

BOOK REVIEWS

Fighting for a Living. A Comparative History of Military Labour 1500–2000. Ed. by Erik-Jan Zürcher. [Work Around the Globe: Historical Comparisons and Connections, Vol. 1.] Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013. 688 pp. € 79.00.

“Since work is performed in countless different ways and conditions, it is much more difficult to say anything general about it than about highly organized systems such as industry or capitalism” –or the military, one might add in response to Jürgen Osterhammel’s judgement in *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*.¹ The present edited book is the first volume in a new series, *Work Around the Globe: Historical Comparisons and Connections*, launched by the Amsterdam-based International Institute of Social History to investigate the global history of labour relations. The focus on military labour is a well-thought-out starter’s signal bound to raise interest in both the series and a theme that is not an obvious choice for labour history research: the divide between civil and military still runs deep in the academic field. It is the self-confessed ambition of the editor Erik-Jan Zürcher and of the editorial board of the series to stimulate the overdue exchange between disciplines.

The volume has been well prepared, being the result of a number of workshops and conferences, and it has been put together in an exemplary fashion. The resulting weighty tome (685 pages, including a bibliography of 47 pages, no index and figures) is structured as follows. There are twenty articles providing a global longitudinal study and a set of shared questions, i.e. comparable features (thematic cross sections). Geographically, the focus is on the historical development within a Eurasian belt stretching from north-western Europe to China, plus the United States. The periodization is conventional: from early modern times (“Western History Standard Time”) to the present. The reasons for this choice, or – in other words – the neglect of most world regions, are obvious. The area and time in question benefits probably from the best researched intersection of global, social, military, and labour history, and is thus a good starting point for a comparative history and an analysis of historical connections. For this purpose, the global review comprises four distinct zones of empires and emerging modern states: China (two contributions); India (3); the Ottoman Empire (3); Russia (1); and – with nine contributions in total – the warring states of Europe, represented by Great Britain (4), France (1), the Netherlands (1), and Italy (1); while Central Europe (1650–1750) and Western Europe (1500–1790) are generalized, with one overview article each. The all-volunteer forces of the United States and a review essay on private contractors complete the panorama in the present. With four papers, the British case study is unusual. It serves as an example of a maritime empire with an exceptional catchment area for recruiting soldiers, reaching from the domestic and “inner” colonial frontier of Ireland and Scotland to the outer colonial areas of New England and the Indian colony. While the concentration on armies and the exclusion of naval forces in this volume are explained by the editor (a special issue on the topic has already been announced), an additional paper on naval

1. Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (New Jersey, 2014), p. 673.

labour would have helped in understanding the transcontinental network of the British recruiting system. Moreover, it would have complemented the presentation of the highly differentiated military labour market by offering a maritime angle. Nevertheless, the book's structure, emphasizing as it does developments in military systems and labour relations over the *longue durée* – from Ming to Qing China for example – allows for a convincing account and global chronology of the area presented.

The compendium's "thematic or systematic cross-cutting", however, is less conclusive. In his introduction – a helpful "how to read" manual, especially for non-military historians – the editor refers to the need for a common taxonomy. One axis of this overarching section is the discussion of John Lynn's four basic army types (the feudal, the aggregated contract, the state commission, and the conscript army); the other axis relates to three basic labour relations (reciprocal, tributary, commodified). Lynn's typology, one of several propositions in military history research, is modelled on the Western European case and is implicitly teleological. Even adapted to global comparisons, it oversimplifies the huge variations, the heterogeneity, and the "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous" (Ernst Bloch) of an uneven global-temporal development in military affairs. Worldwide tendencies are hard to trace, particularly in military labour relations. This is a critique also voiced by some of the authors assembled here. Other authors seem to reject Lynn's model by using different classifications, such as "the fiscal-military state" (of eighteenth-century Europe, originally proposed by John Brewer). This important discussion sheds light on another factor. This study provides a multitude of well-argued examples for the "hidden agenda" of the emergence of the modern state. Armed forces are the essential manifestation of state structures. All authors refer, in one way or another, to the nexus of state-building and military, which is probably the most important factor in the making of military labour relations in the long run.

This book raises a fundamental question, the scope of which transcends the area and timeframe opted for. Does the military "work"? Is war service a form of labour? The book convincingly argues that soldiering is a specific case of increasingly standardized labour processes, but one characterized by a particularly high degree of consciousness. Soldiering is therefore professional work, which embeds the military in society.

In his preface, Marcel van der Linden asserts that "until now, military historians and labour historians inhabited separate worlds" (p. 9). This might apply more to labour historians than to historians of the military. Since the 1950–1960s, the latter have stopped treating the military as a subject apart, a small backwater attracting only members and friends of the armed services studying battles and campaigns, strategies and tactics, weapons and equipment, as art for art's sake. The history of technology, political, social, economic, and, yes, "labour" history have burst their way into the analysis of the conduct of war and the histories of armed forces. The complex of recruiting, training, and financing – the logistics of martial manpower – have become a natural and central field of interest within the "New Military History", which has a keen interest in the overall process of attracting, selecting, and appointing candidates for "jobs" in the military by force, by legal obligation, through hiring, or voluntarily.

Most of the contributors adhere to this paradigm of recruiting and they have simply renamed the phenomenon "military labour". Yet another group followed the approach of a general labour market for their specific chapter of military history. This is not to be seen as a devaluation of the joint venture, but rather as a promising indicator for further fruitful collaboration. All authors have expertise in military history, some are even well-known veterans of the discipline. The unbalanced gender ratio of sixteen male to five female authors

may thus be interpreted as a sign of an evolving interest among female scholars, rather than as a particular bias of this volume.

At this point, questions about the future should be raised. Having read all these insightful articles, one is left wondering wherein lies, or could lie, the genuine value added by labour history that has not already been integrated into military history research, such as Peter Way's moderate Marxist research interest in capitalistic civil-military labour market relations on a global scale (in this very volume). Labour history has been mostly eclectic (or, expressed positively, open to innovation, modification, and renewal) and it has played an important role in historiographical debates such as history from below or gender. This is also true for military history and its new scholarship, which has been able to go beyond certain classic works and their specific bottleneck of methodology. Nonetheless, military and civil labour will always be of quite a different nature, even if you label soldiers "artisans of war". One way to solve this conundrum could be the tertium comparationis. There are many examples in civil-military labour history of a quality that two phenomena which are being compared have in common, such as "refusal to work" or "protest", and a comparison could help identify the fundamental difference between "desertion" on the one hand and "strike" on the other. Another candidate is "mobility" as civil or military migration or work-related translocation – even in campaigns. Military service as "forced labour" (conscription or impressment) – a recurring topic of the volume – could be more systematically compared with "civil forced labour" (indentured servants, serfdom or even slavery).

This book is a valuable state-of-the-art compendium of military labour for military historians and a strong invitation to labour historians to further set aside their prejudices and open up their specific research question of work in the light of military affairs.

Thomas Kolnberger

University of Luxembourg
Campus Belval, Maison des Sciences Humaine
11, Porte des Sciences, L-4366 Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg
E-mail: thomas.kolnberger@uni.lu
doi: 10.1017/S0020859016000262

Networks and Trans-Cultural Exchange. Slave Trading in the South Atlantic, 1590–1867. Ed. by David Richardson and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva [Atlantic World, Vol. 30.] Brill, Leiden [etc.] 2015. xvi, 278 pp. Maps. € 110.00; \$142.00.

This edited collection has two broad objectives. One is to provide a comprehensive overview of the slave trade in the South Atlantic, here defined as an integrated commercial system. The other is to approach this subject from a cultural angle and to examine "the mixing of ideas, institutions and people across cultural boundaries" (p. 1) that took place during the slave trade. These cross-cultural exchanges supposedly resulted from, but also underpinned, commercial interactions in the South Atlantic. The book delivers on the first promise admirably, but less so on the second.

As the editors, David Richardson and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, explain in their introduction, slave trade circuits in the South Atlantic were integrated by distinct wind and ocean