

Section «History»

The composition of the Burgundian army at the siege of Compiègne in 1430

Lobanov Aleksandr Mikhailovich

Postgraduate

University of Southampton, Faculty of Humanities, Southampton, United Kingdom

E-mail: alobanov83@gmail.com

The siege of Compiègne is best known as the engagement where Joan of Arc was captured by the Burgundians, who then delivered her to the English. In fact, it was only a part, although an important one, of the coronation campaign of Henry VI, which was undertaken in response to the crowning of Charles VII at Reims in July 1429. For this campaign the English obtained military support of Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, their most important French ally in the struggle for the French crown since the Treaty of Troyes in 1420. Unlike the campaigns of early 1420s in which Duke Philip had taken part in person, and where he was generally pursuing war on his own in strategic coordination with the English, this time the duke formally indented to serve Henry VI [2]. As a result of this, a special war account (*compte d'armes*) was created by Jean Abonnel, Philip's receiver general. This account, containing the income and expenses of the duke in his service to Henry VI, is now deposited in the Archives Départementales du Nord (ADN) in Lille, bound together with the account of the duke's receiver general for 1431 [1].

Among other expenses this war account contains entries on the sums paid to the captains of the duke's armies at the musters and reviews of their companies. Five such musters are reported to be undertaken during the Compiègne campaign. The first took place on 18 April when the army had just assembled. The second was taken before Compiègne on 24 May, the day after the skirmish in which Joan of Arc had been captured. Two more followed on 24 June and 28 July, and the last one took place on 19 September, when the siege must have entered its final stage and the operations were carried to the left bank of the Oise. The English forces present at the siege were not included in the account as they did not receive their wages from the duke of Burgundy.

A typical entry in the account contains the sum paid to the captain and, as a justification of this payment, information on the composition of his company, duration of service, for which the soldiers were paid, the date and place of the muster or review, and the name of the duke's officer (most often the marshal of Burgundy) who reviewed the company. Three main categories of the soldiers can be identified. First, men-at-arms wearing full armour, of whom the majority were of sub-knightly status. Knights and bannerets (who had a higher rate of wages) formed only a small part of the army (no more than 60 men for all the army over all the musters). The second category consisted of archers and crossbowmen under the common description of *gens de trait*. Finally, a small number of noncombatants appear in the account - heralds, *poursuivants*, and trumpeters.

Table 1. Summary of the musters of the Burgundian army in 1430

	Musters				
	18 Apr	24 May	24 June	28 July	19 Sep
men-at-arms	787	865	819	1026	702
<i>gens de trait</i>	2574	2522	2498	2308	1617
noncombatants	14	14	14	12	12
TOTAL, men	3375	3401	3331	3346	2331
TOTAL, wage-rates	2146,5	2148,5	2105,5	2262,5	1561,5
proportion of <i>gens de trait</i> , %	76,27	74,15	74,99	68,98	69,37

The war account reveals several trends which deserve mention.

1. The percentage of *gens de trait* in the Burgundian army before Compiègne fluctuated around 70% throughout the siege [1, fos. 25-49]. It is also worth noting that in almost all the retinues their share exceeded 50%. The only significant exception was the retinue of Pierre de Bauffremont, seigneur de Chargny, who had only 33 *gens de trait* among 142 men of his company in July and 37 of 125 in September [1, fos. 39v, 47v]. This was due to the fact that the duke's army was mostly composed of the companies of Picardian nobility, while this nobleman came to the duke's service from the duchy of Burgundy, where at that period the traditional proportion of the *gens de trait* in the armies was much lower [4, p. 265-292].

2. It appears that the soldiers listed as *gens de trait* were mainly archers or crossbowmen rather than general infantry. In several retinues it is specially noted in the account, that the group included other categories of soldiers with the same rate of wages, such as *demi-lances* and *compaignons des haches*, but the number of these was insignificant compared to the total number of *gens de trait* [1, fos. 27v, 31]. This is an evidence of the increasing importance of missile weapons in the Burgundian armies, which must have had an influence on tactics.

3. The fact that the proportion of *gens de trait* in the Burgundian armies had been growing throughout the early fifteenth century and especially during the period of close cooperation with the English in 1420-1435 had already been noted by historians [6, p. 267]. In the army besieging Compiègne it almost reached 75%, the standard de facto proportion in English armies in the 1410s and 20s [5, p. 45]. But related documents suggest that this increase has been understated by the contemporaries. When Duke Philip indentured for service he undertook to provide an army of 1500 men-at-arms and the same number of *gens de trait* for the first three months and then to continue with 600 of each (50,00%) [2]. In July the English assigned to the duke the wages for 800 men-at-arms and 1000 archers (55,56%) [3]. It may be suggested that by trying to keep the expected share of men-at-arms higher than it was in reality, Philip the Good may have been following the standard composition of armies in France.

The evidence given by the war account uncover the changes which the Burgundian armies were undergoing by 1430 and to a certain degree undermine the image of Burgundy as somewhat conservative in maintaining older traditions of 'la chevalerie'.

References

1. Lille, ADN, B (Chambre des Comptes de Lille) 1942. [War account of Jean Abonnel]
2. Lille, ADN, B (Chambre des Comptes de Lille) 302, no. 15576. [Copy of the indenture of Philip the Good, 12 February 1430]

Conference «Lomonosov-2013»

3. London, The National Archives, E (Records of the Exchequer) 101/52/35/2 [Warrant for payments, 16 July 1430]
4. de La Chauvelais, J. Les armées des trois premiers ducs de Bourgogne de la maison de Valois. // Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Dijon, VI (1880) p. 19-335.
5. Curry A. English Armies in the Fifteenth Century // Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War / ed. A. Curry, M. Hughes. Woodbridge, 1994. p. 39-68.
6. Schnerb B. L'Etat Bourguignon. Paris. 2005.