

Patrick Sanger, Sandra Scheuble-Reiter (eds.), *Soldner und Berufssoldaten in der griechischen Welt. Soziale und politische Gestaltungsrume*, (*Historia – Einzelschriften* 269), Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2022, 377 pp.; ISBN 978-3-515-13312-8

Mercenary military service was an established phenomenon in the Greek world since the fifth century BCE. The excellent knowledge of military arts and the scarcity of employment opportunities for a larger number of mercenary soldiers in Greece meant that the Greeks would readily leave their homeland to render their services to anyone who was prepared to pay for them, should such an opportunity arise. From the end of the Peloponnesian War until Alexander’s expedition against the Achaemenid Empire, the Greeks formed the largest contingent of mercenaries in the Persian army. Likewise, Alexander and the majority of Hellenistic monarchs also sought the Greek mercenaries’ services, with the armies of the Ptolemies, the Seleucids and others owing much of their might to them. The role of mercenaries in the Hellenistic world was first systematically discussed in G. T. Griffith’s monograph (1935), now considered a seminal work on the subject.¹ Since its publication, the subject of mercenary service in the Greek world, as well as its social and political aspects, became the research focus of scholars of Greek military history.² One of the most recent publications on this subject (2022) was the proceedings of the conference “Shaping Politics and Society—Mercenaries in the Greek World,” which took place on 3–5 October 2016 at Martin-Luther-Universitat Halle-Wittenberg. Although the proceedings’ editors point out that not all the contributions of the conference participants were included into the volume (p. 5), the fourteen chapters found inside make up a quite impressive collection.

The published contributions were divided into four thematic clusters. The first of these (“Ideologie oder Wirklichkeit: Die Dichotomie ‚Burgersoldat – Soldner‘”) comprises three chapters.³ M. Bettali analyses statements in Demosthenes’ speeches on the Athenian use of mercenary soldiers against the threat from Macedonia. It emerges that, in the orator’s opinion, the foundation of Athens’ strength should lie in a land army based

¹ G. T. Griffith, *The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World*, Cambridge 1935 (reprints: Chicago, IL 1975; Cambridge 2014). See also H. W. Parke, *Greek Mercenary Soldiers: From the Earliest Time to the Battle of Ipsus*, Oxford 1933.

² Cf. M. Launey, *Recherches sur les armees hellenistiques*, 2 vols., Paris 1949–1950; J.-Chr. Couvenhes, H.-L. Frnoux (eds.), *Les Cites grecques et la guerre en Asie Mineure  l’poque hellenistique*, Tours 2004; A. Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, Malden, Ma (USA)–Oxford (UK)–Carlton, Victoria (Australia) 2005, 78–101 (with old and modern bibliography).

³ M. Bettali, “Demosthenes, Citizen-Soldiers and Mercenaries” (pp. 29–38); L. Burckhardt, “Xenophon, Soldner und die Poleis” (pp. 39–50); S. Scheuble-Reiter, “Die Soldner und ihre Familie” (pp. 51–72).

on citizen-soldiers, since they primarily determine the strength of the state: however, Demosthenes does not deny the utility of mercenary soldiers in certain situations. In turn, L. Burckhard considers Xenophon's war experience in relation to his participation in the expedition of the Ten Thousand. Xenophon's account shows that, in the face of a common enemy, the mercenaries stood unified by their cultural values and religion but divided by their origin—so much so that their attachment to their homelands prevented the mercenaries from founding their own city. Of exceptional interest is the chapter by S. Scheuble-Reiter on mercenaries and their families, since this aspect of their service has so far received little scholarly attention. The author has collected testimonies showing that the Hellenistic rulers took care of the families of their mercenaries, both during their service and after their death. Alexander of Macedon, who showed concern for the fates of his mercenary soldiers, may have been a role model in that regard. Although the testimonies mentioned here concern individual cases, one can safely assume on their basis that similar displays of consideration by Hellenistic rulers for the families of mercenaries were hardly unique.⁴

The second group of texts (“Politische und rechtliche Implikationen: Der Söldner als Einwohner und Mitbürger”) is formed by four chapters.⁵ The first, by S. Péré-Nougès, deals with the place of mercenaries in the politics of the Sicilian tyrants between the fifth and third centuries BCE. In addition to fighting against Carthage, these mercenaries were used as colonists, ensuring that the tyrants could mobilize them whenever necessary. With their presence in the cities, however, came the problem of their integration into the local population. Although these attempts at integration assumed various forms, mercenaries in Sicilian communities were always seen as strangers (cf. pp. 83–88). In turn, Chr. Chrysaifis examines the relations between soldiers of Macedonian garrisons and inhabitants of the Greek cities in which they were stationed. As a rule, these relations tended to be bad, but at least ten instances are known where soldiers were granted local citizenship and its associated privileges (pp. 106–109). The possibility of receiving such privileges, however, was extremely rare.⁶ Quite a different picture of the mercenaries is presented by K. Zimmermann in the Asia Minor context. While the surviving sources from Asia Minor are not

⁴ “Die . . . besprochenen Beispiele gehören zwar ganz unterschiedlichen Kontexten an und werfen insofern nur ganz punktuell Licht auf das Verhältnis zwischen Soldaten samt Familien und ihren Dienstherrn. Aber dennoch ist in hellenistischer Zeit eine Entwicklung zu beobachten, die eine zunehmende Verantwortung der Könige auch gegenüber den Familien ihren Soldaten und gleichzeitig eine wachsende Abhängigkeit der Brotgeber und ihrer Streikräfte erkennen lässt” (p. 71).

⁵ S. Péré-Nougès, “Citoyenneté et mercenariat en Sicile du Ve au IIIe siècle avant J.-C.” (pp. 75–88); Ch. Chrysaifis, “Garnisonssoldaten und städtisches Milieu. Untersuchungen zur Einsetzung antigonidischer Garnisonen in den griechischen Städten” (pp. 89–109); K. Zimmermann, “Chancen und Grenzen der Inklusion. Söldnerkolonien als politisch-gesellschaftlicher Faktor im hellenistischen Kleinasien” (pp. 111–121); Chr. Van Regenmortel, “The Common Enemy of Mankind? Athenian Mercenaries and their Polis in the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Periods” (pp. 123–139).

⁶ “Im Allgemeinen war die Grundhaltung der Städte gegenüber den Garnisonen negativ. Die Soldaten blieben den Bürgern normalweise fremd und eine wirtschaftliche und soziale Last. Ihre Anwesenheit wurde von der Bürgerschaft nur akzeptiert, wenn entweder die Stadt gegenüber dem König machtlos war oder es eine große äußere Gefahr für die Sicherheit der Stadt gab und die Garnisonssoldaten zur Verteidigung der Stadt nötig waren. Die Integration ist nur unter bestimmten Voraussetzungen gelungen, wie etwa eine starke Verbindung zwischen der Stadt und dem König, der Verbrüderung einiger Soldaten mit den Bürgern infolge ihres langen Aufenthaltes oder ihrem Abfall vom König und der sich hieraus ergebenden Zusammenarbeit” (p. 105).

detailed enough to allow one to trace the fate of individual soldiers, it becomes possible with regard to larger groups. In contrast to Sicily or Greece, the relationship between civilians and mercenary soldiers in Asia Minor appears to have benefitted both sides, with the policies of the Hellenistic rulers playing an important role in the integration of soldiers into the local population. Finally, Chr. Van Regenmortel analyses a gamut of sources from Athens in the 4th century BCE and the Hellenistic period to reveal the Athenian attitudes towards mercenaries. Her findings show that the Athenians did not see mercenaries as a threat and they recognized the wealth of benefits that the mercenaries' service brought, not only to their families but also to their cities of origin.

The third group of texts ("Die Soldner als soziale Individuen und Gemeinschaften"), broadly speaking, presents testimonies that reveal the functioning of mercenary soldiers in local communities in the Middle East, Cyprus and Egypt.⁷ D. Dana has collected testimonies concerning mercenary soldiers recruited from the little-known Trales (Traleis) tribe (who served in many Hellenistic armies), using these pieces of evidence to present conclusions regarding the location of their homeland, their social organization and soldiering skills. P. Sanger, in turn, presents his observations on the nature of the so-called *politeuma* of the Greek military settlers in Sidon. In his view, this term should not be linked to the formal structure of the same name known from the Ptolemaic state but rather to a term that expressed the settlers' membership among the citizens of Greek cities.⁸ In the following chapter, Chr. Fischer-Bovet uses inscriptions carved by soldiers and officers of troops stationed in Egypt and Cyprus to make observations about the manner in which expressed loyalty to and trust in the rulers of the Ptolemaic dynasty. The practice of professing loyalty to the rulers first appeared under Ptolemy IV in Cyprus, to surface in Egypt towards the end of the reign of Ptolemy V and develop further under Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VIII. The mercenaries' dedications in honor of the deities worshipped by the local communities among whom they served also constitute an important testimony to the soldiers' attitudes. According to the author, in doing so the mercenaries wished to present themselves in the best possible light to both the rulers and the civilian population. Finally, K. Vanderpe employs papyrus documents surviving in private archives in the city of Pathyris (Thebaid) to clarify the status of Egyptian mercenary soldiers referred to as 'Persians'. This ethnonym, however, did not refer to their Persian origin but to a type of soldier called *misthophoros*. The pseudo-ethnonym most likely denoted the fact that they descended from the Greeks who had already inhabited Egypt under the Persians and served in their army. During the 2nd century BCE, the *misthophoroi* were granted fiscal privileges and received a regular salary paid by the rulers. Although formally Egyptian, they contributed to the Hellenisation of Egypt through their Greek ancestry.


⁷ D. Dana, "Les Trales (Traleis) dans les sources hellenistiques. Des communautes militaires en mouvement" (pp. 143–164); P. Sanger, "Some Considerations about the Ethnic *Politeumata* of Sidon" (pp. 165–174); Chr. Fischer-Bovet, "Ptolemaic Soldiers in Egypt and Cyprus: Loyalty and Trust in Dedicatory Inscriptions" (pp. 175–196); K. Vanderpe, "'Persian' Mercenaries with Egyptian Traditions and Hellenizing Intentions. On Native Soldiers in Ptolemaic Thebaid" (pp. 197–207).

⁸ "For even we refuse to relate the Sidonian groups of Greek soldiers to the Ptolemaic institution of the *politeuma*, we do have a strong sign of these groups' identity: the simple usage of the term *politeuma*. By just emphasizing that they represent the citizenry of their hometown, these groups of soldiers define themselves as bodies with a particular ethnic or, perhaps better, civic identity. To convey this message, they did not need to be formally organized" (p. 174).

The chapters that make up the final part of the work (“Grundsätzliche Perspektiven bzw. Perspektivwechsel”) have a somewhat different character, with their authors offering a more general view on the problem of mercenaries in the Greek and Persian world.⁹ N. Sekunda proposes criteria for distinguishing between two categories of mercenary soldiers usually referred to by this name (*misthophoroi*). One subcategory was what he called ‘retained’ mercenaries (*xenoi*), with soldiers in this category serving under individual contracts. Into the other subcategory he included troops supplied by allies (*symmachoi*) on the basis of a bilateral contract paid by the served side (pp. 231–232). Another look at the issue of mercenaries from a Persian perspective is offered by Chr. Tuplin. Having analyzed the sources, Tuplin stresses that the Persians hired mercenaries both among the Greeks and the other peoples of their empire. Having compiled available data on the presence of mercenaries in the Persian state, he drew up mercenary lists sorted according to the graded plausibility of the relevant evidence: attestation certain, highly probable, probable, very possible, possible, feasible (pp. 247–255). The final chapter by H. Klinkott also addresses the nominal status of mercenary soldiers in the Achaemenid army, concentrating on the correctness of this designation. In his opinion, mercenaries (commonly understood as a temporary class) did not exist in the Persian army: although the Persian monarchs hired the mercenaries due to their fighting skills, they made efforts to incorporate them permanently into the social fabric of the empire and thus reap the resultant social and political benefits.¹⁰

The proceedings under review demonstrate that the sweeping conclusions previously made about mercenaries in the Hellenistic and Persian world are not always borne out in the light of more detailed research, as made evident by authors of the contributions found within the volume. In the light of their conclusions, the mercenary military service matters not only when discussing armies: it bears great relevance to political, social and economic phenomena. The assessed collection also broadens the knowledge of the Hellenistic period through a number of original observations made possible through the authors’ use of new sources, unavailable to earlier generations of scholars, and their skillful interpretation of the data drawn from the works of ancient authors. Any scholar of ancient Greek and Persian military science should treat this collection as an essential reference work.

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⁹ N. Sekunda, “‘Retained’ Regiments of Mercenaries and Symmachic Contingents” (pp. 211–233); Chr. Tuplin, “Mercenaries in the Greek World: A Persian Perspective” (pp. 235–255); H. Klinkott, “Söldner, Siedler und Soldaten? Zum Status von und Umgang mit multiethnischen Streitkräften im Achaimenidenreich” (pp. 257–287).

¹⁰ “Meines Erachtens ist deutlich geworden, dass es im Achaimenidenreich aus Sicht der Perser die Kategorie der Söldner nicht gab. Vielmehr sah man in ihnen wohl militärische Spezialisten, die dauerhaft in den Reichsverbänden kämpften, nach ihrer Waffengattungen und weniger nach ethnischer Zusammensetzung geordnet waren, die regulären Sold empfangen, sei es in Silber oder Land, die unabhängig von ihren Heimatländern im Reichsgebiet angesiedelt wurden und dort durch ihre dauerhafte, auch soziale Integration für eine Stabilisierung des Landes sowie eine permanent verfügbare Streitmacht sorgten” (p. 287).