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ABSTRACT

In the middle of the fourteenth century the Great Companies of the Hundred Years' War achieved their goals by occupying bridge-towns and strategically important castles in the river valleys. In this paper, the importance of river valleys will be shown from the point of view of the mercenary companies in the border regions of the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire, based on examples gathered in archives from Lyon to Lille. The cases presented show this process from the first appearance of the mercenaries until they reached the total domination of their targeted region.

Introduction

After the Battle of Poitiers, the border region of the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire was ravaged by Breton, Gascon, English and Navarrese companies and even Polish mercenaries, either serving local lords or acting in their own interest.[1] A Breton company, led by a mercenary captain called Gaultier, occupied the valley of the River Nièvre around the city of Nevers in the county of Nevers and the Barony of Donzy. The Breton captain and his company ravaged Nivernais, and gathered all the existing livestock - pigs, cattle, and sheep - and then brought them in front of one of the city gates of Nevers, close enough for their owners to be able to recognise them. Louis de Mâle, the count of Flanders and Nevers, who also bore the title of the Baron of Donzy, sent his half-brother Ryffard of Flanders to defend the Barony of Donzy. Contrary to his assignment, Ryffard disappeared with the money he had collected to

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[1] They were on the payroll of Yolande of Flandre, Dame of Cassel in the Duchy of Bar. Archives de départementales de la Meuse B.1418. 34r

pay off the Bretons. When the Bretons received news about Ryffard left Nevers, they ravaged and destroyed the land in both the county and in the barony by setting several towns (Montenoison, Noison, and Lurcy-le-Bourg) on fire.[2] This is but one example of what happened when the companies occupied and dominated a river valley in the middle of the fourteenth century.

There are several reasons for the success of the mercenary companies in the eastern part of France and the western principalities of the Holy Roman Empire in the second half of the fourteenth century. These include the disintegration of the French central administration after the Battle of Poitiers, the sudden and unexpected death of Philip of Rouvre – the last Capet duke of Burgundy who fell off his horse and died on 21 November 1361, the ongoing private wars among the local nobilities, the last campaign of Edward III before the Treaty of Brétigny, and the active foreign and military policy of Charles the Bad, the King of Navarre.[3] However, these external factors alone would not have been enough to enable the soldiers of fortune to dominate the countryside in the border region to such an extent. The key to the success of the companies were their innovative strategies and tactics, tight control, strong leadership, outstanding fighting skills, and the immensely successful strategies and tactics of the companies were the key to their success.[4] Once they took hold of a region 'thanks to this ingenious and lucrative system of relay in oppression, the victims had no respite in their suffering'.[5] This article endeavours to highlight some of the features of the strategies and tactics that brought about the dominance of the companies over the entire region, from Champagne to Auvergne in the period 1357-1366.

Phillippe Contamine 'referred to the style of warfare [of the companies] as one where the objective was not to prevail over the adversary or to restore peace through victory, but to enrich themselves by all possible means, where elementary economic motives eclipsed political intentions'.[6] The companies did not want to conquer the

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[2]Archives départementales du Nord, B.758 n.14451.

[3]Charles the Bad was the King of Navarre and a prince of the Fleur-de-Lys. As a direct descendant of King Louis X, he was a candidate for the throne of France after the House of Capet became extinct. His many other territorial claims in France, including the Duchy of Burgundy, were at the centre of competing French and English politics during the first part of the Hundred Years War.

[4]Norman Housley, 'The Mercenary Companies, the Papacy, and the Crusades, 1356–1378', *Traditio*, 38 (1982), pp. 253-280 (p. 253).

[5]Siméon Luce, *Histoire de la Jacquerie,* (Paris: Honoré Champion, Libraire, 1895), p. 23.

[6]Philippe Contamine, 'Les Compagnies d Aventure en France pendant La Guerre de Cent Ans', *Mélanges de l'école francaise de Rome. Moyen-Age, modernes*, (Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome, 1975) p. 367.

land, instead they wanted to maximise their profits.[7] This fact was well reflected in their strategy: they used river valleys to infiltrate into a province by focusing on taking strategically important castles or towns. They endeavoured to control trade routes by land and river; hence, crossing points were of a high value to them.[8] A town with a bridge made it possible for the mercenaries to advance along both banks of a specific river.
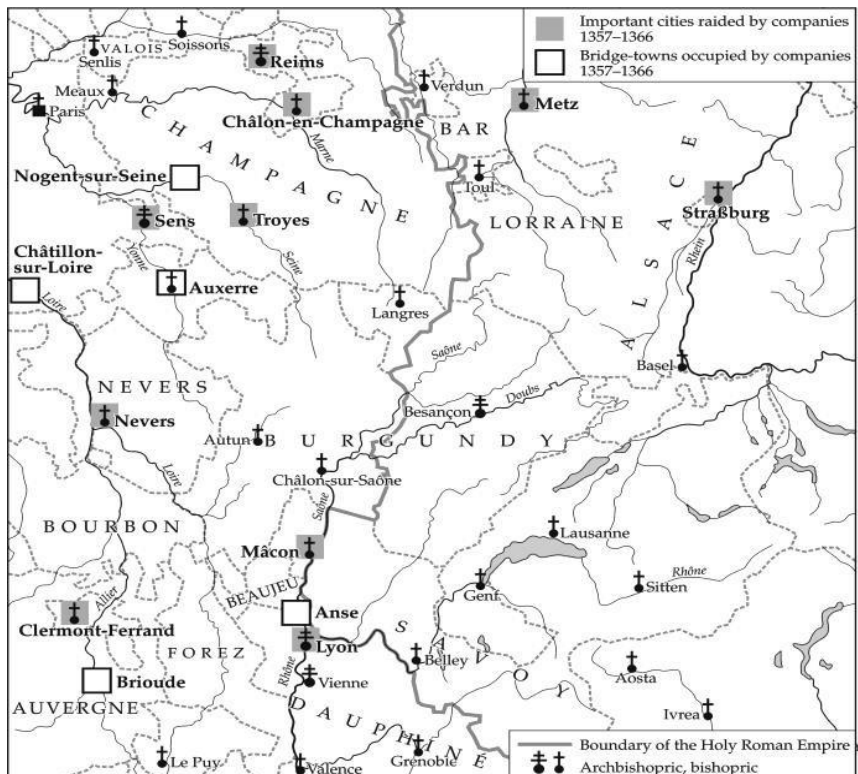

Figure 1: The Strategic Situation of the Companies – Bridges & Cities.[9]

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[7]One of the means of their earning income was a special corporate tax: the *patis*, which was paid by the locals to ensure their survival in company-controlled territories.

[8]An example of the importance of the fluvial trade routes in the middle of the fourteenth century can be found in the accounts of Champtoceaux where it is indicated that in 1397 ships had used the River Loire between 1355-56. Philippe Contamine, '*Au temps de la guerre de cent ans en France et Angleterre*', (Paris: Hachette, 1994) p. 65.

[9]All maps in this study were designed by Ölbei Tamás and drawn by Nagy Béla

The size of the towns was also important: they were successful in taking towns like Brioude, Anse, Châtillon-sur-Loire, Pont-Saint-Esprit, and Nogent-sur-Seine. These towns were significant enough for the companies to be able to control large areas, sometimes even ones with a territory of up to a two hundred kilometres in diameter. They used these areas as a base for their *chevauchées*, but these were also the starting points for isolating big cities like Metz, Strasbourg, Lyon, Avignon, Orléans, or Reims in proximity to their operations. The companies tried to, but never succeeded in taking a significant city of more than 15,000 inhabitants. Their goal instead was the collection of tolls for use of the commercial routes leading into and out of the large cities. Very often, the companies destroyed the land and the 'faubourgs' of the cities, right up to the gates in front of the incredulous eyes of the hapless citizens. This explains why they very carefully chose the castles, or towns that they intended to conquer.

The Preparation of Attacks
Spying was always an integral part of the tactics of the companies. It was always much more dangerous and costly in human life to risk a frontal assault on a walled city or castle than take it by deception. Nicolas Savy states in his fundamental article on the tactics of the Gascon companies that one of the main elements of the preparation of the companies was related to intelligence.[10] Sending spies and requesting information about the targeted area or settlement ensured the appropriate 'surprise effect,' and the safe return of the companies to their bases. Companies used locals from the area to be conquered to gain relevant information. Sometimes these local 'assets' served the companies voluntarily or the companies paid them, as in the case of a certain Erterem, in the bailiwick of Auxois in 1362, who was 'condemned because he had given the English a lot of information about the land when they were there and [the English] took the town of Jully and he was condemned for what the [English] had done with the women of Jully'.[11]

On other occasions, the companies forced people to lead the way to their targeted destination. This was the case of 'Ligier Brouhart of Arnaul who was condemned … because he brought the enemy to the castle of Villers les Aula and then robbed several places with them. He was taken to the prison of Rougemont and then it was proven

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[10]Nicolas Savy, 'Les procédés tactiques des compagnies anglo-gasconnes entre Garonne et Loire (1350-1400)', in Guilhem Pepin, Françoise Lainé & Frédéric Boutouille, eds, *Routiers et mercenaires pendant la guerre de Cent and, Hommage à Jonathan Sumption,* (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2016), p.116.
[11]Archives départementales de la Côte-d Or 1.F. 365 Compte de Baillage de Auxois. F. 18., B. 2748 f. 2v

that he had been forced [by the routiers]' in the bailiwick of Auxois in 1365.[12] The companies were also eager to send spies of their own to explore a targeted area or town. However, this often proved to be fatal for the spies of the companies: just before the Battle of Brignais, the Dame of Chauceris caught a spy of the companies named Gieffroy, accompanied by four female companions, who had been sent to the vicinity of Lyon to gain information concerning the region. He appeared to be suspicious and therefore they interrogated him. Under torture, he confessed that he had worked for the companies. Gieffroy Charpi was beheaded and his headless body was hung on a tree.[13] Before the Battle of Brignais, yet another spy of the companies was sent to St Paul-en-Jarez in the valley of the Loire, where the citizens caught him while he was measuring the height of the town walls with a rope.[14] Thanks to their precise reconnaissance, the companies were able to capture bridge-towns where they appeared unexpectedly and surprised the guards. This is what happened to all of the bridge-towns mentioned above.

The Invasion of the Companies
Once the companies had gathered the appropriate information, they organised the attacking parties. This would mean a coalition of different smaller companies or an operation of a single Great Company.[15]

One of the two factors that determined the success of the resistance against the companies was the size of the companies. Nobody could resist the Great Companies of Robert Knolles, Seguin de Badefol, or Arnaud de Cervole. In the 1360s, when the presence of the companies became permanent in the border regions of France and the Holy Roman Empire, there was no real possibility of regaining control of a territory that the companies had once invaded.
The second decisive factor was timing. If it was possible to stop the mercenaries early enough to avoid their devastation of the countryside and its economy the depopulation of the land could be prevented. The local authorities or the lords organising the resistance were then in a position to finance the forces needed to fight

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[12]Archives départementales de la Côte-d'Or 1. F.365 Compte de Baillage de Auxois f. 55., B 2752 f. 6r

[13]Lettre de rémission pour la dame de Chauceris, May 1362. Georges Guigue, *Recits de la guerre de Cent Ans, Les Tard-Venus en Lyonnais, Forez, et Beaujolais 1355-1369*, (Lyon: Imprimerie Vitte et Perrusel, 1884), Pièces Justificatives XXXVIII, pp. 291-293.

[14]Archives départementales du Rhône, Fonds du chapitre métropolitain, arm. Laban vol.1 n.5, Bernard Descroix, 'Seguin de Badefol', p. 33., Guigue, p. 68, Pièces Justificatives XXXVII, pp. 289-291.

[15]On the origin of the Great Companies see: Germain Butaud, *Les compagnies de routiers en France 1357-1393,* (Clermont-Ferrand: Lemmeedit, 2012), pp. 5-10.

against the companies. This is what happened in Champagne when the first invasion of the companies was successfully halted in 1359.
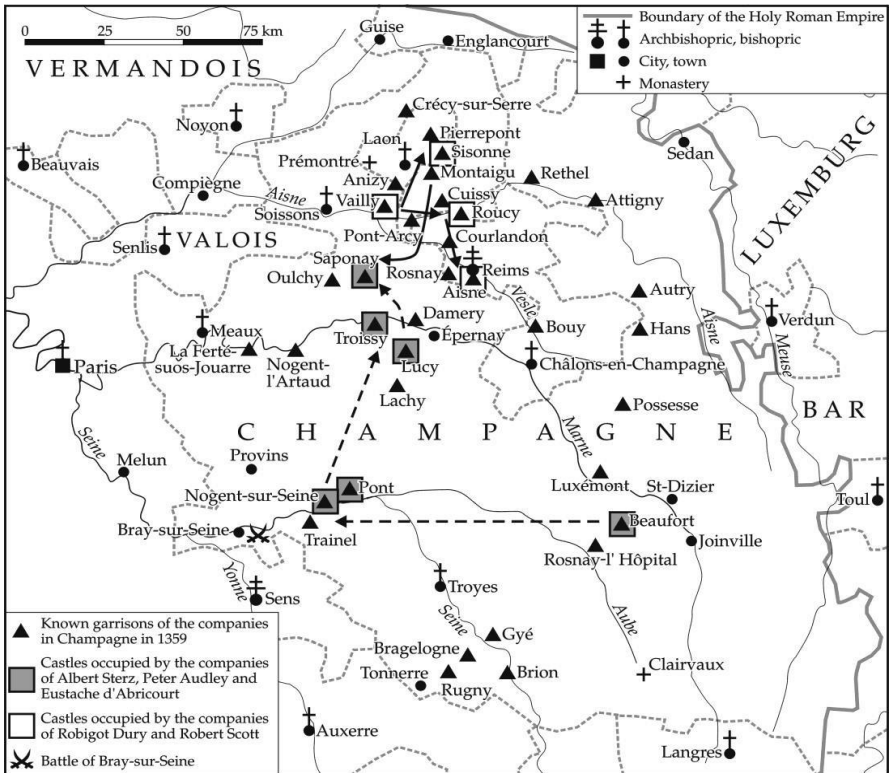

Figure 2: Invasion of Champagne by the Alliance of Mercenary Companies

The invasion of Champagne in 1358/9 was led by the following independent who decided to share the costs and profits of this adventure captains: the English Rabigot Dury and Robert Scott,[16] and the German Frank Hennequin.[17] Rabigot Dury and

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[16]Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War II: Trial by Fire,* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), e-book (location) l. 9076.

[17]Auguste Molinier, ed., 'Fragments inédits de la Chronique de Jean de Noyal, abbé de Saint-Vincent de Laon (XIV siècle)' in, *Annuaire-Bulletin de la société de l'Histoire de France Seconde Partie*, (Paris, 1883), p. 258.

Robert Scott arrived from Picardy, where they had occupied several castles.[18] The companies used the political crisis caused by the rivalry between Charles the Bad and the Regent over the control of what remained of the kingdom, to invade Champagne. In Champagne, they first took the castle of Vailly on the River Soissons and at some point, they joined their forces with Frank Hennequin.[19] Together, the three captains occupied the castle of Roucy situated on the bank of the River Aisne.[20] They swiftly took five more castles in the region between Vailly and Roucy, and were able then to control the major commercial routes north of the coronation city of Reims.[21] At Easter, Frank Hennequin, with the troops of Roucy and Vailly, surprised the castle of Sissonne, 30 kilometres from Aisne. The occupation of Sissonne shows how the companies widened their field of action by using the fortresses of the Aisne Valley and how they supported each other. The new garrison was busy ransoming the surroundings and "inflicted great misery upon the country".[22] The Count of Roucy - who had already been ransomed - attacked Sissonne with his household troops; in total, there were about forty mounted knights with their pages, but after a fierce battle, he was defeated and handed over to Rabigot Dury.[23] Once again, this local attack was repelled thanks to the cooperation of the garrisons of the castles occupied by the companies, which were located close enough to each other so that, in the event

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[18]Both English captains were in Navarrese service. '*Chronique, ou Miroir historian, rédigé pour Jean de Noyal, abbé de Saint Vincent de Leon: (1388)*' Bibliothèque National p.168. Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

[19]Molinier, ed., p. 259. His origin is not sure. He might have originated from Cologne or he was a Hainauter as Sumption suggests. Sumption, 'Trial by Fire' I. 9088.

[20]"At the feast of Christmas this Robert led savage attacks on the castle of Roucy and took captive the rightful count and his gentle wife and daughter". See, Matthieu Lambert Polain, ed., *The True Chronicles of Jean le Bel 1290-1360,* translated by Nigel Bryant, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011, p. 243. 'cil finast bien de deux mille bone florins au mouton', Matthieu Lambert Polain, ed., *Les Vrayes Chroniques de Messire Jehan le Bel,* (Brussels: F. Heussner Libraire-Éditeur, 1863), Vol. II, p. 238.

[21]The political situation in France was turbulent at the time of the invasion of the Champagne region. John II, King of France, had been in English captivity since the Battle of Poitiers. He was desperate to win back his liberty, but all his attempts ended in failure, as did Etienne Marcel's struggle for power. A few months before the companies' adventure in Champagne, the Jacquerie had scorched the region. Later the Jacquerie was largely crushed by the Navarrese troops. This was when the mercenaries acquired the necessary information about the situation in Champagne.

[22]*True Chronicles of Jean le Bel,* p. 244. 'Les Vrayes Chroniques de Messire Jehan le Bel', pp. 238-239.

[23]*True Chronicles of Jean le Bel,* p. 244. *Les Vrayes Chroniques de Messire Jehan le Bel*, pp. 238-239.

of an external threat, they could concentrate their forces.[24] In the beginning of 1359, Champagne was about to face yet another threat, this time from the south.[25] The German Albert Sterz,[26] the English Peter Audley[27] and the Hainauter Eustache d'Auberchicourt,[28] three independent captains, invaded Champagne from the direction of Beaufort, the southeastern corner of Champagne altogether with 1000 men-at-arms.[29] They took two towns at the confluence of the Aube and the Seine, notably Pont-sur-Seine and the bridge-town Nogent-sur-Seine, without much effort. [30] With these crossing points on the River Seine at their disposal, they were able to extend their sphere of influence toward the north. After conquering Lucy, they raided Vertus and Epernay in the heart of Champagne. Their next target was Troissy, a few kilometres to the north, on the bank of the River Marne. Troissy made it possible for the mercenaries to control one of the major fluvial commercial routes leading to Paris. From Troissy, Auberchicourt and the two other captains could continue their advance toward the troops of Scott, Dury and Hennequin. Finally, they joined their forces after the occupation of Saponay, 48 kilometres to the west of Reims.[31] Altogether the troops of the six captains accounted for approximately 2000 mercenaries.[32] They established a chain of fortresses that controlled all the major river valleys of Champagne, from the northern marches to the southern borders of the province. In this way, the mercenary captains could assure each other of mutual assistance in the event of a siege or organise a sizeable army in the event of a battle. They were also able to control the immediate surroundings of great cities such as Reims or Troyes.

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[24]Henri Denifle, *La Désolation des Églises, Monastères et Hôpitaux en France pendant la Guerre de Cent Ans,* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1899), Vol. I, p. 240.

[25]These captains stayed in the region for some time see: Sumption, 'Trial by Fire' I. 9097.

[26]The Champagne adventure was at the beginning of his impressive career, before he was contracted by the Italian cities and led his own international company consisting of German, English and Hungarian mercenaries. See: Karl Heinrich Schäffer, Deutche Ritter und Edelknechte in Italien während des 14 Jahrhunderts Erstes Buch im Päpstlichen Dienste, Darstellung, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1906), pp. 81, p. 94, p. 119 & p. 130.

[27]Maurice Poinsignon, *Histoire Générale de la Champagne et de la Brie,* (Châlons-Sur-Marne: Martin Frères, Imrimeurs-Éditeurs, 1896), p. 328.

[28]Maurice Crubellier, *Histoire de la Champagne,* (Paris: Privat-Didier, 1975), p. 181.

[29]*Chronique de messire Jehan le Bel*, p. 237.

[30]Poinsignon, p. 328.

[31]Eustache d'Auberchicourt occupied Saponay. Poinsignon, p. 328.

[32]Paul Doleine, 'La Bataille de Nogent-sur-Seine' 1359, in *Extraits des Causeries sur l'Histoire de Nogent-sur-Seine et des Environs par L'Écho Nogentais* (Nogent-sur-Seine: G. Maitre, 1935), p. 2.

Nevertheless, in the beginning of June, the local authorities, with external help, managed to reverse the Rota Fortunae in Champagne. The Duke of Normandy hired Brocard de Fénetrange, a mercenary captain from Lorraine, with five hundred horsemen, as well as the troops of the Count of Vaudemont, to take part in a campaign to cleanse the Champagne region of mercenaries. At the same time, the troops of the larger cities of Champagne either accompanied the Lorraine troops, or operated in tandem with the great counter-attack from the south. Thus, an army from Reims laid siege to the castle of Sissonne the same week that the great army led by Brocard de Fénetrange, and the Count of Vaudemont laid siege to Pont-sur-Seine. Henri de Poitiers, Bishop of Troyes, also joined this campaign with 3,000 foot soldiers, including nobles from Artois, Burgundy, Champagne and Brie.[33]

Because of this multiple response to the mercenaries' operations, the mercenary defenders of Sissonne were not reinforced and were subsequently massacred.[34] However, the most important campaign was that of the south. When Eustache d'Auberchicourt, Sir Peter Audley and Albert Sterz heard of 'the gathering of the troops (they) sent word to their fellow brigand garrisons at Saponay and Crécy-sur-Serre and had soon raised a good six or seven hundred mounted lances'.[35] Jean le Bel gives an overview of the companies' strategy, they used the same method before the Battle of Nogent-sur-Seine as the one they had used a few months earlier in Sissonne. The mercenaries cooperated with each other in order to put a large army into the field against the army of Champagne-Lorraine. The decisive battle took place on the banks of the Seine on 23 June 1359. Eustache d'Auberchicourt wanted to repeat the Battle of Poitiers on a smaller scale with his 700 soldiers. He took a defensive position at the top of a hill near Bray-Sur-Seine.[36] He planned to rely on his archers. The French army, including the mercenaries from Lorraine, was divided into three usual *battles*, each consisting of 300 lances. However, Vaudemont's army encircled the mercenaries, and ended up crushing them. Eustache d'Auberchicourt was captured and brought to Reims, where the enraged citizens wanted to lynch him.[37] The Battle of Nogent-sur-Seine effectively put an end to the first attempt by the mercenary companies to occupy Champagne.[38]

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[33]Ibid.

[34]*True Chronicles of Jean le Bel*, p. 245; *Les Vrayes Chroniques de Messire Jehan le Bel*, p. 239.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Siméon Luce, ed., *Chroniques de J. Froissart*, Vol. V. (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1874), p. 159.

[37]R. Delachenal, *Histoire de Charles V,* (Paris: Imprimerie Valentinoise, 1909), II, p. 41.

[38]To commemorate the victory, Henri de Poitiers, Bishop of Troyes, erected a chapel on the site of the battle at Nogent-sur-Seine. Archives départementales de l'Aube G. 2678 Testament of Henri de Poitiers
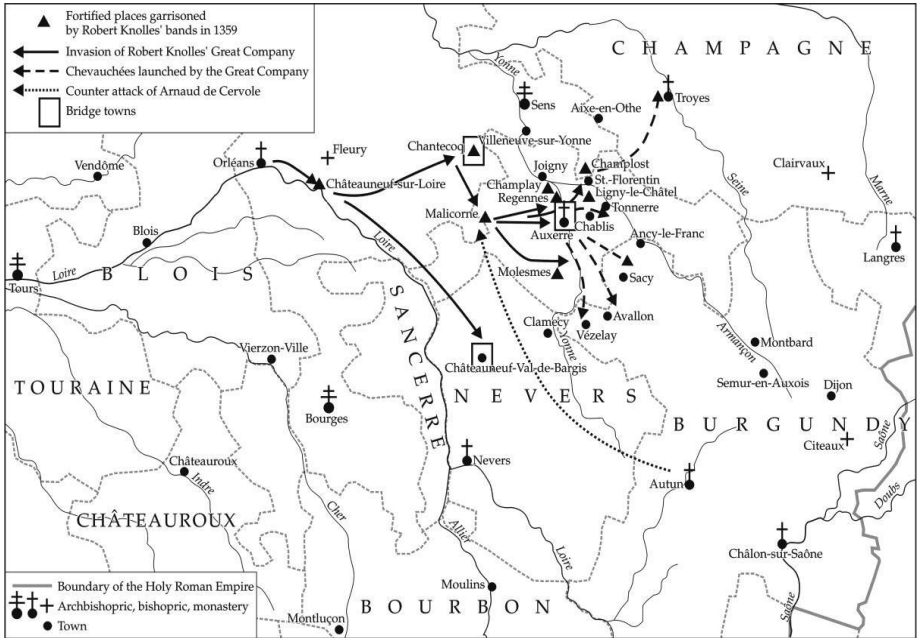
Figure 3: Robert Knolles in the Loire Valley

Pope Innocent VI used the expression "magna societas armigerorum," that is to say "Great Company" for the first time for Arnaud de Cervole's Great Company in Provence in 1358. The term `Great Company' was not applied to all mercenary companies at the turn of the 1350s/60s. Froissart and Matteo Villani distinguished the Anglo-Navarrese companies from the Great Companies. Robert Knolles was one of the captains who organised his own Great Company. They were a "new formation bringing together various elements of different units" where their size was a decisive characteristic, it sometimes meant several thousand experienced combatants.[39] Several examples can be provided for the type of invasion strategies used by a given Great Company. Several examples can be provided for the type of invasion strategies used by a given Great Company. This is illustrated in the case of Robert Knolles, who invaded the Loire Valley at the time of the invasion of Champagne.[40] Robert Knolles

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[39]See: Kenneth Fowler, '*Medieval Mercenaries, volume 1. The Great Companies*' (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001) pp.1-14. Henri Denifle, 'La Désolation des Églises' p. 188-209, Aimé Chérest, '*L'archiprètre épisode de la guerre de cent ans au XIVe siècle*' (Paris: Imprimerie Paul Bouserez, 1879) p.31-40.

[40]October-December of 1358

left Bretagne, where there was nothing left to pillage.[41] Again, the governing economic principle was to sustain his Great Company and this forced him to leave behind the approximately 40 castles that he had occupied in Normandy and Bretagne.[42] Having depleted the north he crossed Berry to arrive at the Loire Valley.[43] He was not able to occupy Orléans, but destroyed its 'faubourgs' and the land in the proximity of the city. with his Great Company, which was composed of around three thousand combatants.[44] Then, he followed the course of the River Loire and at the end of October 1358, he seized Châteauneuf-sur-Loire.[45] He established a garrison in the town and his great company pillaged the region from Châteauneuf-sur-Loire. They did not remain there for long and soon moved further east, and on 31 October 1358, Knolles' company took the castle of Chantecoq (Loiret) and from there, set fire to and subdued the entire region. He continued his way toward the marches of Burgundy, and a part of his company took Châtillon-sur-Loing further down, in the valley of the Loire. At the same time, he went to the castle of Malicorne along with the majority of his great company. Malicorne served as a centre from where he could extend his sphere of influence. His lieutenants reached the valley of the Yonne and took a castle in Regennes which belonged to the Bishop of Auxerre on 8 December 1358.[46] Arnaude de Cervole, another iconic figure of the mercenary captains, was entrusted with the defence of Nivernois and Donzy.[47] He laid siege to Malicorne to drive Knolles and his English company out of the region, but after a short unsuccessful siege, had to withdraw. By the end of 1358, the town of Auxerre was surrounded by the fortresses that had been occupied by the English.[48] It was the largest town on the River Yonne,

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[41]Denifle, p. 228. R. Delachenal, ed., *Les Grandes Chroniques de France, Chronique des Règnes de Jean II et de Charles V*, (Paris: La société de l'histoire de France,1910), Vol. 1., p. 218., 'Knighton's chronicle', ed. G.H. Martin, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.), p. 164.

[42]Luce, ed., Vol. V. p. XLI.

[43]A. Challe, *Histoire de l'Auxerrois son territories, son dioèse, son comté, ses baronnies, son bailliage,*' (Paris: Libraire du Collége de France, de l'École normal supérieure, des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 1878), p. 290.

[44]Tony Bostock, *Dogs of War, Sir Hugh Calveley and Sir Robert Knolles* e-book edition (Bostock Books, 2017), p. 57.

[45]'Les Grandes Chroniques de France', Vol. 1. p.142.

[46]The Yonne was the principal river on the left side of the Seine and played an important role in providing Paris with the necessary supplies.

[47]Thomas Grey, '*Scalacronica*' ed. Joseph Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Printing Company, 1836) p.182. p. 228.

[48]However, during the invasion of the Loire Valley and Auxerre, Robert Knolles fought under the banner of Charles the Bad, the claim that he served Edward III as well is rather dubious. Froissart may be right that this time it was his private adventure. Luce, ed.,Vol.VI. p. 351.

guarding the important fluvial commercial route toward Paris on the navigable section of the river. Exactly two months after an unsuccessful attempt on 10 January, Knolles succeeded in occupying Auxerre on 10 March 1359.[49] All the surviving inhabitants were ransomed and the surrounding region paid the *patis*.[50] Having demolished the walls, he left Auxerre on 30 April 1359.[51] The invasion of Robert Knolles shows the tactical and strategic use of river valleys during the invasion of the Great Companies. Strategically, Knolles was able to secure the long-term financing of his company thanks to the rich booty and ransom he had accumulated during the invasion, and in particular to the occupation of Auxerre. At a tactical level, by establishing a connection between the Loire and the Yonne valleys, he was able to maintain continuous communication between the different elements of his company that guarded important castles such as Malcorne in the Loire Valley or Régennes in the Yonne Valley. Knolles' method of isolating Auxerre can also be considered a typical tactical method applied by companies in the mid-14th century. First, he blocked the roads linking Auxerre to its immediate hinterland, then a series of castles were occupied around Auxerre: Champlay, Régennes to the northeast, Ligny-le-Châtel, Champost to the north-west, Molesme to the south, Malicorne to the west. Once this phase had been completed, it was only a matter of time before the town fell. Once he had succeeded, as is shown in Figure 3 above, Knolles used Auxerre as the centre of his *chevauchées* in Burgundy. In the companies' strategy, this phase served a double purpose: on the one hand, it maximised the profit during his stay in Burgundy by ravaging the terrain, and on the other hand, he used terror systematically during the *chevauchées* in Burgundy to prepare the ground for the inevitable negotiations. In this undertaking, he was very successful, because as Jean le Bel says so eloquently: 'He finished up with around two hundred thousand high-quality florins'.[52]

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[49]"Exinde perrexit uersus Amisi et per cautelam muros ascendit, portas aperit, omnes Angli intrant et in medio strate se ad bellum parant" 'Knighton's chronicle' p. 164.

[50]The companies used the system of *patis* to collect a ransom from the inhabitants of the occupied land. Georges Minois, *La Guerre de Cent Ans, Naissance de deux nations* (Paris: Perrin, Syntheses Historiques, 2008), p. 160.

[51]Ernest Petit, *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne de la race capétienne,* (Dijon: Impremerie Darantiere, 1905), Vol. 9. p.150.

[52]*True Chronicles of Jean le Bel*, p. 243; 'Les Vrayes Chroniques de Messire Jehan le Bel', Vol.II. p. 237.
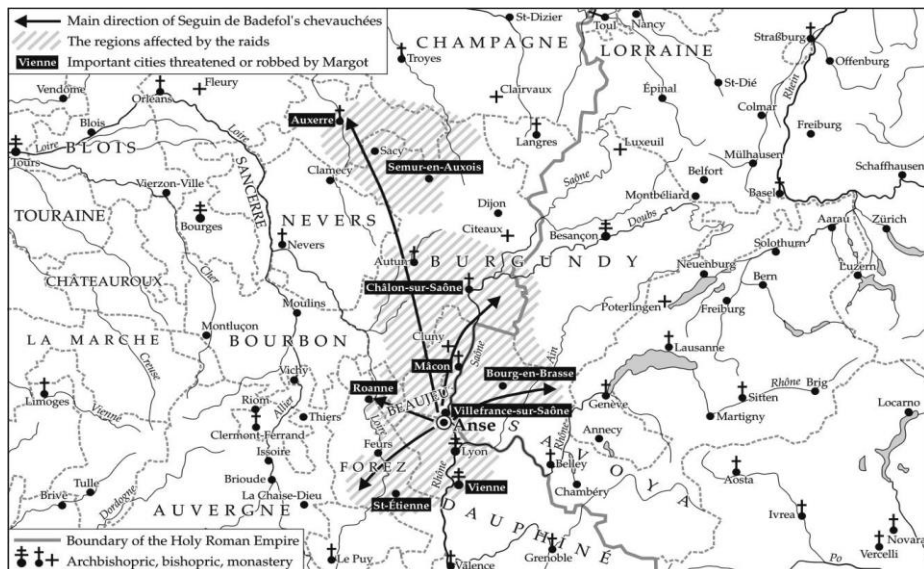
Figure 4: Seguin de Badefol's *Chevauchées* from Anse in 1364/65.

Seguin de Badefol was one the most successful captains in the era of the Great Companies.[53] He was born in the castle of Badefol, originating from a noble Perigordian family, and by 1356 had fought in the Battle of Poitiers on the French side, probably under the banner of his father.[54] He took part in all major enterprises in the 1360s. He also participated in the treasure hunt of Pont-Saint-Esprit in 1360 and menaced Pope Innocent VI along with the entire papal court in Avignon for several months.[55] He was there at the Battle of Brignais, and played a decisive role in it.[56] A year later, he took the town of Brioude in Auvergne by escalade and then occupied it for ten months [57]. Having departed from Brioude, he surprised Anse on the night of 1 November 1364, and stayed there for almost a year.

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[53]"Li plus grans mestres entre yaus estoit un chevaliers de Gascogne, qui s'appelloit messires Segins de Batefol" Luce, ed., VI. p. 62.
[54]Descroix, p. 29. However, Kenneth Fowler thinks that he fought on the English side under the Black Prince. see. Fowler, 'Medieval Mercenaries' p. 75.
[55]Denifle, p. 390.
[56]Jean Devoisse, *Jean le Bon, (*Paris: Fayard, 1970), p. 463.
[57]Prise de la ville de Brioude par Séguin de Badefol et les routiers 13 Septembre 1363 in, Augustin Chassaing, *Spicilegium brivatense: recueil de documents historiques relatifs au Brivadois et à l'Auvergne,* (Paris: Libraire Droz, 1886), p. 359.

Seguin de Badefol applied the same strategy in the case of two bridge-towns that had important strategic positions; one of them Brioude was the interface between northern Auvergne, Toulouse and the Languedoc region. Generally speaking, the border between the Kingdom and the Empire was the eastern border of Auvergne, with the diocese of Le Puy.[58] The occupation of Anse established a direct threat from the north, towards Lyon, the great city of the border region, and control over the land and river trade routes leading to the heart of France. These two towns allowed Seguin de Badefol to take control of the surrounding areas on both banks of the Allier and Saône rivers. What gave Brioude such an important strategic position is that until the construction of the Pont des Moulins and the Pont-du-Château bridges in the eighteenth century there was no stone bridge between the Vieille-Brioude and the confluence with the Loire River.[59] This is why he was able to launch a series of *chevauchées* in the Auvergne, Velay, Forez, Lyonnais, Bourbonnais and Dombes regions. The raids threatened Clermont and Montferrand, Riom in the north and Le Puy in the south.[60]

After occupying Anse, Badefol quickly extended his sphere of influence to both banks of the Saône. One of his lieutenants, Chathelin la Ville, occupied the castle of Saint-Germain-au-Mont d'Or on the right bank, 14 km from Lyon.[61] At the same time another group invaded the castle of the Gleteins on the river's left bank, almost opposite Anse.[62] His company also acquired the two main ports of Saint-Bernard and Frans on the river's navigable sections, thus he was in control of the most important fluvial and land routes north of Lyon.

Froissart gives a list of places that were targeted by the *chevauchées* of Seguin de Badefol's company called the Margot: St. Clément-Sous-Valsonne, Arbesle, Rochefort,

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[58]Marie Saudan, 'L'Auvergne médiévale en cartes : entre orient et occident, entre nord et sud', *Siècles*, 15 (2002), pp. 1-5.

[59]Emmanuel Gréloi, 'Les usages concurrents de la rivière : l'Allier en Basse-Auvergne (xiiie-xviiie siècle)', *Eaux et conflits : Dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne* [en ligne]. (Toulouse, 2012) (généré le 02 mars 2021). https://books.openedition.org/pumi/9469. Accessed 17 November 2021. http://books.openedition.org/pumi/9469. ISBN : 9782810709045. DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pumi.9469. https://books.openedition.org/pumi/37823. Accessed 17 November 2021.

[60]Fowler, 'Medieval Mercenaries', p. 75.

[61]Archives départementales du Rhône et de la métropole de Lyon Actes cap. vol,1 f.40, Guigue, 'Recits de la guerre de Cent Ans' pp. 109 & p.115 n. 1.

[62]Descroix, Seguin de Badefol', p. 36.

Terasse, St. Dennis-sur-Coise and 60 other strongholds in Mâconnais, Beaujolais, Forez,[63] Velay, Dombes, and Burgundy.[64]

Based on Figure 4, it is obvious that Badefol used Anse's strategic advantage to control both banks of the Saône and launch his *chevauchées* from Anse towards the four quarters. By building up his sphere of influence, he approached Lyon systematically, thus keeping the inhabitants of the city under constant pressure. The *chevauchées* he launched served the same dual purpose, as in the case of Robert Knolles. He managed to gather abundant spoils in both cities and, in both cases, he negotiated a large sum for the transfer of Brioude[65] and Anse.[66]

The Margot's *Chevauchées*	
Targeted settlements	Distance from Anse (km)
Saint-Germain-au-Mont-d'Or	11
Gletteins	19
Saint Bernard	2
Frans	10
Atbresle	23
Saint-Clément de Valsonne	24
Hopital de Rochefort La Terasse	81
Saint-Victor-sur-Loire	89
Saint-Denis-lès-Bourg.	56
Saint-Symphorien-le Chatel	55

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[63]Chroniques de Froissart, ed. Luce, VI..p. 265.
[64]Ölbei Tamás, Seguin de Badefol: '"A Gonoszság fia" Anse-ban, 1364-1365', in Lengvári István, ed., *A Hely embere, az ember helye. Helytörténeti kutatás, Emberközpontú Történetírás* (Pécs, 2019) p. 154.
[65]Chassaing, p. 361.
[66]Archives départementales du Rhône et de la métropole de Lyon 10G1931 f. 4

Saint-Galmier-en Forez	62
Saint-Germain	11
Le Velay	79
Châlon	108
Dombes	35
Saint-Christophe	49
Saint-Trivier-sur-Moignans	24
Bois-d'oingt	13
Saint-Laurient d'Agny	40
Saint-Jean-de-Chaussan	24
Sain-Bel	29
Amplepuis	48
Saint-Rambert-sur-Loire	122
Vienne	56
Bourg-Argental	106
Monistrol-sur-Loire	145
Montfaucon	158

Figure 5: List of towns targeted by Seguin de Badefol's *Chevauchées* from Anse in 1364/65

Out of the 40 targets of the Margot, eight (Saint-Germain-au-Mont-d'Or, Gletteins, Saint Bernard, Frans, Châlon-sur-Saône, Pont-de-Veyle, Pont-de Vaux, Neuville-sur-Saône) located in the Saône Valley, two (L'Arbresle, Saint-Christophe-en-Bresse) in the Brévenne Valley, one (La Terasse) in the Furan Valley, three (Saint-Victor-sur-Loire, Saint-Rambert-sur-Loire, Monistrol-sur-Loire) in the Loire Valley, five (Saint-Symphorien-le Chatel, Le Velay, Vienne, Batterie de Sathonay, Saint-Genis-Laval) in the Rhône Valley, one (Bourg-Argental) in the Drôme Valley and one (Châtillon) in

the L'Azergues Valley.[67] This means that 62% of Badefol's targets were located in a river valley, which means that because of the rapidity of the chevauchées, which was an essential feature of these raids, Badefol chose targets that were not only easily accessible from Anse but made these mounted raids as safe as possible.

The Role of River Valleys in Defence against *Chevauchées* of the Margot 1364/1365

As we have seen, the companies' offensive tactics relied heavily on the use of river valleys, but this is also true for the defensive measures of towns, lords and other local authorities that organised the defence of a region against the companies. When Lyon received news of the occupation of Anse, it was already too late and they could not intervene. Hastily, they sent troops toward Anse to prevent a surprise attack coming through the valley of the Saône; Janiard Provana, bailiff of Valborne, guarded the left bank of the River Saône with 33 horsemen 'during one day and one night, when Messire Badefol took Anse'.[68]

The council of Lyon prepared 28 different chains to be stretched over the roads leading to the city and at major junctions within the city as well.[69] Each chain weighed 30 quintaux that is to say, 1468 kg.[70] Palisades protected the roads situated next to the river. Lyon was also afraid of a fluvial attack of the Margot and to prevent this, they stretched two huge chains across the river. The first chain was placed at the fortress of Pierre-Scieze, which was, approximately 100 metres long, weighing 3.6 tons.[71] The second chain was approximately 136 metres long and weighed 3.9 tons. It was protected by a tower that was connected to the ramparts of the city by a wall and was guarded day and night.[72] One of the Margot's mounted raids exemplifies both the defensive and the offensive aspects of the importance of river valleys.

Seguin de Badefol´s *Chevauchée* – mid-June 1365

In mid-summer 1365, the invasion of the Dombes and Bresse regions was prepared entirely by Seguin de Badefol. He sent spies to explore the ports and the main towns on the left bank of the Saône. Some of them were captured and forced to confess. After having been tortured, one spy confessed everything, and thus the lord of Châtillon alerted the local settlements and castles. In addition, messengers 'were sent by the order of the Lord Bailiff to Saint Bernard to the vicinity of Vimy, Tournus,

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[67]Of the 60 targets mentioned by Froissart, the author has been able to identify 40 of Badefol's chevauchées.

[68]Guigue, p. 105. n.3.

[69]Archives municipales de Lyon CC 373 Inventaire-Sommaire

[70]Descroix, p. 53.

[71]Ibid., p. 51.

[72]Archives municipal de Lyon CC 373. f. 75r.

Riottier, Montmerle and other ports of the River Saône concerning the war on Anse, because someone was captured at Burgem and he confessed that he had been sent by Lord Seguin to spy on the village of Breyss'.[73] All this menacing news was confirmed by a female spy called Antelise, who was sent to Anse to bring news on Badefol's intentions, as Badefol had cut off all communication between Anse and its surroundings. She warned the local authorities about the 'utterly terrible threats' in June 1365, and that Seguin was especially tempted to lay waste the high Bresse, the territories of St-Trivier-du Courtes, Pont-Veyle, and Pont-de-Vaux in the valley of the Saône.[74] Two soldiers were sent to meet Antelise, 'who was in the proximity of Anse so that she could gain information and listen to the words of Anse's residents'.[75] It seemed that the port of Vimy was chosen as a point for crossing the River Saône, so a soldier was immediately sent to investigate the ports.[76] One of the bands of the Margot tried to cross the Saône, but because of Antelise s warning, they found the river to be guarded at Montmerle, so they searched for another, less defended crossing point to enter Bresse between Mâcon and Tournus on 20-22 June. In one of the sources, we are informed that the raiding party finally crossed the Saône and entered the region of Bresse: 'The Lord Bailiff of Saint-Amour says that the enemy have made their way to enter the area of Bresse'.[77]

Having failed to prevent the Margot from crossing the river the local lords then set up a trap at the crossing points of the Saône. The aim was to capture the returning mercenaries of the Margot so they sent additional troops to guard the Saône: once 60 glavires[78] were sent to defend Vimy, a few days later another 120 glavires joined the

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[73]Archives départementales de la Côte-d Or, B.7590, Guigue, Pièces Justificatives LX, p. 332-334.

[74]Claude Perroud, *Les grandes compagnies en Bresse et en Dombres*, (Bourg: Imrimerie Adolphe Dufour, 1874) p. 14.

[75]Archives départementales de la Côte-d Or, B 7590 Guigue, Pièces Justificatives LX, p. 332-334.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid.

[78]In the second half of the fourteenth century, the term 'glavier' or 'lance' was used to refer to not one, but two or three individuals. First, there was the fighter fully armed with chain mail and iron (flat) plates, a bascinet, a sword, a lance, a dagger and often an axe. He had a page who looked after his master's weaponry, but did not fight. Often there was a third page, who was also under his command, paid out of his master's pay. His typical armament was a brace, chain mail, sword and spear. The lance as a unit was at the heart of the companies' organisation, but there were also other types of soldiers, archers, more rarely crossbowmen, and other types of foot soldiers. These non-lance fighters were less numerous than in regular armies and were often less well equipped. In the chronicles, they are mentioned as walking on foot, and

troops in Vimy.[79] The attack of the companies might not have succeeded as planned, because in the account of Bourg, there is mention of the salary of the Carnacier of Macôn, who came to Bourg for the captured soldiers of the Margot.[80] In addition, in the account of Pont-de-Veyle of 1365 we learn that the bailiff of Bresse received news about the capture of the routiers of Anse in Pont-de-Veyle.[81] Again, the crossing points of the Saône played a crucial part in organising the successful defence against Badefol's chevauchée.

Conclusion

It has been shown that there was a pattern to the way the various mercenary captains used river valleys to their advantage: firstly, the companies used the river valleys to facilitate their entrance into a targeted region; secondly, they occupied a castle or a series of castles as a base to extend the radius of their operations.

The most efficient way for companies to occupy a region was to conquer a town with a bridge. This meant that they could increase their sphere of influence on both sides of the river valley by taking further castles and fortified settlements and at the same time, they were able to organise *chevauchées* on both sides of the river. This is what happened when Pont-Saint-Esprit was occupied.[82] On the night of 28 December 1358, the company of Batillier, Petit Meschin, Lamit and Guiot de Pin from Lyon took the town by surprise.[83] In addition, based on the sources of their spies, they learned of a gold consignment that had been collected in the province of Languedoc to ransom John I (who had been captured at the Battle of Poitiers) and was going to be transported to Paris. Contrary to what the spies had been told, the 46.5 kg gold shipment was delayed, so the mercenaries arrived in Pont-Saint-Esprit too early.[84] Although they were not able to seize the gold, by raiding both sides of the Rhône from

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sometimes described as being even naked. See details: Germain Butaud, *Les compagnies de routiers en France 1357-1393,* (Clermont-Ferrand: Lemme edit, 2012), p. 57-59. Archives départementales de la Côte-d Or, B.7590, Guigue, p. 117, Pièces Justificatives LX, p. 332-334.

[79]Archives départementales de la Côte-d Or, B.7590. Guigue, Pièces Justificatives LX, p. 332-334.

[80]Archives départementales de la Côte-d Or B 7116 Inventaire, Peroud, p. 15.

[81]Archives départementales de la Côte-d Or B 9921 Inventaire, Peroud, p. 15.

[82]Delachenal, p. 317.

[83]'Luce, ed., V. p. 72.

[84]Fowler, p. 134. The entire story is described in detail in Kenneth Fowler's book on the Great Companies. The captains of the companies were aware of the timing of the gold transport. The transport should have arrived in Pont-Saint-Esprit on the same day. This does not make any sense – what are you trying to say?

Pont-Saint-Esprit to the gates of the papal seat of Avignon, they accumulated a significant war booty.[85]

Mercenaries were able to take advantage of river valleys, especially when they were located on the borders of countries. In the fourteenth century, the River Saône was one of the border rivers between the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire. On 15 September 1358, Jean de Palais, in the service of Count Amadeus VI of Savoy, robbed a merchant and attempted to cross the river with his cloth-laden animals from the Kingdom of France to the Empire, partly to sell the animals there and partly to avoid French justice.[86]

Once the companies were established in a region and had control over the movements of goods and men, they used every means to gain profit. An example is Anse where Seguin de Badefol provided safe-conduct for those who wanted to cross his region. In return for a fee his clerk would issue the documents providing the name of the bearer, the duration of the safe conduct, limiting how many escorts could accompany the person. To make it even more official Seguin de Badefol used the title of 'Captain of Anse for the King of Navarre'.[87]

Champagne provides an example of how the invasion of the companies could be reversed following the decisive battle won by the locals at Nogent-Sur-Seine. Brignais meant the very opposite: the castle of Brignais was situated south of Lyon, on a plain, at the entrance to the Garon Valley, a tributary of the Rhône. It guarded the route to Lyon from the south-west.

The companies marched directly toward Lyon and 'robbed the land, kidnapped and held people for ransom and plundered cities.'[88] They arrived at the same time at the castles of Rive-de-Gier and Brignais.[89] None of the castles was strongly defended, there were only a few soldiers present, so the companies took both castles effortlessly.[90] This news caused great panic among the citizens of Lyon. The French royal army took a great risk in an all-out confrontation against the unprecedentedly large mercenary army. After the lost battle, the east of France, along the border of the Holy Roman

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[85]'Si ravalèrent et rassamblèrent là tout li compagnon, et couroient tous les jours jusques ens ès portes d'Avignon' 'Chroniques de Froissart' ed. Luce V. p. 72.
[86]Descroix, p.16.
[87]Ibid., p. 51.
[88] gastant le pays, ranchonnant gens et villes" Luce, ed.,VI. 260.
[89]Frantz Funk-Bertrano, *Les Brigands,* (Paris, Librairie Hachette et Cfe, 1913), p. 50.
[90]Guigue, p. 61.

Empire, was defenceless as has been illustrated by an example based on rare unpublished findings from the Archives of Lille. [91]
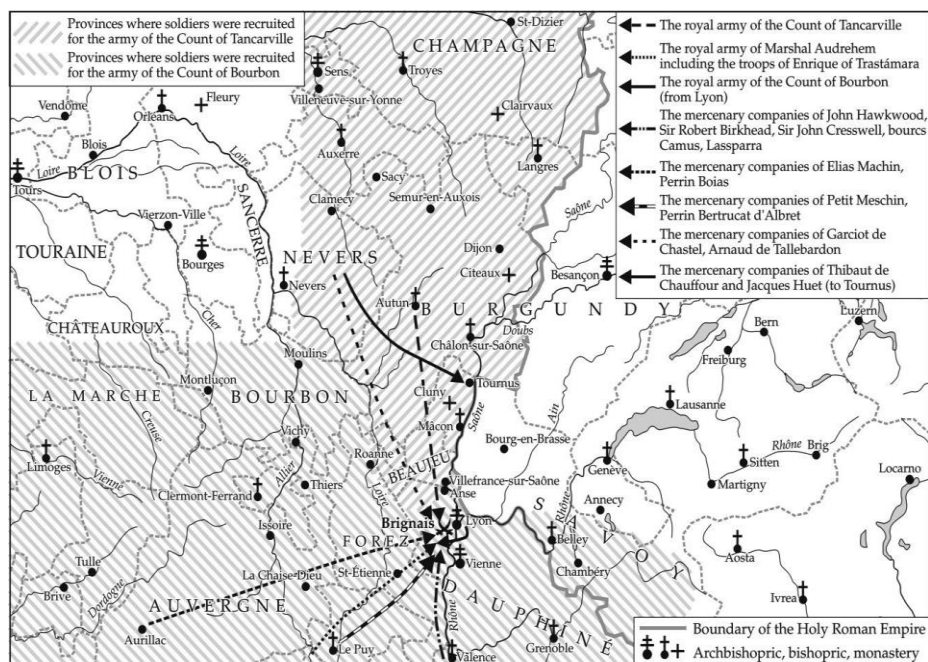

Figure 6: Movement of the armies before the Battle of Brignais 1362

To allow for their greater study in depth, the examples used in this article are taken from a single decade of the fourteenth century and from the geographically limited border region of the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of France. Numerous further cases of the companies using the river valleys to their strategic and tactical advantage could be found but those discussed show the companies to have been highly effective, and that their ability to take advantage of the geography of the border region played an important role in their success in the decade of the first bellicose peace of the Hundred Years War.

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[91]The battle was fought on 6 April 1362. It ended with the third biggest defeat of a French royal army in the fourteenth century after the battles of Crecy and Poitiers & See footnote 2. Archives départementales du Nord, B.758 n.14451.