. Ritarillisuuden kaikki toimintaperiaatteet viittaavat vahvasti siihen että kunnia ja maine olivat päätavoitteita kaikessa ritarien toiminnassa. Tämä kunnia oli täysin riippuvaista toisten ihmisten ihailusta ja arvostuksesta, aina siihen pisteeseen asti että hyvillä töillä ja saavutuksilla ei ollut mitään merkitystä, jos niillä ei ollut todistajia. Koko ritarikulttuuri näyttää toimineen tämän saman yhteisöllisyyden periaatteella, asioiden arvo määräytyy puhtaasti muiden ihmisten näkemyksen ja mielipiteen mukaan. Näin ollen ritarien arvo oli täysin ympäristönsä määrittelmä. Heidän maineensa ei myöskään perustunut täysin heidän palvomansa taidon ja kunnian varassa vaan näistä seuranneiden tarinoiden varassa. Sillä ei ollut loppujen lopuksi merkitystä olivatko urotyöt todellisia vai eivät, maine kumpusi näistä urotöistä kerrotuista tarinoista. Vaikuttaakin siltä vaikutusvaltaisimmat ritarit olisivat hyvinkin voineet ottaa tästä täyden hyödyn irti manipuloimalla heistä kerrottavia tarinoita ja levittämällä uusia tarinoita ja huhuja. Yhteiskunnassa jossa suusta suuhun leviävät tarinat olivat nopein ja paras tapa levittää huhua ja jossa vain harvat oikeasti todistivat tarinoissa kerrottuja tapahtumia olisi ollut helppoa luoda itselleen uusia urotekoja ilman suurta pelkoa että ne todettaisiin vääriksi. Froissartin kronikoiden kuvaus Poitiersin taistelun jälkimainingeista antaakin aihetta epäillä että juuri tämä on kyseessä kun hän kertoo ilmeisestikin täysin fiktiivisen tarinan Walesin Prinssi Edwardista, jossa tämä esitetään ritarillisuuden perikuvana.

Ennen kaikkea ritarikulttuuri ja ritarillisuus 1300-luvulla oli hyvin monimutkainen järjestelmä joka alkoi aikansa ongelmien ja vuosisatojen perinteen alla vähitellen murtua. Ritarin roolin muuttuessa myös ritarillisuuden merkitys vähitellen väheni ja muuttui, mutta vielä tämän tutkimuksen aikavälillä se oli hyvinkin voimissaan. Ritarillisuus edusti ennen kaikkea aateliston yhteisiä pelisääntöjä, jotka kaikki tunnustivat ja osasivat käyttää hyväkseen parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla. Ritareiden vertaus nykyajan huippu-urheilijoihin tai muihin julkisuuden henkilöihin onkin oikein osuva. Heidän uransa perustui maineeseen ja yleiseen tunnettavuuteen ja vaaralliseen ”urheiluun” josta tämä maine ja kunnia oli peräisin. Ilman suuren yleisön ja vertaistensa tunnustusta he eivät olisi olleet mitään.

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1. Introduction

Knighthood and chivalry should be familiar concepts to everyone in Europe, if not in the world, regardless of his or her education everyone has heard something of it and has a few certain preconceptions to what chivalrous behaviour should be and what knights were. They are concepts widely used even today hundreds of years after the last knight fought with sword and spear in hand. Few ideals have influenced western ideology and thinking as much as chivalry, it has been with us and part of our honour codes in one form or another all the way from the Middle Ages up to present day. Obviously it has changed on the way, but the fact that people are still associating the words “chivalry” and “knight” to certain kind of politeness and honourable behaviour shows clearly enough how influential the idea has been in our culture. Knights are still prominently present in almost all kinds of media from cinema, to literature to computer games. Sports teams around the world call themselves “knights” showcasing their fighting spirit and skills, relating to the popular image of a man clad in steel. Similarly the culture and the values they represented are seen, as some kind of golden age of good manners, whether or not this was actually the case is a moot point. Social ideas and codes from king Arthur’s court are still considered valid and good. Arthur himself is at least as popular and known figure as is the knight who he represents. Chivalric literature is still used extensively in society, if the medieval stories themselves are not read directly then they are the inspiration or source for screenplays to movies starring the aforementioned Arthur. Even the modern pulp literature like romance novels draw heavily on the modern concepts of chivalry and the interaction between lovers.

Seeing how heavily ingrained the concepts of chivalry is to our society it is equally important to know where and how this concept came from. What was the chivalry like when knights were actual warriors on horseback riding through hordes of enemies, going on heroic quests and wooing the noble ladies in court, and not the players for a local ice hockey team in the 21st century? These questions are important in studying the history of knights and chivalry, as it is imperative to remember that the ideal has developed over the years as societies and their values have changed.

In this thesis I have chosen to examine the position and role of the knight in English society during the reign of Edward III from his ascension to the throne in 1327 to his death in 1377.

This period includes the beginnings of the Hundred Year's War and at the end of it the long term effects of this new long term warfare are already visible. Edward III and his son the Black Prince were also considered to be prime examples of chivalry during their time, as opposed to for example Edward II. Edward III brought tournaments back after being banned during the reign of his father, Edward II. He also founded the Order of the Garter on the same principles seen in Arthurian romances.

How did chivalry influence the life of a knight in the fourteenth century and how were the ideals of chivalry reflected in practice? Did they have any meaning at all or was this the golden age of chivalry? Many contemporary critics complained then, as their predecessors had done before, that chivalry was dead and the current practices were only a faint reminder of the days of glory. Was this sentiment accurate? I plan to examine how and what kind of chivalry existed in England during Edward III's reign at the beginning and during the early years of the Hundred Years' War. This war was one of the major events of the century, which shaped the lives of several generations. Together with several other disasters and crises that hit the fourteenth century it proved to be an unprecedented time of change not just for knights but also for the entire European society. During these years the knight started losing his position at the top of the military food chain and the various hardships were putting the ideology and organisation of the nobility to the test. I will examine how chivalry manifested during this time of strife and conflict. A cursory glance would suggest that this time should have been a golden age for the knights and their creed, with the Hundred Years' War providing ample opportunity and cause for all kinds of heroics and access to riches; in short everything a knight could have wanted. Yet it did not seem to be a golden age. As mentioned above, several writers were complaining about the morals and conduct of their contemporaries and lamenting for the death of chivalry. What then was chivalry at this time and did they knights live by it?

I will attempt to approach this question through several questions examining different facets of knighthood and chivalry in the following chapters. In chapter two, I will have a quick look at the social and economic conditions of the fourteenth century and what this meant to the knights. I will also examine some of the problems chivalry as an ideology presented to the knight trying to live up to this noble code. Chapter three will deal with the knight on a more personal level, examining his upbringing and the conditions in which they plied their trade. "How did chivalry reflect in the actions of individual knights and armies?" is a question I try

to find an answer during the chapter. The best way to find evidence of chivalry and its meaning is to examine the very people who claimed to live by it. Also how did the chivalric principles show in the behaviour of armies and their commanders? Lastly in chapter four I will examine chivalry and the way of life of knights from a social point of view. How did chivalry show in the society and what kind of behaviour did it incite? I will also further examine the doctrine of chivalry here. What did it actually expect from the knights and how realistic and practical were the expectations. Also how did the ideas of fourteenth century differ from earlier ideas? For this I have used *The Book of Chivalry* by Geoffroi de Charny, a fourteenth century knight and author of the mentioned a chivalric manual, as well as other texts relating to the practice of chivalry. For other source material for the research I have used chronicles written in the fourteenth century and Ramon Llull's *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry* has provided additional information on the ideology of chivalry as well as provided comparison to de Charny's book. I will try to answer all these questions through close analysis of the chronicles and by comparing these results to each others. Also comparing the worldview and actions portrayed by the chronicles to the ideal chivalric behaviour presented by de Charny I hope to gain a better understanding of the ways this ideal works. On the other hand, if it turns out that the chivalric ideal portrayed by de Charny is not compatible with the evidence from the chronicles and does not adequately explain the events depicted in them, it disproves my hypothesis that de Charny's view of chivalry is an actual representation of the contemporary ideals.

Due to the nature of the thesis as well as time and space restrictions I have had to cut out some fairly influential and potentially rewarding avenues of research while writing. Even though chivalric literature from the fourteenth century and before would have been very interesting to use as comparison and as additional source material for the thesis I have unfortunately had to leave it out, as it would have easily doubled the page count of this thesis, if had given it the full attention it deserves. So I chose not to include it more than in passing reference, as I believe that a single chapter would not have been enough to examine all that it has to offer.

Similarly contemporary art and sculptures would have been a very interesting avenue of research potentially very fruitful for evaluating ideals and how people wished others to see them in during their lifetime and after their deaths. The amount of surviving paintings, manuscript illustrations, sculptures and effigies, among other sources, is staggering and as

such it was not suitable corpus for research because of the amount of work that it would have taken to fully utilise it. Thus in this case as with literature I decided that it would be best to leave them out of this thesis, as I could not do justice to the source with the limited time I had.

Again as with both cases above with chronicles the surviving material from the fourteenth century is so large that I could not hope to include everything. Another complication with chronicles was that not all of them have survived whole and only a few sources have been translated to English. Even though the original Latin would not have been an insurmountable problem it would have again taken more time than was available and sensible considering the scope of this thesis. Last and not necessarily least of the complications with chronicles was the availability, as many of them were not available in Finland and acquiring them from abroad would have been prohibitively expensive. I chose a selection of chronicles that to me covered the issues of my research best and also provided enough overlap to make comparison between chronicles possible. I tried to keep the amount of chronicles and other primary sources from becoming too high, as it would have again increased the time required to finish the thesis and potentially harmed the quality of research if hurried.

Lastly, I left the role of religion in the lives knights and in the ideal of chivalry to a lesser role and concentrated more on the practical side of chivalry and knighthood as presented by de Charny in his book. Even though religion was an important factor in chivalric life it did not seem to play as great a role in the chivalric society as seen by de Charny. The Christian influence to chivalry was more an outside influence from the Church that tried to control the knights rather than something that the knights had adopted themselves. The chivalric theories and manuals that promote the importance of religion and the knight's divine role were written either by clergy or by some other party tied more to the Church than to knights. My intention in this thesis has been more to examine how knights live their own life and how they themselves saw chivalry, it was not necessary to also examine the influence of the Church, especially since de Charny's gives the impression that religion did not in fact play a big role in the lives of knights. That is not to say that they were atheists or unreligious, rather that the Church view of chivalry did not seem to match the practical chivalry implied by the writings of de Charny.

1.1. Previous research

Previous research in medieval knighthood can be roughly divided into two distinct areas of interest among scholars: military and chivalry. These two topics are quite dominant in the corpus of research in medieval knighthood. This should not be a surprise to any scholar of the Middle Ages, as this is what knights were all about. War being the whole purpose of their existence and chivalry clearly the most dominant ideology among them. Chivalric research seems to concentrate on the ideology and aspects of chivalry and while this often at least partly deals with military matters, the actual military history is either ignored or only referred to in passing. Military historians in turn seem to ignore the ideological aspects of medieval warfare and thus do not mention chivalric influence in warfare. For this reason I will discuss chivalric and military history separately, with notes when the research diverts from this trend.

Johan Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages* was first published in 1919 and by now it has become one of the most quoted and influential studies of the Middle Ages and knighthood. Even though numerous scholars have criticized his theories over the years and his theories have not held the test of time, it sparked the contemporary interest in medieval history and remains one of the most important books in medieval history. In this book Huizinga studies knighthood and chivalry from several different angles giving the basis and launching point to nearly all of the later research. He examines knight's relationship to chivalry as well as takes a look at the chivalric ideal itself. Another chapter is devoted to knight's military and political roles. From Huizinga's book contemporary research branched off to study all these features in detail. Maurice Keen's *History of Medieval Europe*¹ from 1968 took a similar approach to the topic and examined the overall development of medieval society, including the development of knighthood and chivalry, but again it was only a part of a larger context.

Due to its large scope knighthood and chivalry does not have a single point in time when it was most popular, this is reflected in the very fragmented field of research. Some books like Keen's and Huizinga's attempt to cover larger periods of time or larger parts of the society, but this means that their discussion of specific topics like chivalry and knighthood are either shallow or very detailed and only a part of a larger whole, leaving many open questions and leaving out many important issues.

¹ Republished as *The Pelican History of Medieval Europe*.

Social and economic history of the middle ages is one distinct group of later medieval history, which takes a look of knights and chivalry among many other things. It can be said to have started partly with Huizinga, but Marc Bloch wrote the most important piece of research in it. His *Feudal Society*, translated to English in 1961, examines knights and nobility as a social class and tries to explain how they functioned in the contemporary society. Power, politics and the various dependencies of feudal society are examined quite thoroughly. In similar vein Georges Duby, heavily influenced by Bloch and the Annales School, wrote *The Three Orders*, which examined the relations of the different social classes of the medieval period, including the nobility and knighthood. Rodney Hilton's *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism* continues in the spirit of Bloch and Duby and examines the social and economic history of the fourteenth century. Duby also wrote *The Chivalrous Society*, which deals with the nobility and knighthood as a social phenomenon and examines the social aspects of medieval nobility, its structure and relationships with the rest of the society. What it does not do is take any kind of positions in military matters and warfare. To Duby in these books the knight is only a representation of the general social conditions of the time. While both Bloch and Duby concentrate more on the continental Europe, Hilton studies the conditions in England. He also examines knighthood and chivalry in the larger context of economy and social conditions. This research concentrates more on the interaction of the nobility with peasants and their ties to each other, than to any military matter or ideology of chivalry. The common feature of this social history is that while it does involve chivalry and knighthood, it does not concentrate on it alone, the knight is always a member of a larger society he inhabits and is studied as such. Chivalry is interesting only in the ways it influences and interacts with the larger society. The main focus here has been the social ties and structures of the society and not as much the function of chivalry and knighthood on their own.

Combat is also a very major role in the life of the knight, so it is no surprise that this side of his life has been extensively studied as well. John Barnie's *War in Medieval Society* is equal parts history of war as it is social history in general. Barnie studies the social values of England during the Hundred Years' War. He examines how the Hundred Year's war influenced the values of chivalry and nationalism during the first six decades of war. For this research he incorporates contemporary literature as well as chronicles as source material and evidence. Barnie criticises previous research for ignoring the literature of the fourteenth century as source material. Apparently there had been no proper research done before Barnie

that utilised literature in its analysis of the Hundred Years' War, or other aspects of the century. Indeed this criticism could well be relevant today still. Even though the situation has improved from 1970's there is still unfortunately few studies that look at the literature for answers. Maurice Keen, who is one of the most influential contributors of medieval scholarship, has written a couple important volumes dealing with medieval war and combat. *Medieval Warfare* is a collection of articles from various authors edited by Keen, which is an overarching look at medieval warfare from the Carolingians to the Hundred Year's war and examines some facets of warfare in detail. The articles deal with practical issues of war instead of the more theoretical of ideological issues. For example Andrew Ayton examines the role of armoured cavalry medieval warfare, while Christopher Allmand studies the condition of non-combatants in the Middle Ages. Another very important piece of Keen's is *the Laws of War* from 1965, while medieval combat and warfare has been studied in detail over the years, Keen's discussion of the legal issues and underlying principles of medieval war is not something that has been studied in depth before. Here he examines the concept of just war outside of its usual Christian concept and concentrates on the legal side of it. The implications and consequences of this legal just war are explored and explained in detail and provide a very good picture of the background of medieval warfare, which provides answers to some very important problems in medieval warfare. Especially it sheds light to the motivations and justifications knights and their actions. It reveals the underlying differences between modern thinking and that of the medieval person and highlights how much medieval warfare really differed from its modern counterpart. Many apparent contradictions in chivalry and knightly behaviour can be explained by the theories presented by Keen. Clifford Rogers on the other hand is concentrating on very practical matters in medieval warfare. He specialises in the fourteenth century soldier and has written several good articles and books on the topic. *War Cruel and Sharp* is an in depth analysis of English military strategies under Edward III. It is an invaluable tool in imagining the knight as a soldier as it provides a good overall picture of the war that was waged in the Hundred Years' war. In the book Rogers analyses individual campaigns, battles and raids in great detail, and sheds light to the background of each as well as the tactics and motivations that led to the situation. This book is extraordinarily useful for anyone who needs to find out the specifics of certain battles in the period, it provides an excellent starting point for further research if nothing else. Another book of Rogers' is part of the series *Soldiers' Lives through History* and examines the medieval soldier in all his incarnations and aspects. Everything there is to know about the practical side of medieval soldiering from all the levels of the army hierarchy is detailed, as

well as an in depth analysis on army operations, maintenance and gathering the troops across different social levels.

Out of all the different aspects of knighthood, chivalry is certainly the best documented. Nearly every book and article written about the nobility in the Middle Ages also addresses the chivalry as well. This is not that surprising considering how deeply ingrained chivalry was in the culture of the medieval high society. Everyone had heard of it and every knight was compared to the knights of legend from literature and history. Like Maurice Keen, Richard Barber has published several important books in this field and both have a book that is considered essential to the research of chivalry. Barber's book *The Knight and Chivalry* is the older of the two books. Published in 1970 it attempts to examine chivalry from all sides and in all of its form. Barber considers the chivalric literature and practical aspects of chivalry like tournaments and warfare. He also looks at the relationship of chivalry with religion and the state. This ambitious book tries to make a comprehensive look at all the things that are chivalry and seems to succeed in it fairly well. Keen's book written a decade later in 1984 and plainly titled *Chivalry* is almost a continuation of Barbers book, in that it discusses similar ideas of chivalry, but from a more theoretical point of view as well as from a more individual level. Whereas Barber was describing chivalry in very general and terms and focusing on the whole of society, Keen's focus is more on the idea of chivalry and how it influenced society and where it came from. It also provides a comprehensive picture of chivalry and its history. While both books are important for any student of knighthood and chivalry, together they form the foundation of research in this field. It is unlikely that any book about chivalry published after 1984 goes without quoting one or both of these volumes. They form the basic idea of knighthood that modern research is based on and at least based on how extensively they are referred to in other publications in the field they are still as valid as they were two decades ago, so far no one has written anything as comprehensive as these books about chivalry or questioned the overall image painted by them.

Juliet Vale's book *Edward III and Chivalry* from 1982 is a unique look on the chivalric traditions of Edward III. She analyses the origins of the chivalric sentiment of Edward III and the background where he got the influences. Through the study of the English court at the time of Froissart she provides an important context for his writings and for future analysis of Froissart's texts as well as for the analysis for any other English texts of the time period. She

aims to provide a picture of “chivalric culture at Edward III’s court,”² which provides very good material to compare and exemplify the more general and impersonal theories. The detail and exact time span of Vale’s book is very different compared to most books about medieval chivalry, which tend to be more general and overarching books about chivalry as a whole. There are enough good books and theories explaining the development of chivalry over the whole of Middle Ages, but only a very few books that tackle the issues of specific time periods or people. There is very little to left to write about in the field of general history of chivalry in the Middle Ages, unless one claims that Barber and Keen are wrong and attempts to rewrite the history of European chivalry. Vale represents the new wave of research in chivalry, which is needed in order to gain new knowledge in a well-established field, that of more detailed examination of specific issues and situations. Similarly to Rogers’ analysis of Edward III’s military strategy, Vale attempts to examine Edward III’s chivalric background and ideals, as well as the ideals of his court. As already said, this kind of research creates opportunity for new analysis of Froissart and similar texts. With a better understanding of the contemporary context there is more and more detailed knowledge to be gained from these old sources.

Similarly to Vale, D’arcy Boulton takes a single aspect of the chivalric society and examines it in depth. *Knights of the Crown*, published in 1987, is an extensive history of the chivalric orders founded in the Middle Ages. In it Boulton systematically goes through several medieval chivalric orders and analyses their function and history in great detail. This account on the different orders is essential reading for anyone discussing said orders and provides an excellent launching point for deeper research.

Tournaments are another more specific feature of the Middle Ages that is directly tied to the life of knights. Similarly to chivalry in general there are numerous books on tournaments that examine virtually the same issues and questions, only in slightly different situations, while still attempting to build a comprehensive account of the history of tournaments. *Tournaments* by Richard Barber and Juliet Baker is one of the more accomplished accounts of the history of tournaments, which goes through the history of the sport in Europe and examines in detail how it developed in various parts of Europe. It concentrates on tournaments as an entity alone and does not try to tie it together with chivalry or other parts of the medieval society.

² Vale, p.1

Considering that chivalry and knights have been one of the more researched topics in the history of the Middle Ages ever since Huizinga nearly a hundred years ago, it is hardly a surprise that there has been countless books and articles written about it. I have space to only give a small overview of the most important pieces of the scholarship on the topic, as writing a comprehensive list of research conducted to this day would undoubtedly take dozens of pages. Also, the main body of chivalric research consists of general histories of the Middle Ages and chivalry. Most of these books only retell the same theories from only slightly different points of view and focusing on slightly different topics. It is therefore unnecessary to list all of them in this space. The current state of research into chivalry and knighthood has managed to establish a good working background where the general theories and explanations have been found and published. What is left to be done is to deepen the knowledge in all fields, to use this solid background in order to further define our knowledge of the function of the medieval chivalric society in specific timelines and in specific instances. This general knowledge can now be used to build upon and can be used as a tool for further analysis. It is in this light that I examine the condition and role of knighthood in the fourteenth century.

1.2. Source criticism

Chronicles are one of the best sources of medieval life that has survived, but they are also one of the more complicated. It is in the nature of chronicles that they are not necessarily official accounts of events or systemically collected records of events, like tax and legal records. On the other hand they do give us a lot more information than the more formal records produced for example by taxation or law courts. Chronicles tend to be personal accounts about events witnessed by their authors or events that happened during the author's lifetime. They contain at times prosaic accounts of events that the author thought was interesting. As such they can be highly subjective and there is nothing that guarantees an objective description of events. Thus when using chronicles historians must be very careful with conclusions and a thorough examination of the chronicles context is always necessary.

Jean Froissart's *Chronicles* is one of the most extensive depictions of events in the fourteenth century spanning nearly all the important events of the entire century. Here lies one of the first dangers of the chronicle, even though it is written as if Froissart himself witnessed all the

events he is writing about, it has been concluded that he was not present in more than a fraction of the events. Most of his writings therefore are on the level of fiction, undoubtedly based on actual events and maybe even on eyewitness interviews and accounts, but the author has very little first hand evidence or experience in the matters he discusses. Therefore when using Froissart it is wise not to take his version of events as accurate. The grand scale of events can easily enough be verified in most cases, but many of the details will be distorted, or more often completely fictional. The same goes for the many speeches and personal actions of noteworthy people depicted within. If examining historical events and people in detailed with Froissart this a secondary and even tertiary evidence is almost mandatory in order to compare and verify the accounts of Froissart. When it comes to hard facts Froissart is little better than authors of fiction. Where Froissart becomes useful and even invaluable is studying the mentality of himself obviously, but also the mentality of the aristocracy of the fourteenth century. He was a long-term member of Queen Philippa of Hainault's entourage and as such witnessed the life of the contemporary social elite first hand. The way he sees the world around him and reflects it in his chronicles can be extraordinarily useful in gauging the attitudes and ideals of the people around him.³ Especially his depiction of the Hundred Years' War is invaluable for modern historians. Another danger in the *Chronicles* lies in the authorship itself, as it does not belong wholly to Jean Froissart. Parts of the *Chronicles* have been taken almost word-to-word from a fellow chronicler of Froissart's called Jean le Bel. Froissart himself acknowledges his debt to le Bel in his prologue. Especially the parts before Froissart's birth have been attributed to le Bel and parts of the text up to 1360-61 are most likely a mix of both authors, only after this point does Froissart use his own words alone.⁴ Even though this does pose problems when studying how Froissart specifically saw things and in general anything that hinges on Froissart as a person, it does not need to be a problem in most cases. The issue is simply solved by considering *Chronicles* as an independent entity with more than one author. As long as one does not try to attribute all events to a single author, this multiple origin should not pose any serious problems to analysis. In this thesis I use the name "Froissart" to refer to both potential authors of *Chronicles*, whether the original author was le Bel or Froissart, the person, as it would be too time consuming to attempt to identify who is responsible for each passage of text, for no notable benefit in analysis.

³ Palmer, pp. 4-5

⁴ Brereton, p. 13

For the both Geoffrey le Baker's *Chronicle* and Chandos' Herald's *Life of the Black Prince* I have had to use Richard Barber's book *Life and Campaigns of the Black Prince* which published excerpts from both chronicles, as to my knowledge there is no complete or partial translation of le Baker's *Chronicle* and there were no better copies of Chandos' Herald available. Compared to Froissart, both of these chronicles are more reliable as sources as le Baker's *Chronicle* is based on a campaign diary and as such the author has had a detailed account of the events he writes about even though he himself might not have witnessed them. *Life of the Black Prince* was written, in verse, by the herald of Sir John Chandos, a companion in arms to the Black Prince and as such a first hand witness to many, if not all, of the events detailed in the chronicle.⁵ Nevertheless similar caution must be had while reading either of these sources as is necessary with Froissart. As personal accounts of events they are subjective accounts of events and at best depict how the author viewed the events around himself. Any passage should be considered to be fictional and only representative of attitudes, mentalities or interpretation of events, unless they can be verified through other sources.

The Scalacronica is a chronicle written by an English knight Sir Thomas Grey. Grey started writing his chronicle in 1355 while imprisoned in Edinburgh castle. Even though the author of the chronicle does not reveal himself in the text, he does give enough evidence and clues to reliably deduct his identity.⁶ While vast majority of the text is based on various written sources and other chronicles, and as such would require more detailed criticism and study to be able to provide reliable historical information, the parts relevant to this thesis, namely events after 1337 are largely based either on Grey's own experiences or information provided by his agents, and as such is of much more interest than recycled histories from other chronicles. From the fourteenth century *Scalacronica* provides plenty of material relating to Edward III's Scottish wars and other events in Scotland and northern England as well as the more common picture of the wars in France and Spain. This depiction of the Scottish wars is what makes *Scalacronica* such a useful source for anyone studying the history of the fourteenth century as it complements perfectly the usual sources of the French-English conflicts.

Complementing the chronicles I have used two chivalric manuals as partial comparison to provide a better and wider image of the ideals and mentalities of the fourteenth century.

⁵ Barber (1986), p. 9

⁶ King, pp. xvii-xviii

Ramon Llull's *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry* is a good representation of the more common chivalric manual of the period, which shows significant emphasis of Christian values. Geoffroi de Charny's *The Book of Chivalry* on the other hand has much more practical view of the world of chivalry and I have chosen it as the main source for chivalric ideals as opposed to the more common manuals represented by Llull's book. Even though de Charny's book was not widely read or published during the fourteenth century its views are the ideals common views of chivalry at the time of its writing. Even though de Charny was writing to reform the French chivalry,⁷ this was not a reform that updates the older views or significantly changes the meaning of chivalry, rather it was an attempt to drag the French nobility back to the proper ways of chivalry as it had been in the past. At the beginning half of the fourteenth century due to economic and military reasons the french nobility was in disarray and the common man was demanding change as it seemed that the "protectors of the weak" were not fulfilling their role. It is this situation that de Charny is attempting to reform with his manual. A study of the attitudes and ideas presented in *The Book of Chivalry* show that they are very much in line to those of the other chivalric manuals and contemporary and earlier chivalric literature. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that *The Book of Chivalry* presents us the ideal of chivalry in the fourteenth century as seen by the soldiers and knights themselves. Obviously as there was certainly a need for reform in France, it does not give us the actual state of chivalry, but it does illustrate what knights should be. The critical difference to other similar manuals in *The Book of Chivalry* is that it is written by a knight and not by a clergyman or someone else heavily biased towards the Church. De Charny's role as a close advisor to the French king makes him a unique source for knightly mentality, as an accomplished knight he is in an optimal position to detail the chivalric ideology from the soldiers point of view. This is evident in how *The Book of Chivalry* while having many things in common with the other manuals, shows very little Christian influence. It is not atheistic by any means, but it does not ascribe divine role or purpose for the knight and divine intervention and influence is not present in the life of a knight according to de Charny. In short this view is the most practical of the chivalric manuals, and as such best suited to examine the world view of the knight. The main problem with these manuals as sources is that they do not portray reality in anyway, even though it is tempting to see them as such. It should be remembered that these writings are always biased based on their author and

⁷ Kaeuper (1996), pp. 49-64

showcase more of the author's world view than the general one, also this worldview should always be seen as the ideal case and never mistaken as reality or an actual state.

2. Autumn of the knight

By the time Edward III stepped on the throne in the first half of the fourteenth century chivalry as a concept and cultural phenomenon was already a few centuries old. Many books, treatises and romances had been written about it over the past centuries and many knights had lived and died defending the honour of their ladies and seeking glory through heroic deeds. No one in the fourteenth century had any misgivings about the golden age of chivalry: it had passed long ago.⁸ What then was the role and position of the chivalrous knight in the fourteenth century? Was chivalry a dying ideal, or maybe even dead already, as the contemporary authors so vigorously claimed? Obviously it could not have been completely lost. Without some cultural importance why would people like Geoffrey Chaucer have written his romances about chivalry? Even a hundred years later Sir Thomas Malory penned his books and stories about Arthur, Lancelot and all the other Knights of the Round Table questing for the Holy Grail. Neither had the physical activities of knights disappeared anywhere: tournaments, wars and crusades were still conducted all over the known world. A knight had plenty of opportunity to practice his craft and seek glory in the name of chivalry. Why then did the contemporary writers complain about the disappearance of chivalry? Why did Huizinga talk about the fourteenth century while writing about the *Waning of the Middle Ages*? In this chapter I plan to examine the condition of knighthood and chivalry in fourteenth century England. What had happened to the ideology and its practices over the centuries and in what condition were they at the start of the Hundred Years' War?

Kathryn Faulkner examines the changes in English knighthood during the end of the twelfth century and at the beginning of the thirteenth.⁹ In her article she has done extensive research on the numbers of English knights county by county. She found that coming to the thirteenth century the numbers of English knights dropped dramatically approximately within a single generation. According to her calculations there were up to six thousand knights in England in the twelfth century and this number had dropped well below five thousand by the beginning of the thirteenth century. For this drop in numbers she proposes a four potential explanations. Firstly the growing administrative duties might have forced made knighthood less appealing

⁸ Interestingly there are plenty of people well before the fourteenth century who complain about the lost golden days of chivalry. When was this golden age then? Perhaps like so many other legends the answer lies in 'yesterday.' The golden age seems always to be somewhere not too far in the past, but in a time impossible to accurately define. Most likely in chivalry, as with everything else, every generation, as they grew old, saw their own past or the time of their parents as 'the good old days.'

⁹ Faulkner, *The Transformation of Knighthood in Early Thirteenth-Century England*

to the future generations and thus caused the sons of knights refuse to take up the title of the father; another possible cause was the change of attitude among the lords; third potential reason could have been economic pressures of the nobility and finally that the nature of knighthood itself might have changed. Faulkner concludes that out of these four possibilities a combination of financial pressures and a change in the nature of knighthood were the most likely candidates to cause the decline in numbers of knights. This development especially in the nature of chivalry can be seen quite clearly in the fourteenth century. By then knighthood was quite clearly a matter of rank and status rather than a profession as it was before the thirteenth century, as is evident from Maurice Keen's research.¹⁰ Faulkner also concentrates heavily on the administrative duties of knights. These duties are one of the major factors that explain the change in knighthood in the fourteenth century as well. Whereas before the thirteenth century a knight's function and role was that of a warrior and soldier, in the fourteenth century he had the additional administrative duties of justices, jurors and clerks added to his position. This caused a division within knighthood into two separate groups of knights: those who Faulkner and Barber call administrative knights and those who would perform the more traditional knightly duties like fighting. Even though there obviously were some knights who fulfilled both roles, Richard Barber argues that the division was quite distinct and divided between those who fight and those who rarely leave their counties and are knights only to facilitate local administration.¹¹ Faulkner and Barber both show that the number of these administrative knights must have been far larger than the number of the knights who still had military duties. This division must have had some kind of impact on the chivalric principles, at least on practical level as more knights were not knights in the old sense of the word and had no opportunity to live by the chivalric code. This development discussed by Faulkner did not limit itself to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but continued much further. The development of the knight into a more bureaucratic creature was only going to get worse as the county administration grew and more and more duties were handed for the knights to manage. Thus these problems of the thirteenth century identified by Faulkner would have had intensified by the fourteenth century. The nature of knighthood was changing to adapt to the requirements of the time. On the other hand the ideals of chivalry were the same as they had been centuries earlier creating conflict and disconnection between ideal and practice.

¹⁰ Keen (1984), p.143

¹¹ Barber (1970), p. 20-23. More on the issue of administrative "knights" in chapter 4.3.

Another big change causing problems to the chivalric elite at the time was the developments in warfare. Even though the knight was far from obsolete by the fourteenth century, he had already started his steady decline into obscurity. Nowhere is this more evident than the three major battles of the first half of the Hundred Years' War. The English army with its infantry and archers won decisive victories against an old fashioned and poorly organised enemy. The French reliance to their knights and cavalry proved disastrous against an enemy that was more suited to fighting in the contemporary conditions. Most famous example would have to be the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, where the English archers decimated countless French knights who had been trapped in mud because of their heavy armour and equipment. The faster and more agile archers could easily outmanoeuvre the clumsy knights. These defeats caused a crisis in the French knighthood, which despite all their equipment, training and wealth could not match the enemy on the battlefield. The problems of the French were as much a product of poor discipline and attitude in training as it was with developing technology. The development of new types of weaponry, like the longbow and the crossbow, forced knights to spend even more money in equipping themselves in an arms race they could not keep up with. As a result of the efforts to better protect himself the knight became more and more cumbersome and expensive without becoming any more effective. The knight's role in full combat also became lessened as other units of higher efficiency replaced him. The English preferred to use the knight on foot rather than on his horse, and once on horse he was more likely going to be conducting a fast speed but less glorious raids to enemy territory rather than performing heroic deeds in the midst of combat. The increased cost of a knight in a time when economy was already in decline, made the knight less and less viable option on the battlefield. This problem was only made worse by the economic and social destruction caused by the Black Death. He was slowly being replaced by both cheaper or more quickly trainable units like crossbowmen, longbow men and other footmen and by specialists like engineers with powerful artillery, sappers.¹² The knight was being outperformed by one type of specialist or another in each of his areas of expertise.

2.1. Financing knighthood

During the fourteenth century European economic and social conditions turned into a decline. The population numbers started to fall even before the Black Death and the economic

¹² Kaeuper (1999), p. 172

expansion of the previous centuries ground to a halt resulting in inflation and a general economic decline.¹³ The Hundred Years' War was something new in medieval warfare. It was not a question of short wars and quick skirmishes, but a state of war that practically spanned the century. This put wholly different scale of pressure to the already suffering economy and caused further problems in the guise of a solution to the economic crisis. The nobility had to finance decades of warfare from diminishing income from their land holdings. The decline of income from landholdings is one of the reasons why the war would last so long, as the nobility saw it as means to supplement their income by looting and ransom. On the other hand war also drained increasingly large amounts of resources to keep the campaigns going.¹⁴ Rodney Hilton examined this crisis of feudalism and how it was possible for the nobility to lose money in a situation where they controlled nearly all the production and the market as well. The vicious circle caused by a diminishing economy, increased the need for war and its profits and the increased costs of warfare created a situation where financial downfall was inevitable.¹⁵ In this economic climate the knights of the fourteenth century had to make their living and acquire the funds to maintain a lifestyle demanded by their status.

The Hundred Years' War provided opportunities for individual knights to make their fortune. While many a knight managed to do just that, there must have been countless knights who were not so lucky. After all not everyone came out with a fortune in loot and prisoners, most would have been lucky to come out alive. The problem of landholdings producing less and less was a concern only for some of the knights, as most would not have even owned any land. These landless knights would then in turn cause more problems for the lords who were paying for their services, or provide for their upkeep in some other manner. It is easy to see how the massive profits gained from looting and ransom could have looked like a quick way out of trouble for these lords. The downside was that this income was anything but safe and secure. It was at least as likely that a knight would get captured himself and end up paying a ransom than that he would capture someone else to ransom in turn. Paying a ransom could easily ruin entire families, especially in the case of higher nobility, in a time where income from other sources was becoming scarce. This also exacerbated the financial problems on both sides of the war. On the one hand it made war look more and more like a good way to make money for the winning side, while the costs of war must have been eating away more

¹³ Keen (1969), p. 225-7

¹⁴ Keen (1968), p. 225-7

¹⁵ Hilton, pp. 166-172

and more of the profits, as the upkeep costs of equipment and men kept growing. Additionally the profits made from war were static in nature. The nobility of the fourteenth century were not capitalists and did not do any kind of investment of the money received. Hilton shows that during the fourteenth century technological development was very slow, if not stagnant, and there was no investment into new technologies in order to improve farming or other means of income.¹⁶ These riches gained from war then did not generate any more money for the noble, it was merely a lump sum of money which eventually ran out and did nothing to solve the underlying problems of the economy. The war effort then only delayed the economic crisis of the victors, but did nothing to fix the causes of it. The financial relief provided by warfare was then at worst only an illusion and a slippery slope to worse problems; even at best it was nothing more than a temporary reprieve to the lucky few. On the other hand it was even more devastating on the losing side where the knights had to first gather the money for the ransom of their companions and then go back to war in order to make up for the loss of money suffered, as well as to cover the existing costs of warfare and economic decline. Yet another form of economic devastation resulted from the decades long continuous fighting: a new more vicious type of raiding. *Chevauchée*, used extensively by both Edward III and his son Edward the Black Prince, aimed to destroy the economic viability of the enemy. The following destruction of countryside economy like farms and cattle must have been devastating to the enemy who was already suffering from financial difficulties. In effect the fourteenth century nobility were in a poor situation where the economy was, if not collapsing, then headed towards a depression, which they tried to fix with quick money from warfare, but only worsened the situation by increasing the total expenses and devastation caused by the war.

2.2. Burden of expectations

By the fourteenth century knighthood and chivalry had long standing history and traditions reaching all the way to early Middle Ages. While this provided a solid core to the chivalric ideals and to knights' position in society, it was also a major strain for a class struggling to keep up with changing times. Chivalry as an ideal was not one to change quickly and the nobility that based their culture on that ideal became equally cumbersome entity to change. The society came to expect more and more from their protectors as time went on and traditions and customs started accumulating. Previous research into chivalry shows us well all

¹⁶ Hilton, pp. 168-9

the different duties and obligations knights had on top of their main function.¹⁷ The addition of administrative duties for the realm did nothing to lessen the burden of these knights. In a society that places heavy emphasis on tradition and custom, a social class like knighthood is in serious trouble if it cannot lose some of its previous duties over time or adapt in other ways. This accumulation is worsened by chivalric ideal and theory. As the knights tried to equate themselves to literary heroes like king Arthur and his knights, everything written about them by the clergy and others only added to their existing duties and social pressures. A knight would have been held up to the standards demonstrated in literature and chivalric theory, as well as the best examples of knights from the previous centuries. As is often the case with literature these role models were not realistic and as such any comparison would have always found the real knight lacking in virtue. Only the very best or highest of status could successfully compare himself to these mythical figures, and even then it was not always a safe comparison. For example Edward III tried to emulate and create connections between himself and king Arthur with his failed round table project, where he tried to (re-)establish the traditions of king Arthur. Even though this attempt eventually led to the formation of the Order of the Garter, the round table plan is considered to have failed after only a couple of years.¹⁸ This accumulation of duties and pressures must have had some effect to the decline of knighthood in general and on the views of chivalry of the contemporary people. Obviously this could not have been the only thing influencing this decline, but the pressure put on the knights by the rest of the society had to have some effect on the knights of fourteenth century. They had to struggle to match the expectations of the society. Three major aspects of this kind of pressure were *largesse*, knight's duty to protect the nation and the demand for chivalric excellence in prowess.

One of the best examples of this kind of problematic accumulation of customs, tradition and expectation can be seen in the concept of *largesse*, that is generosity and charity combined with a life style to match the status and wealth. De Charny alludes to the importance of wealth in several instances during his book. One of the few times he mentions God and God's influence is to say that God blesses the worthy and noble with lasting prizes and treasure,

¹⁷ See for example Richard Barber's *Knight & Chivalry* and Kathryn Faulkner's article *The Transformation of Knighthood in Early Thirteenth-Century England*. (See bibliography for full details for both.)

¹⁸ Vale p. 77. Froissart, p. 66. See also *Edward III's Round Table at Windsor : the House of the Round Table and the Windsor Festival of 1344* Julian Munby, Richard Barber, Richard Brown eds. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press

while anything won by luck alone does not last, as Fortune is a fickle creature.¹⁹ Similar attitude is shown elsewhere in his book when de Charny examines the role of wealth in how a man's worth is determined. Those with wealth and riches are seen to be by default better than those without, as their motives for seeking glory and fame must be more pure than their poorer brothers. Because of their wealth they are not risking their life in pursuit of it, so when they do risk their life in battle it is more worthy than when a man who still needs and wants wealth risks his life.²⁰ According to Froissart Bertrand du Guesclin initially refuses to take up the position of Constable of France giving his low status as a reason.²¹ His main argument against him taking the position is that he is not wealthy enough to command respect from the princes and nobility of France. This seems to reflect perfectly de Charny's idea about knightly worth and wealth. As du Guesclin does not believe to be on par with the highest nobility of the kingdom he argues that this makes him unfit to command them, as they would not take orders from someone with less wealth and thus less power. This clearly indicates how important wealth was in medieval power relations. Even with all his previous actions and deeds, without which he would not have even been offered the position, he was not seen to be above the princes and wealthiest nobility. On the other hand this might also have been a more ritualised situation where the idea of chivalric humility dictates that du Guesclin should initially decline the offer and claim he is not worthy of the honour. It is also possible that Froissart made up the whole passage in order to demonstrate du Guesclin's honour as one of the most honourable knights of his time. Whatever the truth may be it does not however change the conclusion in any way. In any case the passage shows that wealth was certainly a factor in chivalric value as well as other achievements and deeds of arms. Ramon Llull also echoes these views in his own treatise on chivalry and places at least equal importance to wealth. According to Llull a chivalric and honourable knight must have nothing but the best weapons, equipment and animals, especially a horse. More importantly a good knight must be "a lord of many men."²² The knight needs many subjects, so they can serve his needs and provide him with a living from his lands, so that he can hunt and indulge in other sport.²³ Later on Llull lists the important requirements of knights and explicitly states that in order to become a knight a squire must be sufficiently wealthy, so he would not be tempted to become

¹⁹ De Charny, p. 135

²⁰ De Charny, p. 107

²¹ Froissart, p. 181

²² Llull, p. 19

²³ Llull, p.20

a robber and can in fact maintain himself as a knight.²⁴ Kaeuper connects *largesse* closely with *prowess* as the main chivalric attribute, *prowess* being the one thing that enables knights to show *largesse* in the first place.²⁵ The idea being that the riches gained in war are the means for knights to show their generous and charitable nature. According to Kaeuper this was one of the ways for knights to reinforce the social barrier between nobility and the newly rich burghers and merchants; the men who were most threatening the social position of the nobles.²⁶ The charity of the high and mighty was then turned into a weapon on the field of early class warfare.²⁷ This custom of *largesse* seems very similar to the earlier custom where lords rewarded their vassals serving under him with treasures and other riches in return for their service. Even though this was no longer the case in the fourteenth century it does show customs from several centuries back are still observed in some form or another and indeed have a great impact on a knight's status. Both de Charny and Lull demonstrate very effectively how great wealth is important to a knight, not just because his profession also requires large expenditures, but he must also be able to maintain a lifestyle which can only be described as luxurious. The image painted here is one where a knight's honour is directly proportional to his wealth. Obviously this wealth must be shown to everyone around for full effect. The problems of making money in the fourteenth century must have been a real issue to knights, not just because they would have had trouble affording the necessities, but especially so because one of the necessities was to be sufficiently wealthy and to show it with luxurious lifestyle. In effect the society pushed a knight to live beyond his means.

The ideal of chivalry was not simple and uncomplicated in this matter though. Even though the society expected the knights to spend copious amounts of money in order to show their nobility and worth, they were also expected to show high levels of restraint and social grace. Lull demands his knights to be courteous and sociable as well as humble.²⁸ At the same time De Charny also promotes the importance of good behaviour for the knight and exhorts them to show proper honour for the ladies in order to promote their own worth.²⁹ The modern idea of chivalry itself is centred on courteous behaviour and conduct, especially towards women.

²⁴ Lull, p.63

²⁵ Kaeuper (1999), p.198

²⁶ Kaeuper (1999), p.193-9

²⁷ Not to be confused with Marxist ideas of class struggle, despite some similarities. The nobility showed definite intent to keep the upstart burghers from climbing too high on the social ladder. Kaeuper's theory and the dozens of sumptuary laws passed in the Middle Ages prove this clearly enough. Even de Charny took some pains to try and keep his peers from imitating fashions of the lower classes. (pp. 189-191)

²⁸ Lull, pp. 41-43

²⁹ De Charny, p. 193

This demand for good behaviour was undoubtedly necessary since it is hard to imagine that the obligation to show *largesse* would not lead into excess in drinking, feasting and celebrating. It does pose problems to the knights though. Here they have two imperatives that are almost directly opposed in spirit, if not in the letter. How can one demonstrate his wealth without too much luxury and excess, when they are supposed to live frugal and humble life as well? The knights had to navigate a very narrow path between wealth and excess, while maintaining an image of humility and courtesy. Another contradiction to knightly behaviour came from “those who pray.” Llull’s knights were deeply religious people and very closely tied to the Christian faith. They were seen as protectors of the Christian faith and as such they had to be exemplars of Christian behaviour as well.³⁰ This behaviour demanded the knights to show humility, restraint and submission, not very good qualities for men who must also flaunt their wealth and rule over men. De Charny also partly contradicts the idea of *largesse*, by declaring that spending money on oneself is not appropriate for a knight.³¹ He promotes the importance of dressing humbly and simply and condemns extravagant and luxurious clothing as inappropriate and degenerate. A knight should dress in a way that shows his humility and is practical. The paragraph is mainly a critique of contemporary fashions and how knights are more interested in fashions than they are about their duties and obligations. The biggest problem here is that this commandment is almost directly against the idea of *largesse*. How is it possible to show one’s wealth and power and not dress luxuriously?

The second problem with the expectations of the society involves the knight’s main duty: fighting. De Charny quite clearly frowns upon excessive spending on a battlefield. A knight should not spend too much money in luxurious living conditions on the battlefield; neither should he be spending money on any other kind of comforts, nor spend too much money in pursuit of opportunities for glory.³² Again there seems to be problem with the knights that contradicts the idea of showing *largesse*. It looks like the knights were all too happy to show *largesse*, so much so that their performance suffered for it. The knights were expected to protect the nation by fighting for the monarch, as well as to take part in crusades in order to protect Christendom, at least according to Llull. Yet if they were to follow the teachings of Christianity they should have not spent much money in doing so. This problem with spending money caused several problems in Europe as the other classes could not see what the money

³⁰ Llull, pp. 66-74

³¹ De Charny, p.189-191

³² De Charny, p.97

collected from them as taxes were going to. In France the Jacquerie caused severe problems when the peasants revolted. Similar peasant revolts and uprisings happened elsewhere in Europe as well, this was not solely a French problem. De Charny's book could well be an attempt to address those issues that were behind the Jacquerie as well. Knights' inability to fight despite all the money spent was obviously too much for the war-torn population. Similarly even in England the taxes collected by the nobility to support their lifestyle were and had always been a problem to the ones who had to pay the taxes. It would be interesting to examine how well a commoner understood the demands and requirements that a knight faced. Would they have known and understood how much money a knight had to spend to keep up a fighting condition and a sufficient level of luxury in order to maintain the demands of a chivalric existence? It is quite likely that even the commoners knew the basics of chivalric ideals and they most likely had heard one or more chivalric romances and stories, but did they understand how knighthood worked in practice and what it took to conform to the chivalric ideal? Or did they just see the lazy nobility who took their grain, money and other products and did nothing with it?

The last example is closely related to the one above and also partly to the question of *largesse* and luxury. As the Jacquerie and other peasant revolts over inefficient knights aptly show us, the common people were not happy with the performance of their protectors. In their eyes the knights were only wasting money on themselves and letting the enemy do what they wanted in the case of the French, and unnecessary warring abroad in the case of the English. The knights were considered not to be able to fulfil their main function, which was the protection of the weak. The image of a highly skilled and able warrior is one very familiar from chivalric literature and this is what the knights should have been able to live up to. One of the biggest problems with this requirement was that the knights were banned from practising and training. The Church was adamantly against tournaments of all kinds, up to the point where any knights killed in one would not be given a Christian burial and the survivors faced excommunication.³³ Naturally tournaments and jousts were not the only way for knights to practise, but as it was the closest analogue to real war, it must have been one of the more efficient ways to gain that experience. De Charny lists tournaments as one of the lower ranked ways for good knights to gain honour and prowess³⁴, but at the same time the good Christian knight of Lull's could not take part in something abhorred by his faith. This is another good

³³ Barber & Barker, pp. 141-2

³⁴ De Charny, p. 87

example of the kind of contradicting expectations that a knight had to face. How would one effectively keep up to the standards depicted by literature and demanded by the populace all the while following the rules given by the Church, as well as the same people who complained about the lack of practice?

These three examples are only a part of the problems that centuries of growing tradition imposed on the knights. The biggest problem was that while the demands of the society around them changed and dictated their day-to-day behaviour, the literature and folklore that formed the basis of the ideals of chivalry did not change to reflect the needs of the day. Obviously the ideals of chivalry changed over time, but this change was merely the growth of new beliefs and customs on top of the old. The old ideas did not disappear and only changed slightly to match the contemporary society. By the fourteenth century the accumulation had resulted in a system of ideals that was so complex that it could not be without contradictions. Despite this the knights were supposed to live by the examples set to them by their literary brothers and by the Church who had drafted them as their champions and defenders of the faith. It is not surprising, if the concepts and ideals of chivalry were becoming less popular and ignored, especially in a time when a knight's importance on the battlefield was beginning to fade, and while the knight himself was getting more and more paperwork from his duties in the county administration and less and less actual combat. These burdens of the past were not the only reason why knighthood and chivalry were on starting their slow decline into obscurity in the fourteenth century, but they certainly played a not insignificant part in it. Knighthood was fast losing its superiority on the battlefield and its lustre in real life. A paper-pushing knight was a far less inspiring image than the image of a knight in shining armour in the midst of a pitched battle. Yet this administrator was what the knight was fast turning into.

2.3. Summary

This then is the background of the fourteenth century knighthood and the environment where chivalry was struggling. The social position and importance of the knight was slowly beginning to change as his importance on the battlefield was reduced by advances in warfare that made him at the same time more expensive to maintain and less effective. This coupled with the poor economic situation made it more viable to field armies with less knights and more alternative units, cheaper to train and more effective. While the knight's importance on

the battlefield was starting to diminish his free time was more and more invaded by administration of the kingdom. A development that had started in the previous century already was now becoming more and more important and time consuming. This development is best visible in the number of knights taking part in county administration compared to the numbers of fighting knights. According to Barber this ratio of administrative knights to fighting knights would have been around three to one, with no more than five hundred knights capable of fighting.³⁵ Though Faulkner estimated the total numbers of knights in England by the thirteenth century somewhere around four or five thousand.

Chivalry itself was an ideal several hundred years old, which did not quite fit the society that tried to live by it. During the centuries chivalric ideals had accumulated dozens of different customs and traditions, when different people over the years had influenced its direction and content. So by the fourteenth century its followers must have had problems interpreting all the various duties, commands and obligations. Some of these were certain to cause conflicts with other parts of the code in the contemporary conditions. The knights were simply expected to live by impossible standards and then criticised for failing to live up to them. Naturally the knights themselves did not live by the code and ideals as much as they could have done, and cultural differences between social strata were likely sources for misunderstandings.

³⁵ Barber (1970), p. 20

3. Practical knighthood

In this chapter I will examine the practical aspects of knighthood. The first part examines what knights were in the fourteenth century and what kind of demands knighthood imposed on a man. I will examine the background of a knights and knighthood briefly as well as examine the problems of the concept and modern perception of mercenaries and how they differed from knights. In the second part of this chapter I will examine how chivalric behaviour and theory works through examples from various chronicles. As warfare and battle were the bread and butter knightly life it is important to see how these activities reflected the chivalric values of the knights themselves in order to better understand how much of the chivalric code the knights themselves saw fit to uphold and how it might have been interpreted.

Geoffroi de Charny's *Book of Chivalry* is my main source for practical chivalric theories for the simple reason that it was written during the Hundred Years War by an actual knight internationally famed for his chivalric deeds. It is also very appropriate source as de Charny was a knight first and foremost. Unlike the authors of many other books of chivalry de Charny was not in any way related to the Church and did not approach the topic as religious exercise. He did not try to guide or control his readers towards a more acceptable behaviour as perceived by the Church. Neither did he try to show how knights are mandated by heaven to be the protectors of Christendom. Instead his reasoning and arguments were entirely practical and secular, though he was by no means impious.

I will not examine the role of a knight in war; that has been done well before, to a much better extent that I could discuss here.³⁶ It is well known that knights took part in war, and fighting in general was their part in society. But how exactly did the fourteenth century knights go about their business in the tumult of the Hundred Years War? Did they conduct war in a chivalric manner, and if not why, not? How did the knights manage to resolve the discrepancy between chivalry and war? I aim to show that there was no problem between the two and any contradictions are born out of modern misinterpretation and misconceptions about the nature of chivalry.

³⁶ For example Clifford Rogers' *Soldiers' Lives through History: the middle ages* gives a very thorough explanation of all aspects of medieval soldiering.

Even though war and fighting in general was a big part of a knight's life, it was not all there was to it. The knight was primarily a warrior whose job was to defend his lord and the realm, but they did have other functions and tasks?

3.1. Who was the knight and where did he come from?

An English knight in the fourteenth century would have been a completely different creature than his ancestors a couple hundred years back. Over the centuries the meaning of knight had come from lowly and humble origins of a boy (in old English) or a servant all the way to the highly specific and high-ranking status of a mounted and armoured warrior as it was in the fourteenth century. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a knight as being:

“One raised to honourable military rank by the king or other qualified person, the distinction being usually conferred only upon one of noble birth who had served a regular apprenticeship (as page and squire) to the profession of arms, and thus being a regular step in this even for those of the highest rank”³⁷

As such, in the fourteenth century knights were almost exclusively members of the higher levels of aristocracy. Gone were the days when a feudal lord was responsible for maintaining his knights through gifts of land and loot from his campaigns. Though neither of those forms of compensations had disappeared, they had changed in nature. A knight would, in most cases, receive a salary or other compensation from his king or lord when in military service under him³⁸, if he were not otherwise obligated to join his lord's army when needed.³⁹ A different form of the old feudal contract, where a knight had martial obligation attached to his landholdings, was in effect; now the same knight would get a money reward instead of land, but this was a longer term social contract than pure salary. Another difference was that the contract included peacetime service and not just wartime service, like was the case with paid soldiers.⁴⁰ Even though it was almost mandatory for a knight to own land in order to fulfil his

³⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. 1989. (www.oed.com): keyword “knight” entries 1. & 4. (accessed 1.5.2010)

³⁸ Barber (1970), p. 22

³⁹ For more on army building see Rogers, *Soldiers' lives through history*.

⁴⁰ Barber (1970), pp.20-22

duties, this land grant was often received from somewhere else, for example through inheritance or other duties and not as a reward for military service.

Even though the definition above says that knights were of noble birth, this was not a requirement for a knightly status. Though it was common especially in the later Middle Ages that a person aspiring to be a knight had to be of a suitable lineage in order to become a knight. Common rule said that one could not become a knight without knight ancestors. Opposite was true as well: Keen gives an example from the eleventh century where an abbot raised a poor man to knighthood because he was a son of a knight.⁴¹ In the same chapter he also mentions the exception to this requirement of knightly lineage; a king could break his laws and thus provide an exception to the rule and raise a commoner to knighthood.⁴² In order for a man to be eligible for knighthood he had to be able to fulfil the requirements and duties of a knight, and not just the requirement of noble lineage. It is these duties and requirements that are the main reason why common soldiers and other people could not take up the role of a knight. A knight in the fourteenth century was expected to maintain his own equipment and mounts, as well as train himself to be fit for duty.⁴³ The cost of maintaining and acquiring the proper equipment was something that people with small or middling income could hardly afford.

From the in depth study of Rogers' we get a very good idea of the costs and requirements a knight faced when going to war.⁴⁴ An average knight taking part in the Hundred Years' War would have to equip himself with the latest armour, which invariably would be full body armour protecting him from head to toe; all that metal required special undergarments so that it was even possible to wear the actual armour. Next on the shopping list would be a shield, sword and most importantly for a cavalryman, a lance. The most important, and as it happens most expensive, piece of equipment is yet to be mentioned – the horse. This horse could not be just any old horse found in a farm. A warhorse was a breed apart, and as such a lot more expensive. Where a regular peasants plough horse would cost somewhere around thirty pence (already a significant investment for a poor farmer) a horse suitable for a mounted archer was already eight times as expensive; and this horse was never meant to be used in battle, only in getting the archer to the battle. A horse for lower level nobility would cost the equivalent of

⁴¹ Keen (1984), p.143

⁴² Keen (1984), p.143

⁴³ Rogers, p.30

⁴⁴ Rogers, pp. 30-37

400 plough horses, and the really good horses could go up to 200 pounds or 1600 times as much as a regular plough horse. In comparison a wealthy farm or manor could be expected to provide around 20 pounds per *year* to its owner. To make things worse, knights were usually meant to bring more than one horse: different horses for regular travel and fighting for example. On top of this still come all the servants, helpers, tents, provisions, and any personal gear and of course the transportation for all of them, that is more animals, which in turn required fodder to feed them and carts to transport the fodder. The most obvious thing from looking at a list like that is that the logistics alone for a whole army would be a veritable nightmare, but more importantly it aptly illustrates the enormous cost of equipping one knight for war. As if all this was not enough, the things listed above are the bare minimum a knight would bring with him. If he would like to demonstrate his quality and standard, he would have to invest in the best quality equipment and horses and bring as much of it all as he could. Knights were also expected to demonstrate *largesse* in order to show their noble status and honour. In practice knights were expected to spend excessive amounts of money and shower people around them with gifts and gold to prove their worth and show their noble nature.

Additionally knights had many duties outside of warfare that they had to attend. Several of higher positions in counties and towns required a person of knightly status to fill the position and it was not uncommon that this position did not provide any compensation. For example the requirement for a coroner's position was that the person had to be a knight of good reputation and own land in the county he was to hold the position.⁴⁵ The reason for the requirement of land in the same county is because the coroner had to live in the county in question and because the job did not pay anything. Therefore the knight had to be able to support himself and have enough free time to perform his duties. The same requirements and demands applied to most of the royal positions, like the position of a Sheriff for example. This is likely one of the contributing reasons why the contemporaries saw the English governmental machine as universally corrupt in the fourteenth century; this is evident in the number of complaints recorded against royal officials. One of the most common problems with coroners, for example, was blackmail; where the coroner refused to do his duties before getting paid by the people of the county. Many, if not all, of the knights were therefore members of the topmost levels of society, and even though there were quite a few knights without land holdings, they were often younger sons of rich families who could afford the

⁴⁵ Hunnisett, R. F. pp. 174-5.

initial cost of knightly equipment. Later on these knights hoped to make their fortunes in war.⁴⁶

Another major factor in becoming a knight, which is not an official requirement, is the amount of free time available. Knightly training is something that will take vast majority of the potential knight's time when he's growing up. It is certainly possible that someone might be naturally good enough a fighter that he'd earn the honour on a battlefield, but it is very unlikely. Knights would spend all of their youth in training for their profession, just like for any other profession. This means that only the rich and noble could afford to have their sons take part in the training. Also again the cost of equipment is a deciding factor. A future knight must receive training in a multitude of weapons, strategies and combat in general. That doesn't include the required training in courtly etiquette and behaviour or diplomacy, all things that one would need as a knight. Later on in his career the knight-in-training would take part in tournaments and other competitions involving martial skill as further training. These tournaments and competitions could be very dangerous and life threatening. Even if one did not lose his life or health in the tournament there was a very real risk of losing ones possessions after a lost match. This was due to the practice of ransom used in tournaments. People captured in the simulation of war called melee would be ransomed like they had been captured in war. They would then have to pay this ransom in order to gain their freedom. Similarly a loser in the lists could lose his horse and equipment. A good knight could make a fortune on the tourney over time. It would only take one lost match to impoverish a poor or unlucky fighter. For these reasons vast majority of people could never afford to entertain aspirations of knighthood. The financial requirements alone are something that can take the yearly income of a village. Also most children were needed to work with their families from an early age, which would make knightly training practically impossible. Most people simply couldn't afford the time and money the training took, especially when knighthood was anything but certain even after successful training. Therefore only the people without daily duties to distract them from the training and enough wealth or influence to cover the costs of it could even aspire to become knights.

⁴⁶ Keen, p.143 & Barnie, chapter 3.

Character of the knight

Knightly behaviour was quite well codified in the many manuals of chivalry written during the Middle Ages. Most of them attributed holy and heavenly ideals and requirements to knights. Some of these demands, like virginity, can be seen as attempts of the clergy to justify and control a social group that was very much against the common theme of their teachings. The clergy wrote much of the literature discussing chivalric ideals and other semi-religious writers like Ramon Llull⁴⁷ in order to, at least partially, control the actions of those who fight, and as such are not necessarily best for learning how the knights themselves thought they should behave. Here de Charny's *Book of Chivalry* is an excellent source as it is mainly concerned in secular matters and causes. He wrote as a knight to other knights.

Knightly behaviour seems to have been very strictly controlled, or at least regulated.⁴⁸ The first and foremost of chivalric rules and morals was the concept of prowess. The concept of prowess is probably best explained as recognition or fame received from impressive martial feats and great skill at arms in general. Where a modern person would attribute chivalry and knightly morals to gentility, politeness and honour, a fourteenth century knight's main focus was in martial skill as the supreme show of worth. De Charny himself shows skill at arms, or prowess to be the main concern in his book. De Charny devotes an impressive 35 paragraphs out of 44 in his book to discussion on the varied ways on how prowess can be measured and how it affects a man's life in any and all situations that he can imagine. Nearly every chapter ends with "he who does more is of greater worth,"⁴⁹ or other similar lines to the same effect. This prowess is what a knight spends his entire career striving for. It should not be interpreted as merely skill at arms. It is also a mentality that contains many of the elements that modern readers would attribute to honour. It should be noted however that medieval honour concept is closer in meaning to the concept of prowess than it is to modern concept of honour.

In its core prowess is a very personal thing and only applies to the knight himself. This is what causes most of the problems in interpreting medieval martial code. Military operations by their very nature are against individual heroics and demand solid teamwork and require

⁴⁷ See Book of the Ordre of Chyualry.

⁴⁸ Unfortunately my sources are less than helpful in identifying how much these codes of conduct were actually followed and whether or not breach of them was punished in some way. For this kind of research personal letters and court records might prove more useful.

⁴⁹ De Charny, p.87, l.18 as an example.

placing the unit before the individual. Prowess on the other hand demands individual heroics. There is no honour and glory to be had in being an anonymous soldier in an army. Nearly every single example given by de Charny about gaining honour assumes a single knight performing the deed. There are no cases where a knight would be praised for helping others gain glory or participate in teamwork. Only a couple examples are given where teamwork is even mentioned. The first example explains the importance of lords and other knights of great wealth and status as leaders for the inspiration it provides. The second case is for knights who have achieved everything that a knight can possibly achieve on his own and then goes on to learn from the leaders of campaigns about leading armies. Neither of these examples applies to regular knights who did not command armies or possess great wealth. De Charny writes nothing about the importance of teamwork or working as a unit on the lower levels of the power. To de Charny then, prowess and chivalry is all about individual heroics. There is no room for others in the path for glory. Slightly paradoxically then prowess and honour are obviously worthy and valued but they demand to be acknowledged by others. A medieval knight always needed an audience for his honour. This attitude is particularly well expressed in Charny's thoughts on women and their role in a knight's life: A woman can only be proud of a man who has done great deeds and is respected by his peers. Equally a woman's value is directly tied to the value of his lover. His deeds are her honour as well and she is the inspiration for those deeds.⁵⁰ This is something quite different from modern values, as the medieval mindset seems to look at things from a social perspective. A person is always a part of a social group and can only have worth through that social group. At least in the concept of prowess there doesn't seem to be any evidence that actions have worth on their own, they always need someone to recognise the act for it to have worth.

Charny provides plenty of illuminating examples for this social worth. Maybe the most telling of all is a paragraph headlined "Sacrifices made by Men-at-Arms-Whose Deeds Remain Unknown."⁵¹ As the chapter title explains this chapter deals with the case of a soldier who has not received any fame for his actions. Unlike the headline though, de Charny seems to assume that these people have no deeds worth mentioning since no one is there to talk about them. He takes into account that these knights may well have performed many glorious deeds in many campaigns but for one reason or another there are no accounts of them. He then goes saying: "But it so happens that few learn of their exploits but are only aware of the fact that they have

⁵⁰ De Charny, pp. 95-97, 121-123

⁵¹ De Charny, pp.97-99

been there, which is in itself a fine thing; for the more one sees great deeds the more one should learn what is involved [...].” This one sentence illustrates very clearly the attitudes towards great deeds and achievements and their validity. At first de Charny acknowledges that these people may have performed great deeds, but if no one knows about them they can still be praised for the experience of seeing the deeds of others and learning from them, assuming of course that these deeds have been witnessed and reported in turn. This knight would then be praiseworthy for his experience. No mention or worth is given to any deed that may have been performed without witnesses, like those deeds are worthless when considering the worth of a knight. Clearly then the worth of any particular individual is based not on his martial skill, but the perception of martial skill. Although naturally any deeds performed without witnesses would be nearly impossible to prove. It is the idea that only when other people hear of a knight’s good deeds are these deeds worthy that makes this ideology so different from modern views. Modern thinking is so comfortable with the thought that peoples action are inherently good or bad, and as such have worth in themselves that this way of thinking can easily cause problems. A knight’s worth is directly measured from the stories of his deeds and experiences and nothing else. De Charny completely ignores any unreported deeds that may or may not have happened, as there is no evidence of it to the society at large. Obviously the same applies to ill deeds as much as good deeds. With this system knights need not actually perform any great deeds, he just needs to have stories of his great deeds circulating to make him “worthy” as de Charny calls it. The key difference here is that deeds themselves are not inherently worth anything; they only gain worth after they have been witnessed and reported by others. In other words a person would be good or bad, or in the case of a knight worthy or not, based solely on whether or not people are talking about his achievements. This in turn raises the question of a person’s worth in the eyes of God. Did a person’s worth in the eyes of God match that of the person’s worth in the rest of the society, or did his worth in the eyes of God differ, thus creating a separate worth for people depending on who was judging him?

This raises interesting questions when compared to the many stories about knights errant who travel around the world performing good deeds, mostly on their own. These good deeds would be worthless in the eyes of the greater society, if there were no records of them. The grail quest of Arthur’s knights of the round table is in interesting problem if this holds true. They are told to have travelled alone in search for the holy artefact. How could this quest have any worth if they were on their own? Any deeds performed on the quest would be worthless

without witnesses. There is a big notable difference here though: the ideology that is behind the romances differs from de Charny's ideas. Most of the romances have a very religious view of chivalry, similar to the religious chivalric manuals, where the knight's main duty is to defend the Christendom. In this thinking it is likely that a person's worth is based on what God sees and knows and not what the knight looks like in public. De Charny's view on the other hand is very practical and does not take God's judgement into account, only what people see and do. This does bring up an interesting question though; which of these two views was more dominant at the time?⁵² De Charny's ideas seem very practical and to a modern view they seem likely to be more realistic, but that does not mean that is the case. In practice all the famous cases of knights errant were anything but solo ventures. They always made sure they had as large a following and audience as possible, to spread the word of their deeds.

Another remarkable feature in this concept of worth is that it does not include religion or God in it in anyway. A knight's worth does not seem to have any bearing on how God views his actions, but how his peers see his actions and how they are reported. Worth here is purely a factor of fame, wealth and the perceptions of the surrounding society, and as such completely removed from any divine influence or aspect. If a knight's worth would have something to do with God, it would be irrelevant who witnesses the deeds as God sees all. There is no evidence of this kind of thinking in de Charny's writing, though God does have a role in his thinking, it is not one that gives value.

God has a very different role in de Charny's thinking. He does not provide a knight's worth directly as that is something where individual action and approval from the rest of the society is needed. God makes sure that worthy knights have their rewards for worthy deeds.⁵³ Here de Charny succumbs to a bit of a circular argument in his philosophy. According to him God rewards those who are worthy with lasting honour, treasure and power. Any success achieved by wrongful or deceitful means will not last as it does not come from the grace of God, and is thus the result of chance only; and anything that is a result of chance cannot last. The, quite obvious, flaw in the logic lies in that, according to de Charny, any success a knight has achieved that endures, no matter how questionable it might be, must be the work of God's grace and thus good and worthy. This little explanation of God's grace and its relation to

⁵² The question is worth studying in detail, if the right kind of source material exists. Unfortunately there is only enough evidence to raise the question in my sources, but not to provide any answers beyond pure speculation.

⁵³ De Charny, pp.187-189.

deeds of arms is the extent to which de Charny acknowledges God's influence in honour and prowess. That is, God blesses good and worthy people with appropriate rewards for their deeds with honour and wealth. The deeds themselves are the responsibility of the knights.

Knights, mercenaries or something in between?

One of the characters of the *Canterbury Tales* is a most virtuous and honourable knight accompanying the pilgrims on their common journey. He begins the round of stories with the amazing story of two knights and brothers-in-arms called Palamon and Arcite. In the course of the story these two knights end up at war with each other over the love of a woman, whom both of them love over everything else. The most common interpretation of the *Knight's Tale* is that the knight is a very chivalrous individual who has travelled around the world defending the Christendom in numerous crusades and battles against its enemies. His tale is a tale of "chivalric romance... mainly concerned with love and arms."⁵⁴

On the other hand Terry Jones subjected this story to very close scrutiny from the point of view of a historian; examined the attitudes and ideals depicted and presented by the tale and compared it to some of the contemporary ideologies of the story itself. What he found out was that the Knight was not a knight at all, but a despicable and honourless mercenary; more importantly his audience and fellow travellers could not possibly have believed him to be a noble knight.⁵⁵ Next he turns his critical eye towards the tale told by the Knight, and read from the new point of view that the storyteller is a lowly mercenary pretending to be a knight, the story takes on a whole new meaning which makes a mockery of all the traditions of a chivalric romance. This tale does have all the required elements, but they are merely poor imitations that miss all the crucial elements.⁵⁶ After all, a lowly mercenary could not have any idea of the morals and ideals of knighthood and thus had completely missed the point of a chivalric romance turning the morals and ideas into pale and deeply flawed imitations.

But was reality as well defined as presented by Jones? Was there such a clear line between mercenaries and knights that this distinction could be made? One of the major arguments about the Knight's character is his participation on battles and wars in several foreign

⁵⁴ Benson, pp. 6-7

⁵⁵ Jones, chapter 3.

⁵⁶ Jones, chapter 4.

countries.⁵⁷ The fact that these battles have not been crusades against the enemies of Christendom is good evidence that the knight must have taken part on them as a hired soldier; that is a mercenary. The problem here is not whether or not the Knight has done mercenary work abroad or not, because that should not disqualify his position as a knight. Indeed it can quite easily be argued that mercenary work was one of the main ways to gain honour and reputation for chivalrous knights. De Charny shows this very clearly: “Deeds Performed Outside One’s Locality for Pay or Other Rewards”⁵⁸ is the title of one of his paragraphs in a list of things that bring knights honour and provide opportunity for prowess. Unlike Jones, de Charny does not seem to see anything wrong with knights travelling abroad in order to find rewards and payment for fighting. On the contrary this seems to be perfectly acceptable and possibly even normal. He even goes as far as saying that these men should be “praised and honoured everywhere, provided that they do not, because of the profits they have made, give up the exercise of arms too soon.”⁵⁹ Lull’s chivalric manual does not take any position to this. It does not mention it either as a sin or as something knights should do. What it does say is that a knight should be loyal⁶⁰ to his lord and have enough wealth to maintain himself as is proper for a knight.⁶¹ Lull’s text does not in anyway condemn these mercenary activities, which is very odd, if mercenary activities were seen as inappropriate for knights. In this light Chaucer’s knight would most certainly qualify as a knight of high honour as he had travelled around the world fighting and performing deeds of arms in Africa, Lithuania, Russia (Ruce), Spain among many other countries. Did this make him a mercenary? Absolutely! Did this make him any less of a chivalrous knight? It would seem not!

The biggest problem with the division between knights and mercenaries would seem to be that of definition. The problem arises when those two terms are viewed as mutually exclusive categories. It is very tempting to make this clear-cut division, as they seem to represent two ends of a spectrum of honour. The bad reputation and action of the mercenaries, like those of the men of Free Companies are seen as the antithesis of the pure and noble ideals of the knights. Richard Barber makes a distinction between noble knights and mercenary knights that would seem to offer some clarification to the problem.⁶² According to him the mercenaries and other members of the lower classes started calling themselves as knights

⁵⁷ Jones, pp. 34-73

⁵⁸ De Charny, pp. 93

⁵⁹ De Charny, pp. 93

⁶⁰ Lull, p. 29

⁶¹ Lull, p. 63

⁶² Barber (1970), pp. 22-24

during the Hundred Years' War and due to the ambiguous nature of gaining knighthood and the difficulties of proving it these self-proclaimed knights could not be denounced. These knights would then impose their own taxes and fees to the counties they were in and in effect extorting money from the populace to fund their own life.⁶³ This interpretation is problematic at best. Since the "real" or noble knights also practiced taxation on their lands, in a justice system where possession of the land was enough to control the rights tied to it, there is no clear and simple way to divide people based on whether or not they imposed taxes on the populace. Similarly participation to campaigns of war on purely a salary contract should not be seen as any evidence on the nature of the knight in question. As shown above, according to de Charny, knights were encouraged to go abroad and take part in what can only be described as mercenary action. These nobles would then be part of either official mercenary bands or form smaller bands with their retainers and any other companions they might have with them. Therefore declaring that members of mercenary bands would not be "proper" knights and thus somehow not interested in chivalry is very dangerous. Clearly then mercenaries are not some easily defined group that can be reliably shown to be different from knights. If fighting for anyone for a money salary defines a mercenary, then the spectrum of people falling under this category during the fourteenth century is so vast compared to the small and diminishing numbers of knights that any comparison is pointless. The membership roster of "mercenaries" would span from lowly peasants to the very highest knights, and bundling this many different varieties of people under one common term makes the group almost useless as comparison. The issue between knights and mercenaries in the fourteenth century cannot be examined merely by assuming the two groups are somehow separate entities; one of them spans tens of thousands of people through every social class and the other being significantly smaller section of society. Knights could have often served in a mercenary role, still maintaining and pursuing the ideals of knighthood, but this did not label them permanently as mercenaries. Mercenaries on the other were not some uniform social class that could be easily defined and classified. Mercenary was nothing more than a temporary job title for fighting men, while a knight was a social class in its own rank. A person could be a member of both.

⁶³ Barber (1970), p. 23

3.2. Chivalric war?

Warfare is the bread and butter of a knight's career. Only in extremely rare cases would a knight go through his entire career without taking part in some kind of combat.⁶⁴ War is the very purpose of the knightly class and a very large part of the life of a knight. Boys would begin training the many duties and skills of a knight at a very early age and it took many years to become a knight.⁶⁵ From an early age the boys would be encouraged to practise many different sports; wrestling, running and swimming among others. They would also participate in hunting and hawking which were some of the main past times for aristocrats in general. Hunting was especially good for the boys since it required a very similar skill set as was required in actual war. Thus it was the best choice to provide fighting experience for young boys without directly exposing them to war and battle. The aim of the training was to improve the boy's stamina, dexterity and strength, all attributes required in his future duties. Riding was also a part of their life from a very early age. Orme illustrates this point with Edward I, who received a horse at the age of 7.⁶⁶ It is not unthinkable that he would have experience with horses before that as well. Military training was also very important aspect in the life of a future knight. He would get to know all types of combat and weapons while growing up: from archery to sword fighting. Throughout his career a knight would spend his time practising fighting, taking part in tournaments and other similar events, all in preparation for real war. It is the battlefield where a knight shows his purpose and it is also at the battlefield where the chivalric ideas are put to test. How do all the noble ideas survive the stress of combat? How could a knight hold on to the more noble elements of his creed when savagery was the rule?

Vast majority of de Charny's writings deal with violence and war in one way or the other. Even though he writes everything in a positive and encouraging manner, the many problems and abuses are clearly visible underneath his rhetoric. Fighting in local wars⁶⁷ and those abroad⁶⁸ is the most commendable action there is. Training and tournament bring their own rewards but nothing is to be more respected than fighting in a war, as it brings together all the aspects of a knightly profession and provides the best opportunities to perform deeds of arms

⁶⁴ Here I am counting only the knights who were able to participate in combat. Obviously there were knights whose health and other causes made it impossible for them to even consider fighting.

⁶⁵ Orme, Chapter 6, specifically about martial training.

⁶⁶ Orme, p.181

⁶⁷ De Charny, p.89

⁶⁸ De Charny, p.91

and thus acquire honour by showing ones prowess. Crusades were the most respected form of warfare, as it called the knight to practice his skills in service of the whole Christendom and fight for a divine cause, not just for some lord's glory. Not every action in war is good and honourable though. These actions can be seen in some of the things de Charny exhorts his readers to avoid through better things they could be doing. These directions for good conduct provide us some guidelines for good warfare as seen by the knight.

As most of the knights were almost by default very wealthy de Charny shows some concern for excessive spending during a campaign.⁶⁹ De Charny speaks against luxurious life style⁷⁰, which softens the knights and makes them less inclined to suffer the demands of a campaign of war. This must have been one of the major concerns in France during the fourteenth century as the French nobility was heavily criticized for excessive spending and luxury and not defending their people.⁷¹ Obviously there was something wrong with the French chivalry after two major losses within ten years against the English on French soil.⁷² Another issue with spending for Charny was that the nobility did not take into account how much money was needed to survive through the campaign. Excessive spending and luxurious living during the campaign caused some of these knights to not be able to continue waging war as was necessary, instead they had to return home when their funds ran out, thus harming the war effort. This shows quite clearly the main goal of chivalry: a more effective knight. Although there is some conflict between the good of the knight and the good of the army, mostly de Charny's goals were to make better soldiers.

Chivalric principles and ideas can be seen in the general conduct of armies on the battlefield quite clearly in most cases. Froissart describes several conflicts in his Chronicles where any attacks are always preceded by distinct declarations of war, so that the enemy is never caught completely unaware. For example, in 1337 Edward II sent a delegation to the king of France responding to earlier demands of homage and declaring an immediate war.⁷³ This could be explained at least partially with the chivalric drive to engage in deeds of arms. Though it could also be at least partially attributed to Froissart's admiration to chivalry. This drive to engage the enemy honourably and directly is a general feature in medieval warfare. Warfare

⁶⁹ De Charny, p.97

⁷⁰ De Charny, p.123

⁷¹ Kaeuper (1996), pp.48-63

⁷² Battles of Crécy (1346) and Poitiers (1356)

⁷³ Froissart, pp. 57-58

was a thing between two armies on the field, and as such a very different creature from later wars. What in modern days would be called civilian targets were not attacked as a rule; this does not at all mean that they did not suffer from the presence of armies, quite the contrary in fact. A medieval army was a big problem for any nearby civilians whether or not it was a hostile. Armies had to eat, and they would acquire the foodstuffs from wherever they could: mainly from any nearby farms and villages. If the army was friendly the peasants might have been promised compensations later for any losses, which may or may have actually been compensated later. Another major problem was idle or over eager soldiers who could decide to raid and plunder a friendly village just for the fun of it. These civilian targets were usually not targets of direct military action though, which means that an invading army would concentrate only on the defending army, town or castle and not the commoners living in the area. There was no glory or honour to be had in any other type of conflict, not that it prevented collateral damage.

A notable exception to chivalric warfare was called the *chevauchée*, in which the invading army would concentrate on pillaging and destroying the outlying countryside and agriculture of the enemy nation in an attempt to provoke the defender. Edward the Black Prince was the most notable commander to use this tactic during the Hundred Years' War. One of the *chevauchées* performed in 1355 by the Black Prince provides ample evidence the kind of warfare this particular strategy represented. The whole purpose of this particular campaign was to punish rebels against the English rule and to bolster the spirits of the English allies. The method of achieving this was to cause as much destruction to the French countryside and towns as possible.⁷⁴ Rogers explains that the prince's strategy here did not concentrate as much on places as it did on people. Half of the operation was about revenge on people who were considered to be rebelling and betraying the English. And to do this the Black Prince specifically picked targets that would cause the most damage and impact. One of the first castles captured on this campaign was the castle of Arouille. He captured the castle and three nearby towns without violence through secret negotiations with the castle commander. This commander then promptly surrendered at the first sight of the prince and sided with the English.⁷⁵ Interestingly this is exactly the same reason why the Black Prince ordered all the inhabitants of the town of Limoges to be put to death.⁷⁶ According to Froissart the

⁷⁴ Rogers (2000), p. 304-5

⁷⁵ Rogers (2000), p. 307

⁷⁶ Froissart, p. 175

townspeople had sworn allegiance to the Black Prince and then later returned to the French side. Here we see the Black Prince doing the exact same thing as he himself evidently despises: convincing people to betray their masters. In this case it is partly even worse, since with the castle of Arouille three towns changed sides as well. Rogers does not mention if these towns were forced into it or if they came willingly. Obviously then the Black Prince would know the fate of these people once the French would return to the area and find out about the treachery. How come a chivalrous knight tries to convince others to commit treason when he himself considers it a capital offence? This seems especially cold blooded as the aim of the *chevauchée* was not to gain control of land, but to destroy it and make sure the enemy does not benefit from it, so it is unclear if the English would even bother to defend the towns that joined their side. One of the aims of the *chevauchée* tactic was to draw the enemy into an open battle. This provides us another interesting point to consider when the French leaders refused to engage the English forces ravaging their countryside. One of the most common chivalric maxims was to protect the weak, and it is difficult to think of a case that would break this maxim more blatantly. So it would seem that neither the French or the English were fighting with the chivalric principles in mind: the English are terrorising the weak, while the French are refusing to protect them.

Curiously despite this brutal style of fighting Edward the Black Prince was also considered to be one of the most chivalric people of his time.⁷⁷ This does bring up an interesting question: why was the Black Prince considered to be among the most chivalrous people of his time, if he was also known for using some of the more unchivalrous tactics of the time? Looking at just this one case it is difficult to say anything for certain. The *Book of Chivalry* itself is intensely personal in the way it addresses honour and prowess. Everything deals with a single person only. Honour is gained from lone actions and there seems to be no concept of teamwork or good of the whole in the way the book sees chivalry, apart from a few examples where an action damaging the whole army or campaign is frowned upon. It could be then that *chevauchée* being an action committed by the whole army does not affect any single person's honour, even if it is the commander. Though this kind of deduction seems quite suspect as personalities seem to have been in very high esteem at the time. Malcolm Hebron⁷⁸ talks about siege commanders in medieval literature and how the whole depiction of a siege was personified in him. The actions of whole armies were condensed to the person of the

⁷⁷ Barnie, pp. 75-6

⁷⁸ Hebron, chapter 2

commander, including ethics and strategies. The whole process reflected the person of the commander. Even though in this case it is not a question of literature or sieges, the conclusion seems obvious. In a cult of celebrity like that of the knight and their admiration of prowess, a leader of an army, especially in the case of a famous leader, would most likely get credit for all the achievements of the army, as well as all the blame for poor conduct. As the prince and heir apparent of England Edward was a very famous person, so it is conceivable that any actions done by the army he is commanding could be seen as personal actions of Edward himself. The problem with this interpretation, as attractive as it may seem, is that attributing the morals and actions of armies to a single protagonist is a very common technique in literature throughout the ages, and does not necessarily reflect the worldview of its readership or audience. Another element that might play a role here is one already mentioned above: grace of God. God would reward the worthy with lasting success and riches, and since Edward, as the prince of England, was one of the richest men in Europe by that logic he must have been a very chivalrous and noble man. In this view his actions would have less effect on his reputation than his background. It is evident that he is wealthy and as such deserves honour, but it is unlikely that this alone would negate all possible infamous deeds that he could commit. Maurice Keen provides an alternative solution to this problem in his study of medieval concepts of just war.⁷⁹ The problem in the events and actions above is not really a contradiction in the chivalric principles or in the people claiming themselves to be chivalric. Despite what it looks like this would not be a question of chivalry at all. Only to modern eyes does it look like it would cause moral problems to chivalrous characters. According to Keen these events are explained perfectly by the medieval concepts of just war. As an example he gives the following:

“Raymond of Pennaforte, dealing with the crime of arson, defines incendiaries thus: ‘an incendiary is one who, out of hate, ill-will or for the sake of revenge sets fire to a town, or to a village or to a house or vines or anything of that kind. But... if he does this at the command of one who has the power to declare war, then he is not to be judged an incendiary.’ It was the same with other crimes, such as spoliation of a man’s goods. In time of peace this was robbery, but in

⁷⁹ Keen (1965)

time of war it might be the basis of a legal title to possession, because in war it is not unjust or unreasonable to despoil the goods of the enemy.”⁸⁰

The key here is “one who has the power to declare war”. According to Keen and Pennaforte’s *Summa de Poenitentia* acts that are criminal and deplorable during peacetime are completely reasonable and justified during a time of war. In a war all the atrocities committed by the Black Prince are acceptable method of fighting, even though during peace they are heinous crimes against chivalric ideals. This has grave implications to the ideal of chivalry. In the chivalric literature knights are required to defend the weak wherever they find oppression, but in times of war ⁸¹most of the chivalric rules and maxims would become irrelevant, as the codes of war make them perfectly acceptable behaviour. Thus the Black Prince could freely burn entire villages, destroy towns and kill hundreds of defenceless peasants on his *chevauchées* without it having any effect whatsoever on his reputation. The only question that would have to be considered is whether or not he is waging a just war. This single point of consideration would transform horrible crimes against everything that chivalric ideals stand for into something mundane and perfectly acceptable.

Richard Kaeuper has examined the same issue and draws slightly different conclusions.⁸² He examines the ample evidence of knightly violence and disregard for the life of fellow man and reflects it in the light of the ideals from the romances. This picture paints a bleak image of chivalry that is uncaring and cruel to its fellow man. Kaeuper concludes his chapter with the realisation that “as a code, chivalry had next to nothing to do with ordinary people.”⁸³ While this characterisation seems to be fairly accurate depiction of the state of chivalry Kaeuper fails to consider the rules of war presented by Keen. All of the examples given by Kaeuper are from warfare, if Keen’s theory of the rules of war is correct then all the apparent brutality and unchivalric behaviour would be at least partly justified. One thing is evident from all the examples given by Kaeuper: many of the accounts he quotes show that even though the writers are horrified and sympathetic to the suffering of the victims of war they do not condemn the knights who committed these actions. There is a distinct lack of judgement in all these accounts that seems to support the ideas proposed by Keen. While the chroniclers and other witnesses are not happy with what they are seeing and recognise the violence and

⁸⁰ Keen (1965), p. 65

⁸¹ More on the concepts of just war and the requirements of it in Keen’s *The Laws of War*.

⁸² Kaeuper (1999), pp. 176-185

⁸³ Kaeuper (1999), p. 185

suffering caused by war, they do not criticize the knights themselves. At war their actions are perfectly justified and reasonable, it is only regrettable that some people suffer because of these actions. The apparent lack of fault in these actions is puzzling to the modern reader who is accustomed to place blame on the aggressor.

Taking of prisoners was another typical and integral part of medieval warfare. It is also one of the main ways of how knights could finance their fighting. An important and rich prisoner could make his captor rich. It explains why so many knights survived several bloody battles while lesser soldiers were not as fortunate. It was worth more to capture a knight alive than kill him. The worth of the victory did not demand that the loser must die. Though this does not by any means mean that warfare for the knights was safe and free of danger. Even though knights were the celebrity of their day and probably the most imposing figures on the battlefield, recognition was a constant worry. One had to make sure that any enemy knew who you were, if there was to be any hope of mercy and capture in case of defeat. This is where heraldry comes in very useful, and is in part reason for heraldic symbols. Even though ones name might be known around Europe, there would have been very few people who connect the face to the name and reputation. This was even more difficult in the battlefield, where heavy armour often covered the knights and in general it was not the best time to start studying ones opponent in detail. Even though it might seem like common sense to capture as many opponents as possible, it was not always an easy decision to make. A prisoner was someone who could return to the fight later on if freed, while a dead person was not. Also the relative value of a prisoner had to be above the cost of maintaining said prisoner. The captor would have to provide upkeep for his prisoner and make sure he stays in good health during his imprisonment, which could stretch out for years. Even though not all lords kept their prisoners as guests, it was seen to be the proper way, especially if the prisoner was a high ranking noble. It was not a simple matter to collect a ransom either, as often it had to be first gathered up, and with the owner imprisoned collecting money was not any easier. So here practical matters like cost efficiency would go hand in hand with more chivalric principles. Also no one would have been looking forward to being captured and having his finances ravaged by ransom. So losing to a fellow knight did not mean an automatic capture. Knights were still out to gain glory by performing notable deeds of arms and other feats of heroism, and getting captured did not look good on ones resume. There are some exceptions to this: de Charny himself was captured a couple of times without losing any glory. He was once captured during a heroic battle to the last where his only options were to die fighting or

surrender. He had proven his honour by fighting to the last without giving up and surrender at the end was no dishonour. His second capture was after a failed plot to recapture Calais from the English. De Charny tried to bribe the city's mayor to open up the gates to the French. Even though this plot failed and de Charny and others were captured it was not considered to be a blemish to his honour. The justification for this was that he personally had not vowed not to attack the English like the French king had done previously.⁸⁴ Interestingly enough nothing is said about the chivalric qualities of this covert operation, as it certainly does not seem to be something worthy of a noble knight. Usually these situations include some heroic undertaking against difficult odds, like defending oneself successfully against unbeatable odds before surrendering as de Charny had done.

Froissart illustrates one of the bigger dangers of war to knights in battle. A passage of the *Chronicles*⁸⁵ talks about a pair of French knights after hiding from the English troops after a lost battle. These two knights are worried, that the English archers will overrun them before they can surrender to a knight. Even though they were valuable and most likely well known knights, the archers as common people would not know them and would likely just kill them like any other enemy on the field. As commoners the archers did not pay much heed to the principles of chivalry, and even if they had, they were not in any position to take and keep prisoners. It would be in their best interest to kill the knights and loot the bodies for any valuables. Luckily for our two French knights an English knight happened by their small fort and they could surrender to him, and thus kept their lives. This chapter in Froissart is a good example and a reminder that chivalry was not a universal custom followed by all. More likely it was a cultural feature of knighthood and nobility.

The Siege

The siege is one of the most iconic scenes in any medieval battle depiction, but how did chivalric principles work during a siege? A siege could often last months with little activity going on in either side. This apparent idleness would not have suited well the knight who was looking to prove himself by committing those all-important deeds of arms. Indeed De Charny shows this to have been a real issue as he has several warnings towards problematic behaviour during sieges.

⁸⁴ Kaeuper (1996) p.12

⁸⁵ Froissart, p.75

One of these I have already mentioned earlier. Excessive spending could be a very big problem during a siege. A knight wishing to live up to his reputation, or just enjoyed luxury a bit too much, could spend his money and resources before the siege was over and be forced to leave the army and return home to prevent bankruptcy. On the other hand this could also force the knight to look for alternative means of funding his stay, which would lead to another problem mentioned by de Charny.

“Those who are brave but eager to plunder.”⁸⁶ Lack of money could and would drive people to looting and plundering at inopportune moments. De Charny warns against this kind of behaviour and leaving the fight too soon in order to get to the looting, possibly tipping the balance of the fight again to the defender and maybe even causing the loss of the battle. Even though the wording of the chapter is mainly positive and encouraging, the issue behind is gravely serious. Over zealous looting could ruin the whole battle for the aggressor, when they the number of soldiers fighting is reduced. These looters are also easier to defeat, as they are separated from the main force and as such easier to surround and capture, illustrating how this kind of behaviour was detrimental to the individual as well as the siege effort. This is where the basic individualism of chivalry shows some of its problems. There is very little honour in teamwork, and at least according to de Charny, all honour comes from individual achievements. Obviously we should not put all the blame on chivalry, when human greed is at least as powerful motivator in a case like this.

The looting and pillaging after a successful siege is often seen as one of the most contradicting actions towards chivalry and chivalric ideals. How could a system so concerned over valour and honour allow such brutal action against an enemy already beaten? This question is difficult to answer, but I suspect the answer lies somewhere in the issues discussed earlier, in how chivalry and chivalric deeds affect individuals. Froissart describes a good example of this behaviour in his depiction of the sack of Limoges by the Black Prince.⁸⁷ This example also goes hand in hand with the question on chivalric reputation discussed earlier. The Black Prince found out that some former allies of his had sided with the town of Limoges against him, which threw him into a rage according to Froissart. The resulting siege and sack of the town was very bloody and even big apologist of chivalry like Froissart had to confess

⁸⁶ De Charny, p.99

⁸⁷ Froissart, p. 175

the cruelties of the event. As his revenge, the Black Prince had most of the townspeople massacred and the town itself pillaged and burned. How is it that after acts like this his reputation was not tarnished? Notable feature in the description of sacking, which might hold a clue to the interpretation of this situation is, that the regular soldiers of Edward's army did the actual killing and sacking. He himself did not participate in the killing; he just approved of it and did nothing to stop it. The conclusions that we can draw from this incident reinforce the image of chivalry as a code or cultural norm between knights only. It seems that chivalric practises and rules of conduct did not apply when dealing with commoners. The Black Prince does not shy away from killing commoners and neither seems to do any of the others. Other commoners can obviously kill each other without any chivalric considerations. In this instance the few people spared happened to be knights and nobility. Along with all the other rules and regulations presented by de Charny and with examples dealing with chivalry, it would seem that chivalry is strictly a matter between knights. Between knights and commoners there are no such restrictions, almost like they're a whole different creature altogether.

Set Battle

The set battle has to be the one of the most recognisable events of a medieval war, with two massive armies facing each other on a grassy field moments away from battle on a grand scale. It is also the main field of glory where a knight could perform his coveted deeds of arms, and have a wide audience to witness them. Set battle is also the last place where soldiers should act for their own glory. Teamwork is paramount when it comes to massive battles like this and any badly timed individual heroics can shatter any hope for victory, even faster than during a siege.

When it comes to chivalry the set battle is a very conflicting situation. Many knights are looking to earn their reputation, but the commanders need absolute obedience if the army is to function properly. How does the highly individualistic chivalric ethos balance the need for teamwork and sacrifice for the greater whole? And how do the chivalric principles show in the behaviour of these great armies. Paradoxically the fourteenth century did not see many of these great battles, even though it was the goal and greatest honour of every knight to participate in one. Here as well, de Charny is a good example. A man, whose entire career

was based on his great prowess as a soldier and a knight, only participated in a handful of set battles.

While Froissart describes events in France and Spain, the Scalacronica concentrates on the conflicts between the English and the Scots as well as with the war in France. What is in common with both sources is that the image they create of the movements and actions of armies are very similar. Scalacronica tells of an encounter with an invading Scottish army where both armies were facing each other, and apart from one small night raid from the Scots, no fighting was done. After a while the Scots quit the battlefield and returned to Scotland without a fight.⁸⁸ What is remarkable about this encounter is that despite both armies being in visual range of each other several times, and even camped opposite of each other for a good time, they never engaged each other directly. Another very similar confrontation with the Scots has the two armies in a standoff on opposing hills. Again the Scots leave the field without a battle and return to Scotland. They seemed to avoid direct confrontation. Similar scenes happened in France. In the lead up to the battle of Crécy, the Edward the Black Prince drove his army through half of western France causing massive destruction on the way. They did their best to avoid the French army though, resulting in a long chase. Only near Crécy did the French army force a confrontation, after the English army slowed down by their loot train could not run escape any further.⁸⁹

A third example of this kind of behaviour is the English siege of Calais⁹⁰, where the English army had fortified their position around Calais against any relief force that comes to help the besieged town. Eventually, but not before plenty of time had passed, the French king did show up with his army, with the intention of driving away the invading English force and rescuing the suffering Calais. Leaving the town to suffer the ravages of an extended siege was not very chivalrous on the part of the French. On the other hand the actions of the English force later on did not follow the tenets of chivalrous behaviour either. After seeing the situation around Calais, King Philip VI of France sent emissaries to discuss with Edward III,⁹¹ asking him to meet Philip on a level battlefield away from the English fortifications. Edward III promptly declined. Even appealing to Edwards chivalrous nature did not get him to give up the well-defended positions the English had. Edward's reason was that if Philip's actions were

⁸⁸ Scalacronica, p. 125

⁸⁹ Froissart, p 68-86

⁹⁰ Froissart, p.102-3

⁹¹ Geoffroi de Charny was one of the emissaries sent by Philip VI.

as noble as he claimed he would have come sooner to rescue the town. This gave Edward a good reason to refuse the request without compromising his reputation as a chivalrous leader, but it is unlikely that it was more than a convenient excuse to keep his superior position. Naturally this decision was very sensible from a tactical point of view, but it was not a chivalrous way to handle the matter. In the end Philip VI left the Calais to the English, as he could not have ended the siege without significant losses, if at all.

It is clear from these examples alone that chivalry did not have much influence in military matters as a whole. Tactics and results dictated the actions of commanders and armies. Chivalry was only considered when everything else did not disagree with it. In this regard chivalry was only a matter of convenience. It was used as a weapon in order to lure the enemy out of superior positions or excuses were made that bowed to chivalrous principles, but in truth this lip service probably was the extent to which chivalry influenced war. These commanders did not risk defeat for foolish attempts at glory. In this regard as well, chivalry seems to be a very individualistic ideal. It was not a factor in large-scale operations, such as military campaigns and set battles. Chivalry was a business for individual knights, for commanders of armies it was a convenient tool and an excuse, little more.

3.3. Summary

Here I had a look at the upbringing of a knight and how they lived their life. Was the chivalric creed even a tenable ideal on an individual level? Even though it does have its problems most knights were raised to believe in chivalry from a very early age, similarly to many modern Christians are raised today. This upbringing does not guarantee that they were ardent followers of the creed, but it does make sure that everyone knows at least partially what is expected from them and how they should act in the society.

At first mercenaries and chivalric knights seem to be the complete opposites of each other, but de Charny seems to be claiming otherwise. According to him all knights should serve as mercenaries at times in order to build up their reputation. None of the other sources seem to contradict this idea. It is unlikely that someone like de Charny would present something like this if it was not true. As far as I can see the main incompatibility between mercenaries and knights is one of definition. A modern reader easily makes it into a question of one or the

other. A knight cannot be a mercenary and vice versa. But in reality this comparison is a poor tool, as the spectrum of mercenaries is vast and not at all stable. A man may be a mercenary temporarily, without it becoming his profession, which seems to be something forgotten in most definitions of the word.

A look at warfare and fighting brings up conflicting results. Even though chivalry is a factor influencing the lives of all knights, the tenets and beliefs do not seem to be visible in warfare. In fact warfare requires completely different kind of set of morals. Individualism of chivalry does not seem to have a place on the battlefield. Indeed there were several things in warfare that seem to contradict chivalric codes.

4. Social aspects of chivalry

In this chapter I will examine the role of chivalry on a larger scale. The previous chapter concentrated on the individual knight and his relationship to chivalric ideals and practices. This chapter intends to examine how chivalry worked on a societal level. De Charny's text gives the impression that chivalry is an intensely personal matter and seems to have very little to do with anyone else than the knight himself. Was there anything beyond the individual? How does chivalry work on a larger scale, or does it even have any bearing on nations. What kind of impact does de Charny's ideals have on society and how do they interact with the status quo of the fourteenth century? Here I'll have a look at how, if at all, the chivalric ideals affected the society of nobility and whether or not it could be said that there was common culture that all the knights shared or was it just a question of individual aspirations, without any larger context? At the end I will consider a single event and its depiction in the chronicles and how the chronicles themselves worked to help create chivalric reputation.

4.1. Social standing of a knight

Most of de Charny's teachings and points about knightly honour, prowess and glory stress time and again "he who does best is most worthy." How does this kind of meritocracy work in a society that is very aware of social standing and advocates people to know their place and not striving to chance what God has decreed for them? In a system like this de Charny's words seem very contradicting and encouraging social climbing and improving ones position. Could a peasant really climb all the way to the top of the society through nothing more than skill at arms?

Even though the philosophy in *Book of Chivalry* looks quite egalitarian at the first glance, this perception does not hold a closer inspection. First of all we need to be aware that de Charny wrote to his peers, knights and nobility, the very top of the society who was actively involved in fighting and warfare. It is very unlikely that the book was ever meant to be read by the common people, that is the common soldiers. As I discussed above, the knightly society can be seen as culture of its own with rules and customs only applying to them and not the rest of the society. So when de Charny exhorts his readers to improve himself in order to become more worthy, he does not address the lower classes, but fellow knights and men at arms.

Secondly de Charny denies this system of pure merit equalling worth later on in his book. He cleverly puts a cap to how far one can climb through ones actions, by giving higher ranked nobles higher value due to their status.⁹² This way the right people are always more worthy than their social inferiors. The way de Charny achieves this is by stressing how wealthy and high ranked people are better known then their poorer peers and as such are able to inspire other knights better. He also argues that one who already has wealth and power when he starts his knightly career, does not need do so in order to become wealthy and powerful, thus his actions are more noble since he they have no other motivation than to show his worth. In this way de Charny establishes preaches the merits of effort, skill and fame without angering the people in power. No matter how well a poor knight does on the battlefield his superiors will always stay as his superiors.

So even though the code presented by de Charny appears as a meritocracy, in reality it is not any different from how the rest of the society functions. People have their place in society and that position determines their overall worth. Through chivalric practices a knight can make himself more honourable, but he cannot rise above his superiors through skill alone. The little loopholes in this system make sure that while de Charny is inspiring all the knights to do better through promises of glory and riches, he does not do so by shaking the thrones of the already rich and powerful.

Chivalric orders and Order of the Garter

If we are to assume that chivalry was nothing more than a convenient façade for the knights to gain fame, wealth and power, that chivalry did not actually exist as anything more than ideals in the minds of poets and the pages of romances, how do we explain the chivalric orders? What was their function if not a gathering of the most chivalrous knights of their time? At least ten chivalric orders were founded in the fourteenth century from England to Hungary to Sicily. Among these orders were the English *Society of St. George* better known as *The Order of the Garter* and its short-lived, but not any less ambitious, French counterpart *The Company of Our Lady of the Noble House*, or commonly *Company of the Star*.⁹³ Both of these orders were apparently founded in order to gather the best knights in the world to a single order

⁹² De Charny, p.107-9

⁹³ Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown*

headed by Edward III and Jean II respectively. Jean II wanted to have an order that could compete with *The Order of the Garter* and show that French knights were as good as the English, if not better, as well as to inspire his own knights to aspire to improve themselves. The tenets of the *Company of the Star* included orders that none of its members could flee a field of battle, which has been attributed as the reason for the orders demise shortly after its foundation.⁹⁴ The *Company of the Star* had another task which *The Order of the Garter* did not have any need for: it was meant to lead by example and show to the weak French nobility the true meaning of knighthood. Assuming that de Charny's book was indeed written as a guidebook for the *Company* one of the main functions of the order was to rekindle the forgotten chivalric honours and customs. The several bad defeats had been attributed to the lazy and out of shape nobility, who were more intent on living a comfortable life than on defending their subjects. This decadent lifestyle had also made these defenders of the nation weak and disorganised in battle. *Company of the Star* was to show the way for all nobility and raise the level of French knighthood where it was meant to be.

Similarly the *Order of the Garter* was founded in order to collect most chivalrous knights of the realm and abroad around Edward III. The declared purpose of the order was to promote chivalry in all its forms and bring glory to all the knights involved. The order was fashioned after Arthur's Round Table and the members were tasked to go out and perform chivalric deeds around the world and then report back at the annual feast on St. Georges day in order to record these deeds in the records of the order.⁹⁵ Despite the many other activities that the *Order of the Garter* was involved with, the main purpose for the order was to promote chivalry and chivalric principles through action and devotion. Juliet Vale suggested that the Order had begun as a way for Edward III to field two tournament teams, which could practise with each other and compete for Edward during tournaments.⁹⁶ Naturally this participation in tournaments was perfectly suited to increase the honour of everyone involved, as tournament competition was one important aspect of a chivalric career. Though the main reason for the Order's foundation seems to have been to promote Edward III's reputation and image internationally as well as domestically. Boulton comes to the conclusion that even though *The Order of the Garter* was founded in an attempt to boost Edward's reputation, it was not merely a façade of chivalry with no substance. Apparently the people involved in the Order

⁹⁴ Boulton, pp. 189-196

⁹⁵ Boulton, chapter 4.

⁹⁶ Vale, p.91

really did strive for the best chivalric form. They participated in earnest in the religious services of the Order and as Boulton concludes the Order was most likely a true corporation and fraternity where all the members were equals.⁹⁷

Both of these two orders strived to increase the honour of their fellows and in general tried to promote the chivalric ideals they were founded on. The very deep and real religious cult of St. George that was connected to the *Order of the Garter* was no mere lip service to religious beliefs connected to knighthood. If chivalry was indeed nothing more than a convenient excuse for certain actions and behaviour then it is very unlikely that this kind of organisations had been created only for the purposes of chivalry as they seem to have been. It is certain that these Orders were well known and the elite of the society involved in them was sure to guarantee that lower orders of society would emulate their actions and behaviour. The function and operation of these orders does not imply in anyway that their members did not take chivalry seriously.

4.2. Culture of chivalry

Was there such as a chivalric society? From the way de Charny and others are dealing with the topic, it would certainly seem that chivalry is a very private affair and only applicable on a personal level. However there are some signs that point towards a more unified culture that makes knights of different nationalities have more things in common than they have with most of their fellow nationals.

One of the most visible indications of this singular culture among knights is the literature shared among them. Romances and other chivalric literature were widely spread and well known by the fourteenth century. Even though France and England had been at war several times over the centuries they still shared more than a passing cultural connection. The effects of Norman Conquest could still be seen in the society. For several centuries after the conquest English nobility was composed mainly of French and French speaking people. There was a wide divide between the ruling classes and the rest of the population. Even though by

⁹⁷ Boulton, p. 165

fourteenth century the divide was disappearing fast⁹⁸ it had left its mark in the culture of the nobility. The nobles and the commoners had very different cultural backgrounds due to the Norman Conquest of 1066 and the following trend of French aristocracy. This divide did not close quickly because it was nearly impossible to move from one social class to another. The nobles kept their own culture and customs, never getting to know the culture of their subjects. French chivalric literature had been read and absorbed over the years and formed the common basic understanding of what chivalry was and how one should behave with other knights. Similarly English land holdings in French soil would have been a melding pot of French and English noble society.

Another feature that would help the spread and homogenisation of chivalric culture and ideas across national borders was the peacetime activity of tournaments. Even though popularity of tournaments varied over the years, they were never completely absent. A big reason for the fluctuation in tournament popularity was condemnation by the Church, but even that could not completely stop tournaments.⁹⁹ One of the strongest statements against tournaments was that any knight who died in a tournament would be denied ecclesiastical burial;¹⁰⁰ but this ban was difficult to enforce and as such could not stop the competing in tournaments. Especially in England the frequency and popularity of tournaments depended largely on the king's disposition towards them so the social standing of tournament was mainly in the hands of the king. For example Edward III was a big fan of tournaments and chivalry, so naturally he did his best to encourage it. It is even said that the Order of the Garter was formed, among other reasons, as a pair of tournament teams for Edward II.¹⁰¹ Big tournaments were international affairs that drew participants from many nations across Europe. French and English knights would be in especially close contact in tournaments held in either region. Later on, on the battlefield these people would recognise and know each other better than the average soldier. This does offer some explanation to some of the more interesting and abstract facets of knighthood. The concept of ransom is clear enough, but the trust required for it to work would be very hard to come by if the knight and his prisoner did not share the same values and ideas. This is especially true in the cases where prisoners were released, in order to arrange the payment of their own ransom. Even higher degree of trust and understanding is required

⁹⁸ Froissart, on page 58, describes how Edward instructed his nobility to teach their children French so they could better understand the enemy in the coming wars. Which is quite a clear indication that French language had declined since the days of William the Conqueror.

⁹⁹ Barber & Barker, chapter 6.

¹⁰⁰ Barber & Barker, pp. 142-3

¹⁰¹ Vale, p. 91

before something like parole could be applied. Scalacronica offers us a good example of the complexities of parole¹⁰². An English knight is rescued from captivity, by some of his sympathisers. This action though goes against the rescued knights parole agreement, where he was set free by his French captors, so he could raise the ransom for his release. The French complained that this subsequent “rescue” was not valid, as the knight had in effect promised not to escape. In the end the French party was compensated for this unlawful rescue. This kind of behaviour and knowledge of the social rules simply could not function if there was no common culture in the background where all members know and respect the rules and practises. In a modern war a soldier has the duty to escape however possible. There is no similar concept here. The situation has more in common with a business contract between citizens than the relationship of a prisoner and a captor. Similarly the fact that the complaint was acknowledged and the French received compensation for the transgression show features more in common with a court of law than the behaviour of two nations at war. There is certainly some kind of common understanding and culture behind these decisions, since there is no superior authority to enforce any of these actions, no international law to enforce the decisions; only peer pressure and shared cultural norms ensured that these rules would be followed. No one would force a released prisoner to return and pay extortionate sums of money to his former captor and neither is there any court or other authority that can provide compensation to the injured French party in the above example. The only way for this system to work is if both sides are aware and respects the social rules of the situation. This kind of situation is not very likely to come to be without a common cultural tie. It certainly does not show any characteristics of behaviour between two enemy soldiers who are out to kill each other no matter what. Keen has come to similar conclusion with his book on *Laws of War* where he speculates that certain minimum level of chivalric standard was expected and enforced during the Hundred Years’ War.¹⁰³ Soldiers would not necessarily follow the full ideals of chivalry, but in order for the system to work at all there must have been some common understanding and minimum level of rules and behaviour that was followed. Examples like ransom and parole would seem to point to just that custom or law, since like mentioned before, they could not work without some kind of common understanding and agreement. This law was even enforced to some degree as shown by Keen in an example where the Black Prince demands justice from a French knight who had broken the terms of

¹⁰² Scalacronica, p.179-181

¹⁰³ Keen (1965), p. 3

his parole.¹⁰⁴ This complaint was judged by a jury of twelve knights assembled from the hosts of the Black Prince. Similar cases were judged by various courts and princes around Europe, the high court of chivalry being one of them.

This social separation from the lower classes could well be one of the factors behind the apparent contradictions of chivalry discussed in the previous chapter. If the knights felt closer to the knights of the opposing side than they did with their own soldiers it would explain some of the apparent disregard of chivalric code in matters involving the lower classes. Throughout his *Chronicles* Froissart is giving us the impression that civilised society included the nobility and clergy, with peasants and other lower class members being some menacing, dangerous, faceless mass. Dangerous because they were so alien and unknown in their motives, actions and culture. Even though Froissart was not above bias towards knights and nobility, this kind of portrayal would seem quite extreme, if there was no seed of truth in it. Therefore it is not very far-fetched idea to assume some kind of cultural divide between the nobility and the lower classes. They certainly lived completely different lives, which rarely intersected in a peaceful way. The social separation is visible in the actions of the two French knights in the example above, where the English archers looking for survivors had cornered them. The knights could not surrender to the archers as they did not follow any chivalric codes and would have just killed them on the spot. Only the appearance of the English knight made sure that they could safely surrender for mutual benefit. The mood of the scene is that the two knights were saved from the violence and threat of the mass of archers. Even though it is not exactly worded as such the archers were the enemy and the English knight was a friend. There was no chance of negotiation with the archers as there was no common cultural background to create any kind of communication. Froissart demonstrates similar sentiment when describing the *Jacquerie* of 1358.¹⁰⁵ The actions of the rebelling peasants are “very strange and terrifying” to the chronicler. He does not seem to understand the motivations of the peasants. They are also described in terms of a single mass, or at times bands, of evil and wicked rebels whose actions have no leaders. The wording of this passage is very clear: the peasants are an unknown, uncontrollable entity and the nobility fighting them are good and virtuous men fighting for their lives. With God’s help the rebellion was put down. Even if Froissart is only demonstrating his own fear and lack of understanding of the peasants and

¹⁰⁴ Keen (1965), p. 33-4

¹⁰⁵ Froissart, p. 151-4

their culture, it does quite starkly show that there was a divide between the nobility and the common people, and the nobility did not quite understand this other culture.

4.3. Conflicting chivalry

The chivalric code is not completely free of conflicts and paradoxes. The view of God's involvement described earlier could be seen as one such conflict. Though I will not examine it any further here, as it would require a more complete understanding of medieval religious beliefs. The logic presented by de Charny does show a clear flaw for many modern readers, but there is no certain way to say how a fourteenth century knight, or a cleric for that matter, would have seen the issue. Any speculation on the topic would be exactly that: speculation, and as such not productive and far beyond the scope of this thesis.

There is another interesting feature of the chivalric ideals presented to us by de Charny; the code described to us is mainly a martial affair. It is primarily concerned of honour and as such it revolves around war and fighting, but by the fourteenth century a knight's life included many other duties than just fighting. Knights were required to fill many of the governmental positions in England and their job was becoming more and more clerical. They were required to act as judges and other peacekeepers among other things. Yet it is interesting to see that the chivalric ideal doesn't seem to have taken these expanded duties into consideration at all. De Charny deals almost exclusively on military matters, and only a few things beside it, which are also related to war and fighting. There is also very little research done on the effects of chivalry and the chivalric codes to the more clerical and administrative duties in the realm, which were still manned by knights. As I mentioned above these positions were often seen as the most corrupted in the realm. This provides us an image that is severely at odds with the image of a knight as the best and noblest of the society. How did the society react to an otherwise noble and worthy knight that, as an administrator, was utterly corrupt? It is unlikely that this kind of behaviour would go unnoticed in a society that puts so much weight to personal reputation. Still there is no evidence of this neither in De Charny's tenets of good knightly behaviour nor in any chivalric literature. Did he intentionally concentrate only on military skill, or did the nobility truly not care about what happened in the civic organisation of the country? Maybe culture around knighthood was so centred on violence and warfare that it overpowered any concerns about behaviour in the "civilian" sector. Even though this kind

of chivalric activity is not the mainstream of chivalric scholarship, it does pose very interesting questions about the nature of chivalry in general, which deserve to be examined.

The culture of chivalry does not seem to recognise this reality beyond reality of civic duties in any way. De Charny's lack of consideration has already been mentioned. While he writes about all the different ways one can gain honour by killing he says remarkably little about matters outside of combat. That does not mean that he does not mention anything outside of it! The few lines that he devotes to affairs outside of the battlefield are mostly in support to the ideas about soldiering, but not all of them. He mentions women and how both they should behave and how they should be treated. He also talks about proper ways to dress and criticises the contemporary fashions. Lastly he gives some thought on the qualities of leadership. It is from his thoughts on leadership where we can find more general attitudes on knightly service and conduct that can give us a glimpse on how these warriors should behave in a civic office.¹⁰⁶ Even this does not provide much more than broad suggestion on the influence leaders have to their followers. Knights would have been leaders and examples to everyone around them in these positions and as such they should strive to inspire and motivate everyone around them with his own impeccable behaviour, as the lower rank people would follow his lead. The biggest problem with finding directions from de Charny on how to behave outside of war, does not stem mainly from its martial focus, though that is undoubtedly a reason, it is a result of the fact that de Charny is only giving advise on conduct between equals or near equals. Most, if not all, of the problems that come from corruption of the administrative positions is because men of power abuse their position and power over the lower classes, which would form the majority of their "customers." Even in cities there would be a distinction between the nobles holding the offices and the burghers who needed those services. Both de Charny and Llull spend considerable amounts of time instructing the knights on how to conduct themselves on the battlefield and with their fellow knights, but apart from exhorting them to "protect the weak" they do not offer any guidelines to any other behaviour towards the commoners. Obviously this mandate to protect the weak should apply outside of battle as well as in it, but for some reason this does not seem to be the case.

Chronicles and chivalric literature is no better in this regard. The chronicles are mainly historical accounts that inform us on the extraordinary events and campaigns of the kings and

¹⁰⁶ De Charny, p. 107

lords. In effect they are either chronicling the “rich and the famous” of their times or they are a personal journal of one of them. In either case they do not pay any attention to the daily business of administration and thus provide us with very little information. Romances and other chivalric literature are in turn only concerned about ideals and myths about the best of knights. Naturally these knights are depicted in what are the ultimate acts of chivalry, which are the quests, deeds of arms and grand adventures. There is hardly any place to comment on the mundane business of bookkeeping. Here lies the biggest problem of the question. Administrative business was already by then a mundane business that did not inspire people to great tales of valour. It was also quite different from the traditional roles of knighthood and none of the old qualifiers of glory seem to apply to it. It simply was not worth mentioning in written accounts.

If there is no evidence of it, did it even exist? This is a very good question. We do know from the many legal treatises and laws, that the people who worked as royal administrators had to be knights and hold land.¹⁰⁷ So not only did they need to be knights, they had to be the more successful and rich ones who owned enough land to be able to support themselves fully. The question is then, if these knights who acted as civil and royal administrators were the same as the ones who took part in battles lived the full life of chivalry promoted by the many chivalric manuals? Richard Barber suggests that they were in fact two different groups of people who both shared the title of a knight.¹⁰⁸ In his estimation England had in the end of the thirteenth century no more than 1500 knights, of which only 500 were able to fight. These remaining knights would be the ones taking up administrative positions in the shires thus creating two kinds of knights: the administrative “knights of the shire” and the more commonly understood knights who did all the fighting. These “knights of the shire” would be the local administrators, representatives in parliament and justices of the realm. Eventually this kind of knighthood lost any pretence of real knighthood and remained as such in name only. Eventually “knight of the shire” would have become associated with administrative duties and not with nobility or knighthood. In a sense there would have been two different categories of knights with different expectations and different duties.

¹⁰⁷ see Helen Cam’s article “Shire Officials: Coroners, Constables, and Bailiffs “ for a full account of the various administrative positions.

¹⁰⁸ Barber (1970), p. 20-23

As attractive as this model is, it does come pose some problems. Not all of the remaining knights would be ones holding enough land to support them, which was one of the biggest requirements for the administrative positions. Since only the eldest son could inherit, it is more than likely that majority of knights would start their career without land holdings. If this division suggested by Barber is this strict, it would also mean that the landless knights, who did not take part in fighting, had very few opportunities to gain lands later on, as the main ways for knights to increase their wealth was on the battlefield, either through ransom or loot and other rewards. At least gaining sufficient landholdings would be much more difficult for a knight who never took part in battles. Another problem relating to landholding is was that the knight was not only supposed to hold enough land to support himself out of it, he also had to own the land in the county where he served, which was the case at least with coroners.¹⁰⁹ In the case of coroners the problem was compounded by the fact the every county had to have four coroners. The problem of finding knights suitable for the position is highlighted when at the last half of the fourteenth century the requirement for knighthood started disappearing from the coroner's position. It is unlikely that the five hundred knights able to fight would stay out of administrative business.

More importantly, the knightly education and culture was thoroughly ingrained to the noble society of the fourteenth century, which can be seen not only in the many chivalric manuals, but also in the popularity of chivalric literature. It is very unlikely that any son of a nobleman could grow up without being exposed to the chivalric ideals and expectations. The children of nobility were schooled and trained for their role as knights from a very early age with the main aim of making them knights and rulers.¹¹⁰ They would be exposed to chivalric ideals all throughout their lives. Even though some of them would not grow up to be fit to battle does not mean that they would not have been fully aware of the chivalric ideals and expected to live by them. There is no reason to assume that the "knights of the shire" were any less chivalric than their more combative brothers, and as such the chivalric issues and virtues should still somehow show in the way they handled matters.

The scholarship done on these administrative positions reveal a very different image from the one projected by all the chivalric literature and ideologies. It gives us a history of abuse, corruption and vice, very different from the noble self-sacrificing ambitions of the knight

¹⁰⁹ Hunnisett, R. F. pp. 174-5

¹¹⁰ Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The education of English kings*

errant. The command to protect the weak seems to have completely disappeared. Helen Cam mentions coroners as having a better reputation than the other royal agents when it comes to corruption in general. This praise is quite weak considering the company. While coroners might be better than most, the whole royal administration was considered badly corrupt, from the judges of the kings bench to the local sheriffs and bailiffs. Being the best of the worst does not make them just and fair people.¹¹¹ Coroners serve us as good example of the levels of corruption, as the best of the worst we get a good glimpse of what these supposedly noble knights were doing with their positions. As mentioned already, coroners were most often accused of blackmail and bribery. They would not perform their duties without additional payment and would even go as far as threaten the local community with not performing his duties at all. This would put the community as a whole in danger of punishment as they would be held responsible for any breach of law and punished accordingly.¹¹² Any more clear violation of the command to protect the weak is difficult to find. The coroner is actively using his position and power to extort money from the very people he is supposed to protect. This corruption of all the administrative positions is probably the best evidence against any chivalric behaviour of these knights, yet their actions are not objected as unchivalric, or at least there is no comment where this kind of behaviour is discussed.

What lead to this situation and why was it not corrected? The reasons for the problem are quite easy to see: the knights were constantly in need of money due to the extravagant lifestyle and these positions did not provide them with any legal income at all. Additionally as lords and rulers these people were used to commanding authority over the people they were now serving. The urge to misuse a position of power for personal gain is even today a very common occurrence, especially when offered a good motivation and opportunity. These nobles were often very powerful people in the county even without the authority of the position, and any complaints and action against them would undoubtedly cause more trouble to the complainers. It was also difficult to remove these people from the positions because of their contacts in their own social circles and the power they received from the position. Also replacements could be very difficult to find at a time when it was problematic even to fill the positions. The alternative could be someone even worse, or maybe they would be left with no one filling the position. At least in the case of the coroner, the town or county hired him and as such only they had the authority to remove him from his position, which will be a problem,

¹¹¹ Cam, Helen. p. 165

¹¹² Hanawalt, 'Violent Death in Fourteenth- and Early Fifteenth- Century England'

if they were unwilling to do so, since most likely the coroner was someone with considerable wealth in their own region.

In conclusion, this is a matter of high interest that has not been studied enough. No research has been done on the relationship of chivalry and administrative positions and how the public viewed these knights. The people in these positions were undoubtedly knights and would have been well aware of the chivalric ideals and expectations. The reason they apparently did nothing to follow them might be found with the interaction between two social classes and the apparently disregard for commoners that chivalry had. The administrative duties were relatively new duties to a class that had in the past done little more than fight. The ideals presented in chivalric literature were passed down generations from times when these new duties were not known. It could be that the chivalric ideology just had not adapted to include these new duties and did not fit completely with the contemporary society. As a result this outside business was then ignored. It could also be seen as evidence that chivalry was nothing more than an ideal that was never actually practiced during the fourteenth century. There is certainly enough evidence that these people did not practice chivalry in these administrative duties. Maybe chivalry was only noble words from the top of the society; that none of the common people seemed to expect chivalric behaviour towards them in these cases would certainly point towards that they were not accustomed being treated like chivalry demanded. The nobility certainly did not protect them in their day-to-day life. The implications are interesting at the very least, but more dedicated research, than the one this thesis can offer, is needed.

4.4. Advertising chivalry: the case of the Black Prince

How was chivalric ideals perceived by the contemporaries? Was perfect chivalry some holy state of being that only the worthy could attain through years of practice and meditation? Or was it just another tool for the politicians and celebrities of the times? Here I examine the chronicles as means of chivalric propaganda and how they portrayed the Edward the Black Prince after the battle of Poitiers. The Black Prince was one of the biggest celebrities of his time and considered to be one of the shining examples of chivalry by his contemporaries, despite some quite questionable deeds during his career. The battle of Poitiers is considered to be one of the highlights of his chivalric career, where his performance was exemplary and

most noble. While many scholars have studied the battle of Poitiers itself, this case study looks into a minor event that happened after the battle and how it was described in the contemporary chronicles: the dinner in the honour of Jean II presented by Edward after the battle.

Nearly every chronicler describes this dinner scene differently, which is a particularly good example on the risks of chronicles as sources. There are certain similarities in their descriptions though, which might give us some clues to what the intention of the writer was when describing the scene. I will compare this event as described in the chronicles of Henry le Baker and Jean Froissart as well as in *Chandos' Herald*. What did these different accounts have in common, if anything, and what does it have to do with the chivalric qualities of Edward the Black Prince?

Richard Barber's biography of the Black Prince mentions this scene only in passing with very little attention to any of the chivalric colourings of the chronicles. Barber states in a very matter of fact style how the Black Prince was dining with king John (Jean II) when he a seriously wounded companion of his was brought to the camp. The Black Prince insisted on leaving the king and visiting his friend and to raise his spirits with the news of the French kings capture.¹¹³ Barber does not pay much attention to this event and does not come back to it in his later analysis of events of the battle. Neither does he comment in any way to what his source texts might try to show with the description of these events: namely the elevation and confirmation of Edward's reputation as a chivalric knight.

Henry le Baker's *Chronicle* on the other hand does make something out of the situation. Baker's *Chronicle* was among Barber's sources for the passage described above, but what was missing from the biography is the nobility and humble attitude of the prince, or at least the portrayal of the prince as such. The prince's companion James Audley was "carried reverently by his companions in arms"¹¹⁴ to the prince's quarters. Equally noble and suffering was the prince when he heard of the plight of his companion, who rushed to his side and "he brought him back to life by his praiseworthy attention, and almost in tears kissed the cold lips, stained in blood, of his scarcely breathing friend."¹¹⁵ After this the Black Prince returned to

¹¹³ Barber (1978), p. 145

¹¹⁴ le Baker, p. 81

¹¹⁵ le Baker, p. 81

king Jean and begged for forgiveness for leaving the table, to which the king responded only with praise of Edward's character.

Froissart is even more dramatic in the depiction of events in his *Chronicles*. Out of all the chroniclers here Froissart dwells on this event the longest: he spends nearly two pages detailing the events of the evening. He also gives wildly different image of the event than any of the other chroniclers. At this point it is imperative to remember that Froissart did not witness these events personally, but more likely wrote about them much later.¹¹⁶ As Froissart met Edward in 1366 he could not have been describing events he personally witnessed Barber speculates in his article that Froissart was trying to establish his reputation and position as a chronicler by embellishing and exaggerating some of the events he had supposedly encountered.¹¹⁷ This does not mean that he is useless to us though. The events he describes do follow a certain pattern, which is visible in the accounts of the other chroniclers; in Froissart it is just more overt. According to Froissart the event with a wounded companion never took place; instead there was a more elaborate scene at the dinner with Jean II. Froissart has Edward serving the whole meal in the honour of Jean and in general shows deference to him, saying that he is not worthy of sharing a table with such a noble person as the king of France. At the end Edward is praised by all present as a very humble and noble knight, with a bright future ahead of him.

The account of events presented by *Chandos' Herald* combines elements of both of the above-mentioned text. It is a lot more taciturn in its description than Froissart but it does share the same idea of nobility of Edward's deeds and actions. In this version of events Edward meets with king Jean and offers to help him disarm himself, only to be refused by Jean II, because Edward had won such great honours on the battlefield on that day that it was not proper for him to assist in this task. After Edward makes excuses for his achievements he proceeds to spend the rest of the night with his men among the dead.¹¹⁸ There is no mention of any meal shared by Edward and king Jean.

Even though all these passages seem to be very different from each other and written by very different people there is one common element to all of them; that is the praise of Edward the

¹¹⁶ Barber, (1981) p. 25

¹¹⁷ Barber, (1981) p. 25-27

¹¹⁸ *Chandos' Herald*, p. 103

Black Prince and his chivalric nature. Every one of the passages tries in its own way to convince us that Edward was not only the most noble and worthy fighter on that day, but also that he was humble and unassuming after the battle. Both *Chandos' Herald* and Le Baker portray Edward as a man who would spend the night with the wounded men of his army rather than celebrate the victory. In *Chandos'* the prince avoids the high praise from king Jean by saying: "My lord, God has done this and not us; and we must thank Him and pray that He will grant us His glory and pardon this victory."¹¹⁹ Le Baker on the other hand shows the humble and loving side of the prince as he left the dinner with the king in order to make sure his companion was properly taken care of. This he gets praised for as well. Even Black Prince is told to give all credit to either his opponent or to God, with him only doing what little he could. All of these chroniclers are painting a picture of the Black Prince that is noble and humble; he does not try to take praise for himself for the deeds he has done, but tries to belittle his role, still it is obvious that he has performed great deeds on that day. These are some of the very finest virtues de Charny advocates in his text: humility, nobility and great deeds of arms.

Froissart is also portraying the prince in very humble and chivalric fashion, but this description is worth having a closer look. The most obvious feature is how the prince behaves in a very subservient manner and emphasises how he is unworthy to share a table with a king and insists on serving his guests. Similarly to all the other chroniclers Froissart is making it perfectly clear that the Black Prince is the most humble person in the room and thus deserving all the praise bestowed upon him. Froissart is not content with just this example; he goes quite a lot further than the others:

"I [Edward] do not say this to flatter you [Jean II], for everyone on your side, having seen how each man fought, unanimously agrees with this and awards you the palm and the crown, if you will consent to wear them."¹²⁰

This comparison uses holy and biblical imagery to uplift the worth of Jean II. Palm and the Crown are common symbols that are used most often with martyrs and saints who fought against the forces of evil.¹²¹ This kind of gesture seems very odd indeed, if interpreted strictly

¹¹⁹ *Chandos' Herald*, p. 103

¹²⁰ Froissart, p. 144

¹²¹ Lanzi, p. 25

in this context. Most likely the purpose of this imagery is to show how worthy Jean II was as an opponent, and since he was defeated by the Edward, he in turn is made more worthy by proxy. So in this as in all of the previous depictions of the events after the battle of Poitiers the ultimate goal is to show Edward the Black Prince as the apex of chivalry. His behaviour as it is portrayed in all of the texts follow de Charny's maxims to the letter. He has shown his prowess to all on the battlefield; the results speak for themselves. In none of the chronicles does he try to take glory for anything that he has done; quite the contrary he tries to avoid and belittle all the praise he receives. Yet at the same time he does all that he can to make show his opponents supreme worth, thus reinforcing his own merit as the victor. Lastly he is depicted as merciful and benevolent victor who treats all with great respect. The message is very clear. No matter what he actually did, the chivalric reputation of the Black Prince is elevated significantly by the actions of these chroniclers, as it is their words that will be remembered in the years to come, and their stories that will be told about the victory in Poitiers.

This passage and the many ways it was portrayed by contemporary chroniclers provide a good example on the nature of chivalry at the highest levels of society. Even though it is likely that none of the authors were present to witness the events first hand¹²², they did feel like they had to record the events in their chronicles. They had undoubtedly heard of the battle and its outcome. These texts bring authority and substance to the actions of the Black Prince, and effectively publicise his glorious deeds. They feed the chivalric need for fame and publicity very effectively. Whether or not these events happened exactly as mentioned is irrelevant. The writers knew what the common sentiment of the battle was and in their writing they reflected this sentiment filling in the details where necessary. The text also aptly demonstrates that for a great and lasting chivalric reputation one did not necessarily need to do anything physical. The tales, stories and gossip about deeds were theoretically enough. These books would spread the knowledge and stories of the heroism and humbleness of the Black Prince far and wide to people who had no reason to doubt what they were hearing. Hundreds of people who had never even seen the prince would know how chivalric and great he is. Similarly any other knight could achieve lasting fame for deeds never done, if he could get enough people to talk about it, as according to de Charny praise and tales of great deeds are the highest proof of chivalric deeds. Granted that in this case there was no shortage of

¹²² Chandos' Herald being a possible exception.

witnesses to the battle, but a clever knight should be able to craft himself a reputation from nothing with good rumours and storytellers. Whether or not he could maintain that reputation for long in court is a different matter altogether.

4.5. Summary

In this chapter I have taken look at the society that the fourteenth century knight inhabited. “Was there such a thing as chivalric society,” has been one of the major questions all throughout this chapter. It is evident from the chronicles and source material that there must have been some kind of chivalric culture and society behind all these complex customs and practices that reached well beyond the borders of kingdoms. The culture of knighthood was something that every knight, regardless of his nationality, was aware of and respected. This is plainly evident in the custom of ransom and parole.

Both de Charny’s writings and the existence of the chivalric orders point towards the conclusion that chivalry was recognised as valid and real social value, and that it did indeed have its followers. There would be no need to provide as specific rules as de Charny and Lull have written if chivalry only existed in the romances and had no bearing on the real world. But despite all these quite specific rules and theories, there seems to have been some room for interpretation and problems in the way the ideals were put to practice. It is quite evident that the chivalric culture and ideals were a legacy of past times when the role of the knight was simpler and different. The problems mentioned in chapter 4.2. Conflicting chivalry point out the problem areas of the chivalric ideals

Despite the problems and holes in the chivalric code of conduct it, chivalry was indeed actively practiced at the time. Black Prince’s dinner depictions reveal how extensively the chronicles used the rules and conventions in order to promote the reputation of the Black Prince. It seems quite clear that at least the chivalric elite knew full well the rules of the game and how best to take advantage of it.

5. Conclusion

When I first started reading the research material and primary sources for this thesis, I had the idea of studying knights in a different context than chivalry. Chivalry has been studied from nearly every possible angle, from literature to archaeology and everything in between, but very few text were talking about knights without the seemingly mandatory companion of chivalry somewhere in the background. The chronicles and other contemporary accounts of life and events in the fourteenth century seemed to paint a picture where chivalry was not such an important factor after all. Many of the events described on those chronicles seemed to be in clear violation of the principles of chivalry and it seemed very odd to think that the same people who swore to the name of chivalry could be responsible for all the violence and suffering done by these knights whose actions were so well catalogued in the chronicles. But as it so often is the case, first impressions can be deceiving. It turned out that chivalry indeed is irrevocably intertwined with the lives of knights, especially so in the fourteenth century. These English knights seem to have been living and breathing chivalry; but not the same chivalry we know and think we understand. Their chivalry was not a simple and clear-cut ideology, but something much more complex and problematic. Instead of examining the knights and knighthood from some different perspective than the age-old chivalry, I ended up doing just that, as I discovered how impossible it is to separate the two. In the end I came to the conclusion that rather than trying to do the impossible I would examine the intricate social situation where the knights found themselves in at the first decades of the Hundred Years' War.

I chose to examine how the ideals of chivalry influenced the knightly behaviour in practice. How did these ideals reflect in the behaviour of the knights depicted in the chronicles, or was it reflected at all? The contemporary ideal of chivalry as shown by literature was quite clear and well defined, but how did this image translate to practical life, where the epic heroes of literature were a fantasy and every knight was merely a man. In order to even approach this question and problem I had to divide it up to a number of sub questions and consider them separately. It was imperative to discover what practical chivalry actually meant before examining how it was reflected in the chronicles. Similarly I have examined the background of the fourteenth century where in order to build some context where to interpret their actions in. Chivalric action was not something that was dictated solely by the knight himself, but society as well. Therefore I found it necessary to examine both of them separately in order to

get any kind of picture about practical chivalry and what it might have been to the knights themselves.

In this research Geoffroi de Charny's *Book of Chivalry* has turned out to be an invaluable reference point to practical aspects of chivalry. By comparing the rules and maxims found in the book to the events in the various chronicles used in this thesis, I was able to find many apparent contradictions between theory and practice, which in turn prompted further research in order to explain these anomalies. This cycle of research and explanation revealed an interesting picture of chivalry, which bears only superficial resemblance to the common modern image of chivalry and only partly recognisable from literature.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century socio-economic events, like the financial depression and the decline of agriculture, were heading towards a general crisis of society. The Hundred Years' War was partially responsible for and partially a result of those events. In France the Hundred Years' War caused a general crisis of faith in the nobility as one defeat followed another and the French knights were not up to the task of protecting the general populace. In England the war brought on several changes as well and forced the noble society into a whole new situation as the economic troubles combined to the stress of war forced the society to adapt to the new situation. War was seen as a good method to cover the financial losses of the countryside through ransom and looting, but in the end this could not provide anything more than a momentary reprieve. The cost of war was a completely different matter. English society had never before encountered war that did not seem to end and as such it had to change the ways it waged warfare so that it could keep up with the unending need for money that the upkeep of armies required. Changes in the composition of the army also meant that more and more money was needed to fund the campaigns. Mercenaries were employed more and even the regular soldiers were paid a cash salary rather than in goods as had been done in the previous centuries.

Many of the apparent contradictions of chivalry become unravelled once the nature of chivalry in the fourteenth century is analysed fully and any modern misconceptions are revealed. For example the case of Jones' analysis of the Knight in *Canterbury Tales* and him identifying the character as a mercenary instead of a knight illustrates this point well. The idea that a knight could be a mercenary seems very alien to modern readers and that is indeed where Jones makes his mistake. He assumes that since the Knight can be show to have been a

mercenary he could not also have been the noble and chivalrous knight that he was described as. But after examining de Charny it seems to be clear that a knight was not only allowed to be a mercenary, but also encouraged to become one. One of the ways to gain honour and glory according to de Charny was indeed fighting for money abroad. It might not have been one of the best ways to do it, but it was still a perfectly acceptable way. Another example of this kind of mistake stemming from misunderstanding the context and background of the fourteenth century are the raids common in the Hundred Years' War. It would seem that the killing of peasants and other people what would today be called non-combatants would go against everything a knight is supposed to represent. It does indeed go against the principles shown in literature and in the command to "protect the weak," but for contemporaries this behaviour did not seem to be highly problematic and it did not seem to influence at all the honour and reputation of people like the Black Prince. The explanation to this can be found in the concepts of just war as presented by Keen.¹²³ Things that seem like atrocities and war crimes for modern readers would have been normal and acceptable behaviour in a just war, if Keen's theory is as sound as it looks. This highlights a fundamental problem in this kind of analysis: a small detail like this can easily change the whole analysis of behaviour upside down.

Analysis of de Charny's theories and classifications of chivalry paints a picture of a society that is very deeply focused on individual glory and achievement, but at the same time a very social society where a person's place and value was determined by his peers and the other people around him. All the chivalric achievements listed by de Charny mean nothing if there were no witnesses to spread the tale and describing how they were achieved. At the same time de Charny states it quite clearly that a knight should under no circumstances boast with his own deeds. This was apparently very bad form and any worthy knight would let others do the praising. Similar idea that a knight should be humble is found in Lull's text as well as one of the basic concepts of Christianity, pride being one of the seven deadly sins. While this demand for ,ever increasing, praise and requirement to stay humble would at a glance seem to be contradicting each other, it was not the case. In theory a knight could well be a humble and unassuming while everyone around him showered him with praise for the great deeds he had accomplished. Indeed similar behaviour is still considered good manners, where people should not take too much credit for his achievements and maybe even downplay the extent of

¹²³ Keen (1965), p. 65

the deed. The concept of *largesse* reflects this very same attitude. A knight was expected to give a large amounts of money and wealth to charity in order to appear noble and chivalric. In practice this developed into a general tendency to spend vast amounts of money in order to appear wealthy. Knights would spend fortunes to equipment, living and charity just to maintain the appearance of wealth and appropriate status. This could, and did, lead into knights bankrupting themselves in the attempt to live up to the expectations of the society. In the fourteenth century English noble court appearances seemed to have been everything. Their social status was dependent on them being able to show that they possessed enough wealth by spending it recklessly and any and all deeds performed by knights had to be confirmed by his peers and other people by telling stories of the heroic things he had done. None of this would have had any worth in without the other people. The concept that deeds or items could have some value on their own did not seem to be there. Even though God could judge people by their intent and indeed rewarded good people for their actions, these action still needed mortal witnesses in order to be seen or accepted by the rest of the society.

This quest for social acceptance and admiration leads to an interesting phenomenon that puts knights in a similar position as modern professional athletes. In *Knight & Chivalry* Barber explained that knights “personal prestige stemmed from their achievements as warriors, not from their financial or social standing, and they acquired something of the aura that sportsmen have today.”¹²⁴ This statement is partly accurate but only partly. Knights indeed do seem to be like sportsmen. Tournaments were a very violent form of spectator sport where the knights entertain their audience and gain fame through success. Equally all the feats on the battlefield can be seen a very dangerous sport. The common cultural values shared by the European nobility and the common concepts of chivalry made it sure that a battlefield was much more dangerous place to the foot soldier than it was for the knight, and not only because of the expensive armour worn by the knight. The common ties of nobility meant that more likely than not the nobles would at the very least know of each other when facing on the battlefield. They would also know that their opponent was far more valuable as a prisoner than as a corpse. The knight would also recognise that his opponent would have been thinking along the same lines. All this made sure that the battlefield for a knight was probably closer to a sports arena than a killing field, none of the feats or arms and prowess required him to kill anyone so death was more of an unfortunate accident than an intended result. This fame is

¹²⁴ Barber (1970), p.19

their reputation and in the end, the whole concept of prowess boils down to recognition for physical feats – that is to say fame. Where Barber was wrong, was his conclusion that a knight's prestige stemmed from his achievements. This prestige actually stems from the perception of those achievements! As said before achievements without an audience were not worth anything. A reverse can be seen in the analysis of Black Prince's dinner scene. It is certain that the scene did not happen as Froissart described it, and it is uncertain if the whole scene happened at all. Regardless the event must have been an extraordinary boost to the Black Prince's reputation and fame, as most people would not ever see him, but hear the tales and in turn tell them on to others. This way imaginary acts of chivalry could increase the honour of the subject. It is also likely, considering Froissart's close connection to the English court that the Black Prince knew perfectly well what was written and told about him, maybe he even encouraged it in order to improve the already impressive reputation. Similarly Barber is wrong when saying that social status or financial standing had nothing to do with the knight's reputation. De Charny shows quite clearly that wealthy knights were considered to be of higher worth than their poorer brethren. Same thing applied to rank; a high rank would automatically mean a higher level of worth in the eyes of de Charny, and no amount of great deeds could raise a knight above someone of a higher status.

It is clear that chivalry in the fourteenth century was not a mere ideal and a simple yardstick to measure knights against. It was a complex set of ideals that was even more complicated in practice. The contemporary knights knew the rules of the game fully and would have used them to their advantage, just like Edward III did in the siege of Calais. Chivalry had been an integral part of a knight's life for centuries and by the fourteenth century it had begun to buckle under the weight of tradition and could not fully take into account the changed society. It was a set of social codes that every knight must have been fully aware of, whether or not he chose to follow them. It was not something only left in the pages of the chivalric romance, but neither was it something that was followed to the letter by the contemporaries. It was like any other ideology, a tool, a convention and a basis for the social order. It was ignored when convenient and enforced when useful. Knights like Edward III and the Black Prince knew perfectly how to manipulate the chivalric conventions and ideals for their benefit. Practical chivalry employed by the knights themselves bore little resemblance to the pure ideals of literature.

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