

# Medieval Mercenaries

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## The Warrior Bourgeoisie

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# What is a mercenary?



11<sup>th</sup> Century Norman  
Mercenaries



16<sup>th</sup> Century German  
Landsknecht

## Mercenaries and Merchants?

- Both 'middle class'
- Rising economic forces
- Threat to the bipolar Feudal structure

## Social Discrimination:

- Religious taboos
- Socially destabilizing
- Threatening and dangerous
- Unpredictable
- Foreign or 'alien'

\*nearly all these justifications were used against the merchant class as well.



# Mercenaries and the Nobility

Mercenaries were essential to war...

...yet despised



El Cid (a beloved noble; mercenary in the Reconquista)



Gianfrancesco Gonzaga (noble condottieri)

# Mercenaries and Commoners

- Peasants valued the stability of feudal relationships
- Commoners suffered from taxation, violence and upheaval due to the presence of mercenaries
- Those too poor to afford arms and armour could not become mercenaries themselves
- Mercenaries were often viewed as thieves and criminals



# The Sum

By being indispensable on the medieval battlefield yet reviled by nobles and commoners alike, mercenaries held the uncommon position of being a 'middle class' in the Middle Ages: a place which was also occupied by the mercantile class.

*Pecunia Nervus Belli: Money Rules Warfare*



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