The status of prisoners of war was firmly rooted in the practice of ransoming in the Middle Ages. By the opening stages of the Hundred Years War, ransoming had become widespread among the knightly community, and the crown had already begun to exercise tighter control over the practice of war. This led to tensions between public and private interests over ransoms and prisoners of war. Historians have long emphasised the significance of the French and English crowns’ interference in the issue of prisoners of war, but this original and stimulating study questions whether they have been too influenced by the state-centred nature of most surviving sources. Based on extensive archival research, this book tests customs, laws and theory against the individual experiences of captors and prisoners during the Hundred Years War, to evoke their world in all its complexity.

Rémy Ambühl is Lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Southampton.
PRISONERS OF WAR IN THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages

RÉMY AMBÜHL
To my mother and to the memory of my father.
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I crossed the Channel for the first time in October 2003. I wanted to improve my English and research skills by doing a Masters in History at the University of Nottingham, and I did so. But what was supposed to be a one-year-long interlude in my Franco-Belgian education ended up more like a turning point in my academic life. Nine years later, my adventure in the UK is still running. It has even been given a new impetus thanks to the Leverhulme Trust and the University of Southampton which generously agreed to fund a new research project on the capitulation of castles and urban communities in the Hundred Years War. I hope that the future holds many other good surprises like this one. British academia has been as welcoming as inspiring. Along the years, I have had the chance to meet leading scholars without whom this adventure would have been much shorter, and without whom this book would almost certainly not have seen the light. I owe them a great deal.

My first thanks go to a French scholar, Professor Bertrand Schnerb, who taught and supervised me at the University of Lille 3 before I left the Continent. I am very grateful to him for his constant support ever since, despite the fact that I have pursued my academic path in the UK. (As he reminded me recently, Burgundy, of which he is an eminent specialist, was an ally of England for many years in the fifteenth century.)

Professor Michael Jones, who I met at the University of Nottingham, is at the origin of my interest in prisoners of war, an interest which increased and expanded over the years under his expert eye. I thank him gratefully for his invaluable guidance. Yet I never thought of covering the whole of the Hundred Years War until it was suggested to me by Professor Chris Given-Wilson, my Ph.D. supervisor at the University of St Andrews. This was a big challenge which I would not have been able to take up without his judicious advice, insightful comments and constant encouragements. I have always been struck by the great generosity and benevolence of all the scholars I have had the chance to meet.

x
In this respect, I would also like to show my gratitude to Professors Christopher Allmand and Matthew Strickland as well as Dr Gwilym Dodd. Finally, I owe a special thanks to Professor Anne Curry who has very generously contributed to enhancing and refining ideas, both in terms of content and form, when I was revising the text of the thesis for publication. Chapter 3, in particular, has greatly benefited from her expertise in Lancastrian Normandy. All the mistakes and misunderstandings in this chapter, and indeed in the whole book, remain, quite naturally, my sole responsibility.

Many more people and institutions contributed directly or indirectly to this work. The University of St Andrews awarded me the Bullough Scholarship for three years. I also received many discretionary bursaries from St Andrews which allowed me to carry out several research trips to London and Paris. More recently, I have received a generous award from the Scouloudi Foundation to carry out further research in Lille and Paris for the completion of the book. I have always found useful guidance at the various archival repositories and libraries that I have visited (The National Archives, Archives Nationales [Paris], British Library, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Archives Départementales du Nord [Lille], Bibliothèque Royale [Brussels]) and I am very grateful to their staff for this. As one can imagine, writing in English, for a native French speaker who had no particularly favourable disposition towards foreign languages, has not been an easy task, which could not have been carried out without the diligent and generous support of many proofreaders. They must be praised for their difficult work. Elizabeth Berry and John Painter, who got on with the final proofreading, have my full recognition. I must also thank the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Southampton which kindly agreed to fund this final step. The reader who comes across a sentence that reads awkwardly can be sure that it would have been much clumsier if it had not been checked so carefully. I would also like to express my gratitude here to Liz Friend-Smith, the editor of this book, for her professionalism and gentleness in dealing with a worrier like me. Thanks to Pam Scholefield as well, for the compilation of the index.

It seems almost unforgivable not to write a good book in such favourable circumstances, all the more since I also found all the support that I could imagine to have in my friends and family. My grateful apologies go to all those who carefully listened to my prisoners’ stories and engaged with them, even if they did not ask to do so. Finally, I would like to address a special thanks to Brigid Bradley who shared this adventure with me from almost the beginning to almost the end.
There was a distinction between money of account, used as ‘measure of value’ and real money, that is, the actual coins, used as ‘medium of exchange’ in the late Middle Ages. Many a ransom or grant appears in livres tournois (lt) in the sources; this money of account was widely used in late medieval France. The pound sterling (£), which was the English equivalent, was worth 6 lt. The actual coins which circulated in late medieval Europe were made of gold, silver or billon (silver–copper alloy). Gold coins were used not only for costly ‘international’ transactions but also for the payment of ransoms, whatever their rate. France was the main theatre of war in the Hundred Years War, and most ransoms were set and paid in French gold coins. The franc d’or (fo) was the principal gold coin in France from the 1360s to the 1380s. It was progressively replaced by the écu d’or (eo) in the fifteenth century. From 1422 to 1453, the English government issued a rival gold coin to the eo in northern France: the salut d’or (so). The reader will also come across other currencies in this book. Given the wide fluctuations in the value of the different coins (especially in the first half of the fifteenth century), it has been deemed appropriate to leave all the amounts in their original currency. The following table, based on Peter Spufford’s *Handbook of Medieval Exchange* (London, 1986), gives an idea of the comparative value of the different currencies in that period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pound sterling (£)</th>
<th>Livre tournois (lt)</th>
<th>Livre parisis (lp)</th>
<th>Mark sterling</th>
<th>Ecu d’or (eo)</th>
<th>Salut d’or (so)</th>
<th>Franc d’or (fo)</th>
<th>Florin (Rhine)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£1 = 6 lt (ratio: 0.167)</td>
<td>= 20 sous or shillings (£) = 240 deniers of pennies (£)</td>
<td>= 24 lp (ratio: 0.21)</td>
<td>= 3 marks (ratio: 0.66)</td>
<td>= 9 ecus d’or (ratio: 0.22)</td>
<td>= 9 ecus d’or (0.23)</td>
<td>= 6 francs d’or (ratio: 0.167)</td>
<td>= 6 florins (ratio: 0.107)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 livre = 20 sous or shillings (£) = 240 deniers of pennies (£).
2 BnF, Ms. Fr. 25772, no. 925 (December 1434).
ABBREVIATIONS

ACO Archives Départementales de la Côte d’Or
ADN Archives Départementales du Nord
AN Archives Nationales (Paris)
BEC Bibliothèque de l’École des Chartes
BIHR See HR
BJRUL Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library
BL British Library
BnF Bibliothèque Nationale de France
CCR Calendar of Close Rolls
CPR Calendar of Patent Rolls
EHR English Historical Review
co écu(s) d’or
fo franc(s) d’or
### List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR (BIHR)</td>
<td>Historical Research (formerly the Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMH</td>
<td>Journal of Medieval History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KBR</td>
<td>Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België/Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique (Brussels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lp</td>
<td>livres parisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lt</td>
<td>livres tournois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMS</td>
<td>Nottingham Medieval Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODNB</td>
<td>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Past and Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so</td>
<td>salut(s) d’or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>st</td>
<td>sou tournois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>The National Archives (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRHS</td>
<td>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSLME</td>
<td>The Soldier in Later Medieval England (online database: <a href="http://www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database">www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database</a>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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