Samuel Beňa

# The Small War in the Late Middle Ages: A Comparison of the English and Bohemian Experiences

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies



Central European University

Budapest

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by

Samuel Beňa

(Slovakia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Samuel Beňa**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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## Introduction

During the late European Middle Ages war was something that entered people's lives frequently. Settlements, villages, and towns were no strangers to armies both foreign and domestic. The best case scenario included economic interaction with the civilian environment, although more often than not medieval armies had a penchant for causing trouble. If the army in question was particularly hostile it was probably the worst moment in all of the local inhabitants' lives. From another perspective, the daily life of a soldier in the Middle Ages might have been as precarious as that of a poor villager or town resident. Unlike these people, a soldier had to find food, rest, and endure hostile conditions far away from home.

When writing about combat tactics most military historians of nineteenth and twentieth century focused on the case studies of major battles and sieges involving grand armies of sovereigns. Although these were important, the most common military experience of a medieval soldier, however, involved ravaging operations and combat between much smaller units than the epic battles involving majority of competing sovereigns' armed forces. Contemporary Anglo–American military historians point out that such minor operations, the so called small war, is often overlooked in scholarship.[1]

Military historians discussing warfare in late medieval Bohemia are no exceptions to this. I would like contribute to the research on this overlooked aspect of warfare via a comparative analysis of the small war tactics in the late medieval Bohemia and Northwestern Europe. This thesis will thus improve upon the existing scholarship by discussing the tactical analysis of small war engagements that has been marginalized so far. The basic theoretical



[1] Simon Pepper, "Aspects of Operational Art: Communications, Cannon, and Small War," in European Warfare: 1350-1750, ed. Frank Tallett and D.J.B. Trim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 181-183, 195–202. Clifford J. Rogers, "The Practice of War," in A Companion to the Medieval World, ed. Carol Lansing and Edward D. English (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 436–454.

framework is a juxtaposition of Czech vernacular sources, written by contemporaries of turbulent late fifteenth-century Bohemia, with a North–Western European paradigm.

## 1. What is the Small War?

### 1.1 Tactical point of view

Medieval commanders often divided their men into small groups for purposes of foraging and reconnaissance. Not getting lost or ambushed and securing provisions were basic necessities. The enemy had to deal with the same problem and send his own men into the field. Naturally, when such armed groups met each other combat ensued. Frequently, such "detachment work" was the only thing the medieval armies did on a campaign. Some commanders in history were experts at preying upon weaker enemy forces and this endeavor was central to their careers as soldiers. As pointed out modern scholarship calls this complex phenomenon the small or little war.[2]

From a tactical point of view[3] these were engagements (i.e., armed confrontations) among several hundred combatants at most. Clashes of smaller scales represented a different experience with a greater emphasis on the skills of the individual combatants. Some authorities also point out that engagement between security divisions of larger armies also fall under the umbrella term of small war. These were set up to protect the front, back, and flank of army columns.[4] Although waged on a scale which was far from small, these clashes were still rather independent of each other.[5]



[2] Pepper, "Aspects of Operational Art,"181-183, 195–202.
[3] Tactics are understood here as leading men in combat and commanding various tactical elements (troop types and their respective armaments /weapon systems). See "Tactics, n.," Oxford English Dictionary Online, accessed March 21, 2014,http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/196967?redirectedFrom=tactics& for a general introduction see "Tactics," Encyclopædia Britannica Online, accessed March 21, 2014, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/580081/tactics. Compare Manuel Rojas Gabriel, "Tactics, Battle" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, vol. 3, ed. Clifford J. Rogers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 339–342.
[4] In Anglophonic general military history the terms used are *vanguard* and *rear–guard* for bodies of soldiers selected for such tasks. See "Vanguard, n." Oxford English Dictionary Online, accessed May 5, 2014, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/221375?rskey=qpeJV6&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid and "Rearguard, n.1," Oxford English Dictionary Online, accessed May 5, 2014, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/159036?rskey=yH4YJJ&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid. Pepper, "Aspects of Operational Art: Communications, Cannon, and Small War,"182.
[5] See the introductory essay by Selig and Skaggs in Johann Ewald, *Treatise on Partisan Warfare*, trans. Robert A. Selig and David Curtis Skaggs (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), 9–12. Napoleon Bonaparte famously

The term small war, when used in a modern context, often carries political connotations of a local populace struggling with small-scale warfare against an invader or oppressor (this also includes the term guerrilla). The word as used in the original context of early modern warfare was, however, connected purely to military operations without its later ideological baggage. The English word itself is a calque (a borrowing and literal translation) of the French *petite guerre* and German *Kleinkrieg*. It is in this "pure" sense that most scholars of medieval and early modern tactics use the term.[6]

Such activities formed an integral part of the general experience of pre-modern warfare and this is attested in many types of sources from other periods and places. There is evidence that medieval and Classical authors, too, much like later commentators, recognized the different natures of minor and major military engagements. One of the most important examples is the anonymous work *Peri Paradromes* dedicated to the Byzantine Emperor Nikopheros II Phokas (963–969) on the subject of a defensive small war. The author wrote in the context of his experience at the eastern frontier of tenth-century Byzantium in bloody frontier warfare with the Islamic Hamdanids.[7]

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said of fighting between French cavalry and Egyptian Mamelukes that one Mameluk is stronger than two French horsemen, 100 Mamelukes are equal to 100 French, but 1500 Mamlukes would always lose to 1000 Frenchmen. A similar comment was made by Duke of Wellington when he compared the British cavalry with the French. One English squadron would, in his opinion, destroy two French, although with increasing numbers of units and due to the lack of order among the British cavalrymen the reverse was true. See Philip J. Haythornthwaite, *Weapons & Equipment of the Napoleonic Wars* (Bath: Cassell, 1999), 37. Late medieval sources point out that one's skill at arms might shine more in skirmish-type encounters, Clifford J. Rogers, *Soldiers' Lives through History: The Middle Ages* (New York: Greenwood, 2007), 83-85.

[6] Ewald, *Treatise on Partisan Warfare*, 5–16; John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607–1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–15, 95.

[7] George T. Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985), 137–141. Byzantine tenth-century didactic texts are a unique corpus of military literature in this respect, see Eric McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* (Washington, D.C. : Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 171–194. In the Western Europe the work of Publius Vegetius Renatus *De Re Militari* written ca. 383–450 advised mainly the conduct of small war. Vegetius was widely read in medieval Western Europe and many of the small war strategies were employed by medieval Western European armies. See Christopher Allmand, *The De Re Militari of Vegetius: The Reception, Transmission and Legacy of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 314–321.

### 1.2 Impact of small war on a strategic level

> Destroy your foes and ravage their country, by fire and burning let all be set alight; That nothing be left them outside, either in wood or meadow, Of which in the morning they could have a dinner. Then with his united force let him besiege their castles. They will have nor succor nor aid within thirteen leagues. Thus should wars be begun: such is my advice. First destroy the land and then one's foes.[8]

Before the advent of modern logistics, ravaging and devastation of enemy lands was the primary means of forcing a hostile or rebellious kingdom into submission. It represented a major part of campaign strategy[9] and this practice continued well into the early modern period. On one side, ravaging supplied the invading army with supplies and at the same time undermined the economic foundation of the enemy while spreading terror and carnage by destroying property and capturing local inhabitants. Medieval armies detached smaller bodies of men over a large area to pillage and these pillagers were in turn protected by their own sentinels. Naturally the side on the defensive tried to do its best to minimize the damage and neutralize the invader and his raiding parties.[10] Clifford J. Rogers observes that:

> By definition, the skirmishes that arose from such encounters were usually of little significance individually (though there were exceptions, as when an important leader chanced to be killed). Collectively, however, they were of great importance – and deserve much more attention from historians then they have so far been given. The balance of success in these combats could push the flood of devastation in towards the core of the invading army, and even confine it to a narrow channel, or conversely it could let the destruction flow out for dozens of miles. That, in turn, could make the difference between a bedraggled and demoralized column of hungry warriors and bony horses stumbling home without having accomplished anything, and a proud

[8] Strategic advice from Count Philip of Flanders to William the Lion of Scotland before the latter's invasion of Northumbria in the period of the Great Rebellion (1173–1174). The passage "his united force" refers to the troops of Louis VII of France; quoted in Manuel Rojas Gabriel, "Strategy" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, Vol. 3,320.

[9] The term *strategy*, is understood here as the art of projecting and directing the larger military movements and operations of a campaign. In contrast to tactics, it is a more global perception of space, time, and human agency in a military context. See "Strategy, n.," Oxford English Dictionary Online, accessed March 21, 2014, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/191319?rskey=COjN7g&result=1&isAdvanced=false. The complexity of the discourse on strategy and war in the Middle Ages is outlined by Rojas Gabriel, "Strategy," 316–320.

[10] Due to superior numbers of the attackers, the defensive response was usually constrained to the harassment of an attacker's detachments, an activity termed *shadowing*, See John France, *Victory in the East: A Military History of the First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 40–51; Clifford J. Rogers, "The Practice of War," in *A Companion to the Medieval World*, ed. Carol Lansing and Edward D. English (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 439–442.

> cavalcade of victorious troops, loaded down with plunder and eager to strike again the next campaigning season if the defenders still refused to submit.[11]

A major change came with the technological and bureaucratic-organizational evolution of logistics in the eighteenth century, which made armies in Western Europe less dependent upon ravaging operations. It appears that the moral attitudes towards such operations shifted simultaneously with the advance of logistics and the generals and officers of the Age of Reason, generally speaking, frowned upon such conduct.[12]

Another sort of operation falling under the umbrella of the small war is what is now termed reconnaissance-in-force. These were combats between intelligence units, which tried to espy the movements, numbers, and capabilities of the enemy and at the same time prevent the enemy units from doing the same. Part of this endeavor was testing the enemy through direct confrontations. More often than not, these confrontations had an influence on both enemy and friendly morale and capable vanguard skirmishers had a special status in the hierarchy of many armies.[13]

Most small-war encounters took place in the context of these two operations. In addition, small-scale warfare conducted by garrisons and frontier troops also had strategic value, as Rogers points out:

> Various forms of small-war action served to sustain and enrich the soldiers who undertook them while reducing the enemy's strength and will to continue the struggle. Minor actions insufficient to do significant harm to an enemy king directly might nonetheless do substantial harm to him indirectly, by persuading regionally important nobles to switch sides if their sovereign failed to protect them. Local warfare both served and was shaped by local politics as well as by larger strategic consideration.[14]



[11] Rogers, "The Practice of War," 441.
[12] John A. Lynn, "The History of Logistics and Supplying War," in *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. John A. Lynn (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 9–27; Grenier, *The First Way of War*, 89–93.
[13] Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History*, 83–85.
[14] Rogers, "The Practice of War," 448.

In fact, the scale of devastation should not be measured by the numbers of pillaging soldiers alone since: "Small castle garrisons, operating over an extended period, could collectively lay waste an area even more thoroughly than a large army that was passing through."[15]

Following the mores of eighteenth and nineteenth century authorities, twentieth-century, military historians such as Sir Charles Oman disdained ravaging operations, seeing them as crude and not worthy of analysis. Yet others pointed out that army incursions and raids of medieval armies were not done with any sort of strategy in mind but rather belonged to the general savagery of an allegedly uncivilized period. Thus, until relatively recently, any valuable insight into the tactical or strategic nature of small war was discouraged in academia due to a preconceived bias.[16]

### 1.3 The late medieval small war in Bohemia and military history

During most of the nineteenth and twentieth century it was major field engagements (battles) that were used as case studies to point out two essential foci in the history of military tactics:

- General interaction between various types of military technology and traditions throughout the ages.
- Evolution in the art of war, usually via a combination of innovative tactics, strategy, and technology. Of course, such explanations were not free of bias as authors of various nationalities interpreted military progress in their own ways.[17]

The general military historians of former Czechoslovakia were no exception to this phenomenon. Otakar Frakenberger's work, *Husitské válečnictví po Lipanech* [Hussite Warfare after the Battle of Lipany] has to be seen in light of this discourse. Frakenberger

[15] Clifford J. Rogers, "Devastation and Ravaging," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, vol. 1, ed. Clifford J. Rogers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 535.
[16] Sean McGlynn, "The Myths of Medieval Warfare," *History Today* 44 (1994): 28–34.

refused to accept the opinion of Western military historians, chief among them Hans Delbrück, who postulated that the use of the Bohemian wagon-fort in the Hussite wars (1419–1434) was only a brief episode in tactical evolution that led to a tactical dead end.[18] The Delbürckian thesis postulated that the Central European early- to high-medieval battlefields were dominated by heavy cavalry. The re-invention of effective infantry, in the spirit of Classical antiquity, was developed during the course of the fifteenth century by Swiss and German footsoldiers.[19]

Frankenberger analyzed several major military encounters after the original Hussite wars to prove that the Bohemian army went first through a period of maneuver warfare using wagon-forts in conflict with the Hungarian, King Matthias Corvinus (1443–1490). Subsequently, starting from late 1480s, the Bohemians supposedly developed infantry independent of the wagon-fort. It is clear that the work was written as a domestic response to general military history, German pre-war scholarship in particular. Much of the evidence rested on the use of Czech vernacular sources, which started to depict military engagements in more detail than the sources from the original the Hussite war.[20]

Writing in the context of major field engagements, Frankenberger was not particularly interested in the analysis of the small war. Much like other military historians, Frankenberger implicitly despised ravaging operations and did not discuss the subject in detail. His attitude to the small war in general was, however, ambivalent. The skirmishes around the rebellious town of Tábor (1439) between the allied Czech-Polish army and Austrian Duke Albert II (1397–1439) were categorically dismissed without any deeper analysis: "in no way are these



[17] France, *Victory in the East*, 26–30.
[18] Otakar Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech* [The Hussite art of war after the battle of Lipany] (Prague: Naše Vojsko, 1960), 64. Even after fifty years Frakenberger's work still the remains the major analytical treatment on the subject of the art of war in post–Hussite war Bohemia (ca.1436–1526); compare Milena Bartlová and PetrČornej, *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české VI., 1437 – 1526* [The great history of the lands of the Bohemian crown VI, 1437–1526] (Prague: Paseka, 2007), passim.
[19] Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte, Dritter Teil: Der Mittelalter* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1964), 682-691.
[20] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 177–180.

small clashes related to the retreat of the Czech-Polish army from Tabor."[21] So, too, the ravaging of the competing mercenary captains in Upper Hungary (present-day Slovakia) during the 1440s was seen as a sign of their inadequate understanding of strategy.[22] Of course, one has to bear in mind that it is difficult to estimate casualties or material damage done during such small war encounters or ravaging operations. Without extensive evidence a quantitative assessment is next to impossible, yet Frankenberger gave a rather cavalier treatment of the subject.

Interestingly, when the narrative shifts towards the conflict with Matthias Corvinus, the author lauds the strategic value of Hungarian cavalry – both in numbers and tenacity displayed in the many skirmishes of the war. In a critical evaluation of the whole war, Frakenberger observes that the qualities of the Hungarian horsemen in small-war encounters challenged the whole Bohemian host and its wagon columns. The Hungarian king's troops took the initiative most of the time– disrupting the marching and combat order the Bohemian army. Frankenberg's analysis, however, focused on the maneuvering of the wagons themselves (and thus on a more abstract macro-tactical perspective) rather than the actual combat interaction between opposing units of soldiers.[23]

### 1.4 Small war encounters in mid- to late fifteenth-century Bohemia compared with Northwestern Europe

As John France points out, the make-up of armies, their variety in terms of troop types, was determined by the needs of the military elites, the capabilities of their subjects, and physical constraints such as natural resources, climate, and geography.[24] France argues that

[21] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 19.
[22] Ibid., 34–35.
[23] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 128–131. A major scholar of Matthias Corvinus' army– Gyula Rázso treats the Bohemian operations only in passing, see his "Mátyás zsoldosseregének hadművészetéről," [On the Art of War in King Matthias' Mercenary Army] *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 5 (1958): 117–147.
[24] John France, "Close Order and Close Quarter: The Culture of Combat in the West," *The International History Review* 27, no. 3 (2005): 500, 516–517.

most of the Western European armies, constrained by these physical realities, were characterized by relatively slow-moving forces of combined arms. The majority of combatants were footsoldiers who were armed with both missile and close-combat weapons. Mounted men were a minority, usually furnished by wealthier parts of society, and fought their foes in close combat. The Western art of war in the Middle Ages was essentially an inheritance from antiquity which evolved by further technological stimuli such as gunpowder, advancement in equestrian equipment, and metallurgy, among other things. [25]

Unlike the Western European paradigm, the Eastern armies of medieval Turks, Mongols, and related people used a different approach. The armies of Central and Western Eurasia (in addition to some Middle Eastern states) fielded armies composed of masses of horsemen – virtually all of them bowmen. In addition, wealthier combatants wore armor and also carried lances, javelins, and other secondary close-combat weapons (including swords, maces and war–axes). Being all mounted, such armies used more maneuvering than the "Westerners" as well as constant mobile harassment by missiles before closing into close combat.[26]

The Central European region stood between the two paradigms and saw the interaction of both. In fact, Polish and Hungarian scholars argue that a uniquely Central European military tradition developed as a result of such an overlap.[27] The Bohemian

[25] France, "Close Order and Close Quarter," 498–517. France states that the Western European cavalry during the Hundred Years' War was rather slow and that the Crusaders did not develop effective light cavalry until the twelfth century. Both of these observations can be challenged, however. Later medieval mounted men-at-arms were accompanied by their followers who wore lighter armor. Furthermore, men-at-arms that had heavier gear sometimes discarded pieces of their armor to serve more nimble roles. An early crusader cavalryman, in contrast, was a much more all-around trooper who served in various roles and wore lighter equipment than his late medieval counterpart. See Robert Jones, "Re-thinking the Origins of the 'Irish' hobelar," *Cardiff Historical Papers*1 (2008): 9–17.

[26] France, "Close Order and Close Quarter," 501–502, 507–509. Compare Charles R. Bowlus, *The Battle of Lechfeld and its Aftermath, August 955: The end of the Age of Migrations in the Latin West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 19–37; Russell Mitchell, "Light Cavalry, Heavy Cavalry, Horse Archers, Oh My! What Abstract Definitions Don't Tell Us About 1205 Adrianople," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 6 (2008): 95–118; János B. Szabó, *A honfoglalóktól a huszárokig* [From Hungarian conquerors to the hussars] (Budapest: Argumentum, 2010), 74–105, see also additional related literature in Szabó's extensive work.

[27] A summary of this idea, including relevant references can be found in János B. Szabó, "Bethlen Gábor, Az újjászervező, A kora újkori hadügyi fejlődés Kelet-Közép-Európában: az Erdélyi Fejedelemség példája a XVII.

kingdom was "Western" in nature, but it bordered on the kingdom of Poland and Hungary, which could field armies with a much greater number of horsemen than the states of Western Europe. Furthermore, during the fifteenth century the Bohemians became famous for their capabilities in using early gunpowder weapons in conjunction with the use of defensive war-wagons.[28] Most probably, these regional variables reflected themselves into the Late Bohemian experience of small war as well.

As pointed out earlier the main focus of this thesis is to use the English, or rather, Anglo-French, late medieval experience as a paradigm to which the Bohemian case can be juxtaposed. The first reason behind the comparison is the fact that the military history of late medieval Northwestern Europe has already been analyzed in much greater depth than anywhere else. An essential work on the subject of the small war in the Middle Ages is Clifford J. Rogers' *Soldier's Lives through History*. While the book is general in nature, Rogers draws a considerable number of observations from the sources of the late Hundred Years' War period.[29] The second reason lies in the fact that both the late medieval "English" and "Bohemian" ways of war influenced their immediate neighbors, who took over certain elements of their military technology and tactics.[30]

The experiences of small war encounters differed from those of a battle and so probably did the minor tactics and military technology employed. The research question here is thus the following: "Bearing in mind the different use of military technology and different



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Század első felében 1.rész, " [Gábor Bethlen, the reorganizer. Military development in East Central Europe in the Early Modern Age: The case of the Principality of Transylvania in the first half of the seventeenth century (Part I) ], *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 126, no. 4 (2013): 967–968.

[28] Ibid., 967–970. Uwe Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004), 22-30.

[29] Two major names feature: Jean de Wavrin and Jean de Bueil, both veterans of the Hundred Years' War who wrote their texts in the later part of the fifteenth century. Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History*, 83–84, 90–93, 106,108.

[30] Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Archer* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1985), 144-146. For the influence of the Bohemians on the practice of war in East Central Europe see Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 22-96. The Bohemian influence on the Bavarians is illustrative, as observed by Uwe Tresp, "Der Einfluß Böhmens auf die Veränderungen im Kriegswesen während des 15. Jahrhunderts: Ein Beispiel aus Bayern," *Husitský Tábor Supplementum* 3 (2007): 539-553. Poland, Hungary, and the Ottomans also adopted the idea of the Bohemian wagon-fort, Szabó, "Bethlen Gábor, Az újjászervező,"968.

traditions, was the phenomenon of the small war different for the late medieval English than it was for the Bohemians? Why?" The answer to the research question will help to illuminate the "face of skirmishes" in late medieval Bohemia in particular and identify the regional differences between Northwestern and Central Europe.

## 2. The Historical Context: Fifteenth-century Bohemia

The former lands of the Bohemian crown[31] are located in the western part of what is today called Central Europe. The region is rich in forests, medium-sized hills and its other typical features are rivers and wetlands. Naturally local geography had an impact on the social, political, and cultural makeup of the medieval state. The core living areas of medieval Czechs are located in a basin and enveloped by woods and hills of the Bohemian Massif. These made a natural boundary and the first line of defense against any potential aggressor (Fig. 2.1) with forests and marshlands were favorite hideouts for both native and foreign troublemakers.


Figure 2.1: Snapshot of the Kingdom of Bohemia from Abraham Ortelius' *Theatrum orbis terrarium* published in 1570. Accessed September, 2013, http://www.loc.gov/item/98687183).

Late medieval Bohemian society suffered from anarchy during the late fourteenth century. This was due to two interconnected reasons: first, because of the weak authority of King Wenceslas IV (1378–1419), and second because of border wars between the Moravian margraves Jošt and Prokop. Armed bands (usually under the patronage of a nobleman) ravaged the countryside, forts, castles, and cities, stealing, and causing havoc. The tense

socio—political situation was aggravated by the Bohemian reformation. This helped to spur a conflict between the Bohemian protestants, the Utraquists or as they became known later, the Hussites, and the Catholics. Aside from religious reformation of the established church the Hussite factions rejected Sigismund of Luxembourg (1368-1437) as their rightful sovereign. [32]

The conflict between the Hussites and Catholics thus had the features of a complex civil and religious war including foreign interventions styled as crusades. What made it stand out from "standard" medieval warfare was the mutual perceptions of the opposing parties. Contrasting ethnic, cultural, and religious traits between the crusaders and the heretics sometimes led to grim atrocities. The contesting factions were however quite flexible, with noblemen, towns and communities switching their allegiance as the war progressed. This made it even more difficult for the already reluctant Catholic forces under Sigismund to take decisive action against a determined and elusive foe. The political ambiguity of the Utraquists became an Achilles' heel of the reformation when radical Hussites were defeated at the decisive battle of Lipany (1434). There the moderate Hussite faction allied itself with the Catholics and significantly helped to crush the radical wing of Hussites.[33]

The battle of Lipany, however, did not put an end to fighting. The former warriors lent their services abroad. A large number of Bohemian mercenaries intervened in the politics of surrounding countries and the veterans of the Hussite wars formed various mercenary groups.



[31] The term "Lands of the Bohemian crown" roughly denotes the area of the modern day Czech Republic including the "secondary" lands of Silesia and (lower) Lusatia, which were once a part of the medieval Bohemian state.

[32] Jaroslav Čechura, *České země v letech 1378—1437*[Czech lands in years 1378–1437] (Prague: Libri Press, 2008), 197-204. David Papajík, "God's Warriors from the Czech Kingdom—the Terror of Central and Eastern Europe in the First Half of the 15th century," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2 (2012): 115—120.

[33] Čechura, *České země v letech 1378—1437*, 88-104; Papajík, "God's Warriors", 118-124.

Moravian, Czech, and Silesian soldiers operated in a vast area sprawling from the Baltic to the Balkans.[34]

The following historical period, the Bohemian-Hungarian war (1468–1471), still had an air of a crusade—indeed it is sometimes called the second Hussite war. Unlike the former Hussite wars, however, the contest had the more traditional character of a power struggle between two kings. A conflict over succession erupted between two contesting political players, George of Poděbrady (ca. 1420–1471), and the Hungarian king, Matthias Corvinus (1443–1490). Bohemian Catholic lords supported Matthias as the new king of Bohemia. Many Czech and German-speaking nobles from the lands of Bohemian crown saw Matthias as their true ruler. The adherents of the reformed Bohemian church, in contrast, were mostly loyal to George. The struggle turned in favor of Matthias after George of Poděbrady's death in 1471, only to become indecisive again when the Jagellonian party entered the conflict. The Bohemian lands were afterwards governed by two kings: Matthias Corvinus and Vladislaus II of Jagiellon (1456–1516). After the death of Matthias in 1490, the Bohemian crown, together with the kingdom of Hungary, became the possession of the Jagellonian dynasty.[35]

Aside from suffering and attempts at religious reconciliation, the period of the Hussite wars and subsequent Corvinus-Poděbrad struggle saw the spread of the Czech vernacular in written form. Intellectual elites as well as authors of non-elite backgrounds developed their native tongue to an unprecedented level. Themes and topics which up to that point had been the domain of Latin, including new literary genres, started to be written about in Czech. As the number of literate people increased local chroniclers wrote from their own perspectives,



[34] For the period following the battle of Lipany see Jaroslav Čechura, *České země v letech 1437—1526, I.díl* [Czech lands in years 1437—1526, volume I] (Prague: Libri Press, 2010), 13-113. An overview of mercenaries from the lands of the Bohemian crown and their involvement in surrounding countries is given by Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 44–75, 133–168.

[35] For the political background of the struggle for the Bohemian crown see Antonín Kalous, *Matyáš Korvín 1443-1490: Uherský a Český Král* [Matthias Corvinus 1443-1490: Hungarian and Bohemian king] (České Budějovice: Veduta, 2009), 122-153. Kalous tries to reconcile the divergent narratives found in Hungarian and Czech historiography. Compare the anachronistic attitude of Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*,

enriching the historical narrative. Czech features not only in narrative texts, but also in correspondence between literate individuals. Matthias Corvinus, for example, wrote letters in the old Czech vernacular addressed to his subjects and political allies in Bohemia and some parts of Upper Hungary which had West Slavic speakers.[36]



129, who postulated that the Poděbrad–Corvinus conflict was a form of struggle for national existence. See also András Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2008), 73–133.

[36] Čechura, *České země v letech 1378—1437*, 377-384; Čechura, *České země v letech 1437-1526, I. díl*, 265-276; Petr Čornej, *Tajemství českých kronik* [The secret of the Bohemian Chronicles] (Prague: Vyšehrad Press, 1987), 9-70; Branislav Varsik, *Slovenské listy a listiny z XV.a XVI. Storočia* [Slovak letters and documents from fifteenth and sixteenth century] (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Slovenskej Akadémie Vied, 1956), 27–50.

## 3. Sources

### 3.1 Old Bohemian Annals

Staré Letopisy České (Old Bohemian Annals) is a name given to narrative sources spanning from 1373 to 1527, mostly written in late medieval Czech. The first critical edition of a synthetic nature that tried to process all the manuscripts comes from the first part of the nineteenth century. It was compiled by František Palacký (1798–1876), a major scholar of period Czech historiography. The edition by Palacký was done during the era of romanticism and served a language-cultural purpose as much as a scientific one. This means that the process of writing included editing, such as omission of certain passages or even changes of style. There are several critical editions of the Old Bohemian Annals to date, but Palacký's contribution still remains the most complete.[37]

Petr Čornej, an influential historian of fifteenth century Bohemia, observed that Palacký sometimes intentionally changed the prose of a later source to look like as if it were written during the fifteenth century. The Annals are traditionally dated to the period spanning 1430 to 1526, but the actual process of writing, copying, and re-writing the manuscripts extended beyond this chronological range. The collection of sources is in reality a work of several generations of authors. Palacký divided the various manuscripts according to the letters of alphabet. The earliest events depicting the first half of the fifteenth century are recorded by four anonymous authors. Most of the other manuscripts are younger. Later additions brought a shift of interpretation to the old texts and might add elements of fiction.[38]

An illustrative example is the engagement at Hořice in 1423, in which the Hussite commander, John Žižka, fought and defeated the royalist commander, Čeněk of Vartenberk. Manuscript M contains a detailed description of combat, including an explanation of Žižka's victory. The author writes, among other things, that Čeněk's men-at-arms had to dismount in

[37] Petr Čornej, *Prameny dějin českých, nova řada, II.Díl* [Sources for Czech History, new series, part II] (Prague: Filosofia, 2003), xv-xii.

order to storm a wagon-fort strategically positioned uphill. Since, as the author explains, the men were wearing heavier armor than Žižka's foot-soldiers, they soon became exhausted, were repulsed from the Hussite position, counterattacked and decisively defeated. The description looked so genuine that became a part of standard military history canon in Czechoslovakia. However, as Čornej points out, original sources mention only the date, place, and the fact that Žižka won; they do not elaborate on the causality of the event or the flow of combat.[39]

By cross–checking other sources, Čornej discovered that the style of prose is similar to the author of several other works from the late fifteenth century — manuscripts M, L, and R contain identical idiomatic expressions and other linguistic idiosyncrasies. The anonymous author did not include any other data on the engagement, as was usual at the period, such as the names of other lower-ranking commanders. The description is, in other words, largely a fiction of a younger writer. The author did not stop there and his other fictitious military event is John Žižka's campaign into the Kingdom of Hungary, which describes in detail a raid that never happened. [40]

The Hungarian campaign, it seems, was written by someone with military experience and a great deal of the story has a didactic function. As pointed out above, Bohemia in the second half of fifteenth century, when the author of the manuscript lived and wrote, experienced warfare with the Hungarian sovereign. The author was probably trying to give his reader a recipe for how to combat the Hungarian kings' troops via a fictional narrative in which John Žižka (ca. 1360-1424), the greatest hero of the Hussite revolution, served as the main protagonist. Thus, while the engagement might never have happened, at the very least it shows the potential tactical employment of late fifteenth century Bohemian army.[41]

[38] Čornej, *Tajemství českých kronik*, 50-54.
[39] Ibid., 151-158.
[40] Ibid., 161-170.
[41] Ibid., 178-191.

Manuscript R, from the pen of the same anonymous author, is, however, a form of local chronicle that tries to depict events of mid- to late fifteenth century. It is also the primary source that I have chosen for the purpose of this work. Due the aforementioned issues, the edition by Palacký, although the most exhaustive collection of sources, cannot be used. The selection of the time period for this thesis largely depends upon the availability of an appropriate critical edition. Manuscript R was re-edited in 1937 by František Šimek and tentatively dated to ca. 1500.[42]

Čornej deems Šimek's work appropriate for the later post-Hussite war period.[43] I have not used Čornej's own critical edition of the first Hussite wars as the data available is only general. Jaroslav Porák and Jaroslav Kašpar[44] have made a synthesis of Palacký's work in addition to manuscripts R and G edited by Šimek (the latter dealing with the Jagellonian period). Porák's edition is, however, flawed by language editing and translation of passages and words into modern Czech, making it unsuitable for scholarly endeavors.[45]

Judging by his style and knowledge of period topography and military matters, the author of the R, L, and M manuscript might have been a member of a mercenary brotherhood. The end of the Hussite wars left many unemployed veterans, both Catholic and Utraquists, whose sole occupation was warfare. These men tried to sell their services under the patronage of various noble families. However, when their pay was not forthcoming, the mercenaries locked themselves in keeps and castles and made their own fortunes under their captains by foraging and extorting money from the local populace. One such individual who, as a lower-ranking nobleman, lived and fought in such a brotherhood became one of the most famous captains in the Bohemian kingdom – Václav Vlček from Čenov.[46]



[42] František Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České* [Old Bohemian Annals] (Prague: Historický spolek a společnost Husova musea, 1937), i-xvi.
[43] Čornej, *Prameny dějin českých, nova řada, II.Díl*, xx.
[44] Jaroslav Porák, *Ze starých letopisů českých* [From the Old Bohemian Annals] (Prague: Svoboda, 1980).
[45] Čornej, *Prameny dějin českých, nova řada, II.Díl*, xix-xx.
[46] Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 59–72.

### 3.2 Václav Vlček from Čenov and his Instructions on Combat Formations of Horsemen, Footsoldiers and Wagons

Sometime between 1490 and 1500 Václav Vlček from Čenov (?—ca. 1510) wrote a didactic text to the King of Hungary and Bohemia Vladislaus II of Jagiellon (king of Bohemia 1471-1516, king of Hungary 1490-1516) on how to array footmen, horsemen, and war-wagons in battle. It is a unique source, one of a kind in Bohemian medieval context. Up to that point, other texts in the Czech vernacular concerned with military matters focused solely on discipline. Vlček's text, however, discusses tactical arrangement and roles of various troop types in field engagements, army marches, and siege operations. The work is structured in the form of paragraphs, each containing a piece of advice (*naučení*). The instructions seem similar to that of Albrecht III Achilles (1414–1486), the margrave of Brandenburg, and Philip von Seldeneck (1440–1534). All three authors were roughly contemporary. It appears that the second half of the fifteenth century witnessed an emergence of didactic tactical texts in the territories of the Holy Roman Empire and Vlček, although not a direct inhabitant of the empire was probably part of this intellectual trend.[47]

Vlček was a man of a new age. The fifteenth century saw the rise of independent mercenary companies and mercenary contractors from among noblemen. The classic feudal levy drawn from the retinues of noblemen, ecclesiastical authorities, and a ruler's subjects slowly degraded in military value over the period.[48]

It was a phenomenon visible in both late medieval Western and Central Europe. The example of Polish army performance against the Teutonic Order is illustrative. The Great



[47] Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 78–79; Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnictví po Lipanech*, 169–176. For the circulation of military text among period European counts see Ralf G. Päsler, "Sachliteratur (Artillerie–,Fecht– und Ringücher)," in *Residenzenforschung, Höfe und Residenzen im spätmittelalterlichen Reich: Hof und Schrift*, ed. Werner Paravicini (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2007), 573–584.

[48] Čornej, *Tajemství českých kronik*, 189–190. On the phenomenon of mercenaries see also Kalous, *Matyáš Korvín 1443-1490*, 104–106. John France, ed., *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). On the complexity of the various recruitment methods in the context of European warfare, see Steven Gunn, "War and the Emergence of the State: Western Europe, 1350–1600," in *European Warfare: 1350-1750*, 50–73.

War (1409-1410) ended in a decisive victory for the Polish-Lithuanian army on the fields of Grunwald (1410). The Polish feudal levy (*expeditio generalis*) managed to be strategically capable and tactically effective in the field, using sound maneuvers and displaying good qualities in both individual and collective skills.[49]

Several decades later, however, during the renewed hostilities with the Teutonic Order during the Thirteen Years' War (1454-1466), former knights turned into landowning gentry. These were no longer interested in making war, but cultivation of their lands and the economic benefits of agriculture. One of the first engagements was the disastrous engagement at Chojnice (1454) in which the Polish levy was beaten by a smaller force. From that point on mercenaries from Bohemia served on Polish as well as the Teutonic side.[50]

The social changes in the warrior-aristocrat class posed new challenges for military leaders and they had to rely more and more on mercenaries and royal stipendiary troops whose sole occupation was war. Vlček saw action as a field commander in both Austria and Hungary and was a member of a mercenary brotherhood similar to that which the anonymous author of manuscript R also belonged to. Moreover, Vlček was a skilled organizer and negotiator, literate and of noble stock. His former captain, John Švehla, operated in northwestern Hungary (today's Slovakia), lending his services to whoever paid the best coin. More often than not, however, the mercenaries Švehla commanded were a thorn in the side of the king of Hungary due to their freebooting behavior.[51]

Just before the group was destroyed in the battle of Veľké Kostoľany (1467) by Matthias Corvinus, Vlček left his former brothers-in-arms and found service in the army of



[49]Andrzej Nadolski, *Grunwald: problem wybrane* [Grunwald: selected issues] (Olsztyn: Ośrodek badań naukowychim Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego, 1990), 59–66,116–196.

[50] Nadolski, *Grunwald: problem wybrane*, 218–224; Bernard Nowaczyk, *Chojnice 1454 Świecino 1462* (Warsaw: Bellona, 2012), 51–110. An interesting analogy is the battle of Lučenec (1451) between a Hungarian feudal levy led by John Hunyadi on one side and a smaller mercenary army of pro–Habsburg commander John Jiskra on the other. Much like the case of Poles, lack of discipline cost the Hungarians a victory. See Vladimír Segeš, *Od rytierstva po žoldnierstvo. Stredoveké-vojenstvo v Uhorsku so zretel'om na Slovensko*[From knighthood to the mercenary service, warfare in medieval Hungary with regard to Slovakia] (Bratislava: Ministerstvo obrany Slovenskej republiky, 2004), 196–200.

the Bohemian King George of Poděbrady.[52] Vlček earned most of his reputation as an able field commander during the Bohemian-Hungarian war. Two decades after the war ended, Vlček, an aged man who had to be moved on a cart, was still seen as "der best Hauptman in Beheim"[53] by the recruiters for the conflict over the Landshut succession (1503–1504).

### 3.3 Critical evaluation of the sources

Period sources were written with a certain purpose in mind, for certain audience or perhaps on the behalf of a patron. Often due to agenda and insufficiency of human memory the clashes of arms depicted in the texts are not depicted in a way they actually happened but how they *should* have happened.[54] Chronicles were thus designed in a clever way so as not to put shame on the military virtue of its patron or local community. The anonymous author of the R manuscript may have had a colored view of certain events, especially when interpreting the outcomes of various engagements and troop numbers. Furthermore, at certain times and at certain places xenophobic tendencies may have developed due to protracted warfare and ethnic and religious tensions may manifest themselves in chronicles. This is the case with some fifteenth-century Czech vernacular texts which contain an aura of local patriotism as well as more or less explicit disdain towards foreigners and Catholics.[55] Of course, such biases may also be present in narrative sources coming from the pen of Bohemian Utraquist neighbors.

Yet the very fact that the texts had an audience brings forward the issue of the rhetoric of plausibility. This concept, as David Bachrach points out[56], implies that the authors of narrative sources were restricted in their use of fictional narratives since the author had to meet the expectations of his (or her) audience. In medieval context, the audience was usually



[51] Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 59–72, 108–109. Segeš, *Od rytierstva po žoldnierstvo,* 201–206.
[52] Segeš, *Od rytierstva po žoldnierstvo*, 206. Čornej, *Tajemství českých kronik*, 190.
[53] Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 109.
[54] David S. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), 6– 7.

comprised of social and political elites who insisted on historical accuracy from their chroniclers.[57] Moreover the author of R manuscript occasionally moralizes, with direct remarks in the form of exclamatory sentences and the imperative mood.[58] In this case a twisted, more glorifying version of reality would miss its objective – which was to instruct other members of local society in general military matters.

Vlček's instructions, on the other hand, are purely related to practical matters, written on the basis of his own experience. Yet some passages may be biased. Not necessary against an external enemy of the king, but against the soldiers from among the ranks of the royal army. He postulates the following: "Dear King, even if you have Rascians or Vlachs, scum unsuited for combatformations, unleash them all in a vanguard skirmish and appoint a smart individual to command them to press the enemy."[59]

This sentence could imply, on one hand, that the two ethnicities were skilled at skirmishing. Many Vlachs and southern Slavic warriors ("Rascians") of the era were expert at small war since they lived by daily raids along the Ottoman frontiers. Yet, on the other hand, one can also sense Vlček's scorn towards them. Their placement into the vanguard–a dangerous position on the field of battle–thus might have been a result of Vlček's enmity. The nature of fights in which the skirmishers engaged always contained a great risk of defeat. The individuals and parties who raced in advance of the main army and fought skirmishes could be ambushed by a larger force and the nature of combat in such circumstances had a fluid and unpredictable back-and-forth nature. [60]



[55] One of the most comprehensive treatments on the issue of national and religious identity in late medieval Bohemia is František Šmahel, *Idea národa v husitských čechách* [The idea of a nation during Hussite period Bohemia] (Argo: Prague, 2000).
[56] Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 6– 7.
[57] Ibid., 7.
[58] This is the case when the author admonishes his reader about the potential repetition of tactical mistakes made by another Bohemian commander; see Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 138.
[59] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 187.
[60] On Rascian and Vlach cavalrymen see B. Szabó, *A Honfoglalóktól a huszárokig*, 147-153.

Vlček would naturally know about this phenomenon as he had a great deal of combat experience. Units of Rascians fought against the Bohemians during the reign of the previous king of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus. It is probable that Vlček fought against them and perhaps even witnessed the atrocities of the Hungarian king's troops.[61] When the Hungarian and Bohemian lands united under Vladislaus II after Matthias died in 1490, the old enemies would have had to fight side by side. This is, however, perhaps the only layer of bias present in Vlček's text.

By combining the data from the two different sources, that is, a narrative of events that had already taken place in conjunction with a didactic text describing hypothetical military maneuvers, I will complement the tactical observations in a more balanced fashion.



[61] Atrocities on Utraquist Bohemians perpetrated by "Raiczens" are mentioned in the context of operations around Třebíč (1468) by the period Silesian chronicler Peter Eschenloer, *Geschichte der Stadt Breslau*, part 2, ed. Gunhild Roth (Berlin: Verlag Waxmann, 2003), 725. Rivalry between different military groups was quite common in the period – compare Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 74–75.

## 4. Methodology and Comparative Analysis

If one follows the terminology outlined by Rogers, then small war encounters could be divided into three basic combat scenarios: skirmishes, ambushes, and assaults (*coups de main*). Skirmishes are essentially small "battles" between groups composed of several hundred combatants.[62] A skirmish often included an element of surprise, although this was difficult to achieve without high quality intelligence beforehand. The ambush is an attack from concealment. Ambushes are like a mechanical trap, meant to go off once the victim arrives at the proper place and time, which makes them essentially static. Assaults (*coups de main*) are attacks on and taking of fortified places by parties.[63] In reality, these three scenarios often intertwined in a complex small war interaction. Thus, it was common for the ambush scenario to include first a skirmish, when an individual or a small party was sent as bait to lure the intended victims into the trap. This action may also have served as a distraction for yet another party to storm a fort by an assault.[64]

As already pointed out the thesis takes the Anglo–French (Northwestern European) experience as a paradigm to which the Bohemian case is compared. I have taken out relevant passages from the Old Bohemian Annals, translated them, and divided them according to the basic combat scenarios outlined by Rogers (assaults, ambushes, and skirmishes). Whilst interpreting the data I tried to bear in mind potential modifying factors such as the employment of missile weapons (use of the longbow versus the crossbow; the missile to close-combat troops ratio), the different uses of horses (mounted combat versus dismounting to fight on foot) as noted in the secondary literature. The aim is to look for emerging patterns,



[62] For purposes of clarity I use the general military history terms *party* or *detachment* to describe such groups. In the Middle Ages, various European languages used diverse terminology for war parties. Where needed, individual words are treated separately in the footnotes.
[63] See Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History*, 83-93, 114-117,126-133,174-176, for elements of the small war within the "big" war including sieges, and ibid., 237-253, for small war itself.
[64] The case in point is the capture of Luxembourg in 1443 by Burgundian detachments, see ibid. 248.

commonalities, and differences between the Bohemian and English cases. Based on this mainly inductive approach general statements will be formulated. These in turn will attempt to answer the research question.

Research on military operations of the Hundred Year's War done by Rogers reveals several key points connected to the use of various troop types within the context of the small war combat scenarios, namely:

1. The soldiers known as outriders (*coureurs*) carried out the important duties of scouting, sentinel duty, covering of pillagers, and what is known as reconnaissance-in-force. Rogers points out that in the Hundred Year's War theatre these were well-armed men-at-arms–armored from head to foot in the latest armor of the period and fighting primarily with lance and sword. Men-at-arms were often accompanied by more lightly equipped lancers and mounted archers. In strategic defense, detachments of man-at-arms hunted down vulnerable enemy pillaging parties (so-called "shadowing"). In offensive operations, however, men-at-arms protected (covered) their own pillagers.[65]
2. The pillaging parties sent out to devastate enemy territory and secure forage were composed of footmen and lighter horsemen.[66]
3. Rogers further observes that: "Men-at-arms engaged in composite duels between covering and harassing forces inevitably fought many skirmishes. Usually these took the form of meeting engagements between parties of cavalry or ambushes."[67] However, he also adds that a change came in the fourteenth century and that:



[65] Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History,* 84–85, 90–93. In the mid- to late fifteenth century French army the lighter version of a man-at-arms was called a *coutilier*, see David Nicolle, *French Armies of the Hundred Years' War*(Oxford: Osprey, 2000), 20–21. For their role see Matthieu Chan Tsin, "Medieval Romances and Military History: Marching Orders in Jean de Bueil's Le Jouvencel Introduit aux armes," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 7 (2009): 132–133. In England of the same period light lancers were called *prickers*, see Anthony Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: Military Activity and the English Society*, 1452–1497 (London: Routledge, 1981), 176–181.
[66] Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History*, 84–85.
[67] Ibid., 91.

"though cavalry fights were remained fairly common, it became more usual for such combats to take place on foot."[68] Thus, this is another observation stressing the dichotomy of mounted combat versus dismounting before engagement.

4. Pillaging parties, composed of foot soldiers and unarmed horsemen, often served as bait in ambush scenarios. The men-at-arms then struck out of concealment. Similarly, unarmed cavalrymen were sent out to scout in advance of the men-at-arms.[69]

5. Assaults by parties (*coups de main*) were conducted by a rush of armored men under the cover of missile fire and sometimes with the help of ladders.[70] Rogers observes:

   In the cloud of foraging detachments and outriders surrounding the army, several such small scale coups de main might be attempted in the course of a single day's march."[71] Also, advanced parties, sometimes in the strength of a small army, would "not normally attempt a complete siege but would set themselves up in a defended position, seized or constructed, and harass the town with raids, attacks on agricultural workers, ambushes on the road and so on."[72]

6. Both the armies of the Hundred Years' War as well as the Bohemian army included a wide spectrum of combatants whose defensive armament ranged from the expensive harness of an elite man-at-arms dressed *cap-a-pie* (including an array of horses) to the humble foot-soldiers who were, at best, armed with an open-faced helmet and a quilted jack (arming jacket) or other sort of textile defense. The offensive armament, comprised of pole-arms, was also quite similar in both regions with a variety of simple and more complex weapons (spears,



[68] Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History*, 92. Several period commentators observed the peculiar custom of parties of Anglo-French men-at-arms and archers to dismount before combat. This habit lasted at least until the end of the fifteenth century. Compare Andrew Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses: Military Service and the English Aristocracy under Edward III* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1994), 9–25. Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses,*163–195.

[69] Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History*, 93. On unarmed scouts see Chan Tsin, "Medieval Romances and Military History," 130, 133.

[70] Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History*, 96.

[71] Ibid., 96, 116–117.

[72] Ibid.,114.

lances, poleaxes, including peculiar impact weapons such as the East Central European war-flails, or war-mallets of the English archers).[73] The greatest difference between the two regions lay in the use of missile weaponry, which saw a marked increase during the fourteenth century. To summarize, both the Bohemian horsemen and foot-soldiers were mainly crossbowmen.[74] The English, French, and Burgundians, in contrast, perfected the use of the longbow, a weapon which had different strengths and weaknesses when compared with the late medieval crossbow.[75] The last point is thus the dichotomy of crossbow and longbow and their use in small war encounters.

[73] Andrew W. Boardman, *The Medieval Soldier in the Wars of the Roses* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 118–154. Phillippe Contamine, *Guerre, état et sociéte a la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Mouton, 1972), 277–319.

[74] Foot-soldiers armed with crossbows worked in conjunction with the pavisiers who carried a specific type of shield. A military summons for the feudal levy of nine Bohemian counties from 1470 points out that in a body of 450 horsemen there should be approximately one lancer to seven mounted crossbowmen. See Petr Klučina, "Pohusitské vojenství" [The art of war after the Hussites] in *Vojenské dějiny československa, díl I* [The military history of Czechoslovakia, part I], ed. Richard Marsina et al. (Prague: Naše Vojsko, 1985), 273–299. However, noble retinues and mercenary companies had probably a slightly higher proportion of lancers to mounted crossbowmen – compare Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 377–379.

[75] For pros and cons of both weapon systems see Russell Mitchell, "The Longbow-Crossbow Shootout at Crécy (1346): Has the Rate of Fire Commonplace Been Overrated?" in *The Hundred Years War (Part II): Different Vistas*, ed. L. J. Andrew Villalon et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 233-258. The spread of better quality armor coupled with the adoption of the pike and shot (longspear and arquebus) infantry forced both regions to modify their traditional equipment and tactics. In the opening decades of the sixteenth century the pavisiers, crossbowmen, and longbowmen were used in conjunction with the new infantry sporting pikes (long spears) and arquebuses. As the century progressed the traditional equipment was phased out. For a detailed analysis of this phenomenon see Clifford J. Rogers, "Tactics and the Face of Battle," in *European Warfare, 1350-1750*, ed. Frank Tallett and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 203-216.

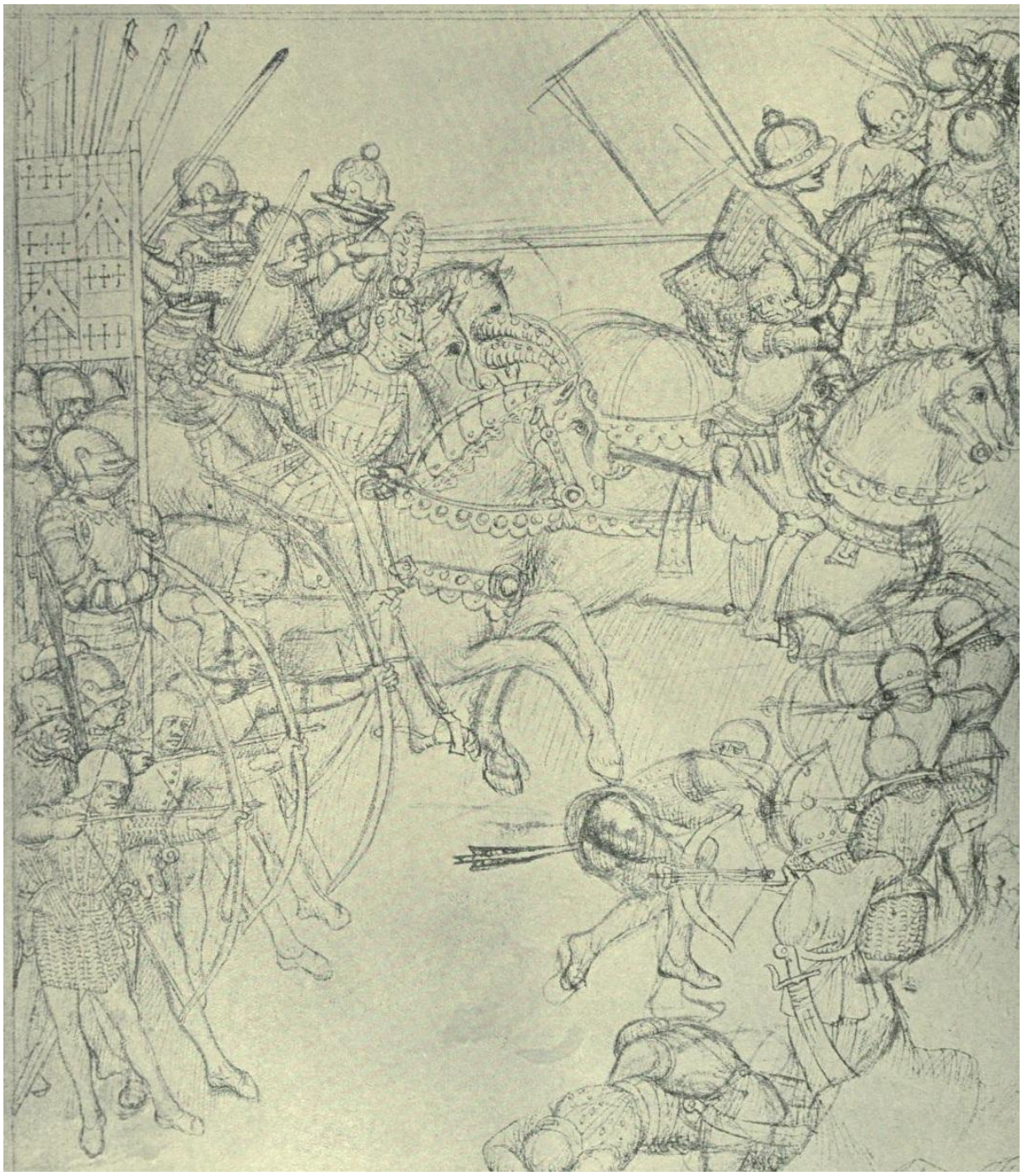

Figure 4.1: Depiction of a late medieval English army. The upper part of the image shows men-at-arms chasing their French counterparts. In the lower part English archers shoot against French crossbowmen. The scene is a part of an illustration of the so-called Beauchamp Pageant that celebrates the deeds of Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick (ca. 1389–1439). Although it depicts earlier events it is was done in the fashion of 1480s and 1490s; Viscount Dillon, *Pageant of the Birth Life and Death of Richard Beauchamp Earl of Warwick K. G. 1383–1439* (London: Longmans Green, 1914), 79.

The aforementioned six tactical observations, based on the operations of Hundred Years' War and The War of the Roses, represent a generalized paradigm of small war encounters in North–Western Europe. I will compare this paradigm to small war encounters found primarily in Czech vernacular narrative sources and Vlček's didactic work.

Aside from Vlček's text majority of the following fragments come from the depiction of fighting on the fringes of Bohemian kingdom–especially the semi–independent regions of Silesia, Moravia and Lusatia during the first two years of the Poděbrad–Corvinus struggle (1468–1469). After the failed negotiations with papacy, George of Poděbrady asserted his rule by force in 1465. A league of predominantly Catholic lords called Jednota Zelenohorská led by an affluent noble Zdeněk Konopišťský from Šternberk (ca.1420–1474) sided with Matthias Corvinus and wanted him to become the king of Bohemia instead. Most of the campaigns were conducted with the goal of keeping, storming, and supplying important strong points.[76]

Regional lords and cities changed sides accordingly with the changing military fortune of the two contesting parties. Both kings made use of mercenaries, feudal levies and household stipendiary troops. I have tried to choose depiction of events which contain the most detailed description of military tactics rather than those which were politically or strategically important.[77]



[76] Kalous, *Matyáš Korvín 1443-1490*, 126–139. An English overview of the 1468–1489 campaigns, with occasional digression, is also provided in Frederick G. Heymann's, *George of Bohemia: King of Heretics* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 491–568.

[77] For the army of George of Poběbrady see Klučina, "Pohusitské vojenství," 276–280. The army of Matthias Corvinus received a much greater amount of scholarly works– the most fundamental is the analytical paper by Gyula Rázso, "Mátyás zsoldosseregének hadművészetéről," 117–147. See also Tamás Pálosfalvi, "King Matthias' Army," in *Matthias Corvinus, the King. Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court 1458–1490, Exhibition catalogue*, ed. Péter Farbaky. (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2008), 295–297 and Vladimir Segeš, "Organizácia, výzbroj a taktika vojska kráľa Mateja Korvína," [Organization, armaments and the army tactics of the army of Matthias Corvinus], *Vojenská História* 3 (2007): 55–69. Major East Central European chroniclers such as Jan Długosz and Antonio Bonfini offer interesting insight into medieval warfare, however their description of the 1468–1469 operations in Bohemia is only of general character. Period Wroclaw chronicler, Peter Eschenloer is of more use.

A comparative analysis of the didactic text of Václav Vlček and the Old Bohemian Annals reveals several observations. An analogy to the outriders can be seen in the old Czech word *honec* (pl. *honci*). Both the context in which the *honci* appear and its semantic content suggest that these soldiers were given similar tasks to those of Anglo-French outriders. The partial assault and devastation on the town of Zittau (1469) in Lusatia was preceded by an interesting skirmish between such outriders. The inhabitants sided with Matthias Corvinus and conducted raids into Poděbrad controlled Bohemia. The Utraquist Czechs organized a punitive expedition which the Bohemian Annals describe it in the following way:

> The German Silesians and the Sorbs gathered together, on the week before Saint Havel, to lift the siege of castle Kost. King George [Poděbrad] had sent his commander Strela against them. When the Germans found out the news that the king's servants are after them, they immediately fled, in any way they could. The king's men went after them and passing through the mountains, they took no harm and came to Zittau. There they had send out the outriders [*honci*]. And they [the Germans] sallied out of the city [presumably out of Zittau], and their lords Šuof and Šťastný planned to capture the outriders first but lord Strela held valiant skirmishes with them throughout the whole afternoon till Duke Henry [son of Poděbrad] appeared out of the woods with his forces and threw himself into the midst of the Germans; and so they cut down on the spot more than seventy aside from those who were beaten on the willows, bogs and ditches. And they took more than two and a half hundred city artisans captive; and burned down the properties around the suburb, making great damage to the Germans.[78]

Vlček begins his text with the order for cavalry forces. These were composed of 18 divisions in total. The first division was 100 horsemen and the subsequent columns of horsemen increased proportionally in number until the last, which amounts to 8000 troopers. The first division of 100 horsemen included a group called *honce*, which could roughly be translated as outrider's detachment:

[78] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 141.See the entry *honec* which provides other examples based on a virtual dictionary of Old Czech: *Vokabulář webový*, s.v., http://vokabular.ujc.cas.cz/ (accessed February 2014). Compare Hugo Toman, *Husitské válečnictví za doby Žižkovy a Prokopovy* [The Hussite Art of War during the times of Žižka and Prokop] (Prague: Královská česká společnost nauk, 1898), 265–266. Both the *coureur* and *honec* were in fact similar to the Romano-Byzantine soldiers who had similar duties. It seems that the practice of detaching and sending parties of outriders stretched back to antiquity, see McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, 25.

> Item. You shall order hundred horsemen in the following way: 20 horsemen in an outrider detachment [*honce*], 30 horsemen in a support detachment [*v posilcích*] and a 50 in a squadron following them. Each squadron[79] [*huf*] has to have one commander to lead them; and in the squadron of 50 horsemen there should be two marksmen in [two] detachments [*stracence*] from both sides of the squadron, two lancers at the point [of the squadron], three after them and then four should follow them.
>
> Item. 200 horsemen you should order the following way: in support of the first squadron should be hundred horsemen, two detachments, in one 25 horses, in the other 35 and in the main squadron 140. In the first detachment there should be two horsemen at the point, three following them and finally the rest in a body of four people wide; in the other detachment three at the point, four behind them and finally five abreast riding in order.[80]

However, whether the Bohemian outriders were comparable to Anglo-French counterparts in terms of equipment is not clear from the narrative sources. Vlček envisioned the 100 horsemen division to include both lancers and marksmen (mounted crossbowmen). As period documentary evidence discussed by Tresp suggests a lancer (German *der Spießer*, Czech *Kopiník*) is roughly comparable to a man-at-arms. The marksman (German*der Schützen*, Czech *Střelec*), on the other hand, was a mounted crossbowman.[81] Bohemian horsemen did not use bows and firearms as a part of the cavalryman's gear are first mentioned in a document for summon of a general levy in the 1540s.[82]

Given the fact that marksmen comprised the majority of Bohemian cavalry it is also probable that they were the leading element in any skirmishes that might occur and the lancers were kept back and used as a reserve. One can infer from Vlček that the leading



[79] Here I use the term squadron in a general way, denoting a basic tactical unit. Vlček uses the old Czech *hauf* [lit. a flock] for everything from great division of thousands to a body of fifty men. Sometimes a diminutive version of the word [Houfek] is used to point out its small size or instead an adjective was added before it to signify a large unit [thus *valní houf*– major division/squadron]. Late medieval Czech (and perhaps even German) military terminology would benefit from a specialized linguistic study, which seems to be absent at the moment. For a general commentary on the other period terms see Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 171–176 and Tomáš Burian, "Obgasněnj za staralých názwů we wálečném uměnj Čechůw patnáctého stoletj" [Clarification of certain archaic terms in the fifteenth century Czech art of war] *Časopis českého museum* 10 (1836): 40–57.

[80] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 185.

[81] Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 377–384.

[82] The order from 1546 allows the marksmen to be armed either with a crossbow or a handgun (*ručnice*). A year later only the handgun is mentioned and the crossbow is absent. See Královský Český Archiv Zemský, *Sněmy*

wedge of a cavalry squadron was made up of lancers and covered by marksmen on the flanks and probably in front. Further in his work, Vlček discusses the general combat approach of cavalry including the king's squadron. He wants the marksmen to ride in front of the wedge-point of a cavalry squadron and shoot at opponents' horses before coming to blows:

> In the major division, in which your Highness will be, place one rank of naked swords and maces before the rank with the banners and one rank [of sword and macemen] behind it. If you wish you can also have your own squadron, 50 horses or 100, which would guard the major division. And also the other two squadrons which are ahead of the king's squadron should be composed of two ranks of naked swords and maces near the banner. The footsoldiers should cover the flanks as already mentioned. The marksmen which are ahead of the pages [of the lancers], right before the clash, should be in detachments at both sides of the point [*špic*, the wedge point of a squadron] and they should shoot at the enemy, before the squadron enters into the fray and especially into their horses, so that when they hurt their horses, they will destroy their order; and these marksmen should be near the point. This should be ordered to every squadron. In case our squadrons in the van should be pressed or disordered, which God forbid, they should be instructed, not to flee farther than to the major division. There, next to the major division, the fugitives should make a stand as expected from proper folk. This should be ordered to every squadron.
>
> Furthermore, behind every major division there should be a detachment. Each [of these detachments] should be composed of two ranks of fine lancers and three ranks of fine marksmen. Arranged in this way, God willing, the squadrons will be well off. [83]

Thus, in the Bohemian army the cavalry skirmishes would not have been the domain only of the lancers, but also of mounted crossbowmen, which introduced an element of mounted missile combat.[84]

It is difficult to find the composition and role of Bohemian pillaging parties in the sources. The evidence preceding the Corvinus–Poděbrad war suggests that they were targeted in skirmishes and ambushes, but the description lacks detail. The annalist describes an

*české: od léta 1526 až po naši dobu II. 1546–1557* [Bohemian state assemblies from 1526 until contemporary times, part II 1546–1557] (Prague: Zemský Výbor Českého Království, 1880), 22, 169.

[83] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 187–188.

[84] Compare Mateusz Goliński and Jerzy Maroń, "Uwagi w sprawie organizacji i taktyki rycerstwa" [Certain remarks on the organization and tactics of knightly armies] in *Memoriae amici et magistri: studia historyczne poświęcone pamięci Prof .Wacława Korty*, 1919–1999, ed. Marek Derewich et al (Wrocław: Institut Historyczny Universytetu Wrocławskiego, 2001), 235–255. Goliński discusses the tactics of contemporaneous Polish cavalry, which used a similar lancer/crossbowman setup.

ambush on an Utraquist raiding force during the Hussite wars near Chrastava, northern Bohemia in 1427:

> The commander of the Orphans [a radical Hussite faction] and his people went to Zittau for provisions. The Germans gathered together and ambushed them at Chrastava; here they mauled them badly, especially the foragers. The Czechs redressed their ranks and counter attacked the Germans, many of whom were slain. From there the Orphans came to Nisa and the burgers of said town sortied against them. The brothers [the orphans] lured them further away from the city and turned against them and chased the Germans back to the ditches, slaying them. There they cut them down badly, killing several hundreds.[85]

As pointed out, lighter horsemen and unarmored scouts were used in northwestern Europe for scouting and served as bait in ambushes. Ambushes involving horsemen are recorded in the Bohemian Annals, though it is not clear if the stratagem of using "unarmed men" as mentioned by Jean de Bueil was ever used. They seem to have happened as a result of preceding armed clashes of horsemen rather than by covert methods. The annalist records the battle of Chojnice in 1454 fought between the Teutonic Order and Kingdom of Poland, in which Bohemian mercenary commanders participated on both sides. The battle opened with a clever ambush by one of the opposing mercenary commanders:

> When they heard that the Polish king is near the village Chojnice, then lord Bernart Šumbersky [a Czech in Teutonic service] went against them; and he himself rode before the army of the Polish king and reconnoitered their battle order. And after that he went back to his own and said "Dear Lords, let us set off against them and be not afraid of their numbers, since they know no proper battle array!" And so all agreed. They went against the Poles near a certain lake, and the Poles becoming aware of them and wanted to put their people into the array, but alas for them it was too late. Thus lord Bernard saw that the Poles set out and he waited for them behind that lake; then Albrecht Kostka [a Czech mercenary in service of the Polish king] forded the lake, crossed those bogs with some squadrons. At that moment, when lord Bernard saw this, he let some of them pass on the other side and ordered his men, squadron after squadron to attack them, and so he defeated them. It seems to me, that Bernard choose the place of the fight on purpose so his enemies could not get to him, but through this one place, and he letting them pass in number which deemed suitable to him and slay them in such a way. Perhaps, if the Poles would let him through first he would fare similarly. Oh but what are superior numbers good for if there is no proper military discipline? Could the king perhaps

[85] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 55. Although the event was several decades removed from the writer's own time, the rhetoric of plausibility entails that such a scenario had to be at least feasible in reality.

> remind him that he is their only master? When a man turns to flight, he is more afraid than a rabbit.[86]

Southern Bohemia, the domain of the rebellious overlord Zděnek Konopišťský was another theatre of the Bohemian–Hungarian struggle. The engagement at Vodňany in 1468 records an ambush done by Konopišťský's soldiers with the use of skirmishers who served as bait:

> Thus the lord John of Rožmberk made an alliance with Lord Zděnek [Konopišťský]…Zděnek's son Lord John took his forces and those of John Hradecký, and came with his forces to Tajno at Vltava and they burned it down. From there they went to Vodňany, and coming to Vstrp, they laid an ambush at Kraví Hora in those woods. And so, when the horsemen [of Lord John] showed up before the city, they [the forces of city of Vodňany] left the city in haste without proper battle order and chase after them; and their enemies seeing this disorder fled before the forces of Vodňany and let themselves being chased. When they were almost at the bridge they were ambushed, and did not have time even to array their wagons. They were cut down and chased for half a mile back to the city. Their wagons and guns were taken and they [Lord John's forces] killed and captured around 350 people which they took to Hradec for ransom.[87]

A similar stratagem, involving the simulated flight of smaller parties that give false confidence to the enemy who is then led to an ambush by larger units is also advised by Vlček:

> Should the enemy move against you in the field in several squadrons, to scout [your forces], or to skirmish with you, or place sentries against you; place your squadrons in a secret way behind a hill or near the army [that is the main force]. If the enemy is thousand men strong sent against them one or two hundred of your horsemen; the enemy will not be routed by them since they [the enemy] will not be afraid of them. And when your squadron is close to the enemy it should stop before it; as if to negotiate with the enemy. If the enemy chases them, the squadron will lead them back to you. If they are not routed send squadron after squadron to support your own men. The enemy seeing reinforcements coming together with you will panic and will try to flee back home. And that small squadron of yours will spring back into the enemy's



[86] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 116–117. Jan Dlugosz, a major Polish chronicler for the time, adds that the high Polish command refused the sage advice of Kostka to first test the enemy with skirmishes, see Zdisław Spieralski, *Wypisy źródłowe do historii polskiej sztuki wojennej*, vol. 4 [Segments of primary sources pertaining to the Polish art of war, vol. 4] (Warsaw: Wydawnictvo obrony narodowej,1958), 36; Nowaczyk, *Chojnice 1454 Świecino 1462*, 69–109.
[87] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 134.

> back, beat them and shadow them. In the meantime you will come with your own squadron and you will god-willing cut them off and defeat them.[88]

The description of vanguard units–their composition and role– as outlined by Vlček may shed further light on the absence of the Anglo-French "unarmed men". The leading elements in his prescribed array were skirmishers (N. sg. *harcovník*; N. pl. *harcovníci*) who preceded the outriders (*honci*):

> Put the Hungarian banner into the main division, where there should be 8000 horsemen. Before the main division, in which there should be 7000 horsemen put the Czech banner. Into the division with 6000 horsemen put the Moravian banner; into the one which has 5000 put the Silesian banner; into the division with 4000 put the banner of the outriders; into the division where there is 3000, put the banner of Bosnian king; into the division with 2000 horsemen put a banner of some other duke; into the division with 1500 horsemen put the banner of the lord which begins the battle; into the division which has 1000 horsemen in detachments of outriders put some commander's banner, so that he is behind the skirmishers; the commanders of skirmishers should also receive a banner so that the skirmishers know each other.[89]

Vlček advises an aggressive approach, including acoustic signals given by trumpet and drums:

> *Dear king and these formations are against the Turks*; [emphasis mine] thus the detachments should be big so that the squadrons could go three times more. These big squadrons [divided] in detachments can, in turn, divide themselves further; and so the squadrons can be made five times against those mighty Turks. And even if you had Rascians and Vlachs, that scum unsuited for the order of battle, unleash them all in a skirmish. Give a command over them to a smart individual, with which he could press on the enemy and with which he could advance. And this he should do with the help of pipers, to signal to them [to the skirmishers] when to chase, and by drums to stop their chase. And order them [the skirmishers] to obey this, when they would hear the sound of trumped to rapidly press on and when they would hear drums to instantly stop and not chase any further. And move with the wagons and other squadrons after them, and you will god-willing overthrow the enemy, even if they would be in superior numbers.[90]



[88] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 188.
[89] Ibid., 187. As the engagement at Zittau (1469) showed *honci* also performed the role of skirmishers. It is probable that these two words were, to an extent, interchangeable–although the outrider (*honec*) seems to be a more general term.
[90] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 185.

Instructions lay out to use the infamous Rascians and Vlachs, lightly armed lancers paired with horse-archers, as vanguard skirmishers. As mentioned earlier these troops originally came from the Ottoman-Hungarian border and were used against the Ottomans. The Ottoman army was preceded by its own vanguard – often composed of pillagers known as the *akincis*. Just as in the West, these men were in turn covered by better armed men of the border beys. (Especially if the pillagers seized significant booty) These separate divisions of mounted *akincis* were enormous in size, sometimes numbering as many as the whole Rumelian Ottoman army itself. There was nothing comparable in the Northwestern Europe of the time. Perhaps Vlček's advice was written with this challenge in mind – vast hordes of marauding enemy light horsemen that should be shadowed aggressively by friendly cavalry forces.[91]

An example of a small war assault by men-at-arms using scaling ladders is recorded only once in the Old Bohemian Annals and the instance pre-dates the era of Vlček's war experience:

> That same year [1438] Ulrich of Cilli went stealthily from Prague with his men-at-arms to overtake Tabor; he wanted to take the city by betrayal. He was however not successful, because he didn't act in a smart way, although he had a scaling ladder with himself. And so he withdrew with shame.[92]

A unique anxiety found in the Czech vernacular sources, however, is the constant threat of an assault by an enemy detachment on the wagon-fort before it can be properly deployed. As Frankenberger observed, the soldiers of Matthias Corvinus used such assaults constantly in order to mar the deployment of a wagon-fort. The annalist recounts an early faceoff between George of Poděbrady and Matthias Corvinus near Laa (1468) at the Moravian-Austrian border in the following way:

[91] On *akinci*s and other frontier units of the Ottomans see Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans* (Oxford: ABC Clio, 2009), 57–61. Compare John Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of King Wladislas and Sultan Murad: The Ottoman-Christian Conflict from* 1438-1444 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 216–219.
[92] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 85.

> Then the king George [of Poděbrady] gathered his forces, as much as he could, and headed to Moravia and there he assembled his army. The Moravian lords joined him as well. The king arrayed his wagons and put his people inside and went with them to Laa… The Hungarian king had camped near Laa, having lots of people with himself, papal and imperial … The Hungarian king had sent Francis from Háj [a mercenary captain of Matthias Corvinus] with many good men to the king George's army, and for that reason, to lure people out of the wagons and to divide them into two and there somewhere defeat them. They defended themselves against this [stratagem] in the following way: They sent a party of horsemen against them [against Francis' unit] and then making two columns of wagons, went against them together with footsoldiers and thus they made them flee to Martinice [a city]. And here they besieged them and took the fort by storm. The Hungarian king, upon hearing the news, went after King George with all his might. At that point King George was trailing behind his forces near the wagons. He arrayed footmen and horsemen against him [King Matthias]. The squadrons were arranging themselves against the enemy [lit. turning; *točiti*] so that the wagon–array could be redressed. They [King George's army] had to redress their wagon-array since the maneuvers of the other squadrons [of horsemen and footmen] put the wagon array into disorder.
>
> Lord Zděnek Konopišťský knew this very well, what is happening, and spoke to King Matthias: "Dear King, let us fight them now! You can see it's the time, their wagons are torn apart and their people divided into two." Some Austrian and Hungarian lords were not as aware of this advantage as Lord Zděnek. They only saw their enemy ready for battle and talked the Hungarian king to back down from the fight. …If you would end up, or someone else, would end up in a situation like this, do think with prudence, how and in what way should you prevent the disruption of the wagons.[93]

At Zvole (1468) in Moravia, a Bohemian force loyal to Poděbrad under the commander Zdeněk Kostka z Postupic was annihilated by Matthias Corvinus' army under Francis of Háj. The horsemen of Corvinus shadowed the opposing army, eliminated a covering detachment and disrupted the order of the whole Bohemian marching column. Although the account is written in a convoluted manner, it shows the necessity of cooperation between the wagon-drivers and other units:

> The [Bohemian] army moved with all the columns at once [because of mud] and placed some people behind, and for that reason, if the enemy would like to disrupt the spreading of the column or would like to strike from behind into

[93] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 135–136. A letter from Brno to Wrocław (both pro-Corvinus cities in the war) points out that the strength of Francis from Háj's unit was 200 horsemen. See František Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte Böhmens und seiner Nachbarländer im Zeitalter Georg´s von Podiebrad* 1450-1471 (Vienna: Kaiserlisch–Königliche Hof– und Staatsdruckerei,1860), 526–527.

> the wagons, so that the army could defend against this. When the enemy did not prevent them from the wagon maneuvers, but kept only shadowing [lit. slowly rode after them], they ordered those wagons [the annalist does not specify which] to follow the other wagons, so as to close up the whole army. But they didn't order anyone to go before this wagon column [presumably to help with navigation]. Then the wagon drivers went ahead of the other wagons and so the wagons uncovered the footsoldiers and the good people who were left behind. The [enemy] squadrons of horsemen went against them and pressed them and at that point they also captured Lord Borek. And if something like this would happen to you, avoid this in the following way: put good and fearless people before columns and between 10 wagons there should be one overseer to prevent disruption of the wagons and give orders when to stop.[94]

As an old field commander, Vlček knew the strengths and weaknesses of a wagon fort. His instructions provide several countermeasures against such assaults: aside from capable wagon–drivers he stresses the use of sentinel parties who were to defend the column "as a wall", mobile artillery and, perhaps most importantly, horsemen who could sally from behind the wagons and return back to the safety of the marching column:

> The people should be arrayed into the wagons in the following way: the same amount of squadrons should go in front and in back of the wagon column, in case enemy horsemen would like to storm inside and assault the rear … at the right and left side of the border-wagons should appointed be *squadrons of 100 armed men*, behind those columns, *to defend the wagons as a wall* [emphasis mine]… then there should be two squadrons at the place where there are horses, and if the van would get into trouble, one squadron should reinforce it. And if the rear would be pressed, the other squadron should reinforce it [instead].[95]

> And each cart on the edge of the army there should be two hook-guns [*hákovnice*]; and forward in front of the flank there should be at least 10 squadron guns [*houfnice*] and ten skirmish guns [*harcovnice*], and in the back of the army as well; and around the flanks of the army, on the outside, there should be several squadron guns, which are to be specially carried around, where necessary and especially against the Turks.[96]



[94] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České,* 138. Other period sources including Eschenloer and Długosz depict the engagement in a more general way as a night attack; see Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 93–95.

[95] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech,* 193.

[96] Ibid.,187. The precise correspondence between technical parameters and names of firearms is difficult to establish. *Houfnice* was probably a medium-sized field cannon. *Harcovnice* was the smallest and most nimble of late medieval Bohemian and Polish cannons; a *hákovnice* was a portable firearm with a hook that was attached to a piece of cover (walls, wagons etc.) in order to halt the recoil. See Burian, "Obgasněnj zastaralých názwů we válečném uměnj Čechůw patnáctého stoletj"41–43; compare Jan Szymczak, *Początki broni palnej w Polsce*

> And if necessary, have guns inside the border wagons from both sides of the army, several canons [*houfnice*] with special horses so that their operators could move them here and there or to deploy them wherever needed. Each border-wagon, should also have two hook-guns [*hákovnice*], so that the enemy cannot skirmish too close … The cavalry squadrons should be in the main army column, as outlined earlier, and some of the rest should be inside near the border-wagons, so that these can sally out when necessary and [retreat] back into the main column.[97]

The combination of the useful but cumbersome wagon array in regions with many light cavalrymen created a kind of peculiar skirmish-assault combat scenario which does not seem to have been experienced among the English.[98] The wagon array could shelter the horsemen and footsoldiers, but these, especially during marches, had to cover the wagon–drivers and their horses. The weakest links of the whole wagon–array were, of course, the equines that pulled the wagons–once some of these were eliminated the whole could column halt and chaos might ensue.[99]

A period Bohemian wagon train would have included several types of wagons. The basic ones were transportation vehicles for infantry and provisions. Yet period written sources also refer to specially made war-wagons.[100] The basic design of such wagons is, however, a matter of some conjecture. Traditionally these are interpreted as defensive fighting platforms converted from simple peasant wagons that were reinforced by thick planks and bound together by chain. Such platforms in turn allegedly gave high ground and protection from cavalry and infantry assaults.[101] Yet if one looks at period visual sources, one can see that rather than being manned as a tower, the war–wagons could have been a sort of



*(1383–1533)* [The beginnings of firearms in Poland,1383–1533] (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Universytetu Łódzkiego, 2004),41–45, 58–61.

[97] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 190.

[98] Compare Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses*, 170–174. English armies of the War of the Roses used field artillery but period commentators were not impressed by field fortifications and, unlike the Burgundians, do not seem to have used the wagon fort.

[99] Čornej, *Tajemství českých kronik*, 168–169.

[100] See Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of King Wladislas and Sultan Murad*, 320.

[101] Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 27–28.

moveable gun-turret.[102] It is perhaps no coincidence that the depiction of such wagons is coeval with the development of gun carriages.[103]

Vlček discusses assaults only in the context of a formal siege. He advises that the king should assemble a special smaller army for that purpose, made up of five thousand men and including special cannons and siege equipment loaded on wagons. This vanguard was then to be sent in advance to prepare a breach (by bombardment and mining) for the main army. Vlček urges guarding against the enemy sallying parties.[104]

These observations, however, are beyond the scope of the small war. A letter from King Matthias Corvinus sheds more lighton the nature of assaults made by detachments of Bohemian infantry. He describes an arrangement of his own infantry forces and shares a unit type similar to that of the Bohemians–the pavisier. He writes that during the assaults on and the defense of fortifications and encampments the most valued soldiers are the gunners and the second best are the pavisiers. Perhaps the *coups de main* were opened by gunfire/a missile shower and the actual charge was led by pavisiers followed by men armed with pole-arms and finally crossbowmen/marksmen using sidearms (swords, falchions, etc.).[105]

That kind of an assault, with the support of cannon bombardment, was probably attempted by a party of the Hungarian king's foot-soldiers against a Bohemian wagon-fort near Třebíč (1468) in the hotly contested Moravia. The annalist recounts:



[102] See the illustrations of such wagons from a late fifteenth-century Swabian *Hausbuch* in Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History*, 73, 82.

[103] The matter, however, is far from clear, not least by the fact that the concept of a wagon-fort enjoyed popularity in various regions and timeframes stretching from Spain to India. Theoretical works such as *Bellifortis* (ca. 1405) by Konrad Kyeser include creations which might have been similar to period war-wagons. Yet the author was heavily influenced by the design of machines from Classical antiquity and thus it is hard to judge the value of such works for the purposes of historical reconstruction. See Čornej, *Tajemství českých kronik*, 185–189. On the evolution of cannon carriages see Robert Douglas Smith, "Artillery" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, *vol. 1*, 81–86.

[104] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 191–192.

[105] Segeš, "Organizácia, výzbroj a taktika vojska kraal Mateja Korvína," 59. As Hungarian and Slovak secondary literature points out the core of mercenary footsoldiers of king Matthias was originally based on Bohemian mercenary veterans and thus their tactics might have been similar, see Segeš, *Od rytierstva po žoldnierstvo*,123–124, Pálosfalvi, "King Matthias' Army," 295. On pavisers see Arkadiusz Przybyłok,"Pavisemen Armour: Iconography vs. written sources," *Folia Archaeologica* 29 (2012):261–269 and

> The Bohemian King [George of Poděbrady] left a garrison of several thousand men strong in the town of Třebíč lead by his son Viktorin and Václav Vlček from Čenov. The Hungarian king [Matthias Corvinus] besieged them there. Duke Viktorin sallied out of the city to fight the Hungarian king but the duke could not resist him and, together with his force, had to retreat inside the Třebíč monastery. Here the Hungarian king besieged Viktorin again. He stormed the city and burned it down. King George, hearing of this development, gathered a force, and marched against the Hungarian king to help his son. He sent his son Henry in advance with an army and Lord Gdulinec as the main commander … Arraying their wagons they went to Třebíč and made camp under a hill [presumably in a wagon–fort]. They had never thought that the hill overlooking their force would be so perilous. When the Hungarian king went with his force and took position on the said hill, he shot mightily into their army and did huge damage to them. Then they [Gdulinec and Henry] couldn't do anything and had to entrench themselves more and more. The Hungarian king, seeing this, sent some footsoldiers over the water to skirmish with them, and defeated them and took several banners, and he himself got wounded there.[106]

As to the question of mounted versus combat on foot in skirmishes there is no mention of horsemen dismounting in combat as was the case with Anglo-French men-at-arms.[107] Dominic Mancini, a visitor to England in 1483, summed up the rationale of this approach:

> Not that they [English soldiers] are accustomed to fight from horseback, but because they use horses to carry them to the scene of the engagement, so as to arrive fresher and not tired by the fatigue of the journey: therefore they will ride any sort of horse, even pack horses. On reaching the field of battle the horses are abandoned, they all fight together under the same condition so that no one should retain any hope of fleeing.[108]

The practice of mixing English units of mounted men–at–arms with longbow men and then dismounting before combat goes at least to the first half of fourteenth century. Similarly the companies of Burgundian longbow men and men–at–arms in the army of Charles the Bold



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János B. Szabó. "The Pavise, Infantry Shield of Matthias Corvinus' Army," in *Matthias Corvinus, the King. Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court* 1458–1490, 298–299.

[106] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 136–137.

[107] The only exception is the defence of a wagon-fort, see Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 193.

[108] Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses*, 175.

(1433–1477) were ordered, from small to large size units, to cooperate together in a similar fashion. [109]

Vlček describes how to array a force of foot soldiers in the same way as cavalry – starting from smaller to larger units. He begins from a body of 100 men and extrapolates the same principle with larger units. The instructions lay out the combat formation and behavior of the soldiers–interestingly instead of dismounting a combined arms approach between horsemen and footsoldiers is postulated. I cite the relevant passage in its entirety as it captures the complexity of minor tactics in field engagements:

> If you have to array 100 footsoldiers, put detachment of six men with smaller pavises and arquebuses, and if they would not have those give them crossbows instead. Put three pavisiers after them followed by three sudlica bearers[110]; after the length of a room put seven pavisiers behind them. Put behind them sudlica-bearers again and long spears, the sort used for banners, should be placed over the pavisiers, so that enemy horsemen cannot approach them without hurt.[111]
>
> In the same way, you are to array 300 or 400 foot-soldiers. 500 in a similar fashion: take 20 footsoldiers in detachments with arquebus, if they do not have arquebuses then with crossbows. Put ten pavisiers before the major division [*valní houf;* a large unit composed of horsemen] and put ten sudlica-bearers behind the pavisiers and after the length of a room put 15 pavisiers; and behind those again the same number of sudlica-bearers or men armed with *voštípy*. And the banner spear, without the banner itself should be laid over the pavisiers and should be firmly placed into the ground against the enemy horsemen, in case these would want to penetrate the footsoldiers, so that they could defend themselves with the help of these spears.[112]
>
> The footsoldiers should not go out into combat together with the horsemen, but instead should brace themselves and stay on the spot, so that they can remain in a firm position. And when the enemy cannot be dislodged [by friendly horsemen] it is at that point that the footsoldiers should advance in combat formation, after the horsemen are routed. The rest of the pavisiers should cover the flanks, if possible. And the marksmen, which are placed behind the pavisiers, should shoot the enemy horses before and after the clash.



[109] Andrew Ayton, "Topography and Archery: Further Reflections on the Battle of Crécy," in *The Battle of Crécy, 1346*, ed. Andrew Ayton et al. (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 358–359. Richard Vaughan, *Charles the Bold. The last Valois Duke of Burgundy* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 209–210.
[110] *Sudlica* is a catch-all term for Bohemian polearms, some more or less similar to Western halberds and poleaxes. See Eduard Wagner et al., *Kroj, zbroj a zbraně doby před husitské a husitské, 1350–1450* [Costume, arms and armour of the pre–Hussite and Hussite period, 1350–1450] (Prague: Naše Vojsko, 1956), 74–75.
[111] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 190.
[112] Ibid., 190–191.

> If you have more footsoldiers send more of them into these detachments as already pointed out. If you have footsoldiers near horsemen order the footsoldiersto cover the flanks of the cavalry in a similar fashion. If you want you can also put footsoldiers in between two cavalry squadrons instead. And before these squadrons there should be two ranks of mounted marksmen, those which belong to the detachments of the horsemen, and these should cover theirfront.
>
> Before a clash, these mounted marksmen should advance ahead and shoot the enemy, and thereafter the footsoldiers will be uncovered. And so both the horsemen and footsoldiers should brace themselves when the clash occurs. [Then] the footsoldiers should advance first before the horsemen and shoot at the enemy, and after that the two cavalry squadrons at the flanks should also advance, since the footsoldiers will break up the enemy's combat formation with their shooting. The horsemen should exploit the moment and strike at the enemy's flanks from both sides. Thus, even if you would not have any able commanders who would lead skillfully against the enemy do it yourself. Whoever looks into this document will know what to do.[113]

As is apparent from the text, in the context of minor field engagements, Vlček envisioned the footsoldiers fighting in conjunction with the horsemen. The infantry is supposed to attack the enemy mostly with crossbows or firearms rather than by an attack with cold steel. Pavisiers and men armed with polearms are to hold their ground and stay reactive (The latter probably to cover the squadron from missile fire). Vlček's prescription for offensive cavalry coupled with semi-stationary reactive footsoldiers becomes more understandable when compared with the makeup of a typical force a wealthier Bohemian knight might take to the field. The annalist describes the year of 1454 when:

> The valiant knight Petr Gdulinec passed through Prague with two hundred horsemen and one hundred foot soldiers armed with pavises and crossbows who headed to Meissen for service. Then Moravian lords passed through Prague with four hundred horsemen and many foot soldiers and wagons filled with lots of baggage. Afterwards Čeček from Pakoměřice the younger went with two hundred horsemen and with the same number of foot soldiers.[114]

A skirmish detachment of several hundred individuals might thus include a 1:1 ratio of cavalry to infantry, as was the case with Lord Čeček, or even 2:1. When one looks at the

[113] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 191.
[114] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 109.

composition of various combatants in period Bohemian infantry forces, it appears that the footsoldiers were predominantly soldiers armed for ranged combat. The royal decree from 1470 ordered feudal military mobilization for nine counties of Poděbrad-controlled Bohemia. The infantry force numbered 4450 men on paper– 3211 of which were to be marksmen. The rest were pavisiers (Figure 4.2), though these often brought their servants, which would have increased the overall numbers).[115]

(Figure 4.2: Depiction of Bohemian pavisiers (shield-bearers) from the sarcophagus of Maximillian I, the Holy Roman Emperor (1459–1519). While shields were common in other late medieval armies, the Bohemians were known for the preponderance of pavises.(Accessed April, 2014, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Innsbruck_1_328.jpg)



Men with polearms, recommended by Vlček, are not mentioned explicitly, although it is possible they were not counted and that the pavisier's servants carried polearms to support their masters in a formation.[116] Moreover, the 1470 decree orders that wagons should be

[115] Klučina, "Pohusitské vojenství," 280.
[116] Compare the description of infantry of Matthias Corvinus in Segeš, "Organizácia, výzbroj a taktika vojska kráľa Mateja Korvína," 59–60.

outfitted with 247 hooked lances and 494 war-flails, which might have further strengthened the close-combat potential of defensively arrayed foot soldiers.[117]

Analogies from France suggest that crossbowmen needed cover from enemy cavalry. If no men with pole–arms were available, ditches and other terrain obstacles provided an equally good protection.[118] Their armament made them vulnerable to horsemen in the open as they ran the risk of being cut down before they could reload their weapons.[119] It appears that the combat behavior of Bohemian parties in a small war was constrained by these technical factors. High numbers of crossbowmen had to be protected from missile fire by pavisiers. Furthermore, the minority of men using close combat panoply were better suited to defense of the marksmen than attack.[120]

The description of fighting around Hradište (1469) in the Moravian frontier by Old Bohemian Annals suggests that the footsoldiers of Poděbrad could hold their own in the field:

> Duke Henry took over the footmen, and had sent some of them [*nětco*; a small amount of footsoldiers] with his commander Strela, to escort a provision train to Hradište. Hradište was already besieged by the Hungarian king for a year and a half. And when Strela came near to Hradište, the Hungarian king send a lot of his servants to stop the provision party; but the Czechs ordered themselves into a combat array and fought the Hungarian king's servants. They [Strela's unit] valiantly defeated them and chased them until Uherský Brod, cutting them down and taking captives. So they took many captives including John of Pezinok and several other nobles and knights. Mankovský and three of his lancers, were badly pressed by the squadrons, so they escaped into Uherský Brod and here they were taken captive. And so the Czechs positioned

[117] Spears with hooks are traditionally assumed to have been for defending the wagons. Such weaponry was used, however, in the open field as well. In the battle of Bouvines (1214) imperial foot soldiers used such weapons against French cavalry, see Jan Frans Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe During the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), 253. Footsoldiers equipped with hooked spears and war–flails fighting in field without the cover of war–wagons also feature in period iconography spanning from 1440s to early sixteenth century, see Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen*, 89, 94. At the battle of Wenzebach (1504; known in Czech historiography as Schönberg) Bohemian mercenaries were pitted against the army of Maximillian I. During the fighting Frederick I of Ansbach and Bayreuth, the margrave of Brandenburg was allegedly hit by an iron flail. See "RI XIV Maximilian I. (1486/1493-1519) - RI XIV, 4,1," last modified May 4, 2014, http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1504-09-15_1_0_14_4_0_3422_19141.

[118] This one can infer from the memoirs of Blaise de Monluc a major military commander and writer, who led a party of French crossbowmen against the Spanish on the Basque frontier in the early sixteenth century, see Blaise de Monluc, *The Commentaries of Messire Blaize de Montluc Mareschal of France*, trans. Charles Cotton (London: Herbert & Daniel, 1913), 47– 62.

[119] Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe During the Middle Ages*, 187–188.

[120] Jean de Bueil observed that "All those who advance on foot break their own array and put themselves out of breath, and ordinarily they suffer defeat." Quoted in Rogers, "Tactics and the Face of Battle," 205.

> themselves near the fortified tower and mightily stormed it. They took it, burned it down and then took the provisions to the city. However during the fighting near the fortified tower a lot of the Bohemian king's servants were slain.[121]

No mention is made of a wagon-fort, nor supporting cavalry. Peter Eschenloer recounts an earlier unsuccessful attempt at provisioning Hradište. A skirmish ensued between a composite force of 600 foot soldiers succored by 300 horsemen and a superior force of 1000 strong crack cavalry, possibly men–at–arms/lancers (*tawsent rűstige Hofflewte*) in service of Matthias Corvinus. In the ensuing struggle the provision wagons were lost and the Bohemians were forced to retreat. Yet Eschenloer points out that the majority of Poděbrad's men saved themselves by valiantly breaking through the enemy into the city.[122]

This finding is interesting, especially if compared with the opinion of Czech military historians on Bohemian cavalry of the period. Their general observation is that due to their unimpressive numbers, Bohemian cavalry were of low importance.[123] However, the analysis of minor units–their tactics and performance– reveals that cavalry was qualitatively important, being the leading offensive element in small war engagements.

Indeed, even in 1677 an English traveler, Edward Browne, observed the good quality of Bohemian horses:

> The Bohemians are a strong, stout, and hardy People, make good Souldiers, and have made great wars both at home and abroad; and Histories are full of their warlike Exploits. The chief Magazine of the King is at Egra, a strong



[121] Šimek, *Staré Letopisy České*, 141.
[122] Eschenloer, *Geschichte der Stadt Breslau*, part 2, 790. The fragment also shows how deadly period men–at–arms could still be–even against combined arms detachments.
[123] Čornej, *Tajemství českých kronik*, 168; Klučina, "Pohusitské vojenství," 279–280, 283. The observation that the army of George of Poděbrad was weak in cavalry is rather relative. It certainly didn't have the numbers of Matthias Corvinus' horsemen or that of the Polish king.The letter from the town of Brno reports that George fielded around 4000 horsemen at Laa in 1468, see Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte Böhmens und seiner Nachbarländer*, 526. For comparison, the French and Maximillian I of Austria had at the battle of Guiniegate (1479) 4000 and 1650 cavalrymen, respectively. Rather than weak, it seems that the Bohemian numbers were the Western European standard of the time. See Jan Frans Verbruggen, "Arms and the Art of War: The Ghentenaar and Burgeois Militia in 1477–79," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 7 (2009): 145.

City, accounted the Second of Bohemia. The Country affordeth also lusty and strong Horses.[124]

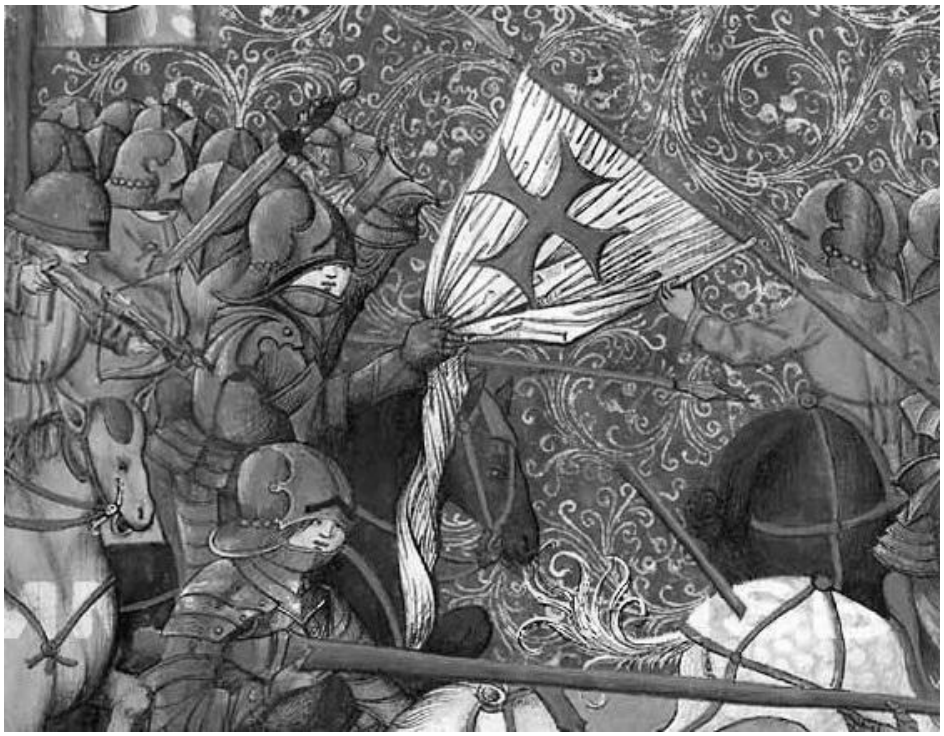

Figure 4.3: A depiction of a mounted crossbowman as he aims his weapon. A Czech illumination from the so–called Jena Codex (ca.1490–1510).(Accessed April, 2014,http://mscripthq.nkp.cz/documentrepository/manuscriptorium/L/KNMP_IV_B_24_2NFL/N1/IV_B_24_2NFLN10057R.JPG)



[124] Edward Browne, *An Account of Several Travels through a Great Part of Germany* (London, 1677), 128, accessed April 20, 2014, http://books.google.sk/books?id=b2lCAAAAcAAJ&dq=An%20account%20of%20several%20travels%20through%20a%20great%20part%20of%20Germany&hl=sk&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false.

## Conclusion

The phenomenon of the small war clearly had an important place in medieval and early modern military strategy. Soldiers and their companies not only marched from point to point and fought set-piece battles and sieges, but, more often than not, found themselves in a plethora of smaller actions. Successful perseverance and combat competence in such clashes (skirmishes, ambushes, and assaults) had an impact on the overall conduct of a campaign. Period commentators and modern scholars, with some exceptions, have often overlooked these engagements due to their seemingly marginal importance in the overall course of military operations.

In Bohemian context such clashes have not been studied in detail despite the general acknowledgement that they might have had a different dynamic from grand battles. Thus, by focusing on the minor actions and tactics of the small war I have tried to point out new avenues for studying late medieval military tactics in Bohemia. A comparative approach is, in my opinion, a useful theoretical framework in which regional variables can be compared and contrasted. Naturally, other historiographies may pose different questions and focus on different aspects of military history. Thus, scholars studying the art of war during the so-called Hussite period in Bohemia may bring a new approach to an old topic and use the rich vernacular sources which describe period military practices.

How was the small war experience of an Englishman different from that of a Bohemian?

There were several essential differences which can be brought forward in a comparison with the Northwestern European paradigm:

- The cavalry skirmishes between outriders included an element of mounted missile combat. The Central European horsemen of Bohemia, and also Poland and parts of the Holy Roman Empire, were predominantly composed of mounted crossbowmen.

Crossbows, due to their design, were a more versatile weapon for equestrian missile combat than the longbow. Due to its length, the English war bow was not useful for horseback archery and archers had to dismount to use their weapons. Vlček recommends mounted missile fire as the first response against an enemy attack. This idea might have further been stimulated by his combat experience against the Hungarians, who had a numerical advantage over the Bohemians in terms of horsemen (later used in the war with the Ottomans).

- Pillagers and their conduct in the small war context are not apparent in the sources. Yet the challenge of vast Ottoman mounted pillaging forces is probably related to Vlček's aggressive approach in vanguard skirmishing. Unlike the unarmed men and covert scouting method outlined in Northwestern didactic sources, Bohemians were sent out to harry the elements of an enemy army.
- In contrast to England at the time, there seems to have been a frequent assault–skirmish combat scenario in which detachments of foot soldiers and cavalry defended the war wagons. The employment of the wagon–-ort by almost all of the militaries in East Central Europe led to frequent stalemates between major armies. However, as the analysis of minor tactics reveals, such "static" face-offs often included numerous skirmishes. Furthermore, whilst on a march the Bohemian wagon column frequently experienced assault–skirmish engagements. If the wagon column was not defended properly by security detachments it could lead to disaster, despite the presence of the war-wagons themselves.
- The English practice of dismounting before combat appears in Bohemian sources only in the context of defending a wagon-fort. Furthermore, in the context of field engagements, the Bohemian detachments of foot soldiers were to move into combat in conjunction with the horsemen. The attacking elements were primarily the

cavalrymen, with foot soldiers providing covering and disrupting missile fire on the enemy. Foot soldiers were supposed to advance against the enemy only when the supporting party of horsemen was put to flight (or of course when friendly horsemen were lacking). The use of horses among the English was mainly due to their strategic value as a means of transportation. Among the Bohemians, however, mounted units were essential on the tactical level of combat as well. Furthermore, when defending an area against numerically strong and agile Hungarian (or Ottomans) mounted pillagers the dismounting did not make as much sense. In such a strategic context true cavalry that fought from horseback was arguably more useful for eliminating pillaging parties, which could simply avoid combat with foot soldiers. (The exception being perhaps areas with broken terrain.)

What was similar between the two military traditions was the use of combined missile and close combat troopers among the infantrymen, with greater numbers of missile men than close-combat troops. This seems to have been in contrast with the Swiss-German practice of approximately the same period, which made use of squares of combined spear-halberd formations deployed on a level field. Unlike the composition of Bohemian or English infantry, the missile troops formed a minority in such bodies and served for skirmishing around the parent formation.[125] Interestingly enough, Vlček was not impressed by the new infantry squares and ordered the imagined Bohemian-Hungarian forces of King Vladislaus to do the following:

> When the Swiss or the German foot soldiers enclose themselves into their combat formation let them stay that way. They won't defeat anyone by standing firm on the spot. You should always defeat their horsemen first and separate them from their foot-soldiers. Then deal with the [enemy] foot-soldiers any way you wish, shooting at them with the cannons.[126]

[125] See Rogers, "Tactics and the Face of Battle," 205–208.
[126] Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 190.

If they were to entrench themselves and thus deny the effects of the cannonade, the old veteran had one more ace up his sleeve– the stratagems of small war.[127]

The analysis of Bohemian small war encounters shows that, contrary to general military history focused on grand engagements and sieges, there did not seem to be any dramatic shift in the importance of infantry over cavalry in Bohemia in the context of the small war.[128] Anglo-American scholars, in particular Andrew Ayton and (to a degree) Clifford J. Rogers, believe that this tactical shift also occurred during small war engagements.[129] This may well be true for the English and their emulators, whose incentive to fight more on foot might have been stimulated by the longbow – a weapon unsuitable for horseback fighting in the first place. The Bohemian operations, in contrast, show that horsemen did not lose importance and were still regarded as a deciding attack element in skirmishes and ambushes.[130]

Most of the Czech military history narrative for the late medieval period focused on the maneuvers of the wagon train, its deployment into the wagon-fort and engagements between major armed forces. The multitude of small war engagements that happened during the Hungarian-Bohemian war, however, show that field tactics could be studied outside the wagon-fort framework. This thesis shows that detachments of Bohemian foot soldiers could hold their own in open skirmishes and at the same time highlights the potency of the allegedly declining arm of the cavalry. In the countless skirmishes, ambushes, and assaults it was the men armed predominantly with polearms and (at least until 1490s) crossbows that did



[127] Vlček advises bombarding the entrenchment and shadowing the provision parties, see Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 190.
[128] Compare Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnitcví po Lipanech*, 177–180; Klučina, "Pohusitské vojenství,"277,279–281,283,288. Petr Klučina, "Husitská revoluce na pozadí dobových válek a vojenství," [Hussite revolution within the context of period wars and art of warfare] *Husitský Tábor Supplementum* 3 (2007):523–537.
[129] Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, 20–21. Rogers, *Soldier's Lives through History*, 92. But compare Rogers' entry "Cavalry" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, Vol. 1, 354–356, and Rogers "The Practice of War,"440–441.

the lion's share of work, not the wagon drivers and their cumbersome vehicles. Now the inquiry should perhaps shift towards the big men fighting the little war.



[130] Uwe Tresp also points out that the Bohemian horsemen have often been underrated in modern historiography. Unlike contemporary historians, period commentators found them formidable, see Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen,* 83–84, 184.

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