# *Introduction*

> It was not the spearmen of Troy who caused me to come over here and fight – I have no quarrel with them. [. . .] No, it was you, you great shameless creature, you we came with. [. . .] And now you even threaten to take away my prize yourself – I laboured hard for it, and it was rewarded to me by the sons of the Achaians. I never have a prize equal to yours, whenever the Achaians sack some well-founded Trojan town. My hands bear the brunt of battle's fury, but when the division comes, your prize is by far the larger.
>
> (Hom. *Il.* 1.163–171; trans. M. Hammond 1987)

In the early stages of the *Iliad*, an enraged Achilles famously questions the purpose of his presence at Troy: why are he and his soldiers risking their lives on the battlefield, when they have no stake in the war at hand and gain no share in the rewards of battle? Achilles, of course, had knowingly joined the deadly expedition in pursuit of eternal glory and yet, in doing so, he had forced his men to do the same.

The Homeric hero's desire to acquire status on the battlefield was not merely a literary trope but also the expression of a harsh reality of elite society in the Archaic and Classical Greek world, whose members' position of authority was based on their military service and status.[1] While military service may at times have been a requirement for survival, such as when war was waged in defence of the home polis, it was also enforced by the social and legal obligations that came with the right to citizenship. The problematic balance of interest between those who decided to go to war and those who had to fulfil that aim on the battlefield, as described in the *Iliad*, thus also existed beyond the poetic realm. This is clear from Demosthenes' *Second Olynthiac*, in which he addresses the issue of Athenian citizens' lack of élan for putting up resistance against the growing Macedonian threat, and draws a sharp contrast between the class of men who 'issue orders like absolute

[1] Garlan 1975b, 28–9 on yearly 'ritualistic' warfare; see also van Wees 1992; Connor 1988.



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monarchs' and 'those who have to serve in the field'.[2] Although military service was at times an arduous requirement for survival, it was also a duty enforced by societal norms, and a task that came with few to no immediate rewards for the soldiering class of citizens.

Demosthenes' concern with the Athenian attitude to military service was in part based on his polis's increased reliance on so-called 'mercenary' soldiers – troops who enlisted voluntarily and did so in exchange for remuneration. Such troops, while appreciated for their skill on the battlefield, were often considered unreliable, and Demosthenes duly suggested incorporating them only under the supervision of citizen soldiers.[3] The trope of the citizen as a better soldier – expressed, for instance, by Herodotus in his assessment of the Athenian success at Marathon[4] – endured in the historiography of later periods: Arrian's Alexander, for example, encouraged his men at the battle of the Issus in 333 by drawing a sharp contrast between them, 'free' men who fought for the interests of Greece, and the soldiers of Darius, who were 'slaves', forced to face the heat of battle in exchange for lowly pay.[5] Yet Alexander's alleged engagement with this pre-established rhetorical tradition could not have been more hollow: volunteer soldiers fighting in exchange for pay formed large numbers across all divisions of his army. Indeed, the trend towards increased reliance on such mercenary forces, which had begun in the late fifth century and was later so concerning to Demosthenes, had been amplified by the reforms of Philip II of Macedonia, and then culminated during the Successor Wars, during which the bulk of troops can be said to have enlisted of their own accord. Generous remuneration for military service, furthermore, was offered to conscript and mercenary soldiers alike. This type of service became more and more commonplace and institutionalized in later years: in the mid-third century, the Attalid ruler Eumenes I and his soldiers drew up an agreement which specified the length, remuneration, and further details of their service.[6] Soldiers who were spared Achilles' internal struggle and enlisted of their own accord and in exchange for remuneration form the core focus of this study.

This changing nature of military service needs to be seen in the broader context of the developments that engulfed the ancient Mediterranean from the rise of Macedonia onwards and fundamentally affected its social, political, and economic structures. The conquests of Alexander brought under single rule the formerly independent polis communities of the Greek

[2] Dem. *Or.* 2.30. [3] Dem. *Or.* 4.24. [4] Hdt. 5.178. [5] Arr. *Anab.* 2.7.4.
[6] Epigraphic Dossier, no. 6 = *IvP* no. 13.

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world and the Achaemenid Empire to the east for the first time. The power vacuum left upon the king's sudden death subsequently gave rise to several decades of warfare between his former generals, which eventually led to the break-up of Alexander's former vast dominion into a handful of independent kingdoms. Throughout these years, war was fought on an exceptional scale and with unmatched frequency and sophistication, producing the highly martial character of Hellenistic society.[7] However, at the same time, the period shows significant economic development, as revealed by growing monetization, increased production and trade, and improved standards of living, all of which were concomitant with a gradual integration of markets. For these reasons, recent scholarship has in fact gone as far as characterizing the Hellenistic world as 'proto-capitalist'.[8] While these developments are by now well evidenced, their underlying causes have received less attention. Yet scholarship is virtually unanimous in its acceptance of the role the military developments had to play in the period's economic transformation. The connection between the two was argued for most emphatically by Michel Austin,[9] but the link has likewise been recognized by numismatists, who attribute the period's monetization to its increased military expenditure.

The present study aims to offer a model through which these developments can be combined into a single explanatory framework, and it will do so by analysing the changing nature of military service from a labour history perspective. It will be argued that the paid soldiers of the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods ought to be conceptualized as a large-scale instance of wage labour that was sold and acquired on a labour market. Labour history focuses on the historical variances in the organization of the productive process, and thereby contributes essential insights into the broader functioning of the associated economies. Traditionally, the focus of labour historians has centred on the period following the eighteenth century's Industrial Revolution, which witnessed the appearance of a large class of wage labourers and hailed the advent of market society: dominant theories state that it was the emergence of wage labour that led to the disembedding of the economy, or else gave the impetus to the development of modern, market-based economies.[10] Despite labour history's long-standing focus on the (early) modern period, recent efforts have significantly expanded the field's chronological and

[7] Chaniotis 2005a. [8] Thus Bintliff 2012; 2013. [9] Austin 1986.
[10] See, for example, Polanyi 2002 [1944]; Wolf 1982; Hobsbawm 1996 [1962], e.g., 31–3.

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geographical horizons, and its methods and approaches have been fruitfully applied to a range of societies and periods.[11]

Labour history essentially comprises the study of labour relations; that is to say, it asks who carries out work and under what conditions. In doing so, it draws distinctions between free and unfree, waged and unwaged labour, and the numerous variations that exist on this spectrum.[12] The emerging dominant labour relations, which determine the nature of the productive process, can subsequently be used as yardsticks to uncover the structural nature and development of the economies in which they occur. For this reason, the study of labour relationships has important implications for the ongoing debate on the nature of the ancient economy, and the apparent economic transformation witnessed at the dawn of the Hellenistic age. Wage labour especially has the potential to break the gridlock that has long hindered questions on the relevance of the market to the ancient world.

Scholars of the ancient economy have, of course, long acknowledged the importance of the wage labour relationship, yet studies are often hindered by almost dogmatic adherence to either the substantivist or the formalist paradigm, thereby either denying the possibility of wage labour having developed in the ancient world, or identifying it all too willingly, whenever a payment of sorts is attested in the sources. The latter approach is perhaps too positivistic, in so far as the wage labour relationship proper constitutes more than payment alone. Instead, the worker needs to sell his labour power, measured in time, on a labour market. The focus on attestations of payment for work carried out has also led to a somewhat restrictive scope when looking for wage labour in the ancient economy, and paid work has been identified almost exclusively in sectors of infrequent activity, such as building, or in highly specialist occupations. Thus, known instances of ancient wage labour seemingly occurred on a very small scale only, and its structural impact has therefore been doubted.[13] G. E. M. de Ste. Croix's insights form a notable exception to many other studies on the theme: following judicious consideration of the nature of wage labour, he postulates that the military was the one sphere of activity which can meaningfully be said to have given rise to wage labour, specifically in the form of mercenary

[11] Hofmeester and van der Linden 2017.
[12] See, for instance, Hofmeester 2018a, 2–10; 2018b, 317–28.
[13] Schaps 2004, 150–9 offers useful discussion on the lack of 'formal' wage labour, despite the presence of payments.

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service.[14] Thus, by conceiving of military service as a form of labour, the scope of ancient labour history can be expanded significantly, while it simultaneously allows for joint study of the Hellenistic period's two most notable developments.

Since the Greek poleis generally continued to rely on unwaged conscripts, this study will necessarily focus on the soldiers of the 'royal armies' in which the changing nature of military service was most prominent. The term 'royal armies' is usually reserved for the armies of the Successors (not all of whom bore the title of king) and the Hellenistic kingdoms, but throughout the book, it will be employed as a shorthand that also includes the armies of both Philip and Alexander.

Studying the Hellenistic age with a focus on the military developments exacerbates the known problems of the epoch's formal periodization. Traditionally, the Hellenistic age spans the period from the death of Alexander in 323 to the death of Cleopatra in 30. However, the army Alexander took eastwards was largely the army created by his father in the mid-fourth century, and therefore ought to be included in the discussion. Similarly, the dates used to denote 'the age of the Successors' usually span the years 323 to *c.* 275. However, this endpoint is somewhat fictional since the different competitors achieved stable territorial claims – and thus kingdoms – at different times. Ptolemy, for instance, had a firm claim over Egypt from his appointment as satrap in 323 onwards, while the Antigonids only gained a stable territory in Macedonia and in the Greek mainland in the early 270s, after decades of campaigning in Asia and across the Aegean. Equally, Pergamon, another important power-bloc of the Hellenistic world, did not act independently until 261 when it cut ties with the Seleucid kingdom. The cut-off date of *c.* 275, therefore, falls somewhere within the years of the emergence of the various kingdoms. From a military-historical perspective, however, significant changes in the nature of service appear as soon as a Successor was settled, in so far as it allowed a return to conscription and somewhat alleviated military pressure. For this reason, the present study also addresses the nature of military service in the initial years of the territorially solidified kingdoms.

When referring to the 'late Classical' and 'early Hellenistic' periods, this study is therefore concerned with the period between 359 (when Philip II acceded as regent or king in Macedonia) down to the late third century.

[14] De Ste. Croix 1981, 182; 24–5, citing Marx's similar observation in a letter to Engels, and in relation to pay in the Roman army in the *Grundrisse*. These views are echoed by Schaps 2004, 39; see 146–9 for discussion of the Hellenistic armies specifically.

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At times, however, relevant evidence dated to later years will be adduced; the final chapter, which offers an overview of the Hellenistic economies, will refer to evidence dating to the later years of the Hellenistic age. The proposed timespan is further divided into the emergence of the Macedonian kingdom under Philip II (359–338); the accession and conquests of Alexander (338–323); the Successor Wars (323–*c*. 275); and finally, the (early) Hellenistic kingdoms (*c*. 275–*c*. 215).

Geographically, this study covers the area in which the royal armies were active – thus, the vast stretch of territory conquered by Alexander. On one level, such a considerable geographical focus is warranted because armies move around by their very nature; more importantly, however, from the Successor Wars onwards, soldiers also moved between armies, thereby acting as a homogenizing force for the terms of service offered by the various military employers. The various Hellenistic kingdoms, on the other hand, followed different trajectories in the organization of military recruitment, and accordingly an inclusive approach allows for comparison of the divergent types of service.

Chapter 1 offers an outline of the argument's context, providing a brief history of both the military and economic developments of the early Hellenistic period, *en route* addressing the problems within the current debate on the ancient economy. The chapter also problematizes the scholarly views of paid soldiers as mercenaries and delineates how they can hinder analysis of these soldiers' impact, economic or otherwise. In Chapter 2 the concept of wage labour is discussed in more detail; while highlighting its relevance to the study of socio-economic processes, previous scholarship's assessments of its existence in the ancient world are also considered. The following three chapters then analyse whether service in the royal armies can indeed be categorized as wage labour. Thus, Chapter 3 assesses the labour relations apparent in the royal armies, focusing on the soldiers' initial enlistment and subsequent terms of service, in each case distinguishing between 'conscript' and 'free' military labourers. Chapter 4 describes the types and extent of the soldiers' remuneration and evaluates the evidence on soldiers' standards of living. Chapter 5 centres on the question of whether military labour power was acquired on a labour market. It discusses the soldiers' ability to negotiate the terms of service and their seemingly profit-driven military activity, and argues that, during the wars of the Successors, competition between employers for manpower gave rise to market mechanisms that increased the price of military labour. Finally, Chapter 6 evaluates military wage labour as the catalyst of the grand economic changes of the Eastern Mediterranean, emphasizing key

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aspects of the Hellenistic economies that point towards the development of market-based economies, and relating these to the existence of military wage labourers who were active across the extent of Alexander's empire.

The main aim of this book is therefore to assess the relationship between the military and economic developments of the Hellenistic period. While this connection has been stressed by previous scholarship, by drawing on the concepts and approaches developed in the field of labour history this study hopes to provide a framework to through which this link can be better understood. It aims to show that military service in the royal armies formed a large-scale instance of wage labour, the development of which significantly impacted the economies through which these armies passed. The existence of wage labour is of fundamental importance to the emergence of market economies, and it is proposed that the changing nature of military service forms a hitherto unacknowledged, though vital, variable in the debate on the nature of the ancient economy and was in fact a key stimulus in the development of the Hellenistic economies, and thus the increasing prosperity of the dominant urban societies in the East Mediterranean area.

In doing so, my argument hopes to contribute to the current scholarship in several ways. On one level, the analysis acts as a corrective to previous scholarship on the nature of military service by problematizing the view of paid soldiers merely as mercenaries. The proposed approach of viewing military service as a form of labour allows for a more nuanced interpretation of military enlistment and subsequent terms of service while avoiding the potential negative connotations associated with the term 'mercenary'. Thus, on the other level, the book also offers a social history of military employment in the royal armies, and thereby invites us to see early Hellenistic history from a new point of view, that of the thousands of ordinary Hellenes who risked their lives and freedom in the hope of enrichment rather than in defence of their homelands.

While wage labour has been recognized as a critical variable in the debate on the nature of the ancient economy, the military has been overlooked as a potential area in which it could have developed. Substantivist and formalist theories of the economy both reserve a crucial role for wage labour and see it as the cause of disembedding or as a catalyst for further development respectively. Recognition of the emergence of large-scale wage labour at the dawn of the Hellenistic age, therefore, not only has the potential to contextualize and explain Hellenistic economic developments, but perhaps even to refocus the debate on the ancient economy towards questions of labour.

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