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*Feudal Obligation or Paid Service? The Recruitment of Princely Armies in the Late Medieval Low Countries**

In 1338–9, Duke Jan III of Brabant (r. 1312–55) raised an army of more than 1,500 knights and squires to help Edward III of England (r. 1327–77) in his struggle to win the French Crown. The king paid him an enormous sum of money for his help; in the autumn of 1339, he owed the duke a staggering 307,000 Florentine florins.¹ Edward's first serious military campaign against Philip VI of France (r. 1328–50) was launched in September 1339 from the Brabantine town of Leuven, where the English king had established his headquarters.² Duke Jan's men, who supported King Edward, were primarily recruited from among the duke's 'own' Brabantine vassals, although there were also men from neighbouring principalities, such as the counties of Loon, Mark, Namur and Hainaut. The duke paid them all, vassals as well as others, according to their military and social rank: knights received £6, whereas squires earned half that amount. The total costs for these men-at-arms amounted to some £6,200.³

The increasingly international character of warfare had a significant impact on the way kings and princes composed their armies. The traditional feudal host of the high Middle Ages, in which unpaid vassals served their lord because of their feudal oath, no longer met the needs of belligerent kings and princes. Scholars tend to agree that the

* We would like to thank our colleagues both at the University of Amsterdam and at the Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands, the two anonymous reviewers and the editors of the *EHR* for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

1. H.S. Lucas, *The Low Countries and the Hundred Years' War, 1326–1347* (1929; repr. Philadelphia, PA, 1976), pp. 353–5. In July 1337 Edward III had already promised the duke £60,000 sterling in exchange for his loyalty and future collaboration: *ibid.*, p. 215. See also S. Boffa, 'The Duchy of Brabant. Caught between France and England: Geopolitics and Diplomacy during the First Half of the Hundred Years War', in L.J.A. Villalon and D.J. Kagay, eds., *The Hundred Years War: A Wider Focus* (Leiden, 2005), pp. 211–40. Throughout this article, we use many different coinages and so-called moneys of account (in pounds). Since it is impossible to standardise all these different currencies, we give the exact sums as mentioned in the sources. On monetary problems in medieval sources, see P. Spufford, *Monetary Problems and Policies in the Burgundian Netherlands, 1433–1496* (Leiden, 1970), pp. 13–28.

2. Boffa, 'Duchy of Brabant', pp. 218–21. The names of the persons mentioned in the text are given in their original spelling, except for those of the French kings Philip IV the Fair and Philip VI, for which the accepted anglicised form is used.

3. *Oeuvres de Froissart. Chroniques*, ed. Baron [Joseph Marie] Kervyn de Lettenhove (25 vols. in 26, Brussels, 1867–77; repr. Osnabrück, 1967) [hereafter *Chroniques*], xx. 416–26. The number of combatants is based on this account: payments were made for 115 *milites*, 850 *armigeri* and 550 *tam milites quam armigeri*. See also Alphonse Wauters, 'La Formation d'une armée brabançonne du temps du duc Jean III, de 1338 à 1339', *Compte rendu des séances de la Commission royale d'histoire*, 5th ser., i (Brussels, 1891), pp. 192–205; S. Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 217–18.

alternative, the contract army in which professional soldiers fought for whomsoever would pay them, was still a phenomenon of the future. But the Brabantine example of 1338–9 demonstrates that the division between the two types of armed forces was not clear-cut. Instead, there was a transitional period in which both forms could occur at the same time, and in which the distinction between unpaid vassals and mercenaries was blurred.

In this article, we examine this transition from feudal host to paid forces in the Low Countries during the fourteenth century. As early as the twelfth century, the princes of Holland, Brabant and Flanders were capable of mobilising armies of 500 to 1,000 mounted men-at-arms. In the fourteenth century these figures were substantially higher, ranging from 1,000 to 2,500.⁴ Although some princes had over 2,000 vassals and sub-vassals, it is unlikely that these men alone were capable of providing an armed force appropriate for a princely military campaign.⁵ We show that both the princes and the men who fought for them deployed various strategies and methods to cope with changing circumstances. Since there was no linear development from an army consisting of vassals to one of paid ‘retainers’, it is necessary to disentangle a wide range of feudal and other personal relationships. We focus in particular on the formal ties between princes and nobles in relation to the build-up of princely hosts, and on the ways in which these ties developed and changed. These relationships, both feudal and non-feudal, have previously been studied only in part (in the case of fief-tenures, for example)⁶ or in the context of particular military conflicts.⁷ In looking at the full gamut of these relationships and at their evolution across an entire century, this article also contributes to the wider debate about the military position of the nobility in the Low Countries and

4. J.F. Verbruggen, *Het leger en de vloot van de graven van Vlaanderen vanaf het ontstaan tot in 1305* (Brussels, 1960), pp. 72–4.

5. The picture is made richer by consideration of the role of towns, but space is lacking here to elaborate on that. In short: towns were not only important princely strongholds, but also functioned as a reservoir for the recruitment of men for military operations. In these territories, knighthood did not have an exclusively rural character; many members of the urban elites were also knighted and played political and military roles in both the town and the princely entourage. For Brabant, see P. Charraudas, ‘La Genèse de l’aristocratie urbaine à Bruxelles au miroir de l’historiographie italienne (XII^e–XIV^e siècles): Entre service militaire à cheval et activités civiles lucratives’, *Histoire urbaine*, xxi (2008), pp. 49–68, esp. 59–61; M. Damen, ‘Patricians, Knights or Nobles? Historiography and Social Status in Late Medieval Antwerp’, *The Medieval Low Countries*, i (2014), pp. 173–203; id., ‘The Knighthood in and around Late Medieval Brussels’, *Journal of Medieval History*, xliii (2017), pp. 255–284. For Flanders, see F. Buylaert, *Eeuwen van ambitie: De adel in laatmiddeleeuws Vlaanderen* (Brussels, 2010), pp. 259–66; id., ‘La “Noblesse urbaine” à Bruges (1363–1563): Naissance d’un nouveau groupe social?’, in T. Dutour, ed., *Les Nobles et la ville dans l’espace francophone, XII^e–XVI^e siècles* (Paris, 2010), pp. 247–75. For Zeeland, A. van Steensel, *Edelen in Zeeland: Macht, rijkdom en status in een laatmiddeleeuwse samenleving* (Hilversum, 2010), pp. 312–18; id., ‘Noblemen in an Urbanised Society: Zeeland and its Nobility in the Late Middle Ages’, *Journal of Medieval History*, xxxviii (2012), pp. 76–99.

6. B.D. Lyon, *From Fief to Indenture: The Transition from Feudal to Non-Feudal Contract in Western Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1957).

7. See, for example, Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, and A. Janse, *Grenzen aan de macht: De Friese oorlog van de graven van Holland omstreeks 1400* (The Hague, 1993).

the nature of their relationship with the princes. Whereas the role of the nobility in the growing Burgundian state in the fifteenth century has been examined in depth, noble–prince relations in the fourteenth century remain relatively little studied.⁸

This article also compares military changes in the Low Countries to those in England. The English case is particularly well studied and recent research into the transition from feudal obligation to paid service has contributed to a rich debate about the concepts of ‘bastard feudalism’ and ‘military revolution’. A comparative approach will shed light on the (dis)similarity of this transition and the underlying mechanisms in regions on both sides of the North Sea, and thus clarify the nature and scope of socio-political and military developments at a trans-regional level not usually considered by traditional nation-centred scholarship.⁹

From the thirteenth century onwards, military conflicts in Western Europe grew in frequency and scale. Kings and princes found it increasingly difficult to summon the traditional feudal host of heavily armoured and mounted vassals, frequently reinforced with urban militias and hired infantry and archers. They could not simply acquire more vassals, since the availability of extra fiefs (extracted from their own domains) was limited, and the division of existing fiefs would violate the rights of the fiefholders. On the other hand, princes were more successful in financing military expeditions from their own treasuries, either from their ordinary domain incomes or from their extraordinary revenues, such as subsidies (*aides*) and loans supplied by private capital.¹⁰

The growth of the fiscal ‘war-state’¹¹ had a significant influence on feudal relationships all over Europe. Historians of late medieval England have paid particularly close attention to these developments. In the 1940s, K.B. McFarlane was the first to elaborate on the concept of ‘bastard feudalism’. In his view, this included all ties between a lord and his retainers, which were not only based on a feudal relationship, but also on life-long monetary allowances, mostly in the form of annuities. In other words, the personal bond between a lord and his vassal,

8. A. Janse, *Ridderschap in Holland: Portret van een adellijke elite in de late Middeleeuwen* (Hilversum, 2001); Van Steensel, *Edelen in Zeeland*; Buylaert, *Eeuwen van ambitie*.

9. Lack of space prevents a more encompassing European comparison, especially with the neighbouring regions in the kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire. Given the cultural dominance of France, it is to be expected that the military and financial practices of the southern principalities of the Low Countries (Artois, Picardy, etc.) will not differ very much from those found in northern France.

10. M. Ormrod, ‘The West European Monarchies in the Later Middle Ages’, in R. Bonney, ed., *Economic Systems and State Finance* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 123–60, at 138–44; W.P. Blockmans, *A History of Power in Europe: Peoples, Markets, States* (Antwerp, 1997), pp. 161–91; C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1992* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 70–84; J. Watts, *The Making of Politics: Europe, 1300–1500* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 219–24.

11. Term used by Ormrod, ‘West European Monarchies’, p. 44. Ormrod demonstrates that the English Crown’s ability to obtain more extraordinary revenues in the 1330s and 1340s gave it a great advantage over the French Crown, whereupon England ‘transformed itself into a war state’ in the first decade of the Hundred Years War.

which was traditionally founded on the possession of a fief, normally a heritable landed estate, was gradually replaced by a more business-like relationship.¹² The indentures, or contracts, that formalised these relationships specified the kind of (military) obligations that a retainer had towards his lord and determined how many men he had to bring with him for military service. This view of bastard feudalism was not restricted to lords and their retainers, however, but was also applied to the changing social and political order in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

In 1989 the discussion about the concept of bastard feudalism was reopened by P.R. Coss, with reactions from David Carpenter and David Crouch,¹³ and it continued in 1995 with Michael Hicks's monograph.¹⁴ The finer details of the debate do not concern us here, but two central subjects in that discussion have been the origins and the end-point of the practices described by McFarlane and the wider impact of bastard feudalism on English society.¹⁵ Christine Carpenter has recently stressed the differences between the bastard feudalisms of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, and has even questioned the existence of affinities—now the preferred term for a noble following, replacing 'retinue'—before 1370.¹⁶ Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that there was a distinction between commitments for life to provide service in peace as well as in war ('indentures of retinue') and

12. K.B. McFarlane, 'Bastard Feudalism', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xx (1945), pp. 161–80, repr. in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays of K.B. McFarlane*, (London, 1981), pp. 23–43 (citations are for the latter). See also A.E. Prince, 'The Indenture System under Edward III', in J.G. Edwards, V.H. Galbraith and E.F. Jacob, eds., *Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait* (Manchester, 1933), pp. 283–97, at 283–4, who also mentions these practices without using the term explicitly. The scope of this article does not allow us to contribute to the debate on the evaluative nature of the term 'bastard feudalism', which supposes a 'pure' or 'ideal' type of feudalism. See E.A.R. Brown, 'The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe', *American Historical Review*, lxxix (1974), pp. 1063–88, at 1077. We do not engage either in the still more fundamental debate on the meaning of the term 'feudalism' or whether it should be used at all. In the following, the term 'feudal' stands for the practice, abundantly attested in the sources of the period, of a formal bond between a lord and a free man implicating specific mutual rights and obligations, mostly of a military nature.

13. P.R. Coss, 'Bastard Feudalism Revised', *Past and Present*, no. 125 (1989), pp. 27–64; with the reactions of D. Crouch, 'Bastard Feudalism Revised', *Past and Present*, no. 131 (1991), pp. 165–77, and D. Carpenter, 'Bastard Feudalism Revised', *ibid.*, pp. 177–189, and a 'Reply' by Coss, *ibid.*, pp. 190–203. See also M. Hicks, 'Bastard Feudalism, Overmighty Subjects and Idols of the Multitude during the War of the Roses', *History*, lxxxv (2000), pp. 386–403; P. Coss, 'From Feudalism to Bastard Feudalism', in N. Fryde, P. Monnet and O.G. Oxley, eds., *Die Gegenwart des Feudalismus* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 79–108.

14. M. Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism* (London, 1995). This book did not receive unanimously positive reviews. See, for example, the critical reviews by P. Morgan in *Welsh History Review*, xviii (1996), p. 149; N. Saul in the *English Historical Review*, cxii (1997), pp. 719–20; B. Thompson in *History Today*, xlvii (1997), p. 52.

15. Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism*, pp. 57–63.

16. C. Carpenter, 'Bastard Feudalism in England in the Fourteenth Century', in S. Boardman and J. Goodare, eds., *Kings, Lords and Men in Scotland and Britain, 1300–1625* (Edinburgh, 2014), pp. 59–92.

short-term contracts for specified and defined tasks, such as a campaign or garrison duty ('military indentures').¹⁷

There is universal agreement that, especially in the fourteenth century, military developments were strongly correlated with changes in feudal relationships. Charles Tilly characterised this century as an age of transition between the era of 'patrimonialism', when monarchs and princes extracted capital from their domains to cover the costs of their wars and relied heavily on feudal levies and urban militias, and that of 'brokerage', when princes were only able to wage war with contracted armies consisting of mercenaries and only with the consent of the 'dominant classes'.¹⁸

Some historians of late medieval England have labelled this development—the formation of contract armies on the basis of aristocratic affinities, paid by the king during a finite period—as one of the characteristics of a medieval 'military revolution'.¹⁹ However, they simultaneously point out that the demise of the feudal host and its gradual or even 'inevitable' replacement by a contract army was not as abrupt as the term 'revolution' seems to suggest: first, because there were combinations of 'feudal' and 'paid' soldiers in the royal armies as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and secondly, because English kings still regularly summoned a feudal host well into the fourteenth century, and hence their armies consisted of a mix of 'partly paid, partly voluntary unpaid and partly feudal ... mounted armoured forces'.²⁰ There was thus a degree of continuity in the way armies were constituted. However, the military campaigns against the Scots and the French in the first half of the fourteenth century certainly caused the royal government to modify its recruitment policies.

Although similar military developments took place in the Low Countries, historians have never applied the concept of bastard

17. On the former, see M. Jones and S. Walker, 'Private Indentures for Life Service in Peace and War, 1278–1476', *Camden Miscellany XXXII*, Camden Society, 5th ser., iii (1994), pp. 35–190; on the latter, see, in particular, J. Sherborne, 'Indentured Retinues and the English Expeditions to France, 1369–80', *English Historical Review*, lxxix (1964), pp. 718–46 (also on sub-contracts).

18. C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1992* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 184–5.

19. A. Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses: Military Service and the English Aristocracy under Edward III* (Woodbridge, 1994), pp. 9–25; A. Ayton and J. Price, 'Introduction: The Military Revolution from a Medieval Perspective', in *id.*, eds., *The Medieval Military Revolution: State, Society and Military Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London, 1995), pp. 1–23, at 13; M. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (New Haven, CT, 1996), pp. 112–13.

20. D. Simpkin, *The English Aristocracy at War: From the Welsh Wars of Edward I to the Battle of Bannockburn* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 152–4, 183–5. A. Ayton, 'English Armies in the Fourteenth Century', in A. Curry and M. Hughes, eds., *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War* (Woodbridge, 1994), pp. 21–38, states (at p. 23) that from the mid 1330s onwards royal armies were fully paid. Important work on the army in the Edwardian period has been done by M. Prestwich, in *War, Politics and Finance under Edward I* (London, 1972), and 'Cavalry Service in Early Fourteenth Century England', in J. Gillingham and J.C. Holt, eds., *War and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of J.O. Prestwich* (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 147–58.

feudalism to changes in feudal relationships in this conglomerate of principalities and lordships. We argue that some feudal relationships in the late medieval Low Countries bore many similarities to the characteristics of bastard feudalism as described by McFarlane. These may have had autonomous origins, but they can also be explained by the multi-faceted contacts between England and the Low Countries, not only in the field of diplomatic and military relations,²¹ but also in the commercial and economic sphere.

As in England, in the Low Countries the fourteenth century formed a pivot between the thirteenth century, when military recruitment was primarily based on the traditional feudal host, and the fifteenth century, when the Burgundian dukes managed to raise standing armies.²² In this period there existed a wide range of feudal and other personal relationships, which were constantly put to the test by the multiple conflicts between ambitious princes and lords and their incessantly changing alliances. The political and military interventions of the kings of England and France and the Holy Roman Emperor, who invested large sums to buy support in the Low Countries,²³ were an incentive for princes to create new ways of forging bonds, not only with their own vassals, but also with those of their competitors. Our results shed new light on the development and nature of 'bastard feudalism' in the Low Countries, and also highlight the similarities to and differences from the English situation.

Around 1300, the most important princes of the Low Countries were the prince-bishops of Utrecht and Liège, the duke of Brabant and Limburg, the count of Flanders and the count of Holland, Zeeland and Hainaut.

21. J. Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry: Chivalric Society and its Context, 1270–1350* (Woodbridge, 1982), pp. 22–3; M. Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe, 1270–1380* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 3–9. For the military support provided by Hainaut troops in the 1326 *coup d'état* by Queen Isabella of England, see S.A. Waller Zeper, *Jan van Henegouwen, heer van Beaumont: Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der Nederlanden in de eerste helft der veertiende eeuw* (The Hague, 1914), pp. 83–112.

22. P. Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 165–72; Ayton and Price, 'Introduction', p. 12; B. Guenée, *L'Occident aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles* (Paris, 1993), p. 211; R. Vaughan, *Charles the Bold: The Last Valois Duke of Burgundy* (London, 1972), pp. 207–8.

23. The French king followed the same policy as his eternal adversary of England did in 1338–9. In 1314, for example, the French king promised Count Willem III of Holland a yearly sum of £40,000 Tourn. for his support: J.F. Niermeyer, 'Henegouwen, Holland en Zeeland onder Willem III en Willem IV van Avesnes', in J.A. van Houtte et al., eds., *Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, III: *De late middeleeuwen, 1305–1477* (Utrecht, 1951), pp. 63–91, at 68. In the same year, the German King Louis IV (r. 1314–47) paid Count Willem, who had helped him to get elected, £52,000 black Tourn.: *ibid.*, p. 69. In February 1315 the French king promised the count a monthly sum of £140,000 small Paris. for 50,000 armed infantrymen ('hommes a piet defensaules et armés'), who were to invade Flanders for a period of at least a month: *Registers van de Hollandse grafelijkheid, 1299–1345*, ed. J.W.J. Burgers (Huygens Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 2013) [hereafter *Registers*], available at <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/registershollandsegrafelijkheid>, no. CA 35 (accessed 11 May 2018). Later that year, the king paid the count £27,755 Holl. for the wages of some 7,000 combatants who were to invade Flanders: H.P.H. Jansen and P.C.M. Hoppenbrouwers, 'Heervvaart in Holland', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, xciv (1979), pp. 1–26, at 4; Janse, *Ridderschap in Holland*, pp. 295–6.

They were followed, in terms of power, by the duke of Luxembourg and the counts of Guelders, Namur, Loon, Cleves and Jülich.²⁴ In the following century, the power relationships between the princes scarcely changed; it was only in the fifteenth century that the Burgundian dukes acquired most of the principalities of the Low Countries, which they integrated into a composite state.²⁵ In other words, princely authority in the entire region was fragmented, but some players were ultimately more successful than others in extending their power through military and diplomatic endeavours. Moreover, in the border regions of all these territories, and especially in the region between the Meuse and Rhine rivers, many high-ranking nobles held semi-independent lordships in combination with smaller fiefs in two or even three principalities. This 'multiple vassalage' system implied not only that such nobles could act as courtiers or councillors in the service of different princes, but also that they could be summoned to serve in the armies of different lords.²⁶

The test case in the present study is the duchy of Brabant, situated in the heart of the Low Countries and, together with Holland and Flanders, one of its most urbanised territories. In the thirteenth century, successive dukes of Brabant achieved the political unification of the duchy through warfare and diplomacy.²⁷ This culminated in the Battle of Worringen (1288), in which Duke Jan I (r. 1267–94), aided by the counts of Berg, Mark, Loon and Jülich, among others, defeated the count of Guelders and his allies and added the duchy of Limburg to his possessions.²⁸ However, in the fourteenth century, this major territorial aggrandisement led to new military conflicts with the princes of the surrounding principalities, especially the counts and dukes of Guelders, Jülich and Flanders.

Brabant makes an ideal case-study, as archival sources on the fourteenth-century duchy, some of them published, are abundant. These sources consist of hundreds of charters in which the duke paid nobles for their military assistance, as well as ducal registers of vassals and fiefs.²⁹ The case of Brabant has already been studied by Sergio

24. W.P. Blockmans, *Metropolen aan de Noordzee: De geschiedenis van Nederland, 1100–1560* (Amsterdam, 2010), pp. 295–301, 329–37, 380–90.

25. R. Stein, *De hertog en zijn staten: De eenwording van de Bourgondische Nederlanden, ca. 1380–1480* (Hilversum, 2014), pp. 13–58.

26. G. Croenen, 'Regions, Principalities and Regional Identity in the Low Countries: The Case of the Nobility', in P.F. Ainsworth and T. Scott, eds., *Regions and Landscapes: Reality and Imagination in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Bern, 2000), pp. 139–53, at 148–53.

27. Blockmans, *Metropolen aan de Noordzee*, pp. 145–52; R. Van Uytven, 'Vorst, adel en steden: Een driehoeksverhouding in Brabant van de twaalfde tot de zestiende eeuw', *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis*, lix (1976), pp. 93–122; R. Van Uytven et al., eds., *Geschiedenis van Brabant van het hertogdom tot heden* (Leuven, 2004), pp. 65–124.

28. U. Lehnart, *Die Schlacht von Worringen, 1288: Kriegführung im Mittelalter. Der Limburger Erbfolgekrieg unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Schlacht von Worringen, 5.6.1288* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993).

29. The charters are listed in A. Verkooren, *Inventaire des chartes et cartulaires des duchés de Brabant et de Limbourg et des pays d'Outre-Meuse* (3 ser. in 15 vols, Brussels, 1910–88), ser. I, vols. i, ii and iii, and ser. II, vols. i and ii; the ducal feudal registers are edited in *Le Livre des feudataires de Jean III, duc de Brabant*, ed. Louis Galesloot (Brussels, 1865).

Boffa, who dedicated an entire book and several articles to warfare in the duchy in the second half of the fourteenth century. Nonetheless, he paid very limited attention to feudal relationships. With regard to the role of the nobility in the armies of the duke of Brabant, he remarks that ‘they formed the core of the army,’ and that during the fourteenth century their ‘appreciable power, derived from their landed property and the prestige of their representatives’ did not undergo major changes.³⁰ Although this is undoubtedly true, the personal ties between the duke and the nobility do merit closer examination, for they changed substantially in this period, as we shall see.

In addition, and by way of contrast, we analyse feudal ties and military recruitment in other principalities in the Low Countries. The county of Holland, for which sufficient comparable sources are available,³¹ will be our primary focus. In 1299, this principality was united with the counties of Hainaut and Zeeland and the lordship of Friesland in a personal union that enclosed Brabant at its Northern and Southern borders. The duke and the count thereby became natural opponents.

In the following, we focus on five forms of military recruitment which mark the transition from a feudal host to a contract army. We argue that in the fourteenth century a nobleman rendered military service to a prince in return for: (i) the lands, princely rights or lordships that he held in fief (the classic feudal relationship); (ii) payment, although he was formally a fiefholder; (iii) a fief-rente given to him by a prince, not necessarily the prince of the principality where the vassal had his main possessions; (iv) a *fief-rente de reprise*: a feudal relationship on the basis of a largely fictitious fief-rente; (v) a formal contract—that is, there was no feudal relationship whatsoever between the prince and the contracting party. At the same time, we should note two caveats: first, that, despite developing in rough chronological order, these five forms often overlapped to a great extent; and secondly, that a nobleman could engage in more than one of these five relationships at the same time, and do so with various princes.

I

In the ‘classic’ feudal relationship, a vassal who held a fief from his lord was obliged to provide him with *consilium* and *auxilium*. Throughout Europe, *auxilium* consisted of military assistance: a vassal had to present himself for service with his own weapons and equipment, sufficient horses of a certain quality (war horses or *destriers*), and often a retinue.³² This obligation long remained in effect: for his military expedition against

30. Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, p. 131.

31. The archival sources for Holland are listed in M.J. van Gent and M.-C. Le Bailly, *Gids voor de landsheerlijke archieven van Gelre, Holland, Zeeland en het Sticht: Bestuurlijke, economische en sociale geschiedenis vóór 1500* (The Hague, 2003), for our purposes esp. pp. 148–52, 195–9.

32. Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, pp. 77–90. For Brabant, see Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, pp. 206–8.

the Frisians in 1398, the count of Holland ordered his vassals to 'serve him, armed and with good and armed men, well equipped'.³³ This meant that vassals had to have the means to purchase adequate arms, armour and mounts.³⁴ In theory, these were provided by the revenues extracted from both their allodia and their fiefs, in the form of landed estates and/or seigniorial rights such as jurisdiction (the right to judge crimes and offences within their lordships), rents (in money or in kind), tolls, mills, fishing and ferry dues.³⁵ The relationship between the possession of a fief and the military obligation of the vassal was specifically stated in the summons letters that princes issued for military expeditions.³⁶

There is little doubt that, until well into the thirteenth century, the feudal host formed the basis of princely armies in most principalities of the Low Countries. However, the available source material does not provide much insight into the precise military implications of the feudal bond for this period. The nature of the fief and the occasional payment in the case of relief (*verheffing*), in money or in kind, were usually specified in charters or accounts, but both contracting parties seem to have been aware of the vassal's military obligations, since the latter were seldom written down.³⁷ In thirteenth-century sources we catch only the occasional glimpse of the obligations connected to the feudal oath. In 1279, the Flemish nobleman Jan, lord of Oudenaarde and Rozoy-en-Thiérache, transferred his allodial lordship of Ghoy (near Lessines, situated in Walloon Brabant) to Duke Jan I of Brabant. In return, he received the lordship in fief from the duke (as a so-called *fief de reprise*), who also undertook to provide him with annual compensation of three *queus* of Rhine wine and a falcon.³⁸ In 1285 a new clause was added

33. 'ons te dienen, gewapent, met gewapende goede mannen, wail voorsien van alles, des ghi daertoe behoeven zult': *Grootplacaat en charterboek van Vriesland*, ed. Georg Frederik, baron thoe Schwartzenberg en Hohenlansberg (5 vols., Leeuwarden, 1768–93), i. 270 (summons letter of 5 May 1398).

34. Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, pp. 95–7.

35. Louis Galesloot, *Inventaire des archives de la Cour Féodale de Brabant* (2 vols., Brussels 1870–84), vol. i, pp. xxxiv–xxvi; P. Godding, *Le Droit privé dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux du XII^e au XVIII^e siècle* (Brussels, 1987), p. 158; Janse, *Ridderschap in Holland*, pp. 146–55. On the importance of seigniorial lordships, see F. Buylaert, 'Lordship, Urbanisation and Social Change in Late Medieval Flanders', *Past and Present*, no. 227 (2015), pp. 31–75.

36. See, for example, the letters of Albert of Bavaria, Count of Holland, of 5 May 1398 in which he summoned his vassals on the basis of their fief ('ende ombieden u als wij begeertelick moghen ende vermanen op sulc lien, als ghi van ons hout'): *Grootplacaat en charterboek*, ed. Schwartzenberg, i. 270–71; Janse, *Grenzen aan de macht*, p. 264.

37. See also S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (New York, 2001), p. 31. Until well into the fourteenth century, for some fiefs in Flanders and Brabant, a new fiefholder had to hand over an object that was associated with his service, such as a pair of gauntlets, a pair of spurs, a lance or a falcon. In the fifteenth century these objects were generally replaced by monetary payments: Godding, *Le Droit privé*, p. 159; R. Opsommer, 'Omme dat leengoed es thoohste dinc van der weerelt: Het leenrecht in Vlaanderen in de 14de en 15de eeuw' (Brussels, 1995), pp. 608–10.

38. *Le Livre des feudataires*, ed. Galesloot, pp. 38–9; Christophe Butkens, *Trophées tant sacrés que prophanes de la duché de Brabant*, I (Antwerp, 1641), p. 291 and *preuves*, pp. 109, III, who mentions eighteen 'amez de vin' and seven falcons. On the same day, Jan was also enfeoffed with the village of Ronquières, situated in Walloon Brabant. On this nobleman and his predecessors, see E. Warlop in *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek* (22 vols. to date, Brussels, 1964–), vol. ii, cols. 656–60, s.n. 'Oudenaarde'.

stipulating that he did not have to serve the duke at his own expense.³⁹ From this, we can conclude that a vassal would normally have borne the costs of serving his lord.⁴⁰ A contemporary charter from Holland confirms this practice. In 1283, Count Floris V (r. 1256–96) declared that his vassal Dirk van Brederode was obliged to serve him in his host for as long as the count was personally present on the battlefield with his banner. In such a case, the vassal had to come at his own expense with a twenty-oar *heerkogge* (war boat), or with fifteen men-at-arms and five archers.⁴¹

In contrast to a relative paucity of detail for the thirteenth century, the documentation concerning the Brabantine war of succession of 1356–7 offers an excellent insight into the importance and relevance of the feudal oath by the mid-fourteenth century. At this point, the count of Flanders, Louis of Male (r. 1346–84), had conquered most of the duchy. On 27 August 1356, ten days after the defeat of the Brabantine army at the Battle of Scheut, near Brussels, the count summoned 158 knights to do homage and swear fealty ('manscap ende hulde') to their new lord for the fiefs they held in Brabant. The most important towns of Brabant had already sworn loyalty to the count.⁴² Although this 'feudal policy', which was clearly intended to neutralise the military potential of opponents, initially seemed successful, it met with resistance from the most important vassals. The lords of Breda and Glimes declared that they were too ill to travel to the count to render him homage.⁴³ Other vassals were more forthright and openly declared that they wanted to remain loyal to their 'just lord' ('gherechten heere'); that is, to Duke Wenceslas of Luxembourg (r. 1355–83), who had acquired the ducal title thanks to his marriage to Johanna, eldest daughter of Duke Jan III of Brabant. In October 1356 the count ordered his officers to confiscate the goods and fiefs of the men who had not paid homage to him. These included many bannerets, such as the lords of Wezemaal, Gaasbeek, Grimbergen, Hoogstraten, Diest, Marbais and Perweis.⁴⁴ Several important princes, such as the counts of Berg, Loon and Nassau and their followers, who were allies and very probably also vassals of the duke, declared themselves enemies of the count. Finally,

39. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. i, no. 117.

40. Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, p. 207.

41. *Oorkondenboek van Holland en Zeeland tot 1299*, ed. A.C.F. Koch, J.G. Kruisheer and E.C. Dijkhof (5 vols., The Hague, 1970–2005), vol. iv, no. 2110. On the system of the *kogge-beervaart*, see Janse, *Grenzen aan de macht*, pp. 271–4.

42. *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant, par Jean de Klerk, d'Anvers*, ed. Jan Frans Willems (3 vols., Brussels, 1839–69), ii, 508: 'dat sij manscap souden comen doen van dat si houden van Brabant'. See also P. Gorissen, *Het parlement en de Raad van Kortenberg* (Leuven, 1956), pp. 39–41.

43. H. Laurent and F. Quicke, 'La Guerre de succession de Brabant (1356–1357)', *Revue du Nord*, xiii (1927), pp. 81–121, at 103–5; P. Avonds, *Brabant tijdens de regering van hertog Jan III: De grote politieke krisissen* (Brussels, 1984), pp. 216–18.

44. *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant*, ed. Willems, ii, 515–16. On the social, political and military role of bannerets in Brabant, see Damen, 'Knighthood', and M. Damen, 'Heren met banieren: De baanrotsen van Brabant in de vijftiende eeuw', in id. and L. Sicking, eds., *Bourgondië voorbij: De Nederlanden, 1256–1650. Liber alumnorum Wim Blockmans* (Hilversum, 2010), pp. 139–58.

there were those vassals who had already paid homage to the count, but who changed their mind at a later stage and ‘returned’ their fiefs to him in order to be acquitted of their oath.⁴⁵ In other words, in the Low Countries in the fourteenth century, both the liege lord and the vassal took the feudal oath seriously. The oath of loyalty—with its inherent promise of military aid—was closely connected to the fief, but could be renounced; the fief could be transferred to other holders in the case of disobedience.

An army consisting of vassals clearly had advantages for a prince, since these men were trained, and—because of the feudal bond—probably loyal and motivated.⁴⁶ None the less there was a potential problem in that the number of men-at-arms that could be raised through feudal obligations was inadequate for a large-scale campaign;⁴⁷ that was one reason why the princes sought the support of foreign combatants. An additional disadvantage was that feudal regulations brought restrictions. In Flanders and Brabant, for example, vassals were only obliged to follow their prince on a military expedition at their own expense with a harness and horse within the boundaries of the principality, normally for a maximum of forty days. If the vassal’s military service was performed abroad or exceeded the maximum duration, the prince had to cover the costs.⁴⁸ A further problem was that some vassals held fiefs from two or even more princes. In his acclaimed study on feudal society, Marc Bloch mentions two German nobles who had twenty and forty-three lords, respectively.⁴⁹ Although it is difficult to trace vassals in Holland and Brabant with similar numbers of feudal ties, it is clear that, especially in border areas, nobles held fiefs from several princes.⁵⁰ Problems would

45. *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant*, ed. Willems, ii. 510–12: ‘zo zendic u dat zelve leen over’. See also Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, p. 208.

46. There were vassals who served in princely armies even though they were not required to do so (for instance, because the maximum term of service had expired), and without asking for payment: M. Prestwich, ‘Money and Mercenaries in English Medieval Armies’, in A. Haverkamp and H. Vollrath, eds., *England and Germany in the High Middle Ages: In Honour of Karl Leyser* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 145, 150; Jansen and Hoppenbrouwers, ‘Heervaart in Holland’, p. 2.

47. This was certainly the case in England, where Edward I had to deal with an ever diminishing number of vassals responding to a feudal summons: Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 79–82. His successor faced the same problem: id., ‘Cavalry Service’, pp. 153–6.

48. For Flanders, see Opsommer, ‘*Omme dat leengoed es thoochste dinc van der weerelt*’, p. 714. Compare E. Warlop, *The Flemish Nobility before 1300* (4 vols., Kortrijk, 1975–6), ii. 291, 301, 535 (n. 535). For Brabant, Willem van der Tanerijen, *Boec van der loopender practijken der Raidtcameren van Brabant*, ed. E.I. Strubbe (Brussels, 1952), pp. 434, 445; Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, p. 207. For Holland, Janse, *Grenzen aan de macht*, pp. 254, 264. For England and France, see Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, p. 79, and E. Lalou, ‘Les Questions militaires sous Philippe le Bel’, in P. Contamine, C. Giry-Deloison and M. Keen, eds., *Guerre et société en France, en Angleterre et en Bourgogne, XIV^e–XV^e siècle* (Lille, 1991), pp. 37–62.

49. F.L. Ganshof, *Feudalism*, tr. P. Grierson (3rd edn., New York, 1964), pp. 102–5; M. Bloch, *Feudal Society* (2 vols., London, 1975), i. 211–18, esp. 212. In theory, as liege lord, one lord had pre-eminence over the others in the case of conflicting interests, but this was often little more than a theoretical position.

50. G. Croenen, ‘Regions, Principalities and Regional Identity in the Low Countries: The Case of the Nobility’, in P.F. Ainsworth and T. Scott, eds., *Regions and Landscapes: Reality and Imagination in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Bern, 2000), pp. 139–53, at 150–51.

arise for a vassal if two of his lords were to enter into conflict, since he was then obliged to assist both. Feudal regulations in Brabant stipulated that in such cases a vassal should remain passive ('stille sitten'), and only help a lord whose opponent was fighting an 'unjust' war.⁵¹

Willem van Duivenvoorde (c.1290–1353) presents an excellent example of such dual loyalty. As the illegitimate son of a high-ranking nobleman from Holland, he became a trustee, councillor and chamberlain to Count Willem III of Holland (r. 1304–37), who knighted him in 1328 after the Battle of Cassel.⁵² Between 1323 and 1340, he managed to acquire important feudal goods in the border areas of the county of Holland and the duchy of Brabant.⁵³ But Duivenvoorde would soon cross this border on his own account. In 1325, he acquired the lordship of Oosterhout (near Breda) with high jurisdiction as a ducal fief from Gerard van Rassegem.⁵⁴ In the following years, Duke Jan III of Brabant enfeoffed him with many other lordships (Dongen, Boutersem)⁵⁵ and smaller fiefs and rents, most of them situated in the northern part of the duchy. Understandably, Duke Jan III expected his vassal to assist him when he was besieged by a coalition of seventeen lords and princes, among them Count Willem III of Holland, in April and May 1332. Duivenvoorde responded positively and loaned the duke 56,693 small Florentine guilders, intended to cover the costs of the defence of Brabant. The duke was only able to redeem this enormous debt seven years later, with the money provided by Edward III.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, when the coalition—probably at the instigation of Count Willem III—put Duivenvoorde under pressure in the spring of 1333, he changed sides and resigned his feudal tie with the duke of Brabant.⁵⁷ After a

51. Van der Tanerijen, *Boec van der loopender practijken*, ed. Strubbe, p. 432. For Flanders, see Opsommer, 'Omme dat leengoed es thoochste dinc van der weerelt', pp. 724–6.

52. On Willem van Duivenvoorde, see H.M. Brokken, *Het ontstaan van de Hoekse en Kabeljauwse twisten* (Zutphen, 1982), pp. 220–52.

53. In 1323 Willem III enfeoffed him with the viscounty of Geertruidenberg and the stones with which to build a castle, which would become a fief. A year later, Duivenvoorde acquired the house of Strijen, another castle held in fief from the count, near Oosterhout, a village in Brabantine territory: S.W.A. Drossaars, *Inventaris van het archief van de Nassause Domeinraad: Raad en Rekenkamer te Breda, 1170–1580 (1582)* (The Hague, 1948), nos. 85, 606. On 27 June 1325, he promised that the castle that he had built in Oosterhout would do no harm to the duke of Brabant or to his territories; Duivenvoorde specifically asked the count of Holland to co-seal the charter with him. In other words, they were perfectly aware of the delicate situation: Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. II, vol. ii, p. 24. On the frontier between Holland and Brabant, and the castle of Oosterhout in particular, see P. Avonds, *Brabant tijdens de regering van hertog Jan III: Land en instellingen* (Brussels, 1991), pp. 22–4, and id., 'De Brabants-Hollandse grens tijdens de late middeleeuwen: Bijdrage aan een controverse', *Holland*, xiv (1982), pp. 128–32.

54. Butkens, *Trophées tant sacrés que prophanes*, i. 396–7.

55. Drossaars, *Inventaris van het archief van de Nassause Domeinraad*, no. 89 (Dongen); *Le Livre des feudataires*, ed. Galesloot, pp. 296–7 (Boutersem).

56. Avonds, *Politieke krisissen*, p. 173 n. 536; *Chroniques*, xx. 417–18. Interestingly, the Brabantine chronicler Jan van Boendale characterises the seventeen lords and princes of this coalition as 'soudenieren' or mercenaries of Philip VI of France, who were only interested in the king's money ('conincs ghelt'): *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant*, ed. Willems, i. 496; Avonds, *Politieke krisissen*, pp. 84, 103.

57. Lucas, *Low Countries*, p. 148; Avonds, *Politieke krisissen*, p. 81.

peace was concluded at Amiens in August 1334, the breach between the duke and his vassal was repaired, in all likelihood because of the duke's huge financial obligations towards Duivenvoorde. It should thus come as no surprise that Duivenvoorde played a crucial role in the duke's Council from 1334 to 1353, and presented himself as a Brabantine nobleman.⁵⁸

To summarise: in theory, the feudal oath was a useful tool for a prince to ensure that he would receive military assistance when needed, albeit that he was not always able to summon enough mounted men-at-arms. Both lord and vassals were aware of the implications of their oath. Vassals had their own strategies, however, and seized opportunities that arose in other principalities. They could show amazing flexibility when changing sides in the case of a military conflict between two of their lords. Princes were increasingly aware of the fact that they could not 'claim' a vassal. They were even prepared to compensate a vassal who lost his fiefs in an opponent's lands.⁵⁹

II

During the thirteenth century it became standard practice for a prince to pay his vassals for their service, either for their expenses or as wages, even when they were bound by their feudal oath to serve.⁶⁰ In England, royal vassals were paid for military service from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards.⁶¹ These payments were one of the reasons why war became a very costly enterprise, as is illustrated by the staggering sums spent by Edward III on his French and Scottish campaigns in the 1330s.⁶² In France, Philip IV the Fair (r. 1285–1314) had to pay vassals who served him for more than forty days during his numerous military campaigns between 1294 and 1304. These vassals normally brought their own retinues, consisting of knights, squires and sergeants who did not have a direct feudal tie with the king and who

58. Avonds, *Land en instellingen*, pp. 75–6, 105, 109, 139, 145, 151, 255. He also built a house and a chapel in Brussels—now integrated into the Royal Library of Brussels—and in the same town, founded a convent of the Clarisses where he would eventually be buried.

59. During the war of succession of 1356–7, Arnold, lord of Stein, had to choose between two lords: the duke of Brabant and the count of Namur. He eventually chose to side with Duke Wenceslas and Duchess Johanna of Brabant (r. 1355–1406), who compensated him for the loss of his fiefs in the county: Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. ii, no. 952. Arnold, or his father of the same name, was also mentioned in c.1320 and 1329 as a vassal of the count of Holland: *Registers*, nos. DE 5, 50, 51.

60. Verbruggen, *Het leger en de vloot*, p. 57. Guenée, *L'Occident*, p. 207, uses the term 'vassaux soldés'.

61. McFarlane, 'Bastard Feudalism', p. 25. The English king Edward I paid his knights (evidently vassals as well as others) 2s a day: Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance*, p. 41.

62. For the number of combatants and the sums paid, see A.E. Prince, 'The Strength of English Armies in the Reign of Edward III', *English Historical Review*, xlvii (1931), pp. 353–71; Lucas, *Low Countries*, *passim*. Many of the key organisational developments of the period are summarised in Ayton, 'English Armies in the Fourteenth Century'.

received wages as well. On the other hand, when the king's vassals chose not to serve in the royal host, they had to pay him an exemption fee.⁶³

The sparse documentary evidence demonstrates that the practice of paying vassals for military assistance, even when this was not demanded by feudal law, already existed in the Low Countries in the last decades of the thirteenth century, although the practice was perhaps not as common as in England. In 1290, for example, Count Floris V of Holland promised to compensate his vassal Sir Hendrik Buffel for the damage that the latter suffered in his service against rebellious nobles in Zeeland.⁶⁴ We have already mentioned the charter of 1285 in which Duke Jan I of Brabant held that his vassal Jan, lord of Oudenaarde, did not have to serve at his own expense. Both examples indicate that in this period it was still customary in Holland and Brabant for vassals to follow their lord on his military campaigns at their own expense, but that it was not unusual for them to receive financial compensation.

By the fourteenth century, the payment of vassals who served in princely hosts had become common practice in the Low Countries. Dozens of charters relating to the large-scale wars of 1338–9, 1356–7 and 1371, in which the duke of Brabant was involved, attest that ducal vassals were paid even when their service was required within the duchy for less than forty days. In these documents, the duke either promised to pay nobles for a planned campaign or to reimburse their expenses (often due to the loss of horses or armour). Although it is never explicitly stated that these men were vassals of the duke, many of them can be traced in the ducal books of fiefs.⁶⁵

It goes without saying that payment was not restricted to the vassals, but extended to their retinues. The men mentioned in the payroll of 1338 had retinues that consisted of a certain number of knights (ranging from 1 to 16) and a number of squires (from 1 to 35), probably sub-vassals, servants, followers or simply 'contracted' men. Four men paid by the duke, the counts of Mark and Loon and the lords of Cuijk and Argenteau, all possessors of ducal fiefs,⁶⁶ appear to have functioned as 'sub-contractors', as they took 100–300 knights and squires with them; it is unlikely that they would have been able to recruit so many men from their households.⁶⁷ Others were not only fiefholders, but also high officials at the ducal court. Sir Leon van Kraainem, for instance, was seneschal of Brabant, the highest judicial officer of the duchy and the

63. Lalou, 'Les Questions militaires', pp. 41–5.

64. *Oorkondenboek van Holland*, ed. Koch, Kruisheer and Dijkhof, vol. iv, no. 2455.

65. This pertains, for instance, to the knights Arnoud van Agimont, Jan van Wijtvliet, Liedekijn van Bardeghem and Hendrik Berthout, lord of Duffel, who all served the duke in the war of 1338–9. See Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. i, nos. 476 (Agimont), 493 (Bardeghem), 495 (Wijtvliet), and 497 (Berthout) (*Le Livre des feudataires*, ed. Galesloot, pp. 88, 105 [Berthout], 178 [Agimont], 194 [Bardeghem], 233 [Wijtvliet]).

66. *Le Livre des feudataires*, ed. Galesloot, pp. 2 (Loon), 127 (Mark), 229–30 (Argenteau), 141 (Cuijk).

67. *Chroniques*, xx. 416–26; Wauters, 'La Formation d'une armée brabançonne'.

lieutenant of the duke in his absence. In 1338 he received £93 of old groats for his service in the duke's army, together with four other knights and twenty-three squires, for the duration of the war between England and France.⁶⁸ Another example is Sir Jan Craye van der Hofstat, the marshal of Brabant during the same campaign. Originally an officeholder at the ducal court, in the fourteenth century Sir Jan became a commander in the Brabantine army.⁶⁹ In 1338 Sir Jan and his lieutenant, Sir Walter van der Quadebrugge, received £111 for themselves and twenty-three squires.⁷⁰

During the war of succession of 1356–7, many non-Brabantine (or 'foreign') vassals fought on the side of Wenceslas and Johanna. One of them was the Rhineland nobleman Hendrik van Schönraht, who received 32 old florins in December 1356 for the loss of a horse. Moreover, together with Pade van Heimberg, he received another 50 Antwerp schild as wages for the eight days of service rendered by themselves and six soldiers. Finally, in February 1357, he obtained another 54 old schild for the eighteen days of service he and two *glaives* (men-at-arms) had provided, including four days for his journey home.⁷¹

Two developments fostered the general practice of paying vassals from the end of the thirteenth century onwards. First, the mixed composition of the armies, with a growing contingent of 'foreigners', had an impact. We shall see that the duke had to pay these men even if they possessed a fief-rente, and it therefore became increasingly difficult not to pay his Brabantine vassals.⁷² Secondly, the nature of the conflicts changed: they became increasingly international, with princely armies campaigning outside their own territories. As a consequence, princes had to pay for their vassals' participation, since these conflicts were explicitly excluded from military service in feudal law.

III

Instead of a material fief, a prince could also grant a fief in the form of an annual allowance, a fief-rente, for which the receiver became his vassal,

68. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. ii, no. 503; *Chroniques*, xx, 419. On Sir Leon, see Avonds, *Land en instellingen*, pp. 108–11; Avonds, *Politieke krisissen*, pp. 166–8; *Le Livre des feudataires*, ed. Galesloot, p. 296.

69. On this office, see Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, pp. 104–6, and A. Uyttebrouck, *Le Gouvernement du duché de Brabant au bas moyen âge (1355–1430)* (Brussels, 1975), pp. 228–31.

70. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. ii, no. 542; *Chroniques*, xx, 420; Wauters, 'La Formation d'une armée brabançonne', pp. 203–5 (where Van der Hofstat is erroneously called 'Wilhelmus' in the edition of the charter, p. 204); Uyttebrouck, *Gouvernement du duché de Brabant*, p. 229. Jan's feudal tie is not mentioned explicitly, but his son Willem was a ducal vassal: *Le Livre des feudataires*, ed. Galesloot, pp. 177, 283, 287.

71. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. ii, nos. 968, 974, 1015. On Hendrik's status as a vassal, see below. On his declaration as an enemy of Count Louis of Male (and hence his refusal to pay homage to the count), see *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant*, ed. Willems, ii, 510.

72. V. Van Oeteren, 'Recrutement et composition d'une armée brabançonne au XIV^e siècle: Le Cas de Baesweiler (1371)' (Univ. Libre de Bruxelles thesis, 1987), p. 102.

with all the obligations this entailed.⁷³ A fief-rente did not only consist of money, but could also take the form of allowances in kind, such as certain amounts of grain or wine.⁷⁴ Far from being an invention of the late Middle Ages, this device was already in use in the eleventh century, although it only became widespread in the thirteenth century.⁷⁵ The earliest examples of fief-rentes in Brabant are from the reign of Duke Hendrik I (r. 1183–1235). In 1202, he gave a rente of 100 marks to Count Philippe I of Namur (r. 1195–1212); in 1208, he supplied a rente of £40 Fland. to the Flemish nobleman Raas van Gavere the younger; and in 1224, the Duke granted a rente of 20 marks of Cologne to Gauthier de Ligne and his brother Fastré, noblemen from Hainaut.⁷⁶ During the same period, fief-rentes in Holland were issued by the abbot of Egmond in 1215 and by individual noblemen of Zeeland around 1229 and in 1235.⁷⁷ At that time, the count of Holland also made regular use of this means of binding nobles to his person, among them Sir Arnold, lord of Oudenaarde, in 1228–9, and Sir Willem van Strijen in 1235.⁷⁸ These examples show that the princes used the fief-rente to bind other princes or nobles who did not form part of their ‘natural’ sphere of influence. In other words, princes targeted men who lived on the fringes of, or even beyond, their territories.

Compared to the landed fief, the fief-rente brought a number of advantages for a prince. New enfeoffments would deplete the princely domain, whereas, with a fief-rente, only the princely treasury would bear the burden. Secondly, the vassal and his heirs were unable to appropriate the fief as if it were an allodium, which was common practice with landed fiefs. Thirdly, the prince could easily stop the allowance if a vassal were to misbehave; confiscating a landed fief was more complicated, and

73. Lyon, *From Fief to Indenture*; developments in Flanders are described in D. Heirbaut, ‘The Fief-Rente: A New Evaluation, Based on Flemish Sources (1000–1305)’, *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis*, i (1999), pp. 1–37. Incidentally, the term ‘fief-rente’ is not used in contemporary sources; the latter simply use the term ‘fief’ (*feodum, leen*) with a statement of the annuity involved.

74. See, for example, for Flanders, Heirbaut, ‘Fief-Rente’, p. 15; Verbruggen, *Het leger en de vloot*, p. 51.

75. In Flanders, as early as the twelfth century; Heirbaut, ‘Fief-Rente’, pp. 10–11. In 1213, the English king granted fief-rentes to the count of Holland and some nobles from that principality: *Oorkondenboek van Holland*, ed. Koch, Kruisheer and Dijkhof, vol. i, nos. 319–24.

76. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. II, vol. ii, pp. 32, 38, 57; B.D. Lyon, ‘The Fief-Rente in the Low Countries’, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire/Belgisch tijdschrift voor philologie en geschiedenis*, xxxii (1954), pp. 422–65, at 428 (Philippe I of Namur). The fief-rente of Gauthier de Ligne was confirmed later by the dukes Hendrik II (r. 1235–48) and Hendrik III. The confirmations are known solely from a charter issued by Hendrik III on 22 April 1253 (Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. i, no. 56), in which a rente of £20 Fland. is mentioned, converted into a yearly allowance of two barrels of Rhine wine.

77. *Oorkondenboek van Holland*, ed. Koch, Kruisheer and Dijkhof, vol. i, no. 358, and vol. ii, nos. 491, 571.

78. Count Floris IV (r. 1222–34) enfeoffed Arnold, lord of Oudenaarde, in 1228–9 with a yearly allowance of four barrels of wine and two red falcons; the protector Willem of Holland (r. 1234–8) enfeoffed Sir Willem van Strijen in 1235 with an annual sum of £6 Holl. from the toll of Geervliet. Another example is the enfeoffment by Count Willem II in 1239–56 of Arnoud Kinds or his son Willem with a yearly sum of £4 Holl. from the lease of a piece of land in De Lier: *Oorkondenboek van Holland*, ed. Koch, Kruisheer and Dijkhof, vol. i, no. 483, and vol. ii, nos. 573, 1071.

often only possible through the use of force. Furthermore, fief-rentes facilitated the recruitment of 'foreign' vassals who could be deployed for various purposes. Through this means, for example, high-ranking nobles could be engaged as friends and allies at a foreign court, where they might be expected to exert their influence on behalf of their liege lord. This diplomatic use of the fief-rente also dates back to the thirteenth century.⁷⁹ Still, it was even more important that these vassals could be summoned in the case of a military conflict, and it was especially to this end that the princes used the fief-rente.⁸⁰ This is confirmed by the two above-mentioned examples from Brabant, in 1202 and 1208: in both years, the duke was at war with the counts of Holland and Guelders.⁸¹

Other princes followed similar strategies. The count of Flanders granted a large number of fief-rentes to foreign noblemen during the second half of the thirteenth century, when the French king posed an imminent military threat.⁸² The immediate use of these rentes is expressed in summons lists of 1297, with the names of the allies ('li alloié') and the number of men they were supposed to bring to the Flanders army.⁸³ The lists involve some 1,200 'armures de fer' from all over the Low Countries, but mostly from Brabant and the Meuse and Rhine regions.⁸⁴ Malcolm Vale has noted that some of the men who had been summoned, such as the Brabantine nobles Willem, lord of Horne, and Jan, lord of Cuijk, were bound to the count with a fief-rente and thus had to obey the count's summons.⁸⁵ In the same period, the duke of Brabant also gave fief-rentes to foreign nobles, including Gerard of Luxembourg in 1283, the son of the count of Virneburg in 1284, Gerard 'advocatus' of Cologne in 1292, and Henry of Luxembourg in 1297.⁸⁶ These men were all of high rank, most of them of princely

79. Lyon, *From Fief to Indenture*, pp. 161–81; for Flanders, cf. Heirbaut, 'Fief-Rente', pp. 25–6. For examples from Holland, see, in n. 78 above, the fief-rente that Count Floris IV gave to Arnold, lord of Oudenaarde, who was a vassal and bailiff of the count of Flanders; and the annual allowance of £15 from the toll of Niemandsvriend which Count Floris V conferred in 1278 to the advocate of Cologne (*Oorkondenboek van Holland*, ed. Koch, Kruisheer and Dijkhof, vol. iv, no. 2351). See also Lucas, *Low Countries*, pp. 354–5.

80. Lyon, *From Fief to Indenture*, pp. 270–73; Heirbaut, 'Fief-Rente', p. 7; M. Vale, 'Anglo-French Wars, 1294–1340: Allies and Alliances', in P. Contamine, C. Giry-Deloison and M. Keen, eds., *Guerre et société en France, en Angleterre et en Bourgogne, XIV^e–XV^e siècle* (Lille, 1991), pp. 15–35, at 23.

81. *Annalen van Egmond: De Annales Egmondenses tezamen met de Annales Xantenses en het Egmondse Leven van Thomas Becket*, ed. M. Gumbert-Hepp, J.P. Gumbert and J.W.J. Burgers (Hilversum, 2007), pp. 300–304; Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. II, vol. i, p. 38.

82. Heirbaut, 'Fief-Rente', pp. 24–6.

83. On the term 'alliance'—which could also entail the allowance of a fief-rente without an act of homage—see P.S. Lewis, 'Decayed and Non-Feudalism in Later Medieval France', in his *Essays in Later Medieval French History* (London, 1985), pp. 41–68, at 43–5.

84. Verbruggen, *Het leger en de vloot*, pp. 53–4, counts 1,228 listed men. See also the analysis by Vale, 'Anglo-French Wars', pp. 23–5, who gives a total of 1,189 *armures de fer* enlisted as *alliés*. The term *armure de fer* indicates that these men possessed mail armour, at least, but they were not necessarily all heavily armed and mounted men-at-arms; see Janse, *Ridderschap in Holland*, p. 295.

85. Vale, 'Anglo-French Wars', pp. 23–4.

86. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. i, nos. 108/114, 113, 150/156 and 165 respectively.

descent. This pattern of recruitment shows that, as early as the later thirteenth century, the duke was actively seeking support among the leading families of neighbouring principalities.

In the first half of the fourteenth century, the fief-rente became widespread in the principalities of the Low Countries.⁸⁷ The duke of Brabant was the uncrowned champion of fief-rentes, since he granted hundreds of them in the fourteenth century.⁸⁸ The duke was particularly interested in foreign princes and nobles. In 1340, for example, Duke Jan III granted a yearly allowance of £400 old groats to Count Guillaume I of Namur (r. 1337–91),⁸⁹ and in 1347–54 he gave a lump sum of £50 old groats to Walram of Luxembourg, lord of Ligny.⁹⁰ Sometimes he used a fief-rente as a reward for services performed, as happened in 1334, when he augmented a fief held by Adolf, count of Mark, with an annual fief-rente of £200 Tourn.⁹¹

The count of Holland also awarded fief-rentes relatively frequently in this period. From 1316 onward, some 470 fief-rentes are listed in the registers of the comital chancery in Holland.⁹² Like the duke of Brabant, the count granted over a hundred fief-rentes (or rather *fief-rentes de reprise*; see below) to foreign princes and nobles, such as the counts of Jülich, Virneburg, Neuenahr and Sayn and the lords of Fauquemont and Cuijk.⁹³ For the military expeditions against the Frisians in the last decade of the fourteenth century, the count of Holland summoned his vassals who held fief-rentes, including the counts of Megen and Meurs and the lord of Heinsberg. In the end, none of these three vassals chose to present themselves,⁹⁴ showing that the fief-rente was not always an adequate tool for raising an army.

Among the holders of fief-rentes, the names of certain high-ranking nobles appear time and again. For example, the lords of Fauquemont, Cuijk, Löwenburg, Greifenstein, Van de Bongerd, Stein and Dollendorf are mentioned in 1297 as *alliés* of the count of Flanders, whereas in the 1320s and 1330s they received fief-rentes from the count of Holland and

87. Lyon, 'Fief-Rente'.

88. Lyon, 'Fief-Rente', pp. 425–6, mentions 1,224 transactions of fief-rentes by the duke of Brabant. This number, however, 'represents totals of entries rather than totals of different fief-rentes'. A great many references to fief-rentes can indeed be found in the archives of the duke of Brabant. Sometimes even the quittances delivered to the treasurer of Brabant have been preserved, such as fifteen documents from November–December 1371: Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. iii, nos. 2876–82, 2884–92. See also Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, p. 210.

89. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. ii, no. 640.

90. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. ii, nos. 778, 779, 864, 865, 879. This rente was paid, according to the remaining quittances, between 1347 and 1354. The quittances were half-yearly payments of £12½.

91. *Le Livre des feudataires*, ed. Galesloot, p. 127 n. 2; Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. II, vol. i, no. 371. Compare Butkens, *Trophées tant sacrés que profanes*, p. 432 and *preuves*, p. 181, who dates the charter to 1344.

92. Cf. the edition in *Registers*.

93. *Registers*, nos. DE 5, 6, 14–16, all datable between 1315 and 1320.

94. Janse, *Grenzen aan de macht*, pp. 257–8.

the duke of Brabant.⁹⁵ The availability of these military professionals from the Meuse–Rhineland furthered the diversification of feudal ties in the Low Countries. It goes without saying that these foreign vassals were less loyal than the indigenous vassals who shared a territory with their prince.

A fief-rente also brought clear advantages for a vassal, especially in times of decreasing seigniorial revenues.⁹⁶ He could sell his fief-rente, give it to his own vassal as an *arrière-fief*, or give it to his spouse as a dowry.⁹⁷ A fief-rente was therefore not fundamentally different from a landed fief, since in principle it was also hereditary—unlike a so-called *pension-fieffé*, which was also an annual allowance given to influential foreigners, but one that was not hereditary.⁹⁸ In this respect, fief-rentes also differed from English indentures of retinue, which lasted only during the lifetime of the retainer.⁹⁹

Only occasionally was the military service associated with a fief-rente specified. In 1325, for instance, Count Willem III of Holland enfeoffed Willeman Wittenzoon with a modest annual allowance of £5 Holl., ‘which he and his heirs will hold from us and our heirs as a loan heritable from father to son’. In return, Willeman had to present himself at the castle of Nieuwburg, near Alkmaar, when summoned by the bailiff.¹⁰⁰ In 1337 the count of Flanders granted a fief-rente to Jean de Noyelle, a noble member of his household, on the condition that ‘he should serve us well and loyally as we live, in war, *tournoi* and jousts and in all other things belonging to a knight ... And for his warhorse, if he shall lose it, we shall pay him our marshal’s price’.¹⁰¹ Thus the lord

95. See the lists in Verbruggen, *Het leger en de vloot*, pp. 53–4, and J.W.J. Burgers, ‘Die Grafen von Holland-Hennegau in der Region von Maas und Niederrhein in der ersten Hälfte des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts’, *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter*, lxxx (2016), pp. 58–89; in the latter, Table 3 (pp. 79–80), we find the names of those lords as receivers of fief-rentes of both the count of Holland and the duke of Brabant.

96. Vale, ‘Anglo-French Wars’, p. 19.

97. Lyon, ‘Fief-Rente’, pp. 435–7.

98. Duke Jan III, for example, gave Nicolas Laurant, a burgher from Namur, a yearly sum in 1339 of 20s of old groats for his lifetime: Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. ii, nos. 570, 579. Some of the allowances paid by Edward III in 1338 were of this type: for instance, the £1,000 sterling for the count of Guelders in August 1338, the £20 for Jan de la Mote, a citizen of Ghent, also in August 1338, as well as the £200 for another Ghent citizen, Simon van Halen, who was married to an illegitimate sister of Count Louis of Male: Lucas, *Low Countries*, pp. 307, 315, 322–3. In the last decades of the fourteenth century, the duke of Burgundy conferred many similar *pensions* to nobles in neighbouring principalities in order to convert them into political supporters: H. Laurent and F. Quicke, *Les Origines de l’état Bourguignon: L’Accession de la maison de Bourgogne aux duchés de Brabant et de Limbourg (1383–1407)* (Brussels, 1939), pp. 74–89; R. Stein, *Politiek en historiografie: Het ontstaansmilieu van Brabantse kronieken in de eerste helft van de vijftiende eeuw* (Leuven, 1994), pp. 176–8; B.-A. Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, ‘Les Pensionnaires fieffés des ducs de Bourgogne de 1352 à 1419’, *Mémoires de la société pour l’histoire du droit et des institutions des anciens pays bourguignons, comtois et romands*, viii (1942), pp. 127–50.

99. Less correct, therefore, is the observation by Vale, ‘Anglo-French Wars’, p. 19, that the fief-rente can be considered ‘the continental equivalent of the retaining fee or contract of English “bastard feudalism”’.

100. *Registers*, no. FR 59.

101. M. Vale, *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the end of the Middle Ages* (London, 1981), p. 67.

expected military service from his vassal both on the battlefield and at the tournament, and he guaranteed him sufficient compensation in case of material losses.

The *fief-rente* thus established a feudal relationship between a lord and a man, although the bond was more symbolic and less personal than that of a 'classic' *fief*. Many beneficiaries must have been aware of the direct connection between the financial allowance and the military service rendered in return. As was the case with the landed *fief*, it was not uncommon for nobles to hold several *fief-rentes* from different lords at the same time. Bryce Lyon mentions the Brabantine lord of Cuijk, who held *rentes* from the counts of Flanders, Namur, Berg and Guelders, and from the king of England, an example which confirms the relatively 'depersonalised' character of the *fief-rente*.¹⁰²

IV

There was a special form of *fief-rente* that differed in one essential respect from that already described. In this case, the prince paid his vassal a large lump sum, most often ten times the yearly allowance, at the moment of the *enfeoffment*. In reality, however, this yearly allowance was paid not by the prince, but by his vassal from the revenues of his own allodial possessions. The vassal surrendered this allowance (or sometimes the goods on which this allowance was based) to the prince in order to receive it back as a *fief-rente*. This type of *fief-rente* was in fact a combination of a regular *fief-rente* and a *fief de reprise*. The construction was therefore basically fictitious, since the prince did not pay the *rente* to his vassal from his own resources, as in an ordinary *fief-rente*; he only gave the initial bonus.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, contemporaries regarded this type of *fief-rente* as a real *fief*, because it was heritable and the lord could confer it on somebody else.¹⁰⁴ Since this *fief-rente de reprise* was a relatively cheap tool, it allowed princes to cast a wider net than with the ordinary *fief-rente* and thus attract a larger group of potential clients.

The *fief-rente de reprise* was a feudal bond that was mainly restricted to the Low Countries. Bryce Lyon mentions hundreds of examples, chiefly in Luxembourg, Brabant, Guelders and the Meuse–Rhine region.¹⁰⁵ One early instance dates from 1250, when Walram, the brother of Count Wilhelm IV of Jülich, received 1,100 marks from Duke Hendrik III of

102. Lyon, 'Fief-Rente', pp. 429–31; the example of the lord of Cuijk at p. 431 n. 3. See also Vale, 'Anglo-French Wars', p. 21.

103. Lyon, *From Fief to Indenture*, pp. 72–3; Heirbaut, 'Fief-Rente', pp. 4–5; Burgers, 'Die Grafen von Holland-Hennegau', pp. 63–5. Besides, this bonus was sometimes also paid in the case of ordinary *fief-rentes*.

104. Heirbaut, 'Fief-Rente', p. 4; Burgers, 'Die Grafen von Holland-Hennegau', pp. 63–4.

105. Lyon, 'Fief-Rente', pp. 440–41; B.D. Lyon, 'Le Fief-rente aux Pays-Bas: Sa terminologie et son aspect financier', *Revue du Nord*, xxxv (1953), pp. 221–32, at 230–32. Lyon does not explain why this type of *fief-rente* was mainly found in the Low Countries.

Brabant (r. 1248–61) and in his turn yielded a yearly sum of 100 marks, which his wife would hold as a ducal fief; Walram, as her warden, would do homage to Duke Hendrik on her behalf, and the fief would be heritable.¹⁰⁶ Another example from Brabant dates from 1274, when Duke Jan I paid Walram, lord of Fauquemont, a sum of £2,000 Louv., for which he received in return an annuity of £200, allocated on the revenues of Walram's own lordship of Houthem, the annuity for which the duke awarded as a fief-rente to Walram.¹⁰⁷ In the first half of the fourteenth century, there are many instances of *fief-rentes de reprise* in Brabant as well as in other principalities. The count of Guelders, for example, used this feudal structure extensively in 1335–6 in order to recruit foreign allies, many of them from the Meuse–Rhine region and Westphalia.¹⁰⁸ The count of Jülich did the same, especially between 1300 and 1328.¹⁰⁹

The counts of Holland-Hainaut were particularly active; Willem III and Willem IV (r. 1337–45) awarded a whole series of *fief-rentes de reprise* in the period between 1316 and 1345, especially to noblemen from the Meuse–Rhine area, where around 100 were issued.¹¹⁰ They granted these rentes mainly to the lower ranks of the nobility; those of a higher standing, such as the counts of Virneburg and Jülich and the lord of Fauquemont, normally received 'real' fief-rentes, or sometimes a combination of a fief-rente and a *fief-rente de reprise*, mostly including the initial bonus sum.¹¹¹

Many *fief-rentes de reprise* were granted for military purposes. Count Willem III of Holland, for example, tended to use this tool at times of conflict with the duke of Brabant, as two lists of vassals holding rentes demonstrate. These date from shortly before 1320 and the beginning of 1333 respectively, precisely at those times when the tensions between Holland and Brabant culminated in open warfare.¹¹²

106. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. i, no. 51.

107. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. i, no. 97. Apparently, the duke was already recruiting vassals in the lands of Outremeuse before incorporating these lands at a later stage. However, in the case of Walram, this strategy did not bear fruit: at the Battle of Worringen in 1288, Walram sided with the count of Guelders, his wife's brother, against Duke Jan I: Lehnart, *Die Schlacht von Worringen*, pp. 174–5.

108. *Gedenkwaardigheden uit de geschiedenis van Gelderland (1286–1538)*, ed. Isaak Anne Nijhoff (6 vols., Arnhem, 1830–75), vol. i, p. lxxxiv.

109. Christoph Jakob Kremer, *Akademische Beiträge zur Gölch- und Bergischen Geschichte*, ed. Andreas Lamey, III (Mannheim, 1781), pp. 130–44.

110. Burgers, 'Die Grafen von Holland-Hennegau'.

111. As can be deduced from payment arrangements for and quittances by these vassals in *Registers*, nos. DE 18, 19. It is not always stated explicitly that the payments were made because of a yearly allowance, but the sums paid to these persons in no. DE 5 indicate that this was in fact the case. For example, on 18 March 1315, Count Willem III promised Count Robert of Virneburg £2,000, half of which was paid immediately (*Monuments pour servir l'histoire des provinces de Namur, de Hainaut et de Luxembourg*, ed. L. Devillers, III [Brussels, 1874], no. 145; the payment of £1,000 was registered in *Registers*, no. DE 5); in exchange, Count Robert would confer a yearly sum of £100, which he would receive as a fief. Instead of the other £1000, Count Willem would give Robert an annual fief-rente of £100; one payment is registered in *Registers*, no. DE 18. Thus, the first fief-rente is a 'quasi' one, the second a 'real' one.

112. *Registers*, nos. 5 and 76. Cf. Burgers, 'Die Grafen von Holland-Hennegau', pp. 76–7.

This reinforces a more general conclusion that princes used the *fief-rente* as a device to strengthen their military power during acute crises. Their attempts did not always prove successful, as several nobles from the lands of Outremer and the Lower Rhine areas were vassals of both the duke and the count.¹¹³ During the war of 1333–4, some of them chose to side with Duke Jan III, others with Count Willem III.¹¹⁴ For contemporaries, the difference between a *fief-rente de reprise* and a mere payment for service rendered must have been quite blurred. Even so, some kind of feudal relationship obviously remained imperative when military obligations were at stake.

The count of Holland also recruited vassals in the Meuse–Rhine region in times of peace with Brabant. He clearly deployed *fief-rentes de reprise* not only as a military but also as a diplomatic means, in a similar way to ‘ordinary’ *fief-rentes*. Both the count of Holland and the duke of Brabant, for example, issued *fief-rentes de reprise* to high officials of the imperial court, undoubtedly hoping to gain influence there.¹¹⁵ High-ranking nobles and officials of the Holy Roman Empire were presumably not particularly concerned about engaging in a feudal relationship with a subordinate prince of the German king, but were mainly interested in earning some extra money.

Despite these advantages, there are clear indications that this system of recruiting political and military support was abandoned in the second half of the fourteenth century.¹¹⁶ The financial investments were considerable, but the returns were disappointing. In effect, princes could not reckon upon the loyalty of these vassals, many of whom had feudal connections with more than one lord. Moreover, considerable physical distance between lord and vassal made it hard to exert pressure upon disobedient vassals. In addition, the vassal could simply keep his yearly *rente* at his disposal, even though he had formally surrendered it to the lord. Whereas a lord could cancel the allowance of a regular *fief-rente* at any moment, he was powerless to intervene in the case of a *fief-rente de reprise*.

113. Burgers, ‘Die Grafen von Holland-Hennegau’, pp. 77–80. Cf. the map ‘Brabantse lenen “Over Maze”’ in *De Brabantse lenen tussen Maas en Rijn opgetekend door Jan Stoot, ca.1350*, ed. L. Augustus et al. (Fontes Rodenses, 2; Kerkrade, 1994). See also Lyon, ‘Fief-Rente’, p. 431.

114. P. Avonds, ‘Brabant en Limburg, 1100–1403’, in D.P. Blok et al., eds., *Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, II (Haarlem, 1982), pp. 452–82, at 465.

115. In 1275, Duke Jan I granted a *fief-rente* of £150 Louv. to Werner van Bolanden, imperial seneschal, which was to be paid from the revenues of Werner’s castle Imsweiler: Verkooen, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. i, no. 98. In 1325, Count Willem III granted a *fief-rente* to Hermann van Lichtenberg, chancellor of the king, to be paid from certain allodia that Hermann had surrendered to the count: *Registers*, nos. DE 16, 17. The annual amount is not specified in the deed, but it was probably £50, since the initial bonus was £500 Holl.

116. There is no evidence of the granting of this type of *fief-rente* by the count of Holland after 1345, not even in a list of his vassals from the Meuse–Rhine region that was written, and partially updated, in 1350 on the basis of the older registers: Burgers, ‘Die Grafen von Holland-Hennegau’, p. 77 n. 65.

V

The various and multi-layered feudal ties in fourteenth-century Brabant are clearly illustrated by the recruitment of a Brabantine army by Edward III in 1338–9, the episode with which this article began. When the English king called on the services of Duke Jan III of Brabant in his military campaign, the duke ultimately raised an army consisting of some 1,500 knights and squires, led by ninety-six nobles and officers. Some sixty of these captains were his own personal vassals: they can be traced in the feudal registers of the duke¹¹⁷ or were ducal officers at a local level.¹¹⁸ In addition, there were many other captains from other principalities who were not vassals, but simply contracted by the duke.¹¹⁹ A good example is Johann, Wildgrave (*comes silvestris*) of Dhaun in the Rhineland Palatinate, who promised to serve the duke in person with fifteen knights and twenty-four squires for the duration of the war between France and England, for a sum of £151.¹²⁰ There were others from the Rhineland, too, although with less impressive retinues, such as Sir Gerard van Ringheberch from Cologne (with one knight and twenty-two squires) and Sir Hendrik von Sponheim (with only one knight), who had already helped the duke some years before at the siege of the castle of Rode in 's-Hertogenrode.¹²¹ The contracts between the duke and these captains, and the subsequent payments, are similar to the English indentures in many ways, although they were not 'indented'—and therefore should not be called indentures—but took the form of a normal sealed charter.¹²² The captains were contracted for a limited period of time, for a specific number of men and with provision for special conditions (in case of injury, material losses and imprisonment).¹²³ The recruitment of these nobles was not dependent

117. Based on *Le Livre des feudataires*, ed. Galesloot, *passim*.

118. They had relatively small retinues: the knight Gerard van Dornen, bailiff of 's-Hertogenbosch, who had ten squires in his retinue; the anonymous *villicus Thenensi* (bailiff of Tienen) who had five squires; Sir Walter van Meling, bailiff of Nivelles, who had also five squires in his retinue; the knight Arold Noest, *sculteto Trajectensi*, bailiff of Maastricht, who had seven squires with him; and the knight Herpert Mule, chatelain of Roden (probably Sint-Genesius-Rode), who had nine squires. Only Henry de Racourt, the bailiff of Hannuit, had a substantial retinue consisting of thirty-four squires. *Chroniques*, xx. 421, 423, 425–6.

119. From Namur, Hanosin de Namur and Jean de Peleym *ex comitatu Namurensi*, who used this geographical annotation to distinguish himself from his near-namesake Jean de Peleymis (Pellaines) from Jodoigne: *Chroniques*, xx. 423, 425. The lord of Montigny-Saint-Christophe ('dominus de Montengys'), with a retinue of one knight and twenty squires, was from Hainaut: *ibid.*, p. 422; Wauters, 'La Formation d'une armée brabançonne', p. 199.

120. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. i, nos. 472–3; Wauters, 'La Formation d'une armée brabançonne', p. 195; *Chroniques*, xx. 418. One of the charters was also sealed by the count's relative, Sir Georg of Heinsberg, who received the payment in Brussels.

121. *Chroniques*, xx. 421, 424.

122. See Price, 'Indenture System', pp. 284–5; B.D. Lyon, 'The Feudal Antecedent of the Indenture System', *Speculum*, xxix (1954), pp. 503–11, at 505. Compare Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, p. 215 n. 108, who does use the term *indenture* instead of the French *lettre de retenue*.

123. Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, pp. 215–18.

on any feudal tie whatsoever, but simply on their availability and their capacity to mobilise their own personal retinues.

Contemporaries did not always have a positive opinion of the recruitment of these foreign nobles. The chronicler Jean le Bel, for example, recounted how, during the war of succession of 1356–7, Duke Wenceslas engaged a ‘great mass of foreign combatants’, who plundered the Brabantine countryside and were nevertheless unable to stop the Flemish invader.¹²⁴ Wenceslas had indeed recruited nobles from Holland and Hainaut, such as Dirk van Brederode, Jan van Langerak, Baudouin de Pottes, lord of Écaussines, and Nicolas de Lalaing. And again, he had looked for possible reinforcements in the Rhineland, with men such as Hendrik van Appeltern (Guelders), Conrad van Titz and Hendrik van Garsdorf.¹²⁵ None of these men were vassals of the duke of Brabant.

We are even better informed about the exact composition of the Brabantine army in 1371. In that year, Duke Wenceslas of Brabant undertook a *chevauchée* against the duke of Jülich. Wenceslas suffered a devastating defeat and had to surrender together with his entire army, which consisted of c.2,000–2,500 mounted men-at-arms.¹²⁶ The army was divided into sixty-one *routes* led by captains; the duke also had a *route* under his personal command. Forty of these sixty-one captains originated from the duke’s principalities of Brabant (27), Limburg and Outremeuse (8) and Luxembourg (5). Almost all of these men had a feudal bond with the duke, and ten of them had an important administrative or judicial office in the duchy.¹²⁷ The twenty-one remaining captains can be characterised as ‘foreigners’. Some of these men were closely related to the duke and the duchess, such as Robert and Louis of Namur, for example, brothers of Count Guillaume I of Namur, who also acted as the duke’s councillors and possessed fief-*rentes*.¹²⁸ Others, however, had no relationship whatsoever with the duke, including some of the noble leaders from the prince-bishopric of Liège. In the case of five captains’ *routes*, it is even stated specifically that they joined the army at the request (‘*ter bede*’) of the duke. They appear

124. *Chronique de Jean le Bel*, ed. J. Viard and E. Déprez (2 vols., Paris, 1904–5), i. 237: ‘les Brabanchons retindrent grand foison d’estranges souldoiers, et en mirent grand foison à Louvaing, à Bruxelles, à Vilvorde qui despendirent grandement et gasterrent assez de fourrage ou pays de Brabant. Maiz pou pouoient grever les Flamens ne leur pays pour les fors passages qu’ilz avoient à passer’. See also Laurent and Quicke, ‘La Guerre de succession de Brabant’, pp. 105–7.

125. Verkooren, *Inventaire*, ser. I, vol. ii, nos. 987 (Brederode), 986 (Langerak), 1007 (Appeltern), 984 (Pottes), 983 (Écaussines), 954, 960, 976 (Lalaing), 1020 (Titz and Garsdorf), and 937, 961, 963 (Kranendonk). Titz and Garsdorf are located between Cologne and Mönchen-Gladbach.

126. Froissart estimated that the Brabantine army had ‘deux mille et cinq cens lances de très bonnes gens’: *Chroniques*, xiii. 21. According to Van Oeteren, ‘Recrutement et composition d’une armée’, pp. 148–50, this was quite an accurate estimate, since the presence of at least 2,000 men can be deduced from the archival sources. See also Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, p. 22, and Sander Govaerts, ‘“Mannen van Wapenen”: The Battle of Baesweiler and the Military Labour Market of the County of Loon in the Fourteenth Century’, *Viator*, xlvii (2016), pp. 297–341.

127. Van Oeteren, ‘Recrutement et composition d’une armée’, pp. 200–242 and annex, pp. 17–18.

128. Van Oeteren, ‘Recrutement et composition d’une armée’, pp. 230–32.

to have been straightforward mercenaries, recruited to strengthen the personal *route* of the duke.¹²⁹ It is estimated that only 250 men-at-arms—around 10 per cent of the entire army—had a ducal fief.¹³⁰ The situation was more complex than this, however. The accounts and receipts of the financial settlement of the military expedition reveal that they were only reimbursed for their ransoms ('gevanckenessen') and costs and losses ('cost ende verliese') relating to their horses, armour and other equipment.¹³¹ No wages are mentioned, probably because these had been paid in advance.

It is likely that all men participating in the Battle of Baesweiler had a contract with the duke in which this compensation was stipulated in detail, although not a single one has survived.¹³² As in 1338, the captains in 1371 probably recruited the members of their *routes* themselves, although only a few *routes* had a geographically coherent profile. Thus, in the Brabantine army we find men-at-arms of varying legal status: relatives and officials of the duke; nobles who had a landed fief; others who had a fief-rente; and

129. See P. Hoppenbrouwers, 'Ridders en hun ruiters: Het krijgsbedrijf in Holland en Brabant gedurende de veertiende eeuw', in M. Damen and L.H.J. Sicking, eds., *Bourgondië voorbij: De Nederlanden, 1250–1650* (Hilversum, 2010), pp. 327–49, at 337; Van Oeteren, 'Recrutement et composition d'une armée', pp. 289–90; and A. Moureaux-Van Neck, 'L'Aide brabançonne de 1374', in G. Despy, M.A. Arnould and M. Martens, eds., *Hommage au Professeur Paul Bonenfant (1899–1965): Études d'histoire médiévale dédiées à sa mémoire par les anciens élèves de son séminaire à l'Université Libre de Bruxelles* (Brussels, 1965), pp. 267–83, at 282, who cites Froissart on the recruitment for this expedition: 'Les uns prioit, les autres mandoit'. Hence, the duke could command some to come and fight, whereas he had to ask others. Even in the late fifteenth century, when it came to the reimbursement of losses, the feudal regulations for Brabant made a distinction between vassals and those who served the prince 'at his request and will' ('tot zijnder beden ende begeerten'): Van der Tanerijen, *Boec van der loopender practijken*, ed. Strubbe, p. 434. But cf. Govaerts, 'Mannen van wapenen', p. 316: 'Given that all horsemen received wages, whether they were fiefholders of the duke or not and that connections to one's retinue commander provided the main motivation for service, we should refrain from calling these men mercenaries'.

130. Van Oeteren, 'Recrutement et composition d'une armée', p. 191; Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, p. 209. In the case of the ninety-eight mounted men-at-arms who originated from the former county of Loon, for example, only twenty-three had a ducal fief: Govaerts, 'Mannen van wapenen', pp. 326–42.

131. Govaerts, 'Mannen van wapenen', p. 304; Van Oeteren, 'Recrutement et composition d'une armée', pp. 84–6. See, for example, the receipt of the knight Jacques de Bourbon, published by J.T. De Raadt, 'La Bataille de Baesweiler (22 Août 1371): Liste des combattants du duc Wenceslas, suivi de quelques documents inédits pour servir à l'histoire de cette journée. Supplement', *Annales de la Société d'Archéologie de Bruxelles*, xvii (1903), pp. 267–350, at 310–11: 'dat wi van alsulken scaden, gevanckenessen, cost ende verliese also wi mit onsen geduchten here den hertog van Luccemburgh ende van van Brabant ... namen ende leden hebben in den stride te Baestwilre'.

132. For another contemporary example, see Van Oeteren, 'Recrutement et composition d'une armée', p. 96. On 8 October 1371, a few months after the defeat at Baesweiler, Duchess Johanna made a contractual agreement with the counts of Mark and Cleves. They promised to attend her and serve in good faith ('in goeden trouwen') and to help her against the duke of Jülich with their lives, with counsel and aid ('mit huns selfs live, mit rade ende mit dade'), and with all those whom they were able to mobilise, up to 500 lances. They would serve her on their own account, whether they won or lost ('ende sullen hair dienen op huns selfs gewin, schade ende verlies'). If they imprisoned the duke of Jülich, they would hand him over to the duchess in exchange for 100,000 schild. The duchess would have to pay them each 100 moutons per day, and one mouton a day for every two lances. Payment would be made in advance: *Les Gestes des ducs de Brabant*, ed. Willems, ii, 621–2. See also Boffa, *Warfare in Medieval Brabant*, p. 220, who describes this contract as a mixture of an indenture and an alliance.

many others who did not have any kind of relationship with the duke. Both categories—enfeoffed noblemen and ‘mercenaries’—were paid for their services and both engaged other men for the campaign; only their personal relationship with the duke was different. As Andrew Ayton has observed with reference to England, ‘Seen from the perspective of the social realities of military service, the transition from “feudal host” to early contract army involved little change’¹³³

In terms of the recruitment and composition of the army, the Battle of Baesweiler demonstrates many similarities with the military campaigns undertaken by Duke Albert of Bavaria, Count of Holland (r. 1358–1404), against the Frisians in the last decade of the fourteenth century. In the first instance, he summoned his fiefholders for these three campaigns in 1396, 1398 and 1399. The response to the first expedition was positive, and many men came with their retinues. However, looking more closely at the 404 noble men-at-arms who turned up in 1396, it appears that only 40 per cent originated from Holland, Hainaut and Zeeland. There were large contingents from Bavaria, the ‘homeland’ of Duke Albert, as well as from France and England, which at that time were observing a temporary truce. The French and the Picards who arrived in the town of Enkhuizen were, according to Froissart, ‘merveilleusement bien habillé, de tous harnois et parures’. They were paid, of course, in accordance with their social status and the size of their retinues, consisting of men-at-arms and archers.¹³⁴ In the campaigns of 1398 and 1399, however, the vassals’ commitment diminished drastically. In 1398 Duke Albert sent many summons letters to nobles living abroad, either with or without a feudal tie. All were simply asked (‘bidden’) to come and fight and to let the duke know whether they would be able to come.¹³⁵ In the end, in May 1399 the count sent a summons for anyone who wanted to earn *soudye* to come to Frisia. This call was apparently effective, since there are accounts of the presence of individual English, French, Bavarian and Polish knights in this last campaign.¹³⁶

Around 1346 the author of *Les Voeux du heron* (‘The Vows of the Heron’) reflected on the start of the Hundred Years War. According to this poem, Count Robert III of Artois allegedly incited Edward III to wage war against his brother-in-law Philip VI. Living in exile at the English court, Robert offered Edward a roasted heron, the most cowardly of all birds; Edward reacted immediately by making a vow, on the bird itself, promising that he would fight the French king. After this Robert III took the heron and invited other high-ranking nobles present to make

133. A. Ayton, ‘Military Service and the Dynamics of Recruitment in Fourteenth-Century England’, in A.R. Bell et al., eds., *The Soldier Experience in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 9–60, at 30.

134. Janse, *Grenzen aan de macht*, pp. 258–61, citing on p. 260 Froissart (*Chroniques*, xv. 262).

135. The two summons letters were sent on the same day, that is, 7 May 1398: *Groot placaat en charterboek*, ed. Schwartzberg pp. 272–3.

136. Janse, *Grenzen aan de macht*, pp. 268–70.

a similar vow. This was done by, among others, the earls of Salisbury, Hereford and Suffolk, the lord of Fauquemont and Jean de Beaumont, brother of Count Willem III of Holland-Hainaut. Beaumont, a renowned combatant on many European battlefields, took the vow but only after he had declared that he would fight for the one who paid him best. The English apparently laughed in response.¹³⁷ Whatever it was that was actually said at the English court, the poem and the anecdote it relays are telling, since they show, on the one hand, the way in which warfare in England and the Low Countries had become intermingled, and, on the other, how military service, including that of high-ranking noblemen who had private retinues, entailed increasingly more paid service, at least in the minds of contemporaries.

The fourteenth century was an age of transformation in the composition and recruitment of armies in the Low Countries. Feudal ties multiplied and diversified, and for many princes they remained a useful tool to meet their military needs. In this article, we have explored the changing nature of these feudal relations in which, we would stress, a relatively small part of society was involved and which came to the fore principally during military conflicts. We have shown that the different forms of recruitment of men-at-arms overlapped to a great extent. Vassals with 'normal' landed fiefs were summoned until the very end of the fourteenth century, as the example of the Frisian campaigns of the count of Holland made clear. The fief remained the most manifest symbol of a personal bond between lord and man. It is no coincidence that, in the second decade of the fourteenth century, the chanceries of both the count of Holland and the duke of Brabant embarked upon a meticulous registration of fiefs. These princes did not only want to know the extent of their feudal possessions, but also the identity of the fiefholders. This information was crucial in case of recruitment for a military expedition.

It is clear, however, that during the fourteenth century, princes had more means, both feudal and non-feudal, at their disposal to raise an army than they had had hitherto. Their resources were greatly enlarged thanks to financial contributions by the kings of England and France as well as by the German emperor, all of whom were looking for military support. The involvement of the princes of the Low Countries in the Hundred Years War had a decisive impact both on feudal relationships and on the organisation of military endeavours.

Our evidence demonstrates that the fief-rente was a crucial link between the feudal host and the contract army.¹³⁸ Vassalage and homage

137. *Chroniques*, ii, 531, also cited by J. Huizinga, *Herftrittij der Middeleeuwen: Studie over levens- en gedachtenvormen der veertiende en vijftiende eeuw in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden* (Groningen, 1919), p. 87. On the poem, see especially N.J. Lacy, 'Warmongering in Verse: *Les Voeux du heron*', in D.N. Baker, ed., *Inscribing the Hundred Years War in French and English Cultures* (New York, 2000), pp. 17–26. On Beaumont's military deeds of arms, see Hoppenbrouwers, 'Ridders en hun ruiters', pp. 347–9.

138. Lyon, 'Feudal Antecedent', pp. 506–11, asserted the same for England.

did not simply disappear, but were adapted to the new circumstances of large-scale international conflicts. The interaction between monarchs and princes all over Europe was a decisive factor in this process. Armies grew bigger and there were insufficient vassals available, or else it was simply too difficult to mobilise them. In the first half of the fourteenth century, at least, *fief-rentes* and *fief-rentes de reprise* were useful tools to fill this gap. The deployment of these tools was a decisive step in the process of the monetarisation of princely warfare. The *fief-rente*, especially when given to foreign nobles in times of political crisis, was in fact a disguised form of payment; but, at the same time, a feudal tie was created. The *fief-rente de reprise*, which was widespread only in the Low Countries, can be considered an additional intermediate phase, since the *rente* only existed in theory and the vassal was paid the initial bonus when establishing a feudal tie with a lord. When there was no feudal bond at all, a man's loyalty was entirely dependent on the reliability of payments.

In this article, we have also pointed to the parallel developments of military recruitment in the Low Countries and in England. Around 1300, both in the Low Countries and in England, payment for military service was introduced by means of wages or the reimbursement of costs. At the same time, feudal men-at-arms remained an important factor in the host.¹³⁹ Moreover, from the beginning of the fourteenth century, both the king of England and princes in the Low Countries started to acquire allies through grants of *fief-rentes* and other forms of contract. At the beginning of the Hundred Years War, the duke of Brabant raised an army composed of both vassals and men with whom he had no feudal ties. The latter were contracted for a limited period and under specific conditions, such as the amount of their wages and reimbursements and the number of combatants they had to supply. Although these contracts did not take the form of an English military indenture, their content was identical: the contract was valid only for the duration of the campaign. In contrast, indentures of *retinue*, in which English noblemen were paid a retaining fee to keep up their affinities during times of peace, were not used in Brabant.

The diversification and monetarisation of feudal ties had some marked social, political and military consequences. First of all, these developments undoubtedly affected the relationship between princes and their nobles. By extending their means of acquiring military support, princes created a wider network of noble vassals both within and beyond the borders of their principalities, and hence became less dependent on the great lords. However, greater dependency on foreign vassals was not always an advantage. Moreover, nobles within their principalities also struck up feudal ties with other princes and became less dependent on the grace and favour of one prince. These

139. As is shown for the case of the English royal armies in Prestwich, 'Cavalry Service'.

developments were triggered by the increasingly business-like way in which princes raised their armies. The financial contributions of foreign kings looking for support in their political adventures enhanced and intensified this 'internationalisation' of the composition of the princely armies in the Low Countries. Hence, an entirely new dynamic was introduced into international politics and warfare, which facilitated large-scale and protracted conflicts such as the Hundred Years War. In this respect, it seems quite justified to speak of a 'military revolution' of the fourteenth century.

The changes in feudal ties and military recruitment in the Low Countries culminated in the contract armies of the Burgundian dukes in the fifteenth century. Even so, this did not spell the end of feudal service, at least in theory. In the 1470s Duke Charles the Bold was eager to revive feudal military service in the Low Countries, and summoned his fiefholders repeatedly to assist him in defending his lands. The detailed registration of all the possessions of his fiefholders and their sub-vassals permitted him to do so in accordance with their feudal income. Those who were *nobles*, those who possessed lordships with high jurisdiction, and those who were taxed to serve with *hommes d'armes*, had to serve him in person. Others could redeem their military obligations by paying a tax of one-sixth of the estimated value of their feudal revenues, because the duke discovered that many had great difficulty in gathering men, horses and harnesses. Thus, even this mighty prince found many obstacles in his path; by then, although the mounted cavalry remained essential for any fifteenth-century army, the days of the feudal host were over.¹⁴⁰

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140. A. Janse, 'Feudal Registration and the Study of Nobility: The Burgundian Registers of 1475', in J.-F. Nieuw, ed., *Le Vassal, le fief et l'écrit: Formes, enjeux et apports de la production documentaire dans le champ de la féodalité (XF–XV^e s.)* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2007), pp. 173–87; Vale, *War and Chivalry*, pp. 102–3, 147–8; Vaughan, *Charles the Bold*, pp. 219–20, 401–2.