

## INTRODUCTION

IN an age of specialists it is not easy to imagine a time when soldiers were not a special class of men who made fighting their profession. The historical tradition of modern Europe tells us that fighting is done by soldiers, and it is only comparatively recently that whole nations have been cajoled and coerced to arms. The profession is now occasionally open to almost every member of a modern state; but it is important to realize that it is only a re-opening that has recently taken place. The Greeks of the fifth century B.C. found no room in their economy for the specialist soldier. When Greek cities went to war every man did what he could, and in the two great wars which form for most people an introduction to Greek history, specialists play an insignificant part. When they do make an appearance they have little in common with the modern specialist. The professional soldier of a modern regular army is a highly respectable member of society: but the professional soldiers of the ancient world were mercenaries. The very name is equivocal, carrying with it associations romantic perhaps, but certainly shady as well.

The mercenary soldier is to be found in almost every highly organized society, and is not quite extinct from our own. To produce him three conditions are necessary: first, a war, or the prospect of a war; second, a person (or a community) willing and able to pay somebody else to fight for him; third, a man who is either so poor, or so desperate, or so adventurous, that he is willing to risk his life for a livelihood in a cause that means nothing to him. For Greek and Hellenistic history in general the first condition may be regarded as constant. The other two must clearly depend on social and economic factors which are unlikely to have remained static during a period of some hundreds of years. Poverty, despair and love of adventure are suggested as the motives most likely to induce a man to become a mercenary. The purely adventurous motive must be comparatively rare, and confined chiefly to wealthy *dilettanti* such as Antimenidas of Mytilene or Xenophon the Athenian; for, generally speaking,

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Greek civilization never produced a leisured class of people who might occasionally prefer to do something dangerous rather than do nothing at all. The desperate man was perhaps more frequent; for the name should embrace most of those in every Greek city (and they seem to have been many) who were at variance with the existing government, and became exiles from their homes and possessions: and there were always, presumably, men like the lover in Theocritus who had their reasons for wishing to sleep with the brave as soon as they might. But in the case of most mercenary soldiers sheer poverty was probably the ruling motive. In a country so poor as Greece individual poverty was not a rare or strange occurrence, and it is clear from a casual reading of Greek history that it required no unexpected or extraneous influence, but merely the most ordinary sociological developments, the normal increase of population or the normal tendency of the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer, to make the circumstances of the many unendurable. It seems to have been in such circumstances that mercenary service became most prevalent, and the study of mercenaries in the classical age of Greece is perhaps most interesting in so far as it illustrates the changes in the economic state of Greece from the lifetime of Solon to that of Isocrates.<sup>1</sup>

But however many poor men there might be at any given time desirous of earning their living as soldiers, they needed also somebody to employ them, and the political system of Greece as a whole was not likely, unless in exceptional circumstances, to find employment for large armies of mercenaries. The Greek city states differed from the Italian cities of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D. in two important particulars. In the first place, the citizen of a Greek city accepted it as his duty to fight in person for his city in time of war: this duty seems to have been unquestioned at least until after the Peloponnesian War, and if the rule became relaxed in the fourth century (as it certainly was at Athens in the life of Demosthenes), it is still easy to see why Greek warfare never became, as did Italian warfare, almost entirely an affair of mercenary armies. It was a question of money. Even Athens could not afford to pay large standing

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Parke, pp. 228 sqq. for a good summary, relating the increase in mercenary service especially to a decline in agriculture.

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armies, as we can see from the shifts made by her generals to pay the mercenaries whom she did employ; and where Athens failed it is certain that no other city could succeed. There was really only one condition under which cities could employ mercenaries copiously, namely when they happened to be under the rule of a tyrant, when the employer was in fact not the city but the tyrant himself. A tyrant often needed mercenaries for his own security; he was often a man of some private wealth originally, and he had a means of raising money which was denied to constitutional governments, by confiscating the property of his political opponents. But if the conditions generally prevailing in Greece were responsible for this limitation, there was also, outside Greece itself, another class of employer which seldom failed, the class represented by “Gyges πολύχρυσος” and his successors, the great kings who reigned in Asia and Egypt. They had the wealth of the East behind them, but the Greek infantry was better than any that the East could produce. The first certain reference to Greek mercenaries that we possess is in connection with a king of Egypt, and Greek soldiers continued to find service abroad almost continuously from the age of Psammetichus and Gyges to that of the later Seleucids and Ptolemies. With regard to employers in Greece itself, the “age of the tyrants” was an episode and nothing more; and even the tyrants were not great employers, according to later standards. The Greek cities of the fifth century fought their own battles, and it may be significant that economically the period of “the fifty years” was perhaps the nearest approach to a golden age that the Greeks ever knew. The mercenaries of the Peloponnesian War were not numerous, in fact it is to be doubted whether at any time, even during the siege of Syracuse, there were more than three or four thousand in action at one time. And if we are to accept Xenophon’s own account of his comrades on the expedition of Cyrus, it becomes probable that at the turn of the century it was still not so much the economic cause as personal reasons which induced men to seek their fortune as soldiers over the sea.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking generally, however, there is probably nothing nearer to a single cause of the increase of mercenaries in the fourth

<sup>1</sup> Xen. *Anab.* vi. 4. 8.

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century than the Peloponnesian War itself, which went far towards creating a demand while it certainly provided the supply. One ancient authority noticed the connection between the thirty years of almost continuous warfare and the prominence after it of mercenary soldiers.<sup>1</sup> The habit and discipline of war were there: and it was not long before they were reinforced by hard necessity. As early as 380 B.C. Isocrates draws a gloomy picture of the economic state of Greece, which includes “many compelled through want of daily bread to serve as mercenaries”.<sup>2</sup> We are to conclude that the thirty years of war had served a double purpose; besides having created a population of soldiers they had undermined the prosperity of the country, such as it had been. There then is our supply. The demand may be traced, though less obviously perhaps, to the peculiar strategy of the war. The Greeks had been accustomed to settle their differences quickly with a battle in the open; but here they saw a new kind of war, a war in which the one side could not fight on sea, and the other would not fight on land. The protagonists for the most part refused to come forward on the stage to perform their parts, but confined themselves to scuffling and skirmishing in the wings—in distant theatres of war such as Acarnania, Thrace and Sicily. To warfare of this kind the citizen hoplite was not remarkably well suited, and we find Athens especially, doubtless as the richer of the two chief combatants, beginning to employ foreign auxiliaries, who showed the way to the light infantry and guerilla tactics of the fourth century. In view of the economic cause, which undoubtedly became paramount later, it may have been just as well that “Periclean strategy” came when it did, since it was probably of the highest importance in suggesting a demand for greater specialization in the art of war.

But the effect was not to make the warfare of the fourth century more decisive, or more interesting to the student. If the object of strategy is to destroy the enemy’s resistance, then there can seldom have been less successful soldiers than the Greeks of the fourth century, with very few exceptions. Perhaps the best example of wastefully indecisive operations is provided by the many Athenian expeditions to Thrace and the Hellespont between 370 and 340 B.C.: little was ever accomplished, and

<sup>1</sup> Diod. xiv. 23. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Isoc. iv. 167 sqq.

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most of the details have (mercifully) not survived. It was for fighting of this kind that the mercenary was best adapted, especially as the reformed peltast of Iphicrates had become probably the model for mercenaries in general: the mistake of Diodorus—"after him hoplites were called peltasts"—has obviously some foundation in fact.<sup>1</sup> The surprising thing is, that in spite of the changed conditions of war, the prolonged and indecisive campaigns of foray and retreat in place of the decisive battle, no new tactical development should have appeared. The "Iphicratid" peltast by himself, no less than the hoplite by himself, reduced war to a stalemate. The lessons of the *Anabasis* were not put to use: it was forgotten how Cyrus had been ruined by his weakness in cavalry; how it had been found possible to use slingers and archers as a defence against cavalry, and to manœuvre and attack in open order as well as in phalanx; how Xenophon had experimented with the idea of a reserve.<sup>2</sup> More signs of the inventive spirit were shown during the one year of the adventures of the Ten Thousand than in ten years of manœuvres and fighting by the standing army of Jason or of the Phocians. Longer campaigns and professional soldiers should have meant the speedier conclusion of a war, but in fact they did not. In fairness it must be said that there is no evidence for thinking that wars were "arranged". In this period fighting still meant fighting, and not merely manœuvring for advantage with a view to the enemy's surrendering, as was the rule of Italian *condottieri*, and in a lesser degree of Greeks in the wars of the Successors. Moreover, when the real crisis arrived, the Greek city states could still put their citizen armies into the field, and it was still the citizen hoplite who won or lost the day at Leuctra, Mantinea and Chaeronea: there is nothing to suggest that any important part was played by mercenaries in the three great battles of the fourth century in Greece.

When war became a profession, it created a specialist class to follow it. Class is perhaps hardly the right word, for its specialists varied widely in character, from the theorist Dionysodorus "who professed to teach the whole duty of a general",<sup>3</sup> to the

<sup>1</sup> Diod. xv. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Xen. *Anab.* iii. 3. 16 sqq.; 4. 19 sqq.; vi. 5. 9 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> Xen. *Mem.* iii. 1. 1 sqq.

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“Recruiting Officer” of Menander. Dionysodorus was a professor and no more, and had more in common with the sophists than with the soldiers; but we can see a practical edition of him in the Zacynthian Phalinus acting as military adviser to Tissaphernes,<sup>1</sup> and the next step from the lecture-room towards the battlefield is illustrated by the Theban Coeratadas, “who was going round Greece not because he was an exile, but wishing to be a general and advertising in the hope that some city or nation might need a general”.<sup>2</sup> Such a man was a novelty in 400 B.C. What would Xenophon have said to the career of Charidemus, who began as a common slinger, and became successively pirate captain, *condottiere*, secretary of state and son-in-law to a Thracian prince, citizen and general of Athens, refugee at the court and camp of Darius III? We meet too with a professional officer of mercenaries, an Athenian called Astyphilus; and the experience of the Phliasians who found themselves without a commander and picked one up at Prasiae (an insignificant place), suggests that there were many such officers to be found.<sup>3</sup> As for the common soldiers, everything points to their being the poorest of the poor:<sup>4</sup> on one occasion some Athenian rowers deserted in order to become soldiers.<sup>5</sup> And though Jason might boast that, whereas each city could point to but few men in the prime of physical condition, his army contained none but the best, it may be that the average force of mercenaries, recruited from vagrants and paupers, was not nearly so well fitted to fight as the citizens who stayed at home.<sup>6</sup>

The effect, then, of mercenary service upon the warfare of the Greeks before Philip was to make it less stereotyped perhaps, but also less decisive; and it was reflected in no innovations worthy of the name in strategy or tactics. Its effect on the economic situation may have been more useful, in spite of the contemporary opinion that it was an unmitigated evil. Did it never occur to Isocrates, for one, that if many of the floating population had not been absorbed by mercenary service, they would either have been a burden on the resources of their cities,

<sup>1</sup> Xen. *Anab.* ii. 1. 7 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vii. 1. 33 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> Isaeus ix. 14 sqq.; Xen. *Hell.* vii. 2. 2 sqq.

<sup>4</sup> Isoc. ix. 76; iv. 167 sqq., 144 sqq.; *Ep.* ii. 9; Demosth. xxiii. 139, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Demosth. 1. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Xen. *Hell.* vi. 1. 5 sqq.

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or else they would have starved? It is hard to compute the numbers of mercenaries serving in an average year: Diodorus' figures would make more than 50,000 take part in the wars of Artaxerxes Ochus;<sup>1</sup> but even if we suppose him to exaggerate greatly, and take 50,000 as the total number of mercenaries in the service of all paymasters at that time, this number must have been a useful relief to the indigent populations of Greece. That such a relief should be necessary at all was of course deplorable, and for this state of affairs Isocrates, as usual, had a remedy. A favourite dream of his was the crusade against Persia: he proposed to give Greece a fresh start by shifting the economic centre of gravity farther east, and including in the Greek world the western provinces of the Persian empire. The crusaders were to be the mercenaries, and when they had won their battles they were to found cities in the newly acquired lands and so at once form a bulwark for Greece against the barbarian and rid themselves of their own disabilities.<sup>2</sup> Isocrates did not live to see his dream come true, but it did, in a sense, come true with the conquests of Alexander. Had Alexander lived to give stability to the Greek empire of the East, it is possible that Isocrates' panacea would have been realized. Alexander died, but he had lived long enough to revolutionize the world of mercenaries (one of his less spectacular achievements, but real and interesting nevertheless). Mercenaries had crept into the warfare of Greece and stayed there, inglorious and perhaps unwanted. Inglorious they remain in the Hellenistic age, but after Alexander they do form part of a military system, which for want of a better name may be called the Macedonian system. The focus of interest shifts in the main from the Greek cities to Macedonia and the Graeco-Macedonian kingdoms of the Hellenistic world, and to understand the change one must begin at the beginning, with the Macedonia of Philip and Alexander.

<sup>1</sup> Diod. xvi. 41 sqq.; cf. Parke's table.

<sup>2</sup> Isoc. v. 122.

## CHAPTER I

PHILIP AND ALEXANDER<sup>1</sup>

THE early history of the Macedonians is no more than a succession of isolated events, points of contact with Greek history, when Macedonia is drawn for a moment inside the more intimate circle of Greek politics. Such a record is, for this inquiry, of a purely negative value. It tells us that in 423 B.C. Perdiccas recruited Illyrian mercenaries for a campaign with Brasidas against the Lyncestians; that in 368 B.C. Pausanias, a pretender to the throne, captured several towns with the help of a force of Greek mercenaries, and was driven from the country by Iphicrates in the service of Queen Eurydice; that in the same year Ptolemaeus persuaded the mercenaries of Pelopidas to change sides, presumably taking them into his own service.<sup>2</sup> But this does not go far towards proving that mercenaries were in common use from the reign of Perdiccas onwards, especially when all the arguments from probability point in the opposite direction. For Macedonia never cut any great military figure; indeed the little that we know suggests that her wars must have been waged principally by her national army of nobles, who were the cavalry, and peasants, who were the infantry, ill equipped and untrained, incapable of permanent achievement and occasionally inadequate even for the defence of their country. Frequent dynastic troubles may have been the occasion for an ambitious candidate to the throne, such as Pausanias, to hire soldiers from abroad. But Macedonia was a backward country, and that is to say a country of peasants and landowners, with few cities, no industries, no overseas trade, none of the advantages which make for wealth. The king himself was merely the biggest landowner, and it may be taken for certainty that no king anterior to Philip, son of Amyntas, was ever rich enough to support a regular army of foreign mercenaries.

<sup>1</sup> In view of Parke's excellent chapters on this period, I have thought it best to condense my own to a minimum, comprising only what is necessary as an introduction to the Hellenistic system.

For Alexander's mercenaries the material is collected by H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich*, pp. 130 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Thuc. iv. 124. 4; Aeschines ii. 27 and 29; Plut. *Pel.* 27. 3.



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When Philip came to the throne in 359 B.C. he became the ruler of a country “enslaved to the Illyrians”; which means probably that the Illyrians were in possession of the western half of what we may call Greater Macedonia, that is, Macedonia as Philip ultimately left it. One of the natural consequences of his position was that his supply of Macedonian soldiers was circumscribed. The first known figures give him 10,000 infantry and 600 cavalry for his campaign of 358 B.C. against the Illyrians, which may well represent a full levy from the population under his control.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that he was too poor as yet to employ mercenaries, for earlier in the same year he had captured some mercenaries of the Athenian general Mantias, and had released them on parole instead of taking them into his own service.<sup>2</sup> But there is little doubt that Philip realized from the first how powerful a weapon might be forged from the native material of his country, a hardy and plentiful population, and it seems to have been in the very first year of his reign that he began to execute the military improvements which transformed his native infantry from light-armed auxiliary troops into a world-famous infantry of the line, the Macedonian phalanx.<sup>3</sup> The expansion of Macedonia was reflected in a phalanx more powerful numerically, and of an ever increasing effective value by reason of its constant exercise in campaigns which almost always ended in victory. Philip was creating, what no Greek city could ever begin to create, a large army which should combine a trained and specialized efficiency with the fire of national spirit and racial patriotism, at once the seasoned professional and the enthusiastic amateur of war.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Diod. xvi. 1. 3; 4. 4. They are called ἐπιλέκτους = perhaps all who were properly trained and armed?

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 3. 6. There is a story, of slight historical value, in Carystius Pergamenus 1 (*F.H.G.* iv. p. 357), that Philip spent some time before his accession to the throne in 359, in living on his own lands διατρέφων δ' ἑνταῦθα δύναμιν: if there is any truth in this at all, the force that he kept must have been one of mercenaries, but it cannot have been of any great importance.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 3. 1 sqq. Diodorus lumps together these reforms, of which his description is sufficiently vague, into the year 359–358 B.C. In reality they are much more likely to have been spread over several years, beginning with the first year of his reign.

<sup>4</sup> It is assumed that the main divisions of the Macedonian army (phalanx, hypaspistae, “companion” cavalry, etc.) are sufficiently well known: for a *résumé* cf. Parke, pp. 155 sqq.

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The step in Philip's advance which should, for our special purpose, perhaps be regarded as the most important of any, is his capture of Amphipolis in 357 B.C. The importance of Amphipolis lay in its position controlling the approach to the goldfields of Mount Pangaeus, where under Philip's direction the mines began to be worked more energetically than they had ever been worked before.<sup>1</sup> The possession of money meant that he need never be short of soldiers for the projects and enterprises to which he was prompted by the widening circle of his ambition. The nearest Greek source may have been the Chalcidice, famous for its peltasts in Xenophon's day, so that as early as 382 B.C. a Spartan general could send word to a Macedonian king to recruit mercenaries against his arrival.<sup>2</sup> Another possible source was Illyria, though Illyrian mercenaries are not to be found mentioned by name from the time of Perdikkas (423 B.C.) to that of Alexander. But soldiers from Greece too would not be lacking to the king with the greatest resources in Europe. The first certain notice of mercenaries in his army belongs probably to the year 352 B.C., when he captured the city of Pharcedon in Thessaly with their aid,<sup>3</sup> but their presence may also be suspected in the disastrous Thessalian campaign of the previous year, when Philip, severely defeated by the Phocian general Onomarchus, nearly lost control of his men, who were demoralized and ready to desert.<sup>4</sup> It was at this same period that the Athenian general Chares feasted the citizens in the market-place to celebrate a victory over the mercenaries of Philip.<sup>5</sup> They certainly provided a part if not the whole of the Macedonian army of occupation in Phocis, which the Phocians were obliged to support (perhaps finding pay as well as billets) at the end of the Sacred War (346 B.C.).<sup>6</sup> They appear several times in the next few years; reinforcements to Messene and Argos (344),<sup>7</sup> at Megara, and in Euboea, where it is possible to discover no fewer than four separate forces of mercenaries, one of them commanded by the

<sup>1</sup> Diod. xvi. 8. 6 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Xen. *Hell.* v. 2. 38 (Teleutias to Amyntas).

<sup>3</sup> Polyaeus iv. 2. 8; cf. Diod. xvi. 35. 3. This is the commonly accepted date, but I think the capture of Pharcedon may really be some years later.

<sup>4</sup> Diod. *ibid.* 1.

<sup>6</sup> Demosth. xix. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Theopomp. frag. 241 (Ox.).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* vi. 15.