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*Gifts of Wine in Late Medieval Knightly Culture as Depicted
in Jean Cuvelier's "Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin"
(ca 1385)*

Dary wina w późnośredniowiecznej kulturze rycerskiej na przykładzie obrazu tego zjawiska w „Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin” Jeana Cuveliera (około 1385 roku)

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the examples of stories in *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin* by Jean Cuvelier (ca 1385) in which the motive of gift of wine features. The author argues that the particularity of Cuvelier's images of gifts of this liquor and its consumption as compared to other contemporaneous works, confirms the opinion of scholars, that the poem bears a significant relation to the social circles of the participants of the first phase of Hundred Years War. Offering gifts of wine is an important motif of *enfances*, the part of du Guesclin's biography depicting his childhood and adolescence. This situation points out to high appraisal of ideas expressed via the aforesaid gift. This is by no means a coincidence as the structure of social bonds between the lord and his men as well as the means of forging it via gifts of luxurious alcohol is well recognised by the scholars in the early medieval sources picturing the so-called *mead-hall communities*. Thus, Jean Cuvelier's poem exposes the *longue durée* of cultural substances. The similarities may be also discerned in the cases of descriptions of the ceremonial forms of drinking of wine and mead (as a gift passed among the feasters) by the means of which the status of given person in warrior community is expressed or subversed.

Keywords: Jean Cuvelier; *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin*; wine in the Middle Ages; history of alcohol; theory of gift; chivalric culture; alcohol in the military world; *longue durée* – knightly culture

Bonum vinum laetificat cor hominis, asserts the Psalmist (Ps 104.15). This apparently timeless truth pertains to the Middle Ages era too, as obviously demonstrates it the eagerness to consume this liquor in the higher echelons of late medieval societies¹. But beside the questions concerning the production and trade of this beverage, the scholars interested in the history of culture posed interesting questions concerning the role of wine and similar “noble” drinks in past aristocratic cultures, emphasizing their place in these societies’ ceremonial behaviours and customs. This role could be no less that fundamental as showed Michael Enright in his work on mead-hall communities². This kind of research was conducted via the considerably sophisticated analysis of narrative texts treated as artefacts of past cultures, conducted with paying careful attention to the concepts and phenomena well-known from the field of cultural anthropology, such as the theory of gift. An interesting work of historical literature allowing to conduct the inquiry of the similar type aimed at the French society of the second part of the 14th century is *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin* written by the poet Cuvelier. The poem presents an interesting object of study in the field of history of alcohol as it offers a vision of the (martial) past closely connected to the ideas and experiences of the combatants who fought during the first phase of the Hundred Years War. But the focus of the following analysis will be placed on the more specific problem: the phenomenon of the leader’s gift-giving of wine to his men. It can be argued that the images concerning this sphere depicted by Cuvelier demonstrate the strong aspect of *longue durée* connecting the cultures of early medieval warrior and late medieval knightly societies. Thus, the gifts of wine in the story of Constable Bertrand du Guesclin will be considered as deeds playing an important role in establishing social relations and allowing to perform socially significant actions.

Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin was written in 1385, immediately after its famous hero death (1380). The poem quickly attained wide popularity. In 1387 its prose redaction was written, significantly commissioned by a French nobleman Jehanet d’Estouteville. The work tells the story of the deeds of the famous constable of France who came from a Breton knightly family of not particularly high standing. Thanks to his military skill and valour, du Guesclin acquired the

¹ See R. Philips, *French Wine: A History*, Oakland 2016, pp. 34–62; P. Wygralak, *Vinum laetificat cor hominis (Ps 104,15)*. *Ojcowie Kościoła o spożywaniu wina i związanych z tym problemach*, “Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne” 2011, vol. 25, pp. 141–142; I. Gately, *Drink: A Cultural History of Alcohol*, New York 2008, pp. 50–64, 76–92; R. Bubczyk, *Postawy ludzi Kościoła wobec alkoholu w średniowiecznej Polsce*, [in:] *Oblicza alkoholu w kulturze elit od średniowiecza do współczesności*, eds. R. Bubczyk, B. Hołub, J. Sołtys, Lublin 2015, pp. 49–63.

² See M. Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup: Ritual, Prophecy and Lordship in the European Warband from La Tène to the Viking Age*, Dublin–Portland 1996.

highest military office in the kingdom³. Cuvelier's poem belongs to genre of *chanson de gestes* (it is one of the last pieces of the kind), albeit it should be emphasized that it was perceived by the contemporaries as a historical work. It is very probable that the author of *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin* drew from rich oral traditions concerning the famous commander⁴. For the present inquiry, it is of key importance that the scholars agree that the poem displays the attitudes and emotions of French gentry and is indeed "un reflet de la société française"⁵. Thus, the analysis of various stories from Cuvelier's *Chanson* in their narrative and comparative contexts will allow us to evaluate the significance and interpret the cultural meanings of gifts of wine in the culture of late medieval French knightly circles as described in popular *belle-lettre* of this milieu. Many of the examples which will be discussed were already pointed out by Philippe Menard⁶. However, taking a closer look at the stories in which they feature as well as setting these accounts in a broader narrative and cultural context offers a rare opportunity to understand the significance and patterns of wine-giving which should be deemed by all means exemplary for the French nobility of the late medieval era, as indicates the wide acclaim of Cuvelier's vision of du Guesclin's deeds.

THE CONTEXT OF OPINIONS ON WINE-DRINKING BY THE AUTHORS ADVOCATING THE REFORM OF CHIVALRY IN THE 14TH AND 15TH CENTURIES

To informatively discuss the relatively copious examples of wine-giving in Cuvelier's poem, it is worth to overview the question of the attitudes on drinking wine displayed by the authors who promoted the idea of the reform of chivalry in

³ See, e.g., G. Minois, *Bertrand du Guesclin*, Paris 2006.

⁴ P. Menard, *Introduction*, [in:] *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, introd. P. Menard, vol. 1–3, Toulouse 1990–1991, vol. 3, pp. 19–71, 249–348; D.B. Tyson, *French Vernacular History Writers and Their Patrons in the Fourteenth Century*, "Medievalia et Humanistica" 1986, vol. 14, pp. 108–114; T. Lassabatère, *Poétique et politique du genre. Quelques aspects de la construction d'un mythe dans la Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, "Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes / Journal of Medieval and Humanistic Studies" 2018, vol. 35, pp. 229–231, 249–250; B. Guenée, *Du Guesclin et Froissart. La fabrication de la renommée*, Paris 2008, pp. 81–96; Y. Vermijn, "De quoy juqu'a mille ans bien parlé en sera". *La réception de la "Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin" entre 1380 et 1618*, Amsterdam 2018 (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam), <https://dare.uva.nl/search?identificer=34bce844-5ff5-4e55-b277-157bd797d357> (access: 1.07.2024), pp. 29–59. See also eadem, *Chacun son Guesclin: La réception des quatre versions de l'oeuvre de Cuvelier entre 1380 et 1480*, Utrecht 2010 (unpublished Master Thesis, Université d'Utrecht), <https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/5356> (access: 1.07.2024), pp. 37–48.

⁵ R. Levine, *Myth and Antimyth in La vie vaillante de Bertrand Du Guesclin*, "Viator" 1985, vol. 16, p. 261; Y. Vermijn, *op. cit.*, p. 43. See J.-C. Faucon, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–167.

⁶ P. Menard, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

the period more or less contemporary with the writing of *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin*. This would allow us to highlight certain specificity of Cuvelier's perspective and images concerning this matter.

Let us begin with some broad observations on wine consumption, though. Although this liquor was widely used in the late medieval era and its different kinds (varying in its quality) may be discerned, it remained a drink unreachable to poor people who couldn't afford it even in the areas of developed viticulture. Estimates of daily consumption of wine in France indicate that from 0,5 to 2 litres of wine was drunk daily by average person. However, it should be noted that small percentage of men consumed a high percent of accessible wine. More specific data comes from the accounts concerning the provision of this beverage. Men serving in French army in 1327 received in rations 0,5 litre of the liquor daily. However, these numbers could be significantly higher: for example, in the late 1400s members of duke of Lorraine's retinue received 2 to 3 litres of wine daily while travelling. However, it should be observed that the levels of alcohol of most of the kinds of wine produced in France (*clairret*) is estimated to be 8 to 10 percent (more expensive, sweet wines were stronger)⁷.

That the consumption of wine in the aristocratic courts could be surprisingly high is substantiated by the voices of the late medieval authors who advocated the need for the reform of French knighthood during the Hundred Years' War. They strictly opposed being too fond of this liquor or indulging oneself in courtly entertainments which included drinking wine. The range of this critique varies. Honorat Bovet in his *L'arbre des batailles* juxtaposes the faults of modern chivalry with the virtues of ancient knights, who were used to drinking water and didn't need wine⁸. But the critique could be fairly harsher as in Alain Chartier's *Le Livre des Quatre Dames*. This poet includes inability of abstaining from excessive drinking of good wines in the catalogue of various vices and dishonourable activities pursued by disloyal cowards, given by the grieving lady whose virtuous lover felt fighting at the field of Azincourt⁹.

But the most informative critic of faults associated with consumption of wine among the authors concerned with matters of knighthood turns out to be famous Geoffroi de Charny, knight of widely recognised authority on chivalric matters (if he is indeed the author of the work known as *Livre de Chevalerie*, what is to some

⁷ R. Philips, *op. cit.*, p. 53, 57.

⁸ C. Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood in France during the Hundred Years War*, New York 2013, p. 36.

⁹ *The Poetical Works of Alain Chartier*, ed. J.C. Laidlaw, Cambridge 1974, pp. 224–225, vv. 885–915, esp. p. 225, v. 912–915; C. Taylor, *Alain Chartier and Chivalry: Debating Knighthood in the Context of the Hundred Years War*, [in:] *A Companion to Alain Chartier (c. 1385–1430): Father of French Eloquence*, eds. D. Delogu, J.E. McRae, E. Cayley, Leiden–Boston 2015, pp. 145–146; idem, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood...*, p. 158.

degree uncertain according to research of Nigel Bryant¹⁰). Charny's negative view of faults related to consumption of wine is closely connected to the core knightly values, which he discusses in detail in his works. In his work known as *Livre Charny* he strictly warns a young reader (on the threshold of his chivalric life) that getting drunk makes one lose both God's love and honour. Charny expresses the graveness of this state in an explicit way, characteristic of a military way of living: the one who deprives himself of the aforementioned condition and virtue "deserves to be strung up at dawn"¹¹.

Apart of this rigorous moralising, Charny advances interesting opinions on wine drinking in the discussion of the qualities of good *gens d'armes* in his more widely known work, *Livre de Chevalerie*. According to his judgment, men used to comfort, who require providing for themselves the best food and wine which can be found (during military excursions), dread the hardships inherent in situations in which honour may be acquired (if one acts as he should in these enterprises)¹². His advice is that they should not set up their minds on the delights of good wine (and delicious food), because they are not easy to find in places and conditions where one earns honour. Desire for such luxuries makes it hard to endure lack of these victuals. Charny emphasizes that hearts and bodies of the men who have such desires will find it more difficult to go through rough days during which one consumes (modest) provisions available in circumstances in which honour may be acquired. But the famous French knight actually goes further in explaining away his opinion: he emphasizes that it is said that a man who hasn't learnt the aforesaid truths will be reluctant to risk death¹³.

It may be, therefore, easily noticed that in the worldview of a knight who adopts characteristic, military focused perspective in his writing, certain unmanliness and luxuriating is staunchly criticised. An oversophistication of tastes in wine drinking, as well as indulging in this activity is a recurring object of reproof. This kind of stance may be observed not only in clearly didactic writings of Geoffroi de Charny. John Barbour, the author of the Scottish epic poem *The Bruce* (ca 1376), testifies in his work to the widespread knowledge of the practices and attitudes of French aristocracy, which were the object of Charny's chastising. Describing king Robert Bruce's daring deed performed during the storming of Perth, Barbour

¹⁰ I. Wilson, *The Book of Geoffroi de Charny with the Livre Charny*, ed. and transl. N. Bryant, Woodbridge 2021, p. 33.

¹¹ *Livre Charny*, pp. 98–99, vv. 1610–1623, esp. vv. 1622–1623, *Se Dieu et honneur pers par vin / L'en te devoit pendre au matin*, p. 125.

¹² *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny: Text, Context and Translation*, eds. R.W. Kaeuper, E. Kennedy, Philadelphia 1996, p. 122, 124, vv. 15–27.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 110, vv. 40–49; A. Niewiński, *Rola i znaczenie wina w wojennej egzystencji średniowiecza*, [in:] *Alkohol w wojsku i na wojnie. Z dziejów wojskowości polskiej i powszechnej*, ed. A. Niewiński, Oświęcim 2018, p. 43.

constructs a French knight's comment on this feat of arms, a "witness" reaction to the Scottish ruler's bravery. The warrior from abroad wonders about what one can be said about French lords, who only eat, drink, and dance while Bruce has put himself in great danger to conquer not a very significant settlement¹⁴. The disadvantageous opinions on the customs of French higher circles (in which excessive drinking of good wines as a vice returns) were thus not only well known to Scottish author. He also uses this knowledge to emphasize his hero's prowess and thus treat the aforesaid information as a commonplace to be used to construct the narrative about the exemplary hero.

The commentary on negative aspects of wine drinking may be also found in Cuvelier's poem. It is significant though that against the background of the abovementioned criticism, his concerns are of purely practical character. The poetic biographer of du Guesclin gives an advice on negative consequences of imbibing wine. It sums up the story in which not bottles but actually carts of wine feature. In the wake of the battle of Chizé, the English men-at-arms capture two waggons loaded with barrels of liquor and immediately begin to drink it using coifs, bascinets and kettle hats. The result was, according to Cuvelier's poetic phraseology, that their brains begun to trot (*et tan ten vont humer / Que li vins lor a fait la cervelle troter*). Inebriated men-at-arms quickly started to boast about killing their French enemies. Enter the poet's opinion: this happened because wine frequently make people to say stupid things. One who can't keep this beverage intact while carrying it, should guard himself well¹⁵, advises the author of *chanson de gestes*. Hence, there is no moral or religious stance in Cuvelier's attitude. What draws reader's attention to his story is its everyday life character, apparent both in narrated event and commonsensical remark of the author. Let us also notice that getting under strong influence of wine itself is by no means condemned or reproved by Cuvelier. This seems to be indicative of his attitude to alcohol consumption.

WINE IN EVERYDAY LIFE MILITARY CONTEXTS ACCORDING TO CUVELIER

The above-mentioned opinion may be confirmed by the analysis of relatively large corpus of Cuvelier's stories, which feature the motifs of wine consumption and of acquiring of wine, both taking place in warlike situations. Taking a closer

¹⁴ *Barbour's Bruce: 'A Fredome Is a Noble Thing'*, eds. M.P. McDiarmid, J.A.C. Stevenson, vol. 2, Edinburgh 1980, pp. 224–225, bk. IX, vv. 395–408. Of course, medieval Perth was one of the leading towns of the Scottish kingdom.

¹⁵ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 463, vv. 23653–23670, see vol. 2, p. 149; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin par Cuvelier*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1–2, Paris 1839, vol. 2, p. 299, vv. 22998–22114; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, transl. N. Bryant, Woodbridge 2019, p. 411, cap. DCCLXIV.

look at these fragments of the *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin* will allow us to better understand the significance and cultural meanings of gifts of wine conducted in the knightly environments which are depicted in the poem. The abovementioned story of capturing the carts with wine by the English is a good example of picturing the obviously pressing desirability of acquiring this liquor among men-at-arms. As Cuvelier described it graphically, this desire could be quite rapidly satisfied once the opportunity had come. That the kind of behaviour which the English men-at-arms manifested was a real concern testifies the Polish historian Jan Długosz in his story of battle of Grunwald (1410). As he described, after Polish-Lithuanian triumph a great quantity of vessels with wine was found in Teutonic Knights' camp. The men-at-arms from the victorious army rushed to drink it, using helmets, gauntlets and shoes. But king Wladislaus ordered to break all these vessels, so that his army wouldn't get drunk or sick, writes Długosz. Although Polish historian explains the eagerness of Polish and Lithuanian combatants to their thirst¹⁶, one can ask if giving solely this reason as an explanation of the aforesaid behaviour is not just a kind of moralising excuse of the high-ranking clergyman.

The doubts concerning Długosz's justification for draining the Teutonic Knights' wine may be substantiated if we would take into account Cuvelier's various opinions on the charms of wine in the men-of-arms' eyes. One of these is already expressed in the abovementioned story of the capturing of the two supply waggons (it features in manuscripts B¹ and B² in Philippe Menard's classification). Consuming the alcohol, the English discuss its qualities. One of the combatants assures that he will fight better if he would drink properly. The man-at-arms' explanation for this is that if he would get beaten, he will not even feel the blows. Another positive of the alcohol consumption which the warrior makes is that if he would die (in combat), he will perish with a joyous heart¹⁷. This aspect of the state of inebriation, that is reducing the fear connected to fighting was apparently considered significant by Cuvelier because he repeated this opinion two more times in his work. One of these concerns the Black Prince's and his men's behaviour displayed in the eve of the battle of Nájera, when the English faced superior force. The poet assures that if they could drink wine there, they wouldn't be afraid of awaiting Spanish¹⁸.

¹⁶ *Joannis Dlugossii Annales seu Cronicae Incliti Regni Poloniae*, lib. 10–11, eds. K. Baczkowski, D. Turkowska et al., comm. K. Baczkowski, F. Sikora, Warszawa 1997, p. 114.

¹⁷ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 2, p. 432, vv. 1–9, vol. 1, p. 313; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin par Cuvelier*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 2, p. 299, ft. 4; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 411, cap. DCCLXV.

¹⁸ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 246, vv. 12417–12418; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin par Cuvelier*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, p. 401, vv. 11451–11452; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 231, cap. CDXXII.

But aside from this kind of general statements concerning the benefits of consumption of wine, Cuvelier voices the clear opinion regarding the value of this alcohol in a particular and demanding tactical task: storming of the enemy walls. It features in the story of the assault of well-fortified town of Saint-Sévère, which began unexpectedly, because of the passionate willingness of one French knight to retrieve his beloved (sic!) axe which had accidentally fallen into the city's moat. After long and ferocious combat, Bertrand rallies his forces to renew the attack with every single man available. Even the women of easy virtue (from the French camp) worked hard to deliver water to combatants, writes Cuvelier. It is during this fierce battle that one praised man-at-arms' opinion is voiced: "it is greatly needed to drink the best wine to finish this work" because, as the knight explains, "good wine prepares a man for deeds of valour"¹⁹. One should observe that this highly appreciated *bon vin* ought to be identified with the more expensive of the two main types of wine: sweet and stronger one as opposed to the more commonly consumed *clairet*²⁰.

The worthy man-of-arms' opinion, which the poet constructed, offers a brief insight into the sphere of experiences and attitudes concerning the highly valued alcohol among the men engaged in militant pursuits of the almost unceasing, late medieval conflict. Cuvelier explains this matter in quite straightforward way: after the French had drunk wine during the assault of Saint-Sévère (according to the aforesaid knight advice), they became bolder than a lion or boar. The storming of the walls renewed with such intensity that nobody heard of such an assault ever being talked about, emphasizes the author of *chanson*²¹. In the eyes of the poet and historian writing for wide public, the grave dangers of particularly risky engagements could seemingly be much more eagerly faced with the encouragement of fine alcohol.

Interestingly enough Cuvelier reveals quite a few other examples testifying to the charms of wine in the eyes of men-at-arms. A captivating case of this kind is the description of storming of strongly walled abbey near Périgueux, which, as Bertrand finds out during the visit to the town, is held by an able English force.

¹⁹ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 425, vv. 21682–21685; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 2, p. 234, vv. 20115–20118, *Là ot .I. homme d'armes qui faisoit à loer; / Qui dit: « On déüst bien, à cel euvre mener; / Boire dou meilleur vin don't on péüst finer; / Car le bon vin fait homme à hardement parer. »*; See entries *hardement*, *hardiement* in: J.B. de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, *Dictionnaire historique de ancien langage Française*, vol. 1–10, Niort [1875–1882], vol. 7, p. 18; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 380, cap. DCCII.

²⁰ R. Philips, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

²¹ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 425, vv. 21697–21700; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 2, p. 234, vv. 20130–20133, p. 235, vv. 20149–20150; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 380, cap. DCCII, DCCIII.

Deciding to capture it immediately, du Guesclin gathers his men, equipped with ladders and some improvised materials (both to protect themselves and to pass the moat). It is telling, though, that when one of the French knights plans to erect three siege engines, Bertrand refuses to agree, explaining that before this machinery will be ready, their company will already be inside the abbey, “drinking amply the wine which is there”²². One is left with the impression that in Cuvelier’s popular vision of contemporary warfare, the feasting on wine in captured enemy’s stronghold, immediately after storming it successfully, is a natural and by all means ordinary way of behaviour after a demanding combat to win enemy’s walls.

The recurring theme in Cuvelier’s stories of this kind is a promise of obtaining wine, made by the leader as an incitement to attack a fortified place, such as a castle or town. This pattern reveals itself also in the aforesaid story of taking abbey near Périgueux. After parleying with the English captain, du Guesclin encourages his men to assault the walls with the promise of giving them all the booty to be taken. Cuvelier gives a list of these precious goods. Characteristically, the finest wine features on somewhat exposed place, at the very end of the list²³. The similar emphasizing of the role of this liquor among other spoils may be noticed in the description of assault on strong castle of Soria (Castile). Cuvelier depicts it as especially difficult one, because of casualties inflicted on the French force by the defenders by dropping great stones and beams. This time, Bertrand’s incitement is directed towards the men who were withdrawing to recover from the fatigue caused by the efforts of the assault. The list of spoils to be taken begins with “good wines which we will drink”. Thus, the promise of enjoying the pleasures of good wine is made to motivate men-at-arms to fight in particularly demanding moment. In this particular situation Its allures seem to be to some point superior than those of “fine gold, silver and great treasure”²⁴ which will be taken in Soria according to du Guesclin’s words.

The two examples described above concern the sphere of dividing the anticipated booty and not direct acts of giving. But as a matter of fact, the interconnection of these two spheres is nothing short of direct. In the customary regulations concerning the distributing of spoils in laws of war, the ultimate right to decide about this matter was in most occasions ultimately the competence of the

²² *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, pp. 362–363, vv. 18440–18448; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 2, p. 141, vv. 17410–17419; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 328, cap. DCV.

²³ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 363, vv. 18480–18485; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 2, p. 142, vv. 17452–17455; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 329, cap. DCVI.

²⁴ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, pp. 358, vv. 18198–18206; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 2, pp. 133–134, fn. 2; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 324, cap. DXCVIII.

captain of company²⁵. Therefore, acquiring the booty allowed the military leader to act as a generous gift-giver to his men. In fact, the motif of giving completely all the acquired spoils by the commander to men who served in his company is a recognised motif of medieval literature and obviously, a great way to emphasize the hero's virtue of *largesse*²⁶.

Another Cuvelier's story of taking a castle is illustrative in this regard. During the surprise assault on Fougeray, an incitement of the kind discussed above is used by du Guesclin twice again. When the fighting commences in the gate, the French commander calls for aid, shouting to his companions that there is good wine inside to be taken²⁷. Even earlier, before the assault, Bertrand explains the battle plan to his men and clearly asserts that if it will be followed, he will give them food and the best wine from the (castle's) cellar the same night²⁸.

We can thus observe that the sole copiousness of the examples cited above contributes to the idea of the significance of wine in Cuvelier's imagery of military life. Even more convincing is the variety of detailedly described contexts of the use of wine and the specificity of the information concerning it in the various battle conditions. Indeed, the image of attitudes to wine that comes from *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin* is far distant from the ones of the reformers of chivalry and some ecclesiastical critics of significant wine consumption²⁹. Significantly, the response of the main hero to the ubiquitous appetite for the liquor is by gift of it.

THE LEADER'S GIFTS OF WINE TO HIS MEN

As could be expected in the case of extraordinary hero, the aforesaid du Guesclin's promises of gifts of liquor are serious commitments. Indeed, Bertrand is depicted by Cuvelier as a lord who habitually gives wine to his men. The contexts in which these gifts are made vary, though. In the aforementioned story of assault of Saint-Sévère (in which the liquor serves as means of boosting the spirits of French men-of-arms) du Guesclin distributes the wine immediately after

²⁵ M. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages*, London–Toronto 1965, pp. 139–149.

²⁶ Idem, *Chivalry*, New Haven–London 2005, p. 26, 29; S.D. White, *Giving Fiefs and Honor: Largesse, Avarice, and the Problem of "Feudalism" in Alexander's Testament*, [in:] *The Medieval French Alexander*, eds. D. Maddox, S. Sturm-Maddox, Albany 2002, pp. 127–141, esp. pp. 134–137. See also P. Żmudzki, *Władca i wojownicy. Narracje o wodzach, drużynie i wojnach w najdawniejszej historiografii Polski i Rusi*, Wrocław 2009, pp. 384–390.

²⁷ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 25, vv. 1040–1043; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, p. 37, vv. 951–955; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 42, cap. XXXVIII.

²⁸ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 25, vv. 1010–1012; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, p. 36, vv. 923–926; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 42, cap. XXXVIII.

²⁹ See R. Bubczyk, *op. cit.*, passim.

the advice of one worthy knight to do so is voiced. The famous commander orders his cup-bearer to open the barrels of wine which he possesses. After that, serving members of his troop are ordered to carry wine to the men-at-arms engaged in storming of the walls who quickly get much bolder as a consequence of that³⁰. It may be thus observed that du Guesclin is depicted as a leader both aware of the profits of the consumption of the noble liquor and sensitive to his men's requests for it. But as far as the episode of the assault on Saint-Sévère discloses Bertrand's willingness to give his wine to the warriors from his company, the pragmatic use of liquor to boost men-at-arms' boldness is not the most significant aspect of wine-giving in Cuvelier's image of du Guesclin as a knightly hero.

It is at the very beginning of du Guesclin's knightly career that he starts to deliver wine to his companions and thus becomes a famous wine-giver indeed. This happens in the manner in which the young warriors of *chansons de gestes* to become knights behave (although the famous constable was dubbed only in the age of 37³¹ and Cuvelier does not alter this fact), that is through the actions which disturb more aged and stable members of society. This kind of behaviours is a recognised motif of *enfances*, a theme and even subgenre of *chansons de gestes* in which the stories of remarkable beginnings of heroes' careers are told. The theme is in fact not only a feature of songs about the glories of past knighthood, it is also richly present in the medieval historical literature and even traditions of Indo-European warrior societies³².

Young Bertrand has a quite a record of misdemeanours characteristic of the heroes of *enfances*. As writes Cuvelier, when he passed the age of eight or nine and grew further, his pastime was organizing the group of forty or fifty boys, dividing them in two groups (like in tournaments), and commencing hard and fierce fights. After these brawls, the young hero habitually came home bloodied and with torn clothes. Therefore, just as in the cases of other *enfances* of famous heroes from the cycle of Charlemagne, it is du Guesclin, the extraordinary warrior to be, who rules the band. At his command, *la batailles* between boys begin and cease. Then, after the fray is finished, Bertrand, according to his habit, invites his companions with

³⁰ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 425, vv. 21686–21700; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 2, p. 234, vv. 20119–20133; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 380, cap. DCCII.

³¹ B. Guenée, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

³² A. Gronowska, *Enfances Guillaume, Enfances Vivien, Enfances Renier... Młodzieńcze dokonania wielkich bohaterów starofrancuskiej epiki rycerskiej*, "Studia Źródłoznawcze" 2004, vol. 42, pp. 37–64, esp. pp. 38–39; A.P. Carney, *A Portrait of the Hero as a Young Child: Guillaume, Roland, Girard, and Gui*, "Olifant" 1993–1994, vol. 18, no. 3–4, pp. 238–277; J. Lods, *Le thème de l'enfance dans l'épopée française*, "Cahiers de civilisation médiévale" 1960, vol. 3, no. 9, pp. 58–62. See also J.H. Grisward, *Archéologie de l'épopée médiévale*, Paris 1981, pp. 81–135. On du Guesclin's juvenile misdeeds, see also E. Gaucher, *La biographie chevaleresque. Typologie d'un genre (XIIIe–XVe siècles)*, Paris 1994, p. 347.

a sweet voice for drinking for which he pays himself. However, organising these “parties” is by no means only young du Guesclin’s pleasant pastime. Cuvelier clearly emphasizes his role of a gift-giver by the means of introducing his words of warning (of losing his friendship) against anyone who would like to give him back money borrowed to spend for the aforesaid entertainment. It is also significant that the poet describes how the noble hero raised the funds needed for spending on wine-giving: by selling silver cups taken from his family mansion or sumpter horses which he apparently obtained from the same source³³.

This tendency to use rather wicked means to acquire money for his needs is young Bertrand’s trait, which Cuvelier illustrates in significant detail. After staying in his aunt’s house in Rennes, the young hero visits his parents and makes peace with his father, who previously literally imprisoned him to stop his fights. Bertrand promises to abandon brawling. But as the poet stresses, at the same time he takes a closer look at family’s valuables because he intends to exchange them for an armour and a steed, even if this would require breaking the coffers³⁴. Again, perpetrating this kind of misdeeds in order to acquire knightly gear is a commonplace featuring frequently in *enfances* of great heroes of *chansons de gestes*³⁵.

It is significant that Cuvelier emphasizes Bertrand’s stealing from his family’s property one more time, though, stressing the continual nature of young constable’s misdemeanours. Immediately after describing du Guesclin’s shift of attention from ordinary brawls to knightly contests, the poet describes young squire’s willingness to attend tournaments, even though the organisers of these events wouldn’t let him to joust because of his young age and his father’s ban to allow that. In spite of this, the poet asserts that whenever Bertrand heard of any jousting meeting or tournament taking place anywhere in Brittany, he rode to it on the back of the best of his father’s mares. But when his money was gone, he would sell this horse and take another from his parent’s stable, along with some family jewels to trade them as well. This information is introduced in the direct narratological connection with the subsequent poet’s statement: if Bertrand got the news about some dinner being organised by the noblemen during the events he attended, he would acquire wine and send his squires with the gift of it for the

³³ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, pp. 10–11, vv. 284–328; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, pp. 10–11, vv. 154–194; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 27, cap. X–XI.

³⁴ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 15, vv. 517–524; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, pp. 30–31, cap. XVIII.

³⁵ A. Gronowska, *op. cit.*, p. 62; A.P. Carney, *op. cit.*, pp. 247, 251–252, 263, 272; J.H. Grisward, *op. cit.*, p. 90, 110, 112.

feasters. Because of these actions, everybody behaved towards him in such a way as to make him joyful and warmly welcomed him³⁶.

The two examples of Bertrand's wine-giving described above should be treated with particular attention because as the part of hero's *enfances*, they prefigure his outstanding worth in the mature age. It is thus telling that the first instance of Bertrand's generosity in delivering the liquor is accomplished in a certain social group: his peers engaging in violent behaviours under his command. Du Guesclin is a chieftain of this company, not only in the sense of leading other boys in brawling, but also providing the group with victuals fit for entertainment. It is well recognised that the motif of being a leader of other boys in one's childhood is a commonplace of biographies of great figures and medieval literature testifies to that particularly well. Young, warlike heroes of the works belonging to historical genres of the aforesaid era (*chansons de gestes* in particular) frequently lived in the company of other adolescent warriors, which are called bands or sometimes even packs because of their disruptive and unruly character³⁷. Nevertheless, it is not the detailed structure of du Guesclin's following which particularly interests us here, but the ideas behind the acts which create its coherence, that is gift-giving.

That the ruler should provide an abundance of victuals is an old cultural concept. To its significance testifies, e.g., the fact that its exemplification, the motif of ruler who is food producer himself, is a recognised feature of Anglo-Saxon and Polish dynastic traditions³⁸. But as is the case in the story of the origins of the house of Piast recorded in the early 12th century³⁹, the fundamental sense of this kind of narrative requires ruler to give willingly and abundantly, even if he is not at all rich himself. This last observation could be possibly judged vague if one would consider it as pertaining only to the world of ancient and medieval literature. But the problem is broader and it manifests itself even on the level of language itself, as the example of Anglo-Saxon term for chieftain,

³⁶ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 15, vv. 529–541; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, pp. 15–16, vv. 290–296; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 31, cap. XIX.

³⁷ A. Gronowska, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–59; J. Banaszkiwicz, *Młodzieńcze gesta Bolesława Krzywoustego, czyli jak zostaje się prawdziwym rycerzem i władcą*, [in:] *Theatrum ceremoniale na dworze książąt i królów polskich. Materiały konferencji naukowej zorganizowanej przez Zamek Królewski na Wawelu i Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w dniach 23–25 marca 1998*, ed. M. Markiewicz, Kraków 1999, pp. 22–28; P. Żmudzki, *op. cit.*, pp. 89–90, 127–161; J.H. Grisward, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

³⁸ See, e.g., J. Banaszkiwicz, *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu. Studium porównawcze nad wczesnośredniowiecznymi tradycjami dynastycznymi*, Warszawa 1986, pp. 25–84.

³⁹ *Gesta principum Polonorum. The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, transl. P.W. Knoll, F. Schaer, preface T.N. Bisson, Budapest–New York 2003, pp. 18–23, bk I, cap. 2.

hlaforð (“the guardian and giver of bread, loaves”)⁴⁰, indicates. Evaluated in this context, Bertrand’s thievery committed to provide wine for his companions allow to display basic quality known from age-old stories about becoming righteous and accepted leader.

Of course, du Guesclin’s distribution of wine takes place in a narrower group: a band of underage companions engaging in combative pursuits. But it is exactly in this kind of broad schema of social relations that gifts of liquor are particularly well known and have a grave cultural significance, too. In various early medieval milieus, the chieftain’s larges of this kind constitutes what is known as mead-hall community. Both among the Germanic and Celtic peoples the common conception of paying back for mead with loyalty in battle is well recognized⁴¹. Reciprocating for the gifts of alcohol with military service is not infrequently expressed in clear and explicit ways. A good example in this regard is the Old and Middle Welsh poem *Y Gododdin*, which tells the story of the fatal raid conducted boldly by the warriors who enjoyed a year-long wine-feasting in Mynyddog’s (king of Gododdin) hall in Din Eidyn (Edinburgh) before the expedition. The work was written no later than 9th or 10th century, but as Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson suggests, it could have existed in oral form before that time⁴². The epic imagery of the poem is saturated with phrases referring to the obligations related to drinking mead and wine in chieftain’s hall. In return for mead warriors fell in battle, are ready for death during the combat or just fight spiritedly. Their tragic raid and resulting lost battle of Catraeth itself are described as payment for wine, mead or for the feast in the hall⁴³. Indeed, the very feasting in Mynyddog’s hall itself makes the *Y Gododdin*’s poet sorrowful as it was the cause “for the loss of the harsh warrior”⁴⁴.

It is well recognised that performing of the act of giving situates the one who bestows above the one who receives, both in the terms of perceived social hierarchy as well as in the economy of obligations necessitated by unbreakable rule of reciprocity⁴⁵. Therefore, attending a feast in the Irish epic literature is interpreted by scholars as receiving the gift and acknowledging the superior status

⁴⁰ M.A. Brown, *The Feast Hall in Anglo-Saxon Society*, [in:] *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, eds. M. Carlin, J.T. Rosenthal, London–Rio Grande 1998, pp. 1–6, 11; W. Michalski, *Robert Bruce i jego kompania w eposie pióra Johna Barboura („The Bruce” około 1376 roku)*, Lublin 2020, p. 215.

⁴¹ M.A. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6; S. Pollington, *The Mead-hall Community*, “Journal of Medieval History” 2011, vol. 37, no. 1, p. 26.

⁴² *The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem*, ed. and transl. K.H. Jackson, Edinburgh 1969, p. 66.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 109, 113, 116–118, 124, 129–132, 138, 148, see also pp. 36–37.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

⁴⁵ See the classic work of Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, London–New York 2002.

of gift-giver. Philip O'Leary gives an insightful example of seriousness of the obligations connected with receiving the gift. In the *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, a late medieval Irish saga text, a custom which existed "long ago" is described. According to it, if a king of any rank "would take another chief lord's gift or wage, he would commit himself to submission and homage to him"⁴⁶. Pierre Bourdieu outlined this kind of interaction as (achieving) domination in symbolic economies, where gift-giving may even be a form of "symbolic violence"⁴⁷. One should not be thus surprised at the aforementioned magnitude of du Guesclin's generosity, manifesting itself in a threat aimed at those, who would like to settle their debts with Bertrand. This kind of behaviour is indeed no less than a fulfilment of an ideal in a competitive gift culture of medieval warrior aristocracy⁴⁸.

The nature of the obligations of the underage recipients of the young du Guesclin's *largesse* should also be understood in this context. Even though the wine is given to the boys engaging in brawling, one should understand Cuvelier's image of adolescent squire's behaviour towards his peers as a prefiguration of hero's merits. In this regard, it is giving prime importance to caring for his men well-being as well as establishing personal bonds of friendship and reciprocity with them, at the cost of willingly violating the very basic norms of behaviour in contacts with one's family to achieve these first goals.

That this attitude is directly related to knightly ideal in Cuvelier's eyes is demonstrated in the interesting scene of Rennes townsfolk ridiculing young Bertrand as he rides through the town heading to tournament field. They laugh at his miserable horse (fit for a miller, as the poet describes it) and not very sophisticated apparel, which make the hero looks as a ploughman. One of the onlookers starts to defend the young squire though. The townsman commends du Guesclin's extraordinary liberality in giving and immediately after that affirms that he will become a "bold and very good warrior"⁴⁹. It can be therefore observed that the knightly values and warlike occupations set the socio-cultural framework for the gifts of wine that Bertrand makes. The authority earned by generous young squire is thus based on the forms of behaviour characteristic of knightly or heroic identity⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ P. O'Leary, *Contention at Feasts in Early Irish Literature*, "Éigse" 1984, vol. 20, s. 120–123, esp. 123.

⁴⁷ P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge 2013, p. 191; A. Cowell, *The Medieval Warrior Aristocracy: Gifts, Violence, Performance, and the Sacred*, Cambridge 2007, p. 55.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

⁴⁹ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, pp. 16–17, vv. 592–609, esp. vv. 607–609 : *On ne pourroit trouver nul milleur aumosnier; / Il sceit moult bien le sien donner et aumosner; / Et si sera hardis et moult tres bon Guerrier; Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, vol. 1, p. 18, vv. 359–361; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, pp. 31–32, cap. XXI.

⁵⁰ See A. Cowell, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–4.

The scene of Rennes townsmen mocking du Guesclin reveals Cuvelier's clear recognition of another important aspect of generosity exemplified in wine-giving. The fact that the poet carefully constructs the dialogue between dwellers of Brittany's capital demonstrates his willingness to emphasize that Bertrand's reputation for unusual *largesse* extends to wide circles and is in fact known well enough to reach the level of common knowledge: *publica fama*. Thus, in the poet's eyes young hero certainly gained wide renown for his generosity and even, as Bernard Guenée categorises thus widespread fame, a celebrity⁵¹. That the basis of this appreciation is also giving of wine testifies to the significance of this kind of acts in public perception in poet's viewpoint. Certainly, the kind of social recognition which Bertrand enjoys was an important factor determining one's social standing and indeed career too during the second half of 14th century: the "golden age of renown", as the aforesaid French medievalist describes it⁵². But equally important aspect of the scene of Rennes townsfolk's mockery is a clear narrative tension between the inappropriateness and poverty of Bertrand's mount and attire in comparison to obviously large amounts of money which he spends on giving. First things first, seems to communicate Cuvelier, clearly implying the significance of hero's generosity exemplified in the wine-giving in constructing his knightly identity.

GIFTS OF WINE TO KNIGHTLY ADVERSARIES

Bertrand's *largesse* is not restricted to his friends. As the age of chivalry requires, it reaches also to his adversaries. In the long story of an eventful siege of Rennes by Thomas duke of Lancaster, an interesting interaction concerning wine-giving takes place between Bertrand and the English commander. The besieging force suffers some minor defeats in their attempts to conquer the town as a result of cunning actions of the defenders. The most serious of these setbacks is inflicted by du Guesclin during night raid on enemy camp (when Lancaster's force is drawn up to face the French relieving force supposedly arriving from the other side). Bertrand manages to capture the English supply wagons and leads them into the starving town. Nonetheless, the English carters are treated well and sent back to the besiegers' camp. They carry Du Guesclin's message to the English duke and his men-at-arms: Bertrand offers to deliver them some of the wine (and mulled wine) that he had won, so that they could appease their hearts⁵³.

⁵¹ See C. Wickham, *Fama and the Law in Twelfth-Century Tuscany*, [in:] *Fama: The Poetics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, eds. T. Fenster, D.L. Smail, Ithaca–London 2003, pp. 15–26; B. Guenée, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–40, 75–106, esp. pp. 83–84.

⁵² B. Guenée, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁵³ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 39, vv. 1751–1756; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, p. 57, vv. 1529–1533; Cuvelier,

One could observe that this example of wine-giving features in the episode, which important theme are amicable relations between enemy commanders of vastly varying social standing, Bertrand and duke of Lancaster. But among quite a few depicted mutual acts of courtesy and respect between two commanders, it is the description of the gift of wine which allows Cuvelier to introduce particularly commending opinion concerning the hero of his work. "He is gentle in his heart", exclaims the amazed duke after receiving the liquor. Having ascertained that, Lancaster asserts that this du Guesclin's virtue will benefit him in acquiring high honours, because generous souls do not meet another end. If he would survive, he will better all the knights in the world, declares the English duke⁵⁴.

It could be asked if the duke Thomas' commendation of Bertrand is not a convention of picturing of hero's quality of courtesy as a motif of praising one by his enemy is certainly in play in the episode. But as far as this point is certainly true, one could also ask if the poet's intention wasn't realized via certain play with social practices alive among noblemen in times when *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin* was written? The interesting evidence corroborating this opinion comes from the abovementioned *Annales seu Cronicae* written by Jan Długosz. In the description of the battle of Koronowo (1410), he draws attention to the conduct of the opposing men-at-arms towards each other. The Polish and Teutonic Order's knights pause the battle twice according to mutual agreement because the fighting is so intense that the combatants become too tired. During the second truce, the men-at-arms exchanged taken prisoners and horses, carried the wounded who could not stand up themselves out of battlefield and significantly, sent gifts of wine to each other to quench the thirst. These acts of courtesy make Długosz observe that it could be believed, that somebody unaware about what was really happening, could think that it was two friendly, and not hostile forces, who met on the fields of Koronowo⁵⁵. Another particularly well-known example is Froissart's description of the banquet held by Edward III for the French knights captured during their unsuccessful assault on Calais, during which the English king and his men served his prisoners personally. Wine-drinking is explicitly mentioned in the story as the final point of the feast⁵⁶.

The example of Bertrand's gift to duke of Lancaster is therefore by no means isolated. This opinion may also be confirmed by the descriptions of the similar practices from the Cuvelier's poem. In the episode of du Guesclin's negotiations with the captains of Great Companies (to hire them for the expedition to Castile)

The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin, pp. 54–55, cap. LXIV.

⁵⁴ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, pp. 39–40, vv. 1757–1763; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, p. 58, vv. 1534–1540; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 55, cap. LXIV.

⁵⁵ *Joannis Dlugossi Annales seu Cronicae*, lib. 10–11, p. 154.

⁵⁶ *Chroniques de J. Froissart*, ed. S. Luce, vol. 4, Paris 1873, pp. 314–315.

the theme of offering wine is mentioned even before the description of meeting itself. This time wine-giver is Hugh Calveley, commander of the English troop in the notorious free companies who once led forces against Charles of Blois, Bertrand's liege lord⁵⁷. Hearing the proposal of meeting with du Guesclin, the English knight responds enthusiastically. He avows that he will see the French squire willingly. This declaration is immediately followed by Calveley's affirming that he will give Bertrand good wine and will do that abundantly, giving all the liquor he has in his possession (although it costed him nothing, writes the poet)⁵⁸.

It is well recognized that feasting together is a sign of amity, and this aspect of having a meal together is particularly true of traditional cultures⁵⁹. That this kind of friendly feelings could be very emphatically and conveniently expressed in the knightly circles by the gift of wine is exemplified in the short but interesting anecdote from Jean Froissart's *Chroniques*. As writes the famous historian from the Low Countries, during the rest after the battle of Auray (1364) the commander of victorious forces duke John of Montfort declared that he owed the victory to prudence and prowess of the famous knight and captain John Chandos. The duke expressed his gratitude with the gift of wine to Chandos, handed in the former's own cup from which the English captain drunk the liquor⁶⁰. The aforementioned example of Calveley's reaction to the proposal of meeting du Guesclin presents the same case: it is the gift of (good) wine which features as a proper means of expressing cordiality among men-at-arms. The appropriateness of the liquor for the job is emphasized by the English nobleman's asserted willingness to give in large quantity, to the point of the whole amount of his supply, what also presupposes possible high demand for the drink.

⁵⁷ See K. Fowler, *Deux entrepreneurs militaires au XIV^e siècle: Bertrand du Guesclin et Sir Hugh Calveley*, [in:] *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public. 18^e congrès*, Montpellier 1987, pp. 243–256. The two knights were cooperating closely in the second half of the 1360s in Spain. In a letter from March of 1368 du Guesclin addresses Calveley calling him "very dear brother". See *ibidem*, p. 256.

⁵⁸ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 164, vv. 8187–8195; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, p. 262, vv. 7199–7207; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 164, cap. CCLXXXVII.

⁵⁹ G. Althoff, *Der frieden-, bündnis-, und gemeinschaftstiftende Charakter des Mahles im früheren Mittelalter*, [in:] *Essen und Trinken im Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Vorträge eines interdisziplinären Symposions vom 10.–13. Juni an der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen*, eds. I. Bitsch, T. Ehlert, X. von Ertzdorff, Sigmaringen 1987, pp. 13–25; G. Rosser, *Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England*, "Journal of British Studies" 1994, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 430–442; J. Banaszekiewicz, *Trzy razy uczta*, [in:] *Spoleczeństwo Polski średniowiecznej*, ed. S.K. Kuczyński, vol. 5, Warszawa 1992, pp. 95–98; M. Rampton, *The Significance of the Banquet Scene in the Bayeux Tapestry*, "Medievalia et Humanistica" 1994, vol. 21, pp. 33–38.

⁶⁰ *Oeuvres de Froissart publiées avec les variantes des divers manuscrits*, ed. J.M.B.C. Kerwyn de Lettenhove, vol. 1–25, Bruxelles 1867–1877, vol. 7, p. 61.

The episode of meeting with commanders of Great Companies discloses one more interesting aspect of wine-giving among knights and squires. The way in which the liquor is drunk testifies to its special position in the sphere of chivalric customs. Once Bertrand arrives to Great Companies' camp and meets their leaders, he is cordially greeted by Calveley. The English commander immediately calls for wine. It is brought to du Guesclin by a renowned English knight, Walter Hewitt. However, Bertrand does not accept it, claiming that it is Walter who should drink first. This is not a common courtesy, though. Cuvelier emphasizes that as a response to these words, not a single present knight wanted to drink the liquor first. All the present waited for Bertrand to start. Acting in this fashion, they did a great honour to du Guesclin, explains the poet⁶¹.

It can be therefore observed that wine giving and drinking during the meeting with commanders of Great Companies is regulated by certain social conventions. According to them both the donor of wine, a dominant figure in the group receiving Bertrand, as well as the circle of leading men present at the meeting, decide about the precedence in enjoying the liquor. It is also important to notice that the wine is handed to the French commander by in no manner a random person but a knight described by Cuvelier as bold and mighty, one who already faced du Guesclin in battle in the past. Does the poet engage in a certain play with recognition of one's knightly honour (measured mainly in deeds of arms) and thus determining standing of the hero of his poem among chivalry, rather than demonstrating only a kind of politeness?

The scholars observed already long ago that recognizing and giving expression to warrior's prestige during the communal drinking belongs to the customs of the older era of warrior societies. In Heorot, the mead hall of king Hrothgar described in *Beowulf*, it is queen Wealhtheow who offers the cup with mead to ruler's retainers according to clearly defined order. The veterans receive it first and only then it is handed to younger members of Hrothgar's *comitatus*. By receiving it according to the custom, king's followers accept their rank in the warband hierarchy. In the insightful discussion of this example, Michael Enright points out the description of similar behaviour which features in the famous epic poem *Waltharius*. When Walter's betrothed serves wine to the three main heroes of the piece during the rest after the battle, the precedence is given according to once displayed valour. Hence it is audacious Hagen who drinks first. Then the liquor is passed to Walter and only after that to king Gunther, because he was reluctant in the battle⁶². That the

⁶¹ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, p. 165, vv. 8233–8240; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, p. 264, vv. 7246–7253; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, p. 164, cap. CCLXXXVIII.

⁶² *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, eds. R.D. Fulk, R.E. Bjork, J.D. Niles, fwd. H. Damico, Toronto–London 2008, pp. 23–24, vv. 607–641; *Ekkehard's Waltharius*, ed. J.W. Beck, Groningen 1908, p. 91, vv. 1409–1415, esp. 1413–1414; M. Enright, *op. cit.*, pp. 2–13.

communal feasting could be an excellent opportunity to approve and demonstrate warrior's prominence in achievements and valour is interestingly attested by the custom of *curadmír*, "hero's portion", fairly well known from the old Irish epic literature. According to it, the most notable hero present at the feast was given the best piece of the meat available, receiving it in front of the others. It is thus hardly a wonder that obtaining this symbolically significant and tasty fare frequently becomes the cause of contention or even bloody melees among warriors of Irish epic literature⁶³.

The stories about this kind of disagreements over the gifts of victuals marking one's standing in the marital society are not restricted to the warband era, though. An interesting story about this kind of dispute may be found in Jean Froissart's *Chroniques*. It is worth to notice that the famous historian attributes it to the relation of a knight who witnessed the quarrel himself and that some of characters who feature in this piece are figures featuring in Cuvelier's poem too. The scene from Froissart's *Chroniques* depicts Edward the Black Prince drinking wine in his chamber, surrounded by his men. After the Plantagenet drinks it, the liquor is handed to John Chandos, the aforementioned famous knight and commander, who also imbibes it. It is only then that Chandos sends his man to the earl of Oxford (who is present in the chamber too) in order to pass him wine. As a result of this, the aristocrat becomes full of anger because Chandos has drunk before him. As a result of this, the earl declines the wine with contempt: he tells the squire to go to his lord and tell him to drink the liquor himself. This act is followed with interesting response. The squire who brought the cup to the earl threatens him with splashing the liquor into the aristocrat's face if he would not drink it. The earl, obviously facing the threat of public humiliation, took a sip of wine or pretended to do that as detailedly narrates the affair Jean Froissart. But this is not the end of the story. In consequence of earl of Oxford's act, Chandos comes to him later to explain the matter of his own precedence in drinking over the earl. First, he highlights the fact that he holds the office of constable (of Aquitaine). But then, interestingly, he gives two more reasons. One concerns the earl's conduct during Black Prince's Poitiers campaign. Chandos reminds, that the aristocrat has left the Prince during this campaign and came back only four days before the battle. Moreover, he did that only under the pain of forfeiting his lands by King Edward III himself. The English knight adds another reason to drink first too: during the battle of Poitiers the earl commanded only 4 lances (the basic late medieval cavalry unit consisting

⁶³ J.T. Koch, "Champion's Portion", "Athanaeus", [in:] *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. J.T. Koch, vol. 1, Santa Barbara 2006, pp. 142, 399–400; P. O'Leary, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–118; H.R.E. Davidson, *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions*, Syracuse 1988, p. 48.

of a few men)⁶⁴ and he himself as many as 60. The Chandos' words made earl of Oxford full of hatred and also shamed him, because they were uttered publicly, emphasizes Froissart⁶⁵.

The Chandos' conversation with the earl of Oxford makes it fairly evident that wine-drinking ceremonial among noblemen engaging in military activity reflected prestige coming not from belonging to a certain social class but also on the basis of calculation of one's achievements and faults while facing the challenges of war. The fact that Froissart depicted Chandos as reviewing the second of these factors relatively comprehensively to justify his precedence in drinking wine over his rival indicates that this factor was both important and appreciated as the mean to delineate one's standing in chivalric circles.

It is thus worth emphasizing that a serious quarrel described by the famous chronicler of chivalry in undeniably detailed way testifies to the significance of public evaluation of one's knightly worth in the age of the Hundred Years War via giving wine in certain clearly defined order, just as it was done in the mead halls of the "Dark Ages" era. One more important observation to make is that in Froissart's story, the social convention pertaining to the customary way of communal drinking of wine (which included giving the liquor by one feaster to another) could have been stronger in its influence than the norms of behaviour towards members of the highest strata of the society. Thus, the emotions stirred by the affront caused by the rejection of the gift of wine are pictured as intense enough to abuse even the man of remarkably higher social standing. This last point is indeed highlighted in the story as Froissart deliberately emphasizes that the Chandos squire was courageous enough to fulfil his threat and found himself in danger of losing his head because of his deed⁶⁶. Thus, the strict, almost ritualistic nature of wine sharing ceremony in which the liquor is given in turn from one warrior to another is revealed in the example from Froissart's *Chroniques*. The cup of wine becomes the medium through which the information concerning one's standing in the military oriented group is communicated. A certain play with thus made categorisation is possible albeit it is a serious game, one in which very harsh measures may be taken against those, who refuse to act according to its rules.

Except of the possibility of plain refusing the gift of wine and thus subverting the authority of gift-giver (as well as declining his friendship) to which Froissart testifies, one more interesting mode of behaviour expressing the restraint from accepting the gift of liquor and thus from following the rules of wine-sharing

⁶⁴ See J. Gassmann, *Thoughts on the Role of Cavalry in Medieval Warfare*, "Acta Periodica Duellatorum" 2014, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 156–159.

⁶⁵ *Oeuvres de Froissart publiées avec les variantes des divers manuscrits*, ed. J.M.B.C. Kerwyn de Lettenhove, vol. 12, Bruxelles 1871, pp. 236–237.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 237.

through gifts is described in *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin*. It is also an example of an encounter with adversaries performed via the acts proper to receiving of the gift. As in the previous example, it is Bertrand who is gift-receiver. But the circumstances surrounding the offering of the liquor make him aggravated as certain injustice was committed by the gift-giver associate. To wit, du Guesclin's brother Olivier has been shortly before taken prisoner by an English knight while enjoying a horseback jaunt. The capturing has been done during the period of truce. To handle this situation, Bertrand comes to duke of Lancaster's forces' camp and meets the commanders gathered in duke's pavilion. He is welcomed warmly and no other knight but John Chandos himself offers him wine with "sweet voice". But Bertrand declines to drink "a single drop" until he is given justice, writes Cuvelier. This act is enough to make Chandos immediately declare that du Guesclin's wrongs will be redressed. The case is proceeded by the English lords and ultimately is resolved by the means of a formal duel⁶⁷.

Hence, rather than refusing the gift of wine, Bertrand postpones its acceptance until certain conditions will be met. Acting in this way, he does not insult the gift-giver but brings his attention to the problem that prevents partaking in the union of communal drinking. Thus, as pictures it vividly Cuvelier, the conventions of giving and receiving wine allow to express not only values and relations important to the group engaging in communal drinking, but also to disclose certain attitudes towards the wine-giver and even conduct certain actions through the forms of behaviour in respond to the gift of the liquor. These customary schemes of behaving socially fulfil the function of media for meanings important to the group and thus makes them to a certain degree akin to the acts described by the scholars of medieval culture as rituals or rites⁶⁸, at least in the way that Cuvelier perceived and portrayed them.

CONCLUSIONS

"Weapons and liquor bind the follower in the *comitatus*" wrote Michael Enright in his discussion of the meaning of the word *druht*, Old English *dryht* ("troop of retainers", "warband"). But notwithstanding the well-recognized military meanings of the term, scholars pointed out that it conveys the meaning of "festive" or indeed "weeding" procession or gathering at the same time. This aspect of warband reveals itself in *Beowulf*, when queen Wealhtheow refers to the followers of her husband

⁶⁷ *La Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin de Cuvelier*, ed. J.-C. Faucon, vol. 1, pp. 56–57, vv. 2594–2656; *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, ed. E. Charrière, vol. 1, p. 82, vv. 2225–2289; Cuvelier, *The Song of Bertrand du Guesclin*, pp. 69–70, cap. XCIII–XCIV.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., G. Althoff, *The Variability of Rituals in the Middle Ages*, [in:] *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, eds. G. Althoff, J. Fried, P.J. Geary, Cambridge 2002, pp. 71–87; P. Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory*, Princeton 2001.

as *druncne dryhtguman* “drunk men (warriors, retainers, followers)”⁶⁹. Somewhat similar picture of vinous inclinations of men-at-arms of the 14th century is depicted in the *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin*. The notion of young Bertrand gathering other boys in order to organise group brawls and afford his young followers wine after the melee is finished is in basic structure (of gift-giving relations) not very much distant from the images of feasting on ruler’s mead and wine in mead-halls. The aspect of *longue durée*⁷⁰ in Cuvelier’s vision of Bertrand as a wine-giver becomes more evident if one would take into account that its essential feature, that is building of the group of followers bound to the leader with the ties of gift is found in the *enfances*, the part of the poem which is especially informative about the author’s conception of desirable virtues of the created image of an exemplary hero. Bertrand’s wine-giving, presented as an activity which prefigure the hero’s great achievements in his adulthood, foreshadows du Guesclin’s exemplary attitude towards his men and thus his eminence as a military leader.

Once du Guesclin becomes a man-at-arms and a captain, his gifts of wine earn him renown in knightly circles, where wine is a common and desired victual. But it is more than an ordinary commodity in this community. The customary ways of drinking wine as a gift reflect one’s martial reputation, allow to communicate meanings and perform certain actions. Off course, these aspects of wine-giving belong to the sphere of the vision of deeds of an exemplary hero. But it is a vision which was enthusiastically welcomed by French nobility and one that was created shortly after its main character’s death, what implies that some of his acquaintances could become familiar with it or even contribute in some way to its creation. Therefore, as scholars recognize discussing other epic images of the past⁷¹, Cuvelier’s images of wine-giving and the significance attributed to them should be perceived as reflecting and confirming the values, attitudes and indeed customs of the nobility and soldiery contemporary with the writing of *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin*. Needless to say, that one should keep in mind that these reflexes are seen through the mirror of epic poetry. Still, we arrive at conclusion that the wine matters much to this community as it is a liquor which – once given – binds the members of the knightly society together, both friends and foes alike.

⁶⁹ Klaeber’s *Beowulf*..., p. 43, v. 1231; M. Enright, *op. cit.*, pp. 70–77, esp. p. 77, 72; H. Kuhn, *Die Grenzen der germanischen Gefolgschaft*, “Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanische Abteilung” 1956, vol. 17, pp. 23–25; J. Banaszkiwicz, *Włócznia i chorągiew. O rycie otwierania bitwy w związku z cudem kampanii nakielskiej Bolesława Krzywoustego (Kadlubek III, 14)*, “Kwartalnik Historyczny” 1988, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 15–16.

⁷⁰ F. Braudel, *Histoire et sciences sociales. La longue durée*, “Annales E.S.C.” 1958, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 725–753.

⁷¹ J.J. Duggan, *Medieval Epic as Popular Historiography: Appropriation of Historical Knowledge in the Vernacular Epic*, [in:] *Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, vol. 11: *La Littérature historiographique des origines à 1500*, part 1 (*Partie historique*), eds. H.U. Gumbrecht, U. Link-Heer, P.-M. Spangenberg, Heidelberg 1986, pp. 285–286.

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ABSTRAKT

Przedmiotem artykułu jest analiza przykładów fabuł z dzieła *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin* pióra Jeana Cuveliera (około 1385 roku), w których pojawia się motyw daru w postaci wina. Autor argumentuje, że wyjątkowość obrazów darów i spożycia tego trunku na tle innych dzieł z okresu ujmujących te zjawiska potwierdza opinię badaczy, iż poemat pozostaje w bliskiej relacji z kręgami społecznymi uczestników pierwszej fazy Wojny Stuletniej. Przekazywanie wina w darze jest ważnym motywem *enfances*, części biografii du Guesclina ukazującej jego dzieciństwo i lata młodości. Sytuacja ta wskazuje na wysokie wartościowanie treści wyrażanych za sprawą wspomnianego daru. Nie jest to dziełem przypadku, gdyż przedstawioną przez Cuveliera strukturę związku społecznego pomiędzy wodzem i jego ludźmi oraz sposobu ich zadzierzganania i podtrzymywania w postaci darów z luksusowych napojów alkoholowych badacze znają dobrze z przekazów wczesnośredniowiecznych, ukazujących tzw. *mead-hall communities*. Poemat Jeana Cuveliera ujawnia zatem długie trwanie treści kulturowych. Podobieństwa można zauważyć także w przypadku opisów ceremonialnych form picia wina i miodu (jako daru przekazywanego pomiędzy uczującymi), za sprawą których wyraża się (lub podważa) status danej osoby we wspólnocie wojowniczej.

Słowa kluczowe: Jean Cuvelier; *Chanson de Bertrand du Guesclin*; wino w okresie średniowiecza; historia alkoholu; teoria daru; kultura rycerska; alkohol w świecie wojskowym; długie trwanie – kultura rycerska