INTRODUCTION

PRISONERS AND RANSOMS

The fate of prisoners of war in the Middle Ages is intimately connected with the growth of the practice of ransoming. Ransoming has been practised since time immemorial.[1] But while in former times it was only one fate amongst many, and not necessarily the preferred option – indiscriminate slaughter, enslavement or mutilation seem to have been more common – the situation changed in the Middle Ages. It has been argued that the Christian doctrine encouraged the Christian community to free or to ransom its fellow believers.[2] There is still debate amongst historians as to when widespread recognition and acceptance of ransoming occurred in medieval Europe. Two opposing interpretations have been put forward. For Matthew Strickland and John Gillingham, the transition took place in northern France in the tenth and eleventh centuries.[3] These historians

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[1] For the treatment of prisoners in ancient Greece, see P. Ducrey, *Le Traitement des prisonniers de guerre dans la Grèce antique* (Paris, 1968); see also P. Sabin, H. van Wees and M. Whitby, *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2007), vol. i, pp. 181, 396–7, 415, 459, 511. Ducrey (p. 270) argues that once Rome was involved in the eastern Mediterranean, exchanges of prisoners, which took place between Greek cities, were no longer practised. It must be noted, however, that the practice of ransoming was not totally unfamiliar in early Roman history, see E. Levy, 'Captivus redemptus', *Classical Philology*, 38 (1943), 159–76, at pp. 160–1. For various fates of prisoners in ancient Rome, see Sabin et al., *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, vol. ii, pp. 140, 200–1, 299, 371.

[2] This was 'both a work of mercy and a dramatisation of the Christian's personal and corporate experience of redemption by Christ from captivity to sin and death'. C. Oysek, 'The Ransom of Captives: Evolution of a Tradition', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 74 (1981), 365–86, at p. 385. For an example of a political use of the practice of ransoming in the early Middle Ages, see W. Klingshirn, 'Charity and Power: Cesarius of Arles and the Ransoming of Captives in Sub-Roman Gaul, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 75 (1985), 183–203. For alternative fates of prisoners of war, see G. Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450–900* (London, 2003), p. 213.

[3] M. Strickland, 'Slaughter, Slavery or Ransom: The Impact of the Conquest on Conduct in Warfare', in C. Hicks, ed., *England in the Eleventh Century* (Stamford, 1992), pp. 41–60; M. Strickland, 'Killing or Clemency? Ransom, Chivalry and Changing Attitudes to Defeated Opponents in Britain and Northern France, 7–12th Centuries', in H.-H. Kortum, ed., *Krieg im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2001),

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associate the foundations and emergence of ransoming with the development and diffusion of the chivalric ethos in that period. Strickland suggests that several decisive factors played a part in this process. Warfare was confined to conflicts between rival Frankish dynasties or to small-scale local skirmishing between rival nobles within the limit of the *regnum*; since enslavement of prisoners was not practised between Christians, these internal wars within the Frankish nobility encouraged some form of leniency in the treatment of prisoners of war. Dissemination of the practice of ransoming as the preferred option is likely to be linked with this increased political fragmentation and the rise of castle-based warfare; this required financial resources for the construction and defence of castles, which made rapid conquest more difficult. Prisoners were therefore seen as offering opportunities to make profits in a context that also created more favourable circumstances for negotiations. The payment of a ransom was facilitated by the growing availability of coins in a developing monetary economy.

This theory, however, is not universally accepted. Yvonne Friedman contests the late evidence on which it is based. For her there is no clear sign of the inception of chivalric mores before the twelfth century. She sees the adoption of the practice of ransoming as occurring during the Third Crusade, arguing that before that time crusaders (Franks) showed no willingness to ransom captives.[4] The turning point for Friedman is the battle of Hattin in 1187. As she puts it, 'when almost the entire fighting force of the Latin Kingdom fell into captivity the image of captivity was bound to change.'[5] From that point onwards, crusaders adopted the practices of ransoming and prisoner exchange which were already established in the Muslim world. Writing in the 1960s, Colonel G. I. A. D. Draper had also considered the possibility of 'borrowing' from the war practices of the Muslims. He also speculated that the practice of ransoming might have entered western Europe gradually, long before the crusades, via the Eastern Empire of Byzantium which was regularly at war with the Muslims from the seventh century onwards.[6] Matthew Strickland

pp. 93–121; J. Gillingham, '1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry into England', in G. Garnett and J. Hudson, eds., *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy: Essays in Honour of Sir James Holt* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 21–55.

[4] Y. Friedman, *Encounter Between Enemies: Captivity and Ransom in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Leiden, 2002). See also her book review of J. Dunbabin, *Captivity and Imprisonment in Medieval Europe, 1000–1300* (Basingstoke, 2002), in the *Medieval Review* at http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.baj9928.0401.006 (accessed on 7 April 2008).

[5] Friedman, *Encounter*, p. 7.

[6] G. I. A. D. Draper, 'The Law of Ransom during the Hundred Years War', *The Military Law and Law of War Review*, 5 (1968), 263–77. The exploration of the origins of ransom practice is the most original part of this article which otherwise discusses at length Maurice Keen's *The Laws of War in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1965). Strong evidence of ransoming practice between Byzantine and Arab empires in the second half of the eighth century is to be found in E. W. Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs in the Time of the Early Abbasids', *EHR*, 60 (1900), 728–47.

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has challenged the theory of 'borrowing' from the East, questioning the
reliability of the sources used by Friedman which allege extensive mas-
sacres before the battle of Hattin, and reasserting the validity of his own
sources and the arguments for the development and dissemination of
the practice of ransoming from northern France.[7] These debates will no
doubt continue.

Jean Dunbabin has added an extra theoretical layer to these ideas.
According to her, 'in the course of the thirteenth century, the status of
prisoner of war, which was tacitly acknowledged by the code of chivalry
[through ransoming] had also found its theoretical foundation with the
emergence of the notion of public war'.[8] In other words, since only just
wars were considered to be public wars proclaimed and waged by sover-
eign authorities, in her view,

it became possible to distinguish between the soldier who was doing his duty
towards his sovereign and who was not therefore a criminal, and the soldiers par-
ticipating in his lord's feuds or seeking revenge on his neighbour or promoting
his own personal gain, who might deserve punishment for his offences.[9]

Thus, by the end of the thirteenth century, knightly soldiers captured in
public wars would normally enjoy the differentiated status of prisoners
of war, which guaranteed their lives would be spared and their freedom
regained through the payment of a ransom.

Another activity which was firmly grounded in the experience of
warriors – the tournament – may have had a greater impact on the pro-
gress of the practice of ransoming within knightly mores. The rise of
the tournament in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is likely to have
contributed to the establishment and codification of ransoming practices
in the habits of combatants.[10] Indeed, in this period, there were few rules
to distinguish tournament from real battle, apart from the object of the
tournament which was to capture and ransom, rather than to kill, knights.
The code of conduct of the 'game' specified that the prisoner could not
be held in captivity and was to be released as soon as he had agreed on
the price of his ransom. Knights who felt themselves mistreated could
seek redress from the great lords who acted as referees. All these rules, as
we shall see, prefigure the ransom system as it applied during the course

[7] M. Strickland, 'The Vanquished Body: Some Conclusions and Comparisons', in M. Fierro and
F. Garcia Fitz, eds., *El cuerpo derrotado: como trataban musulmanes y cristianos a los enemigos vencidos
(Peninsula Iberica, ss. VIII–XIII)* (Madrid, 2008), pp. 531–70.
[8] Dunbabin, *Captivity*, p. 86.   [9] Dunbabin, *Captivity*, p. 10.
[10] M. Keen, *Chivalry* (London and New Haven, Conn., 1984), pp. 100–1; J. R. V. Barker, *The
Tournament in England, 1100–1400* (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 44, 134, 143–4; R. Barber and J. R. V.
Barker, *Tournaments, Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 14–15,
21, 190.

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of the Hundred Years War. These last theories remain rather speculative, however. The causal link between the status of 'prisoner of war' and the emergence of the notion of the public war, and between the practices of tournaments and war, is never explicitly stated in the sources.

One of the attractions of the Hundred Years War for an in-depth examination of ransoms and prisoners of war is that the wealth of sources allows the historian to go beyond speculation in exploring the different aspects of this topic. Such sources allow the period to be studied in its own right without the need to bring in material from a later period, a problem which besets those writing on earlier periods. There is a danger of falling into a teleological argument, i.e. the interpretation of a fact or phenomenon in terms of its supposedly inevitable consequences. Although he does it very cautiously, Matthew Strickland, for example, investigates the law of arms in the eleventh and twelfth centuries using the hindsight of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which are not only far better documented but also saw the constitution of a more formalised legal code of conduct in war.[11] Any form of 'logical' evolution which is imposed needs to be identified and its validity questioned. The late Middle Ages is usually seen as a period of transition between the feudal and chivalrous high Middle Ages, when war was an individual business, and the early modern period, when emerging modern states took a firm hold of the whole process. This paradigm, according to Philippe Contamine, is not appropriate in the case of prisoners and ransoms. In his comparison of evidence for the thirteenth century and for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, he finds that the French crown interfered more persistently in the earlier period.[12] Whilst he makes the observation based on a relatively small sample of evidence from the thirteenth century, a period when source materials are more exclusively royal and princely than in ensuing centuries, his remark is an important call for vigilance. It reminds us of the need to examine the sources closely and to be particularly careful in using appropriate terminology.

What was a prisoner of war in the time of the Hundred Years War? Interestingly, the phrase 'prisoner of war' seems to have made its first appearance in that very period both in its French form, 'prisonnier de guerre', and in its Latin form, 'prisionarius de guerra'.[13] The earliest

[11] M. Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066–1217* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 31–54.
[12] P. Contamine, 'Un contrôle étatique croissant: les usages de la guerre du XIVe au XVIIIe siècle: rançons et butins', in P. Contamine, ed., *Guerre et compétition entre les états européens du XIVe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1998), pp. 199–236, at pp. 204–6.
[13] See the remark of Philippe Contamine in 'Un contrôle étatique croissant', p. 201. There is no reference to this phrase in Godefroy's *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes*

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references that I have come across date to the 1420s. The first known reference involves a legal suit held in the *Parlement* of Paris (i.e. the Supreme Court of France) in 1424 in which Sir John Fastolf claimed Denis Sauvage as his 'prisonnier de guerre'.[14] Sauvage contested Fastolf's claim on the ground that 'il n'est point prisonnier de guerre et n'est poursuivy que pour plegerie' (he is not prisoner of war and is sued only for his acting as a surety for the payment of a ransom). Two years later, we learn in a letter of remission issued by the French royal chancellery of Henry VI in May 1426, that the English esquire William Godebec wondered whether the Norman prisoner who was in his hands could be considered as 'prisonnier de guerre', or whether he should be punished as a criminal.[15] About two months later, the knight Sinador de Giresme and several other French soldiers told the *Parlement* of Paris that they had taken prisoner one Robert Parentis between Paris and Luzarchais, and while they were on their way with their 'prisonarium de guerra' to Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, they were arrested and their prisoner seized from their hands.[16] Finally, the English esquire John Stille declared to the English authorities in 1428 that he had considered Guillaume Leheux as 'prisonnier de guerre' because he had not sworn allegiance to the English king and because Leheux was captured while riding on a horse along with the enemies of the king.[17]

Down to the 1420s the closest match was 'prisonnier de bonne guerre [prisoner of "good" war]' (1415).[18] More commonly, in the fourteenth century a combatant would be said to have been 'pris … par/ pour fait de guerre' (taken … by act of war) (1351, 1360),[19] 'tempore guerrarum … captum fuisse' (having been taken in time of war) (1363,

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du IXe au XVe siècles, 10 vols. (Paris, 1881–1902), nor in the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (www. anglo-norman.net/cgi-bin/form-s1; accessed on 24 January 2012). The first mention of the English form 'prisoner of war' dates back to 1608 according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (www.oed.com/view/Entry/267433; accessed on 24 January 2012).

[14] *English Suits Before the Parlement of Paris, 1420–1436*, C. T. Allmand and C. A. J. Armstrong, eds. (London, 1982), pp. 31, 33.

[15] *Chronique du Mont-Saint-Michel (1294–1376)*, S. Luce, ed., 2 vols. (Paris, 1879–83), vol. I, pp. 244–7, no. 81.

[16] AN, X1a 9191, fol. 34v–35v (27 July 1426). On this case, see also G. Little, *The Parlement of Poitiers: War, Government and Politics in France, 1418–1436* (London, 1981), p. 172.

[17] BL, Add. Ch. 3622 (24 April 1428).

[18] AN, X1a 4791, fol. 8v–9r (2 December 1415). 'Good war' in this example seems to refer to the circumstances of open war as opposed to truce and 'guerre couverte' (a form of private war), rather than to the circumstances of 'just' as opposed to 'unjust' war, but this is not wholly clear. There are later occurrences after the 1420s of the phrases 'prisonnier de bonne guerre' and (prisoners captured) 'in facto bone guerre'. AN, X1a 67, fol. 105r (10 June 1430); 9194, fol. 144r (4 August 1436).

[19] P.-C. Timbal et al., *La Guerre de Cent Ans vue à travers les registres du Parlement, 1337–1369* (Paris, 1961), p. 332 (3 July 1351); AN, JJ 90, fol. 237v–238, no. 474 (March 1360).

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1365, 1367),[20] 'pris de guerre' (taken in war) (1370, 1380),[21] as opposed, it would seem, to having been illegitimately taken during a period of truce.[22] Yet it must be noted that such phrases as, for instance, 'empris-onner pour fait de guerre' (1425), 'in facto bone guerre capti' (1430) and 'prisonnier de bonne guerre' (1436) were still commonly used in the 1420s and 1430s.[23]

Does the appearance of the term 'prisoner of war' mark a change in attitudes and mentalities? Here it would help to know exactly who was designated a prisoner of war. We can see that all the named individuals who are qualified in the sources as prisoners of war can be identified as soldiers: that is, the English knight John Cressy,[24] the French knight Jean de la Haie,[25] the Welsh knight Matthew Gough,[26] and the two Burgundian esquires, Jean de Rochebaron[27] and Guérart de Brimeu.[28] Whether or not this association of captured combatants with prisoners of war was wholly systematic is difficult to say. This provokes another equally important question. Who would be considered as a combatant and who would not? The Hundred Years War was a period in which there was no permanent army, at least not until French military reforms in the 1440s; arguably the whole of society was thus involved in the effort of war.[29] It is perhaps no coincidence that the notion of prisoner of war emerged in the 1420s after the treaty of Troyes had been sealed. This was when the English king had become legitimate heir to the French throne and the French supporters of the *dauphin* became rebellious subjects. There was therefore a more pressing need to define a status of combatant and prisoner of war – men who would have their lives saved as opposed to the traitors and criminals who faced the death penalty. This hypothesis

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[20] Timbal et al., *La Guerre*, p. 315 (23 February 1367), p. 329 (2 April 1365), p. 361 (4 March 1363).

[21] TNA, SC 8/118/5878 (c. 1372–7); TNA, Memoranda Rolls, 156 (13 May 1380).

[22] For instance, Jean Jodrell of Poitou asked John of Gaunt and the Council for assistance in paying his ransom following his capture in the king's service by the Lord of Mareuil, 'come il ad esté pluseurs foit pris de guerre … et que le samady devant Noel derrein passé en temps de triwe fust pris'. He claimed to have lost all his horses, equipment and chattels 'et qanqz il avoit et est mys a 300 franks', and that he could not pay this ransom. TNA, SC 8/118/5878.

[23] AN, X1a 4794, fol. 83v (15 May 1425); X1a, 67, fol. 105r (10 June 1430); X1a, 9194, fol. 144v (4 August 1436).

[24] BnF, PO 929, Cressy, 2 (8 April 1432). On Cressy, see A. Curry, 'Sir John de Cressy (1407–1445)' (TSLME) (www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database/November2008.php; accessed on 9 May 2010).

[25] AN, X1a 4797, fol. 215r–216r (22 December 1434).

[26] AN, X1a 9193, fol. 156v (4 August 1436). On Matthew Gough, see A. D. Carr, 'Gough, Matthew (d. 1450)', in *ODNB*.

[27] ADN, B 1988, fol. 172v (18 May 1445).

[28] ADN, B 1988, fol. 202v (20 March 1446). On the family of Brimeu, see W. Paravicini, *Guy de Brimeu: Der burgundische Staat und seine adlige Führungsschicht unter Karl dem Kühnen* (Bonn, 1975).

[29] See Philippe Contamine's remarks on the extensive militarisation of French society in P. Contamine, *Guerre, état et société à la fin du moyen âge: études sur les armées des rois de France, 1337–1494* (Paris, 1972), pp. 550–1.

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of the impact of the changing political scene on the status of prisoner of war will be more fully discussed in Chapter 3.

The modern association of the status of prisoner of war as deriving from the status of combatant applied in the Hundred Years War, at least in the fifteenth-century phase. This is, I hope, the closest this study ever comes to anachronism since I have endeavoured to examine the evidence in the context of the period alone. In this study, therefore, for the sake of clarity and simplicity, prisoners of war are combatants who were captured by the enemy.[30]

THE CONTEXT OF THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

How widespread was the ransoming of prisoners of war in the Hundred Years War? How favourable a context for the ransoming of prisoners of war was this conflict? Or, in other words, how did the political issues at stake in the Hundred Years War impact on the practice of ransoming? The face of war had changed in the late Middle Ages with the slow appropriation of the concept of sovereignty. Private (or seigneurial) wars were not eradicated, but the idea that only sovereign authorities were entitled to wage war had spread widely.[31] A just war, as I have already highlighted, was now a public war.[32] This was significant since only for such a war were lawyers agreed that there was no limit on the taking of spoil and prisoners.[33] In that sense, the Hundred Years War, in which French and

[30] Non-combatants too could be ransomed. It has therefore been a challenge for me on more than one occasion to distinguish combatant from non-combatant prisoners. On the ransoming of non-combatants, see the studies of Nicholas A. R. Wright, 'Ransoms of Non-Combatants During the Hundred Years War', *JMH*, 17 (1991), 323–32; *Knights and Peasants: The Hundred Years War in the French Countryside* (Woodbridge, 1998), especially pp. 62–79. While evidence gathered in these two works is more particularly focused on the fourteenth century, the Treaty Rolls (TNA, C 76), especially at the very end of the conflict, provide examples of merchants who received safe-conducts to go back to their estates and return with the money for their ransom. Many more examples could surely be added here.

[31] On the terminology of seigneurial wars, see J. Firnhaber-Baker, 'Seigneurial War and Royal Power in Later Medieval Southern France', *PP*, 60 (2010), 37–76, at pp. 37–8.

[32] For the gradual superimposition of the notions of 'just war' and 'public war' in the later Middle Ages, see KLW, pp. 69–81. This view is supported by F. H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 299–303; S. H. Cuttler, *The Law of Treason and Treason Trials in Later Medieval France* (Cambridge, 1981), especially pp. 4–27. On bans on, and persistence of, seigneurial wars in France, see Firnhaber-Baker, 'Seigneurial War', pp. 37–76. See also, on Gascony, M. G. A. Vale, 'Seigneurial Fortifications and Private War in Later Medieval Gascony', in M. Jones, ed., *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe* (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 133–49. And for a more general approach to this question, see also Howard Kaminsky, 'The Noble Feud in the Later Middle Ages', *PP*, 50 (2000), 55–83.

[33] KLW, p. 70.

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English kings were opposed, with the latter claiming the kingdom of
the former, was the perfect ground for such war practices. This, however,
did not necessarily accord with the political aims of the two crowns. In
theory, the royal authorities had the wherewithal to control private ran-
soms. That same concept of sovereignty which was a necessary condition
for prisoner-taking could be used to place a cap on the practice. Some
theorists, such as Honorat Bovet, writer of a chivalric treatise entitled
The Tree of Battles in the second half of the 1380s, considered that all
prisoners should be handed over to the crown since war was waged on
its behalf and soldiers were in its pay.[34] The crown could dispose of them
as it wished.

In addition, sovereignty established the French king as an emperor
in his kingdom. Any offence to the king's sovereignty or majesty could
be considered as *lèse-majesté*, which, if applied with full rigour, could
send a traitor to the scaffold.[35] The Hundred Years War was essentially a
fight about sovereignty, whether over Aquitaine or over the whole king-
dom of France. Any prisoner taken in this conflict could, in theory, have
found himself guilty of *lèse-majesté* and executed. Taken to the extreme,
the argument of sovereignty concerned all the people who set foot on
French soil. It was argued in the *Parlement* of Paris in 1443 that, since the
French king was emperor in his kingdom, anyone who arrived in France
automatically became a French subject and thus owed loyalty and obedi-
ence to the French king.[36] If he failed to do this, he would be guilty of
lèse-majesté. Therefore, the argument follows that the English invasion of
France was an attack on the majesty of the king, and any Englishman
who took part in it was thus guilty of *lèse-majesté*. (This politico-legal
argument, which was put forward after the Treaty of Arras in 1435, denied
the founding principle of the treaty of Troyes which gave the French
crown to an English king.)

In practice, however, evidence in the Hundred Years War of 'private'
ransoms – that is, ransoms demanded from prisoners of war by individual

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[34] H. Bovet, *The Tree of Battles*, G. W. Coopland, transl. (Liverpool, 1949), pp. 134–5. For the pro-
nunciation and spelling of his name as 'Honorat Bovet', see H. Biu, 'Honorat Bovet', *Histoire
littéraire de la France*, Paris, 43 (2005), pp. 83–128. Hélène Biu is preparing a new edition of the
text.

[35] On *lèse-majesté*, see Cuttler, *The Law of Treason*, passim; M. Jones, '"Bons Bretons et bon Françoys":
The Language and Meaning of Treason in Later Medieval France', *TRHS*, 5th series, 32 (1982),
91–112; 'Trahison et l'idée de lèse-majesté dans la Bretagne du XVe siècle', in *La Faute, la répres-
sion et le pardon: Actes du 107ᵉ congrès national des sociétés savantes – Brest, 1992. Section de philologie et
d'histoire jusqu'à 1610* (Paris, 1984) pp. 91–106; C. Gauvard, '*De grace especial*: crime, état et société en
France à la fin du moyen âge*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1991), vol. II, pp. 842–7.

[36] A. Bossuat, 'Le Règlement des confiscations sous le règne de Charles VII', *Comptes-Rendus des
Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 91 (1947), 6–16, at pp. 8–9.

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captors or masters[37] rather than by sovereign authorities – is simply over-
whelming, even if the English crown had the right to a share in the prof-
its of war. To date, the concentration of the historiography on prisoners
of war in the Hundred Years War has been on the impact that ransoms
had, in many different circumstances, on the career, life and family of
prisoners.[38] The sustained interest of the scholarly community in this
particular aspect of the topic is all the more fascinating to us now when
the fate of prisoners of war is governed by international humanitarian
laws. However, these case studies of individuals are far from representa-
tive of the whole of society, since they are focused without exception
on the high nobility and often those of royal blood. To some degree this
has been as a result of the surviving sources. As we go down the social
ladder, the evidence becomes increasingly rare, fragmentary and scat-
tered – too much so to be able to build a study around an individual case.
The ransom culture was not, however, strictly or solely aristocratic, as is
shown, for instance, by the studies of Chris Given-Wilson and Françoise
Bériac-Lainé on the prisoners of Poitiers (1356) and my own on the
prisoners of Agincourt (1415).[39] Yet, the portrait painted by the aristo-
cratic case studies, which often involved impossibly large ransoms for

[37] The captor of a prisoner was considered as his master once he had taken the oath of his pris-
oner to be good and loyal to him. This terminology will be further discussed in due time (see
pp. 19–20). From a practical point of view, the existence of these two terms allows for a distinction
to be made between the actual captor of a prisoner and subsequent 'masters' to whom the pris-
oner may have been transferred. In general, therefore, I have used the term 'master' in this study
to qualify any 'owner' of a prisoner whom we cannot be sure was the original captor. This is often
the case.

[38] J. Huillard-Bréholles, 'La Rançon du duc de Bourbon Jean Ier, 1415–1436', *Mémoires présentés a
l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 8 (1874), 37–91; G. Dupont-Ferrier, 'La Captivité de Jean
d'Orléans, comte d'Angoulême (1412–1445)', *Revue Historique*, 62 (1896), 42–74; Eddy Bauer, 'La
Captivité de Jean de Neuchâtel à Semur-en-Auxois', *Musée Neuchâtelois*, 19, 1932, 53–60; 'Au ser-
vice de Bourgogne: la grande rançon de Jean de Neuchâtel', *Musée Neuchâtelois*, 24, 1937, 234–46;
'Le Traité de rançon de Jean de Neuchâtel', *Musée Neuchâtelois*, 40, 1953, 184–94; A. Bossuat, 'Les
Prisonniers de Beauvais et la rançon du poète Jean Régnier, bailli d'Auxerre', in F. Lot, M. Roques
and C. Brunel, eds., *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge dédiés à la mémoire de Louis Halphen* (Paris,
1951), pp. 27–32; A. Bossuat, 'Les Prisonniers de guerre au XVe siècle: la rançon de Guillaume de
Châteauvillain', *Annales de Bourgogne*, 23 (1951), 7–35; 'Les Prisonniers de guerre au XVe siècle: la
rançon de Jean, seigneur de Rodemack', *Annales de l'Est*, 5th series, 2 (1951), 145–62; A. Leguai, 'Le
Problème des rançons au XVe siècle: la captivité de Jean Ier, duc de Bourbon', *Cahiers d'Histoire*, 6
(1961), 41–58; M. A. Hicks, 'Counting the Cost of War: The Moleyns Ransom and the Hungerford
Land-Sales, 1453–1487', *Southern History*, 8 (1986), 11–31; M. C. E. Jones, 'The Fortunes of War:
The Military Career of John, Second Lord Bourchier (d. 1400)', *Essex Archaeology and History*,
26 (1995), 145–61; M. H. Stansfield, 'John Holland, Duke of Exeter and Earl of Huntingdon and
the Costs of the Hundred Years War', in M. A. Hicks, ed., *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later
Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 103–18; J.-L. Bolton, 'How Sir Thomas Rempston paid
his Ransom; or, The Mistakes of an Italian Bank', in L. Clark, ed., *Conflicts, Consequences and the
Crown in the Late Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 101–18.

[39] F. Bériac-Lainé and C. Given-Wilson, *Les Prisonniers de la bataille de Poitiers* (Paris, 2002); R. Ambühl,
'Le Sort des prisonniers d'Azincourt (1415)', *Revue du Nord*, 89 (2007), 755–88.

9

Introduction

which payments were protracted over many years and which, in some
instances, caused the demise of an entire lineage, needs to be balanced.
Indiscriminate massacres of lower-ranking prisoners still took place in
the Hundred Years War, right until the end of the conflict.[40] However, it
is instructive that commoners such as John More and Jean de Rousselet,
two sergeants-at-arms, could claim, towards the end of the Hundred Years
War, to have been ruined by no less than seven and fourteen captures
respectively during their long careers in the service of the English crown
in France. It indicates not only that the ransom culture embraced the
whole social spectrum but also that the process of ransoming could run
smoothly and quickly enough to allow a succession of returns to service
and further captures.[41] The well-preserved English records of Norman
garrisons in the fifteenth century, together with various administrative
and legal documents, are particularly valuable in shedding light on the
application of the ransom system to soldiers of lower rank, as will be
revealed in Chapter 5.[42]

   Ransom was not the only fate that awaited combatants who survived
their capture. Michael K. Jones, for instance, has described the mecha-
nisms of what he called 'ransom brokerage', which involved the interven-
tion of a 'broker' or patron who organised, in broad terms, the exchange
of prisoners of war.[43] Yet this system implied the disbursement of large
sums of money.[44] Bankrupt prisoners could still be offered alternative
ways to regain their freedom, such as changing allegiance. Political and
strategic factors can also influence the fate of prisoners, as we will see in
Chapters 2 and 3. But ransoms, or the idea of putting a price on the liber-
ation of the prisoner, remained the favourite option for the great major-
ity in military society. Ransom was therefore widespread and, by the end
of the war, had reached every echelon of the social hierarchy. Evidence
also shows that ransoms were deep-rooted in the social mores as they
applied from the beginning of the Hundred Years War,[45] and almost

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[40] On killings, see pp. 38–9, 46–8.
[41] *CPR 1441–6*, p. 315; TNA, E 404/52/232 (21 August 1446).
[42] The full potential of the counter-rolls of Norman garrisons in English Normandy in the first
half of the fifteenth century was shown in P. Contamine, 'Rançons et butins dans la Normandie
anglaise, 1424–1444', in *La Guerre et la paix au moyen âge, Actes du 101e congrès des sociétés savantes*
(Paris, 1978), pp. 241–70; reprinted in his *La France aux XIVe et XVe siècles: hommes, mentalités, guerre
et paix* (London, 1981). Although I have consulted a lot of these documents in French and English
archives, I am still much indebted to Contamine's study, as the reader will realise.
[43] M. K. Jones, 'Ransom Brokerage in the Fifteenth Century', in P. Contamine, C. Giry-Deloison
and M. H. Keen, eds., *Guerre et société en France, en Angleterre et en Bourgogne, XIVe–XVe siècles*
(Villeneuve-d'Asq, 1991), pp. 221–35.
[44] Jones's ransom brokerage and exchanges of prisoners are revisited in Chapter 5.
[45] The case of William Montagu, earl of Salisbury, is a counter-example. He was captured by the
French near Lille in 1340. Philip VI would have threatened him with death, but he was ultimately