

Contemporary Sources for the Battle of Worringen 1288

(a) From the 'Deeds of the Abbots of St. Trond'

In this same year [1288], on 5th June, John I, Duke of Brabant,¹ wishing in his capacity of Duke of Lotharingia and as a margrave of the holy empire, to safeguard the public highway between the Rivers Meuse and Rhine for secure and free travel, crossed to the other side of the Meuse with a numerous army and besieged the castle of Worringen, because Archbishop Siegfried of Cologne had stationed robbers there, who plundered and imprisoned merchants.² On hearing this, the archbishop summoned to him, along with a multitude of his own men, the Counts of Geldern and Luxemburg, who had a grievance against Duke John, in that he had acquired the duchy of Limburg from the count of Berg, to which they claimed to have the right.³ A host of princes apart from these flocked to help the archbishop, who gathered a vast army to fight the small squadron of the duke of Brabant.

However, the aforesaid duke, trusting in the help of God, who favours just causes, and being steadfastly unwilling to abandon the siege, drew up the battle line of his men on the plain in front of the castle, and [there] he bravely awaited the arrival of the enemy forces. The battle was a most hard conflict, and after great bloodshed success the Brabantines gained the advantage; but the second line of the other side then charged bravely, and the third attacked behind this. [Thus] the fighting continued here for a long time, so that the battle which was begun in the morning extended into the evening. But finally the Count of Luxemburg and his brother Walram de Rupe were [both] killed, as were two natural brothers of his,⁴ along with a great many men-at-arms, some nine hundred men in all, while the others turned tail and the duke secured victory on this field of battle. He took prisoner the aforesaid archbishop, Count Rainald of Geldern, Count Adolf of Nassau, who not long afterwards became King of the Romans,⁵ and many other well-known noblemen. Count Walram of Falkenburg and many

¹ Duke of Brabant 1268-94.

² Siegfried (II) of Westerberg, Archbishop of Cologne 1275-97.

³ Rainald I, Count of Geldern 1271-1320, had in 1276 married Ermengarde, only daughter and heiress of Walram V, Duke of Limburg 1246-79. However, she died in 1283 and there were no surviving children from this marriage. Count Adolf (VIII) of Berg was Walram's nephew, son of his long-deceased brother Adolf (VII), who died in 1259. The Dukes of Limburg had acquired the county of Berg through the marriage of Duke Henry IV (d. 1281) with the heiress to the county. Adolf VIII was her grandson.

⁴ Walram, Count of Ligny; the two illegitimate half-brothers were called Henry and Baldwin.

⁵ Adolf, Count of Nassau from 1276, and King of Germany 1292-8. His wife's sister was married to a brother of Archbishop Siegfried.

other nobles barely managed to escape by flight after the others were killed. The duke therefore continued the siege, received the surrender of the aforesaid castle and destroyed it, and so he achieved free and secure passage of the royal road.

In the following year the aforesaid Duke John I besieged the castle of Falkenburg, but after a friendly agreement had been made he raised the siege, for that lord of Falkenburg had done homage to the duke to obtain his grace, and while doing so he promised inviolably to respect the right of free transit for merchants.

[*Gestorum Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Trudonis Continuatio Tertia*, MGH SS x.405-6: from the 'Deeds of William II, Abbot of St. Trond 1277-97]

(b) From the 'Chronicle of the Dukes of Brabant'

In the year of our Lord 1286 Duke Henry of Limburg died without [surviving] children, and Duke John of Lotharingia acquired the duchy of Limburg by purchase from Henry's closest heir, namely count Adolf of Berg. Count Rainald of Geldern claimed that the usufructory possession of this duchy pertained to him, devolving upon him at the death of his wife, who had been the daughter of the aforesaid Duke Henry of Limburg,⁶ but who had already died before the death of her father. Since therefore Duke John of Lotharingia strove to treat the duchy of Limburg, which he had gained for himself through purchase, as though it was possessed by hereditary right, while Rainald protested that usufructory possession should be reserved for him during his lifetime, a most serious dispute arose between them, and bitter argument continued for a long time.⁷ Count Rainald of Geldern made an alliance with Archbishop Siegfried of Cologne, Count Henry of Luxemburg, Walram de Rupe (the latter's brother), and also Walram lord of Falkenburg,⁸ and organised a strong confederation against the duke of Lotharingia.

⁶ Actually grand-daughter.

⁷ For detailed discussion, see Severin Corsten, 'Der Limburgische Erbfolgekrieg an Maas und Ruhr: das Herzogtum Limburg und seine Nachbarn vor und nach der Schlacht bei Worringen', *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 124 (1988), 211-66.

⁸ Walram II, lord of Falkenburg 1252-1302.

He, however, was strong of mind and held as nothing this conspiracy of so many princes organised against him. He strove with no less determination [as theirs] to overcome them, for he invaded and most severely ravaged the lands of the archbishop and the count of Geldern, with frequent raids, plundering, arson and all sorts of harassment, and he challenged them to do battle by every means he could. On the other hand, they also invaded the lands of the duke and devastated the border regions with frequent raids and arson. After the dice of war had been thrown back and forth for a considerable time and a great deal of damage had been inflicted by each side upon the other, finally a day was appointed by intermediaries for a treaty of peace to be settled between the [two] sides. Thus Count Rainald and his men gathered at the castle of Falkenburg, which was subject to the jurisdiction of Walram, while the duke and his men were in the town of Utrecht. At this point the duke had no suspicions that his adversaries would prove untrustworthy. But suddenly it happened that Count Rainald rejected the agreed peace proposal; and on the advice of the archbishop and the others who were present he sold the duchy of Limburg for a large sum of money to Count Henry of Luxemburg. On hearing this, the duke roared like a furious lion, and taking on the spirit of a lion immediately mounted his horse and without pausing he hastened to pursue his enemies. Reckoning that they were still shut up inside the castle and were unaware [of his coming] he directed his march there at all speed. But hearing of the duke's approach through his scouts the [arch]bishop and his men fled, and to avoid capture he hastened to the safer refuge of his own land. The duke then followed the fugitive, promptly entered his land and traversed it without fear of fright, ravaging it with every sort of ill-treatment, in such a way that it was amazing that one man could accomplish this against so many within the bounds of their own lands, or even that he should have dared to perpetrate such deeds. For amid the other signs of his worth that ought to be remembered in perpetuity as a sign of his great-heartedness, he rode the horse on which he sat into the River Rhine, as a mark of his contempt and hatred for his adversaries. He had the vines of Bonn cut down, and he entered the forest of the archbishop to enjoy the hunting there, as though he had entered the lands of his enemies not through warfare but for recreation or as a guest. Thus he roused his adversaries to [even] greater envy and hatred.

After the invincible Duke of Lotharingia had performed these and other similar deeds in the lands of his enemies, Count Henry of Berg,⁹ Walram of Jülich¹⁰ and many other

⁹ He was the younger son of Count Adolf VII of Berg.

powerful noblemen of that province, along with the majority of the citizens of Cologne, joined his side, requesting that the duke lay siege, with their help and support, to the castle of Worringen, which was subject to the archbishop's lordship, and in which freebooters were customarily stationed who perpetrated robberies and plundering, and persistently wrought a great deal of harm on travellers and pilgrims were passing thereby. Once these bandits had been driven out, he would gain the whole of this land for himself, since it pertained to the duchy of Limburg, and indeed it was his right to do this through the jurisdiction of his principality. The most illustrious duke therefore agreed to these requests, and he and his men laid siege to the castle; but by doing this he further provoked Archbishop Siegfried and his followers to seek revenge for the great outrage that had been inflicted upon them, for the archbishop and his men were unable to bear such insolence from the duke. They mustered a very large army from various different parts and peoples of Germany (*ex diversis Germaniae partibus et nationibus*) and led it against the duke, all pledging themselves to take revenge for the outrages committed by him.

In the year of our Lord 1288, in the twenty-seventh year of Duke John, which are numbered with the few years that Henry his brother, together with their mother Duchess Aleida, ruled over the land,¹¹ on the day of St. Boniface, which is 5th June, Archbishop Siegfried of Cologne, Count Rainald of Geldern, Count Henry of Luxemburg, Walram his brother, and another Walram, [lord of] of Falkenburg, marched against the duke with a huge and most numerous army. They agreed together to make the attack on him and his followers with all their strength and cunning, although they reckoned that the task would be a very easy one, since he had then only a small following with him, and flight would do him no good for he would be surrounded on every side and would be unable to make his retreat from there. The duke, however, did not fear their attack. He raised the siege for the time being and unflinchingly awaited the enemy's attack, even though they were very numerous. Dividing his army here into three squadrons (*turmae*), for he learned that his enemies had done this too, he began the battle, and from the third hour of the day until the eleventh hour he fought most valiantly with the squadron under his immediate command. Both sides fought fiercely

¹⁰ Walram, Count of Jülich 1278-95, was the second son of Count William IV, who was murdered along with his eldest son William at Aachen in 1278. Walram was a consistent and bitter opponent of Archbishop Siegfried of Cologne.

¹¹ Henry IV, the eldest son of Duke Henry III of Brabant was only nine or ten when his father died, and his mother Aleida (Adelaide) of Burgundy became regent. He seems, however, to have been mentally deficient, and his mother always favoured her second son John, who was installed as co-ruler. Henry eventually entered an Augustinian priory at Dijon in 1269, where he died several years later.

and for a very long time it was doubtful who would win, or so those who saw this testify – and there were several books subsequently written about the battle of Worringen based on eye-witness testimony. Finally, however, victory was granted to the duke. For in that same battle the archbishop, the Count of Geldern, Count Adolf of Nassau who was subsequently elected King of Germany, the Count of Meurs,¹² and many other counts, knights, barons, men-at-arms and followers, fierce partisans of their side, were captured. Count Henry of Luxemburg, Walram his brother, along with two other brothers of his, most valiant knights, along with many others, both noble and ignoble, knights and followers, were put to the sword, so that it was estimated that the number of the dead from the army of the Luxumbergers, the men of Geldern and Cologne and their followers was 1100 men or more, as well as those who perished during the course of their hazardous flight. About forty men in all died in the army of the duke, the most distinguished among whom were Berthout, lord of Malines, and Anrold, lord of Zelem, a knight skilled and clever at arms – all the rest escaped unscathed and safe.

In the thirty-first year of John's ducal rule, reckoned alongside the years of Henry his elder brother, peace was made with Count Henry of Luxemburg, son of that Henry who died at the battle of Worringen. This Henry took as his wife Margaret, the daughter of Duke John of Lotharingia, a dispensation being granted by Pope Nicholas IV for them to contract matrimony, because they were related to each other in the third degree of consanguinity.¹³ ...

... Count Rainald of Geldern, who had been captured at the battle of Worringen, could not obtain release from his fetters until he surrendered into the hands of the duke that right which he had previously claimed in the duchy, and without any reservation whatsoever for his posterity. This he did, fulfilling every stipulation and swearing a most solemn and binding oath about this. So peace was made and the count was restored to his liberty, while the title of the duchy of Limburg was joined to that of the duchy of Brabant.

[*Chronica de Origine Ducum Brabantiae*, MGH SS xxv.411-13].

¹² Dirk (Dietrich).

¹³ Henry subsequently became King of Germany 1308-13, and was crowned emperor in 1312. Margaret died at Genoa in 1311.

(c) **From the ‘Chronicle of the Counts of Mark’ by Levold of Northof**

[This account is somewhat later, being written in the mid-fourteenth century. The author, Levold, was born on 5th February 1279, and became a canon of St. Lambert at Liège in 1314. He wrote his chronicle in old age, the last part of this only being completed in 1358.]

Afterwards, however, the officials of the archbishop of Cologne, who ruled castles situated close to the county of Mark, inflicted many injuries on the count and his land, the archbishop either allowing this while pretending not to, or knowing little about the matter. This young man, in whom a mighty spirit now began to stir his mind, could not be restrained, he was determined to defend himself.¹⁴ He strengthened his own men and carefully sought to secure friends and helpers. He concluded an alliance with his brother-in-law Count Adolf of Berg.¹⁵ While this was happening, and with the war now underway, the officials of Rekelinchusen, and the knight Dietrich Kigge and his associates from a castle called Ahsen, invaded the land of the count on the Sunday before Nicholas day, in December of the year of the Lord 1287, and burned and despoiled it. When the count, who was then staying at Kamen, was informed of this, he immediately rose from his dinner and ordered everyone to hasten to arms, and set out after the enemy. The latter had withdrawn to near to the castle of Ahsen. They had sent their horses before them over the River Lippe, while they awaited the arrival of the count on foot. The count manfully attacked them with only a small force, fighting bravely he was at first repulsed, but he rallied and he attacked and defeated the enemy, some of whom were drowned in the river, others captured, while only a few escaped. He [then] besieged the castle, and after a few days he captured and destroyed it. Then he organised an alliance between the duke of Brabant and the citizens of Cologne. The duke had acquired the duchy of Limburg by purchase from the aforesaid count of Berg, who claimed it for himself by right of hereditary descent after the death of the countess of Geldern, the daughter of his uncle the duke of Limburg.¹⁶ The citizens were in dispute with their lord, the archbishop, because this same archbishop had rebuilt the castle at Worringen, which he ought not to have done, and he exacted unjust tolls and inflicted many other injuries and burdens [upon them].

¹⁴ Eberhard II, Count of Mark 1277-1308.

¹⁵ Eberhard had married Irmgard, daughter of Count Adolf VII of Berg (d. 1259). They were distant cousins, since the Counts of Mark were descended from a junior branch of the original Counts of Berg.

¹⁶ See above, note 3.

Meanwhile this same Count Eberhard besieged the castle of Raffenberg, which was very close to him and a great nuisance, and attacked it with siege engines and other devices on the eve of the Lord's Ascension, on which same day the greater part of the town of Hamme was burned down.¹⁷ At last those who were within the castle were forced by want and by the other inconveniences of continuous attacks to surrender that fortification. They yielded under these terms: that it should be held, and not destroyed until the Nativity of the Lord, in case in the meanwhile a ransom might be paid for them. After the capture of the castle of Raffenberg, as described, the count ordered an expedition by his men towards the Rhineland, where the duke of Brabant had now arrived to lay siege to the castle of Worringen. The count's arrival was awaited¹⁸ daily in Cologne, for the duke felt that he could accomplish nothing in a matter of this sort without the presence of this same count. And when, despairing of his arrival, the duke had decided to retreat back to Brabant, the count arrived, and strengthened and encouraged the duke to march to the siege. So the siege was begun, while Archbishop Siegfried of Cologne and the Count of Geldern mustered their men, the most distinguished of whom were the count of Luxemburg and his brothers, the count of Nassau, the lord of Falkenburg, along with many other barons and nobles. There were on the other side at the siege the aforesaid duke of Brabant, Count Adolf of Berg, the count of Jülich, the aforesaid count of Mark, the count of Waldeck,¹⁹ and many other counts and barons, along with the citizens of Cologne, who had the greatest interest in that siege. However, the side of the archbishop and the count of Geldern had a considerable advantage in numbers and military power. Therefore, having pitched camp at Brauweiler and in the villages round about, they decided not to undertake an immediate battle, but to cross over the Rhine and place themselves between the city of Cologne and the other side's army, and thus to prevent supplies being brought to them, and to wait here until Monday for the arrival of the men of Bonn, Andernach and other places.

But lo and behold! Their plan was changed through the eagerness (*animositas*) of some of their number, and they decided 'to undertake battle on the Sabbath'.²⁰ Hence they drew up their array and marched out to fight. Battle was joined, and the whole weight of the attack was directed first against the duke of Brabant. This took place even though the battle

¹⁷ 7th May 1288.

¹⁸ The Latin phraseology comes from *Judges*, 9: 25: the AV translation is somewhat different.

¹⁹ Otto I, Count of Waldeck 1271-1305.

²⁰ *II Maccabees*, 15: 1.

line had first been drawn up so that the archbishop would fight against the men from the city of Cologne and those who were with them, the count of Geldern against the duke, and the count of Luxemburg against the counts of Berg and Mark, for all three of these divisions accidentally joined together and fought against the duke. They left the standard [wagon] behind them, and this was suddenly overthrown and broken by the unarmed servants of the count of Mark, after those who were in it had been killed, and the torn up banner was lost. This greatly damaged the archbishop's side, since while a bitter conflict was raging between the parties, some of the people of the count of Geldern, who from the start had devoted themselves not to fighting but to plunder, now had horses and saddlebags laden with the spoils which they had seized from the duke's tents. Seeing that the desperate battle was going against them and anxious not to lose their ill-gotten gains, they turned from the fight and shamefully fled; and when some of the others saw this they started to follow in their footsteps. However, others still remained steadfast, fighting manfully and bravely, until eventually victory was granted to the duke, the counts of Berg, Jülich and Mark, and the citizens of Cologne. The archbishop was captured by the count of Berg, and the count of Geldern by the duke. The count of Luxemburg was killed, along with his three brothers and the brother of the archbishop; many others were also killed for there was a terrible slaughter of the men-at-arms there. From the count of Mark's side, the knight Rutger, called Vietel, of Schwansbell, the steward, was killed. This took place on St. Boniface's day, in the year of our Lord 1288.²¹ After this the siege was resumed, and the castle surrendered and was destroyed. Then, in this same year, Count Eberhard of Mark besieged the town of Werle and forced it to surrender, and he levelled the walls and ditches. He also besieged and destroyed the castle of Volmarstein,²² which belonged to the archbishop, and did the same to the castle of Isenberg.

In August of this year, namely 1288, a son was born to the aforesaid count, named Adolf, later to be bishop of the church of Liège.²³ Archbishop Siegfried was meanwhile held prisoner in a castle of the count of Berg, which was called Neuburg.²⁴ In return for his freedom he pledged to the count the castles of Waldenberg, Rodenberg, Menden, Aspel, Wied, and some others [too], and so after some little time had elapsed he was freed and then departed. The count of Geldern was held by the duke in the castle of Bautersem, and as the

²¹ 5th June.

²² Near Hagen, about 60 km. NE of Cologne.

²³ He was bishop of Liège 1313-44.

²⁴ On the River Wupper, near Düsseldorf.

price of his freedom he abandoned [his claim to] the duchy of Limburg to the aforesaid duke of Brabant.

[*Die Chronik der Grafen von der Mark von Levold von Northof*, ed. Fritz Zschaeck (MGH SRG, n.s. 6, Berlin 1929), pp. 45-50]

(d) **From the Rhymed Chronicle of Jan Van Heelu**

[*This very long poem in Flemish was composed within a decade of the battle. The short extracts that follow give a flavour of the original. Translated from Chronique en vers de Jean Van Heelu, ou Relation de la Bataille de Woeringen, ed. J. F. Willems (Brussels 1836)*]

The large battle utterly	Die sterke bataelge al ghemene	5235
Stuck with the duke, composed as it was	Sloech toten hertoge, daer aliene	
Solely of the men of Brabant,	Die Brabantre bi waren	
Who, fighting in their units	Die doen, met hare cleinder scaren	
Pushed so hard against the enemy,	Alsoe hert drongen ieghen	
Although the struggle was unequal,	Al was die strijt onghewegen	5240
That neither they nor their leader	Datsi, noch hare here	
Were beaten into retreat.	Die hertoge, vanden achter keere	
For they were so well-ordered	Nie twint en worden ghescoffiert :	
That they remained together,	Want alsoe sterc gebattaelgiert	
However hard the enemy pushed them or charged at them.	Bleven si altoes in een,	5245
Wat mense dranc ochte ghereen,		5246
Dat nieman tote hen en voer,		
Hine hadde te Coelne dor den moer		
Alsoe wel met erachte mögen riden.		
Aise dor hen met gemake liden.		5250
Maer dats waer, dat was soe groot		
Die perse, daer mense achter croot,		
Dat dese heeren, in dien beginne,		
Van Cuyct, van Ercle, van Hoesdinne,		
Onder waenden sijn gegaen;		5255

Another followed, fleeing 6540
 With untattered banners,
 And after him a great band
 Of knights and squires without need;

He was called the lord of Keppel.
 May God condemn him 6550
 For fleeing so shamefully
 And leaving his overlord in the lurch.

Duke John had nearly achieved victory
 For he had broken through the enemy 6955

Then at last there came up,
 His allies and their troops.

They found many men facing defeat 6962
 Who would not give up or flee

But they were hard pressed
 When these men came
 To help the duke, leading their peasants.
 To back them up; 6970
 For they were being struck
 So murderously and mercilessly
 That there was no knight or sergeant

Who did not desire surrender,
 If he could have been taken for ransom
 With honour.

If the Brabançons had been left to
 Fight alone, sustaining the attack,
 The struggle would have been too hard; 7425
 But their allies joined the fight
 At that moment
 So that they could withdraw without wounds
 And without dying,
 Both peasants and lords alike, Brave and hardy, 7430
 Nevertheless the Brabançons were very relieved

For although their allies
 Had not been present in the hard fighting before,
 They captured those men who did not dare advance
 Against the swords of the Brabançons,
 Yet would not ride from the field 7440
 Although they did not dare to fight.
 These enemy had grown in confidence
 And would have continued the fight,
 For now the Brabançons were tiring,
 But this was prevented by the arrival of the two rear divisions,
 Which easily took them prisoner.