Military-Civilian Interactions in Early Roman Palestine and the Gospel of Mark

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emmanuel College and the Biblical Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael’s College

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Abstract

Despite the rise in academic interest about the Roman imperial context of early Christian writings, the social-historical question of the military in Palestine has remained almost entirely neglected by biblical scholars. When the topic is discussed, it makes use of broad stereotypes that seem more to serve a normative function condemning contemporary imperialism than a careful examination of data from antiquity. The present thesis aims to rectify this problem in three stages.

The first part aims to contextualize the Gospel of Mark as specifically as possible, suggesting a provenance of Capernaum in Galilee in the mid-70s CE. A precise consideration of Mark’s provenance is a necessary starting point if one is to make claims about the evangelist’s experience with men of the military. The second part offers a thorough account of the military in early Roman Palestine, attending both to Mark’s compositional context (i.e., post-War Galilee) and the context which Mark depicts (i.e., Palestine 20s and 30s CE). This part has chapters encompassing both the demographic makeup of the military in Palestine and their function. The third part of the dissertation begins with consideration of three theories of violence that may elucidate Mark’s interactions with the military: Slavoj Žižek’s work on objective-structural violence, Pierre Bourdieu’s work on symbolic violence, and Michel Foucault’s work on violence and subjectivation. These theories are then deployed in the interpretation of Mark, drawing
attention to how the military not only features at several pivotal moments in the Gospel, but
looms in the background in many other locations. Here, it is shown that Mark is ambivalent
about the military in a manner typical of his context: low-level officers are depicted positively,
whereas common soldiers are understood as cruel bullies.
Acknowledgments

Labour, whether intellectual or otherwise, never occurs in a vacuum. Leif Vaage, who has supervised my studies throughout my doctoral program, has been beyond helpful every step of the process. My initial interest in the military of first-century Palestine first came about in his seminar on the Sayings Gospel Q, wherein I found myself drawn to The Healing of the Centurion’s Slave (Q 7:1-10). Leif’s encouragement, insight, and advocacy on my behalf are only the most obvious instances of how he has aided me in my time in Toronto; if I had been paired with any other supervisor, it is difficult to imagine that they would have played a more substantial role in my studies than Leif has. Other professors in Toronto have helped in different ways, including Terry Donaldson, John Kloppenborg, Scott Lewis, Colleen Shantz, and Natalie Wigg-Stevenson. Their conversations, support, and feedback are deeply appreciated. Thanks also to William Arnal for partaking in the defense as an external examiner – my beard expresses thanks to him for his role in its genesis.

Others at Toronto also deserve to be mentioned, especially John Egger, who has been a loyal friend and dialogue partner since my first days in Toronto. John was immensely helpful in navigating Emmanuel College and the biblical studies program at Toronto. His willingness to engage whatever strange ideas came to my mind has helped act as a preliminary quality control for this dissertation. Also at Emmanuel College, Dianne Everitt, Kieren Williams, Trent Voth, Ren Ito, Lelia Fry, Jen Weetman, and Allison Murray deserve thanks for their support and in some cases for feedback on the contents of this thesis. At TST’s “cousin” of UofT’s Department for the Study of Religion, Michelle Christian has graciously provided feedback and I am indebted to her knowledge of coinage and economy. Several residents at Knox College have been important support and conversation partners in the writing process, most especially Helen Baxter, Bill Wu, and Tianna Uchacz. Thanks also to Robert Peacock and Matt Eaton for their help with research concerning the battle of Xin-Shalast. I would like to passive-aggressively thank Monique Matelski for not mentioning me in her dissertation acknowledgments; I hope she feels guilty.
Russell McCutcheon, Maurice Sartre, and Danny Syon were all gracious enough to both offer bibliographic suggestions and in some cases also drafts of forthcoming publications. Fred Baxter supplied English translations of several Latin inscriptions in Database One and I am thankful for his kindness. Thanks also to Michael C. A. Macdonald for help procuring articles, translation of Safaitic inscriptions, and bibliographic suggestions.

Down south, Laura, Jim, Colleen, and my parents have been supportive throughout my graduate programs, neither of which was especially close to “home.” It is always exciting to see them, though my pleasure has less to do with their presence than the fact that I am on vacation when we see each other. The exception to this is when we convene at Laura and Jim’s house, where I am glad to see them primarily because they have brewed a new stout or IPA. Please do not mistake my enthusiasm upon arrival in Grand Rapids for the possibility that I enjoy their company in the least. Come to think of it, my ceaseless housing of family members on their visits to “exotic Toronto” means they should probably be thanking me.

Finally, it is necessary to thank my occasional writing partner, Nathanael Romero. Nathanael has been singularly helpful in thinking about state violence as a theoretical problematic needing redress, particularly vis-à-vis mundane practices. I end these acknowledgments with a quotation from Nathanael that also summarizes the orientation in the following pages: “My own politics are less centered on the extraordinary violence of so-called ‘extremists’ and those positioned as threats to ‘our way of life’ and more on the everyday violences that function to maintain that way of life.”

This dissertation is dedicated to Johann Zeichmann, known most of his life as the eldest John Zeichman. Were it not for his refusal to submit to the draft, the Zeichman family would not exist.
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Abbreviations

I have collected a number of inscriptions and papyri in Database One and when I refer to these, I do so with a paragraph symbol and its corresponding number/letters (e.g., §P12; §§M1-3; §D2c); one can find a bibliography for each entry at the appropriate location in that database. Most abbreviations (academic journals, ancient texts, papyri, etc.) used henceforth are found in Collins, Billie Jean, et al, eds. 2014. *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines.* 2nd ed. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.

If an abbreviation for an ancient text cannot be found in *SBLHS*, then it is probably derived from Sosin, Joshua D. et al, eds. *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets* (found at http://papyri.info/docs/checklist) or the *CLAROS Abbreviations List* (found at http://www.dge.filol.csic.es/claros/cnc/2cnc3.htm). The following abbreviations are not in either of these. Note that *IGLS* without a volume number refers to the Waddington series, whereas those with a volume number refer to the recent series published by Institut français du Proche-Orient.

Finally, I use a database of my own making, including three components that are not technically part of this dissertation. The first part of this database collects all known papyri and inscriptions from Palestine relating to the military (63 BCE-132 CE) as well as all inscriptions relating to Jews and other Palestinians from that same period. Texts from this first component are preceded with by a paragraph mark ($\S$). The somewhat confusing numerical system I use is explained more fully in Database One. All three databases can be accessed at the following URL: http://christopherzeichmann.com/appendices/.

Database One: Texts on the Military and Early Roman Palestine
Database Two: Overview of Military Sites in Early Roman Palestine
Database Three: Overview of Levantine Military History, 63 BCE–132 CE

*ILS*

*RGZM*

**RMD 1**

**RMD 2**

**RMD 3**

**RMD 4**

**RMD 5**
Chapter 1

The Problem of the Military in the Gospel Tradition

In his farewell address in 1961, Dwight Eisenhower famously warned against the growing influence of what he termed the “military-industrial complex.” Eisenhower understood the interweaving of political, military, and business interests to be a threat to the usual processes of governance that were central to liberal and representative democracy. Though the term was a neologism coined by Eisenhower, it has since entered the standard lexicon of the English language; whether in reference to the role of General Electric in Vietnam or Halliburton in Iraq, the phrase has come to function as shorthand for the role of corporate interests in (usually American) military ventures.

Early drafts of Eisenhower’s speech, however, referred to a “military-industrial-academic” complex, something that may be useful as a heuristic. Numerous examples of the academy aiding or legitimating military ventures come to mind: physicists developing the technology necessary for the nuclear bomb, the formation of NASA as a component of the Cold War arms race, the field of anthropology functioning as colonial legitimation, etc. The hard and soft sciences, engineering, and medical scholarship have proved essential to military interests. But what about the humanities or the study of religion in particular? Despite the common assumption regarding the separation of “religious” and “political” spheres of life, complicity extends to the field of biblical studies as well. Biblical studies has long served interests congenial to military expansion: the Orientalist biblical scholarship of the 19th century legitimated various colonial ambitions, biblical scholarship in Germany under the Third Reich provided ideological grounding for the state’s anti-Semitic policies, and the U. S. Department of State is presently funding academic fellowships in International Relations in partnership with the American Academy of Religion.

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1 Giroux 2007.
2 See, e.g., Gerdmar 2009; Heschel 2010; Kelley 2002. One might also recall the famous paragraph in the first edition of Huston Smith’s introductory textbook on world religions (1958: 7-8), discussing the importance of the study of religion: “The motives that impel us toward world understanding may be several. Recently I was taxied by bomber to the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base outside Montgomery, Alabama, to lecture to a thousand selected officers on the religions of other peoples. I have never had students more eager to learn. What was their motivation? Individually, I’m sure it went beyond this in many cases, but as a unit they were
The relationship between biblical studies and the military has been particularly contentious since 9/11, with a surge in anti-imperial and postcolonial readings of the bible, indirectly contesting the legitimacy of military actions in Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. John Kloppenborg thus states: “It might be noted that the effort to represent Christ groups as opposed to the Roman Empire gained momentum primarily in the US and primarily after the election of George W. Bush, the continued US involvement in Iraq, 9/11, and the war in Afghanistan. This comment is not intended as evaluative, only to note that political events shape the climate in which scholarship is conducted and affects the ways in which inquiry is framed.”³ That is to say, the political imagination of scholars regarding political ideology in early Christianity has an apparent connection to their imagination about the politics of contemporary militarism as well.

But while an evaluative assessment about the rise of anti-imperial biblical interpretations and the war on terror is outside the scope of Kloppenborg’s essay, this dissertation attempts to proffer one such assessment. In particular, it will suggest a close relationship between New Testament scholarship and state violence. Of particular interest here is “anti-imperial” New Testament scholarship, which self-presents as a critical stance against contemporary militarism. Scholarly interest in early Christian responses to “Rome” and “imperialism” has been especially visible in recent years. Whether relating to the Gospels, Paul, Revelation, or other early Christian writings, scholars have made a sustained effort in demonstrating that the earliest Christians held one or another attitude toward their imperial masters. Most common are arguments that early Christians resisted Roman imperialism and its violence, as evinced in the texts that now comprise the New Testament. These scholarly publications tend to operate with clear normative functions: Christians today should hold similar attitudes toward imperialism and violence as did those nearly two millennia earlier.

Social histories of early Roman Palestine detailing (and implicitly condemning) Roman imperialism and early Christian responses to it are fairly common, to the extent that it is only a

³ Kloppenborg 2014: 147 n. 1.
slight overstatement to characterize it as a “cottage industry” within the field. It is therefore surprising that no monograph details the social history of the armies located in Palestine during the New Testament period, as the military was probably the most prominent aspect of Roman imperialism in Palestine both before and after the Judaean War. To be sure, there are two helpful volumes with sections devoted to Herod the Great’s army by Israel Shatzman and Samuel Rocca, though neither book discusses the New Testament or the military of the first century CE. Regardless, these works exert little influence in New Testament scholarship. The most frequently cited article on the topic, Roman military historian Denis B. Saddington’s ANRW entry titled “Roman Military and Administrative Personnel in the New Testament,” evinces the author’s inexperience with New Testament scholarship and is strikingly naïve when it comes to questions of historicity; Saddington states, for instance, that the Gospel of Peter and the Acts of Pilate may contain the actual names of the soldiers who crucified Jesus. The tendency of scholars to rely heavily upon Saddington’s work and its tenuous grasp of New Testament studies has been partially mitigated by the publication of two recent monographs on the literary depiction of soldiers in Luke-Acts and another on the Judaean War and the Gospel of Mark, but their influence remains to be seen. Instead, commentators more commonly rely on general studies of the Roman army or credulous readings of Josephus’ wartime accounts, in the process omitting analysis of the specifically Palestinian experience of the military or doing so by generalizing on the basis of wartime events. Despite the prevalence of military men and metaphors throughout the New Testament, there is a resounding silence from New Testament scholars on the topic.

Three factors might explain the reluctance of New Testament scholars to engage in serious study of the military. First, study of the Roman army tends to be an arcane and boring topic. For evidence, one need only read an article or two about the latest military diploma discovery, which at their most interesting are protracted prosopographies of the legates, tribunes, and other commanders, indicating which auxiliary cohort was where at what time. Even archaeological

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4 See Myles 2016.
7 Luke: Brink 2014; Kyrychenko 2014. Mark: Gelardini 2016. All of which are revised dissertations or Habilitationsschriften. The Lukan books adopt a comparative literature method, the Markan book is too recent for me to assess.
discoveries of military assemblages within Palestine are barely readable by those not already initiated into the study of militaria, since the ensuing discussion tends to revolve around comparison of, say, belt buckles found at Masada with those at sites in Britannia, Dacia Superior, and so on. The implications of such studies are often unclear: what knowledge this might contribute to our understanding of the military’s organization, functions, trade patterns, economic relations, and many other topics may be opaque to novice students of the Roman army. The general dearth of military studies within New Testament scholarship further contributes to its absence, as commentators have little groundwork to build upon and few accessible points of entry. Thus, New Testament scholars are quite unfamiliar with military scholarship, and military historians are equally unfamiliar with New Testament scholarship.

Second, study of the Roman army is often undertaken by experts whom one could characterize as “military enthusiasts.” Insofar as “classics” is a field that developed as part of the imperial culture of modern Europe, many Roman military historians do not see imperialism, settler colonialism, and exploitation as the most salient elements of the Roman army, let alone military ventures more generally. Instead, one often detects hints (or even heaps) of admiration in academic discussions of the Roman army, its administration, its engineering, and so on. Indeed, a disproportionate number of military historians are themselves military veterans and it is not uncommon for military strategists with little academic training in the field to delve into Roman military history. Military analysis often ends up engaging in normative strategic assessments that would seem out of place in biblical studies: whether certain battle strategies were wise or poor decisions. New Testament scholars looking to demonstrate the military’s insidious function within early Roman Palestine often have difficulty finding an ideological entry point for their analysis; the political and ideological goals of military historians and New Testament scholars are sufficiently divergent so as to diminish the former’s utility for the latter’s purposes.

I suspect a third reason may figure into the absence of New Testament military studies more prominently than the other two. Namely, Rome is more ambiguous in the Gospel tradition than most exegetes would care to admit. Anti-imperial commentators tend to focus on a handful of pericopae: the demon named “Legion” (Mark 5:1-20), implied criticism of Roman destruction (Mark 13), Jesus’ hostility toward the retainers of Roman hegemony (e.g., scribes, priestly

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8 Most famously and influentially, Luttwak 1976; this matter is discussed at greater length in Chapter Four.
leaders), Jesus’ critique of wealth, the negative depiction of Herod Antipas, among a few others. In isolation, these texts can provide reasonable grounding for an anti-Roman reading of Mark, the Gospels, or the historical Jesus. But this grounding is complicated upon consideration of the occasionally positive role of military functionaries within the same narrative tradition. One thinks of the centurion whose slave Jesus heals (Q 7:1-10), Cornelius (Acts 10), Julius (Acts 27), and most relevant to this dissertation, the centurion who acknowledges Jesus’ divine sonship (Mark 15:39, 44). Since amicability between representatives of Roman violence and early Christians might cast doubt upon the anti-Roman/anti-imperial character of the New Testament, many interpreters argue that some of these passages are only apparently friendly to soldiers. Limiting our focus to Mark, many scholars argue or even speculate that the centurion at the cross must have been actually ridiculing Jesus,9 must have been lamenting Jesus’ defeat of the emperor,10 or must have rejected imperial cult immediately after Jesus’ death11 – whatever reading one prefers, Mark must not have depicted a man of Roman violence as the first human to articulate Jesus’ divine sonship.12 The political framework within which scholars interpret these texts seems to take precedence over Mark’s apparently contentedness with the ambiguity of “Rome.”

But why are scholars so certain about the nefarious nature of Roman imperial operators? Not only must the centurion at the cross be wicked, but so also must the demon named “Legion” suggest hostility to Rome, Jesus’ interaction with tax collectors must entail their repentance, the soldiers at the cross must have demeaned Jesus with hyperbolic cruelty, and so on. Certainty that Mark was hostile to Rome is probably at least partially attributable to a scholarly manoeuvre that I will term “the hermeneutics of the spectacular.” The hermeneutics of the spectacular refers to an interpretive grid understanding the worst violence to be the most spectacular violence: violence whose enactors are pathological, whose excess is beyond doubt, which interrupts innocent lives, and is maximally visible. This frame is common in discourse on any given act of

9 Each of these interpretations is discussed at length in Chapter Six, but see, e.g., Horsley 2001: 252.
10 E.g., Pobee 1970.
11 E.g., Bligh 1968.
12 Similarly, some speculate that the centurion of Luke 7:1-10/Matt 8:5-13 must have manumitted his slave after Jesus healed him (Miller 2014: 186), that the centurion himself must have felt oppressed by local Jews (Jennings 2003: 131-144), or that the purported slave must have really been the centurion’s lover (Jennings and Liew 2004). The imperative to obviate any doubt of Jesus’ or the New Testament’s exemplary normativity is usually implicit, but rarely in doubt.
“horrific” violence, including terrorism, criminal behaviour, war crimes, etc. Within the hermeneutics of the spectacular, violent actions warrant condemnation precisely on these accounts, easily identifying the violence and their perpetrators as immoral. Indeed, it is difficult to employ any other grid for interpreting violence, as a single photograph or anecdote is often sufficient to call the hermeneutic to action: when one, for instance, sees a video of ISIS combatants brutally executing civilians, one has little choice but to condemn their actions. The hermeneutics of the spectacular are prevalent in the study of the New Testament and discussions of imperialism. We are told the legions “could move with all their baggage and equipment at a guaranteed fifteen miles a day to crush any rebellion anywhere,”¹³ that Rome ruled foremost by means of “terror” and “humiliation,”¹⁴ and that “Rome’s ruthless and efficient military machine swept all before it … rebellions [were] punished with cold brutality.”¹⁵ Who cannot help but condemn the Roman army as a perpetrator of cold-blooded violence?

However, there is reason to be suspicious of the hermeneutics of the spectacular. First, these hermeneutics rely heavily upon signifiers whose meaning is sufficiently variable so as to render them devoid of meaning: one person’s maniac is another’s martyr, “excess” is assessed subjectively, visibility is entirely dependent upon the politics of information dissemination, etc. Competing narratives lead to a game where one must contend one’s opponents are in fact the true perpetrators of violence. The situation arising from Ferguson, Missouri illustrates the point: Darren Wilson’s murder of Michael Brown was undoubtedly a horrific and violent act, though the occasional outbursts of violence at protests were used to discredit protesters and the nascent “Black Lives Matter” movement. Unsurprisingly, media accounts quickly devolved into debates over whose violence was worse: that of the police or that of the protestors.

Second, the hermeneutics of the spectacular is ahistorical in its assignment of agency, reducing actors to the categories of hero and villain. Whatever complex interests may lead one to mete out physical violence, the hermeneutics of the spectacular does not consider them beyond their perpetuation of or resistance to evil. Speaking about the movie Schindler’s List, the comments of Tim Cole are pertinent: “We leave … comforted that we are nothing like the perpetrators. We are left ‘outside the film, admiring one man, condemning the other’ and therefore we are ‘never

¹³ Crossan 2007: 12.
¹⁵ Wright 2009: 64.
implicated in the moral economy of the film’ nor are forced to examine our ‘own social and political ethics.’”

So also does this emphasis on spectacular violence position the scholar and their reader comfortably, assuring themselves that they are nothing like the big bad Roman army.

The third and most important reason to be hesitant about the hermeneutics of the spectacular is that it renders other forms of violence invisible and in doing so performs pernicious work in service of hegemonic ideologies. To rephrase, if death and pain are not experienced in a sufficiently spectacular manner, then they are rarely understood as the result of violence. Thus, populations experiencing slow death (whether by targeting or neglect) find little sympathy until spectacular violence highlights their precarious situation: the corpse of 3-year old Aylan Kurdi on a Turkish beach foregrounded hitherto downplayed issues of Syrian refugees’ slow death for Canadians; the slow death of African Americans at the hands of the American carceral state achieved renewed visibility when video footage of Eric Garner being choked to death by NYPD officers was made public; austerity measures imposed upon Ireland and the resulting suffering emerged as noteworthy when the country’s suicide rates reversed their downward trend. The hermeneutics of the spectacular rely heavily upon several assumptions that should strike us as problematic both analytically and normatively. Of particular interest is the hermeneutics’ emphasis on the agency of individual perpetrators and the primacy of their intent. This emphasis excludes structural and systemic forms of suffering from consideration as “violence,” since the absence of intentional perpetrators leaves little compelling vocabulary to acknowledge their suffering – why should anyone care about “stop and frisk” if it’s just the NYPD’s prerogative to ask some rowdy-looking kids some questions? It is only when these mundane forms of suffering are reconsidered as part of a narrative culminating in spectacular violence that they can achieve widespread condemnation. Structural suffering in an economic form is especially difficult to articulate as violent; for instance, liberal capitalism has a high unemployment rate written into its logic, but because there is no single person, business, or identifiable group to blame, it is difficult to express the structural cause underlying the resulting suffering. In short, forms of violence perpetrated by the liberal state are rendered invisible precisely because the prevailing methods for categorizing something as “violence” were devised in a way that excludes them from being considered violent in the first place.

16 Cole 1999: 84.
Given how New Testament scholarship is almost exclusively produced in the context of liberal democracies, it should not surprise us that the hermeneutics of the spectacular and its assumptions also emerge within this academic field in a manner that functions to legitimize the liberal democratic state. In particular, anti-imperial scholarship typically imagines the military to be either a war machine or otherwise engaging in physical acts of violence. Thus, its acts of terror – war, preparations for war, executions, etc. – are if not the army’s only functions, then the only functions worth mentioning. This spectacular violence is sufficient to dispel the idea that the Roman army deserves any praise; it is inevitable that Jesus and the Gospels would assess the matter similarly. But as suggested above, this conclusion does not cohere well with the conflicting data of the New Testament, given the occasionally positive depictions of the military. The New Testament is not exceptional in its ambivalent representation of the army and soldiers, as even a cursory overview of papyri addressing soldier-civilian interactions indicates that soldiers were not most commonly understood as oppressors, but as protectors, customers, business partners, family members, and so on. This is not to suggest that the Roman military was emancipatory in its activities, but that its violence was not always (or even usually) experienced as spectacular; thus, its role in suffering was considerably more subtle than New Testament scholars (or at least the hermeneutics of the spectacular) typically allow. The evils of the Roman Empire and its military are convenient foils to make any teachings of the New Testament appear to be subversive by contrast.

But if the Gospel writers imagine friendly interactions with military officers and authorize practices similarly amiable, how did early Christians understand Roman violence? This is not to ask the question about the implications of Mark not authorizing the politics we want it to authorize (i.e., should Christians also adopt a friendly attitude toward imperialism, state violence, etc.?). Rather, I would like to push the issue in an explanatory direction: how can one explain the tension in the Gospel of Mark between, on the one hand, soldiers as executioners of John and Jesus, and on the other hand, the depiction of a centurion as the only human in the text to grasp the fact of Jesus’ divine sonship? This will be the central question of the present dissertation.

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17 This line of reasoning, of course, anachronistically equates modern liberal imaginaries of violence with those of antiquity. See the discussion in note 333.
I will argue that the study of the New Testament routinely ignores the complex nature of civilian interactions with the military. More importantly, the specificity of the Palestinian experience of the Roman military – an experience that changed significantly around the time Mark was written – is a neglected topic whose study would be fruitful for both Gospel and Roman military scholarship. Thankfully, there has been extensive work on soldier-civilian interactions in the Roman East during the Principate, especially Egypt and Syria. Though military historians attend to the complex texture of the army’s social history in the Levant, these scholars either interact very little with New Testament scholarship or tend to be unfamiliar with its methods and theories when they do discuss it. This dissertation hopes not only to bring these two scholarly fields into conversation with one another, but to extend both by developing their often-parochial insights.

Outline of Dissertation

In this dissertation, I hope to begin bridging the gap between the two indicated academic fields through the apparent tension in Mark’s depiction of soldiers, who act as both cruel executioner and potential disciple. The central question of the dissertation is this: “How are we to explain Mark’s ambivalent portrait of soldiers as being both cruel executioners and the only one with the insight to acknowledge Jesus’ divine sonship?” There are several components required to construct this bridge and answer this question. In Chapter Two, I will contextualize the Gospel of Mark’s composition as precisely as possible, with respect to both time and place. I will offer a provisional locus for the writer of the Gospel of Mark in Capernaum in the mid-70s CE. This will allow us to locate with commensurate precision Mark’s experience of the military, treating it as a datum of how civilians in a particular context reflected upon and literally represented interactions with the military. That is, it will allow us to begin assessing what type of extra-textual knowledge regarding the military Mark brought to his Gospel.

It is also important to consider the particularity of Palestinian experience of the military in the early Roman Empire as a social historical phenomenon – an experience that underwent significant changes as a result of the Judaean and Bar Kokhba Wars, as well as the conquest of Pompey. This element of the dissertation draws primarily upon the work of military historians, since even recent monographs on soldiers in Luke-Acts are analyses in the vein of comparative literature, delving into social historical questions only on occasion. This analysis will take place
over Part Two of the dissertation, comprising Chapters Three and Four. Chapter Three asks the deceptively simple question, “who were the soldiers in Palestine?” How one answers this question will depend on several factors: at what time, where within Palestine, and what their rank was. In the pre-War period, they tended to be Palestinian locals (both Jewish and Gentile), though after the War they were almost exclusively Gentiles from other provinces with much stronger identifications with Rome. The findings from this chapter will allow us to assess the type of soldiers with whom civilians like Mark’s author were interacting, and how they may have represented soldiers from the time of Jesus. Chapter Four will address the next logical question and ask what the military in Palestine did. Warfare was a very small part of the soldiering life. While the army was certainly not a benign institution, most of its activities involved little physical violence. Soldiers performed numerous roles, ranging from policing to infrastructural construction to mediating local disputes. Here we will see the ways in which civilians interacted with soldiers and how civilians represented those interactions in documentary and literary sources.

Part Three of the dissertation returns discussion to the Gospel of Mark. Chapter Five will discuss three theories of violence and complicity by respectively Slavoj Žižek, Pierre Bourdieu, and Louis Althusser. This chapter is offered as a partial corrective to military historical distaste for social and ideological theories, as well as a corrective to New Testament scholarship’s hesitation to engage with theories that undermine the sui generis ethics of the bible. The theories discussed will focus less on physical violence than ideological formations that render collusion with state violence not only possible, but even desirable; they will also help historicize practices of violence so as to discard more anachronistic notions that have dominated the study of imperialism and the New Testament. Chapter Six then returns to the text of the Gospel of Mark and will examine Mark’s representations of the military in light of the preceding chapters, accounting for the historical and geographic situation of Mark’s composition, the military history of that setting, and the types of interactions a person in such a situation would be expected to have. This will entail extended analysis of selected Markan pericopae and themes to ascertain the depiction of the military and even Rome more broadly. The body of this dissertation will conclude with Chapter Seven, wherein we will return to the question about tensions in Mark’s depiction of the military: how is one to explain the way in which most soldiers are mostly bullies, even though the centurion at the cross identifies Jesus’ divine sonship? This will involve
analysis of Mark’s politics of the military along multiple axes, in particular synthesizing the theoretical suggestions of Chapter Five with the exegetical proposals of Chapter Six.

The dissertation makes frequent reference to three databases I have made that are uploaded at a static URL http://christopherzeichmann.com/appendices/. These databases do not contribute to the argument of the dissertation, but rather provide data assumed herein. Database One is a preliminary collection of every published inscription and papyrus found in or relating to the military in Palestine and Palestinians outside of the region during the years 63 BCE–135 CE (the “early Roman period” or “early Principate”). Throughout the dissertation, they are referred to by the number enumerated therein for ease of reference and preceded by the paragraph mark (§). Database Two is a map and gazetteer for known and possible military sites in Palestine during that period, with tentative assessments as to when the military was present. The collection of these data sets are intended as a further contribution of this dissertation and provide much of the grounding for the claims made herein. Database Three offers a brief narrative overview of the military history of Palestine and its interactions with the Roman army until the Bar Kokhba War. This summary clarifies the developments leading to the situation of Mark’s time and allows us to avoid imposing anachronisms onto the Gospel that occurred later.

A Few Matters of Definition

Throughout this dissertation, I use the term “military” and its semantic equivalents to refer to the military component of the state apparatus. Thus, I do not include those with similar roles in another component of the state apparatus (e.g., disciplinary cultic officials, local police forces) or agents of violence outside of the state apparatus (e.g., organized rebels, bandits). The counterpoint of the word “soldier” is “civilian” in this dissertation, which simply distinguishes between career soldiers (i.e., the professional Roman military created after the Second Punic War in 201 BCE and reformed by Marius in 107 BCE) and those who made their living otherwise; it should be kept distinct from modern conceptions of the civilian-cum-citizen. On theoretical issues with the Roman and Herodian “state,” see the introduction to Chapter Five below. One may notice that the navy play a very marginal role in the present dissertation; the reasons for this omission are numerous, but relate in part to the dearth of sources and their general irrelevance for the Markan context, even if they otherwise fall within the definition of “military” used here.
I will use the term “Levant” to denote the region along the Mediterranean coast ranging from Antioch in the north, to the modern Suez in the south, to the eastern edge of Roman influence before Trajan’s conquests (i.e., extending only to Syria’s and Nabataea’s eastern borders). I use the term “Palestine” to refer to the contiguous lands controlled by Herod the Great and/or his descendants at their fullest extent (i.e., Judaea, Galilee, Peraea, Batanaea, Gaza), as well as the entire Decapolis (including Damascus) and other independent cities in the area like Ascalon – the boundaries of this definition are visualized in Database Two. The primary reason for defining Palestine as such is to distinguish lands marked by Herodian history from other nearby land (e.g., Syria, Nabataea, Mesopotamia, Emesa). This distinction corresponds closely with the region in which Mark depicts Jesus’ activity, omitting only Tyre and Sidon. Excluded from my definition of Palestine are Chalcis, Cetis, and the Armenias, as well as other regions over which Herodians or those marrying into the family acted as Roman governors (e.g., Egypt). The word “Judaea” will almost always be used in reference to the province/kingdom of Judaea to avoid confusion with the geographic region of Judaea in southern Palestine; that is, I employ “Judaea” on the same register as Galilee, Syria, Italia, and Egypt; it is not here an informal regional designation similar to that of Samaria, Idumaea, or the Golan, as it sometimes is employed by other writers.

Though I do not intend to become embroiled in the Jew-Judaean debate, I employ both of these terms and distinguish them from one another. This debate pertains to the meaning of the term Ἰουδαῖος, whether it is best translated in a religio-cultural sense (i.e., “Jew”), in a geographic-ethnic sense (i.e., “Judaean”), or in some other way. “Judaean” is used here as an adjective or noun that is used in distinction from Batanaean, Syrian, Egyptian, Thracian, and other identifications relating to states and provinces. Moreover, since Judaean denizens were diverse in their religious practices and cultural identifications, I will sometimes clarify the person I refer to is a Gentile or Jewish Judaean (or Jewish Galileans, Jewish Batanaeans, Jewish Syrians, etc.). “Judaism” and its derivatives are employed loosely as an ethno-religious category in this dissertation, as it is not always easy to distinguish between Samaritans and Jews in the limited record, nor is it often clear the extent to which Jewish identification practices were salient for a given individual. In general, though, the term “Jew” will denote people ascribed social capital for being an Ἰουδαῖος by their peers; that might include cultic affiliations, ethnic kinship, knowledge

18 See Database Three for more on Herodian connections elsewhere in the Roman East.
of Jewish practices, or other means. This is an intentionally tautological definition. Consequently, Jewishness is not understood as a stable identity, but as a variable set of identification practices whose importance an individual might emphasize or downplay as context warranted. Thus, Josephus’ claim that Tiberius Julius Alexander had abandoned his Judaism is understood to be more indicative of the Jewish practices Josephus found significant, rather than Tiberius’ own self-identification (A.J. 20.100); Tiberius may well have understood himself to be a Jew, but did not behave in a way coordinating with Josephus’ interests and expectations. For this understanding of identity and Judaism, I draw especially upon the work of Russell McCutcheon, Shaye J. D. Cohen, Steve Mason, and Bruce Lincoln.\footnote{See, e.g., Cohen 1999a; Lincoln 1996; Mason 2007; McCutcheon 2003: 167-188. Cf. Bayart 2005.}

The term “Roman” has variable meaning in the following pages. In reference to people, it is mostly used of Roman citizens and sometimes those who could anticipate citizenship in the foreseeable future. Rarely do I use the word in reference to people hailing from the city of Rome in particular, though it will be necessary to do so when discussing the theory of Mark’s provenance in the city of Rome or its environs. The cultural sense of the word “Roman” is used in a manner parallel with “Judaism” and refers to an assemblage of practical knowledge, events, bodily regulations, material goods, and so on. The disparate components of this assemblage are unified in their granting of social capital deemed to be typical of Ῥωμαίοι. This dissertation is especially interested in how these Roman identification practices were perceived in the Roman East and the ways in which these practices distinguished them from peregrini. “Romanness” tended to operate as a social-capital-granting distinction in a manner not mutually exclusive with other state-based cultural identities (e.g., Hellenism, Judaism, Nabataean culture).\footnote{See the excellent study Ando 2000. This will be discussed at length in Chapters Five and Seven.} Finally, I use the term for the periodization of Palestinian history. When used of historical periodization, it typically refers to the period beginning with the conquest of Pompey in 63 BCE in Palestine – it will refer to different dates in different provinces and kingdoms. Confusingly, it will also be necessary to distinguish direct and indirect Roman rule in various regions of Palestine via client states, as well as the full provincial status of Judaea as of 70 CE. I will attempt to clarify as best possible, though some terminological overlap seems inevitable in this respect.
I use the term “Christian” in the loosest possible sense: to designate people who ascribed Jesus some special authority. I do not assume any particular Christology, theology, social formation, or anything else held them together in any particular way. Nor is the term used in a way that presumes any specific ethnic identification. The term as used in the following thesis might be applied equally to trinitarians and to those hesitant to name Jesus the Messiah (so, e.g., Q and the Gospel of Thomas).

For the text of Mark, I follow the United Bible Society’s *The Greek New Testament 5th edition*; bracketed and textually doubtful readings will be discussed as relevant. I take exception to the UBS text at a few crucial junctures. Specifically, I will treat some passages as later interpolations into Mark, even though they are usually considered original to the text. William Arnal adopts Helmut Koester’s argument that canonical Mark contains later interpolations that can be ascertained as such through literary analysis – most especially through common omissions of canonical Markan material by Matthew and Luke. On this basis, Arnal contends that Mark 2:27, 7:3-4, and 7:19b are later insertions to the Gospel and were not present in the original text. These passages are among the few presupposing a readership unfamiliar with Jewish ritual practices, their absence from the original edition of Mark would render the basis for assuming a largely Gentile readership moot. This will also be relevant in the discussion of Mark’s alleged Latin transliterations πυγμη and ξεστων, which appear in passages that I regard as later additions (7:3-4).

Chapter Five will offer three provisional understandings of “violence.” Until that point, I will rely upon “common-sense” understandings of the term.

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Chapter 2

The Provenance and Date of Mark’s Gospel

The claim that the Gospel of Mark reflects a particular experience of military-civilian interactions is only meaningful if its setting can be established. As discussed in the introduction, biblical scholars over-generalize about the military and overlook how it was experienced variously in contextually distinctive ways. Biblical interpretations are then dependent upon a series of anachronisms or otherwise inaccurate claims, as these interpretations fail to account for interests that emerge on a localized level; the effort in subsequent chapters to offer as precise a description of the military in Palestine as possible is only helpful if one first ascertains as specifically as possible the provenance of Mark. Military functions varied throughout the Roman Empire based on time and locale; whatever the Roman army was, it was not simply “one” thing. This chapter will help ensure subsequent discussion attends to the Gospel’s context and avoids untenable historical claims. I will argue that the Gospel of Mark was clearly composed in the Levant after the fall of the Jerusalem Temple. The chapter will also advance a more specific compositional setting: the village of Capernaum during the mid-70s of the Common Era. Consequently, Mark’s own setting is partially shared with the story it narrates – both took place in first century Palestine – though marked by a number of important differences.

This chapter begins by discussing the date of Mark’s composition, which is generally identified as within a few years of the Jerusalem Temple’s fall. I will argue that Mark evinces knowledge of the temple’s fall and was probably written within a decade of the destruction. Since Mark’s narrative focuses almost exclusively on events and people from the early decades of the first century CE and thus well before its compositional context, I will read Mark in light of Bruce Lincoln’s claim that “struggles about stories of the past may also be struggles over the proper shape of society in the present.”22 That is, Mark’s story about Jesus will be understood as a retrospective narrative advancing interests related to the author’s own setting. In so doing, I will argue that Mark’s story presupposes social conditions arising shortly after the temple’s fall and sometimes projects them anachronistically into his narrative. Mark was probably written at a

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time when the effects of the War continued to reverberate and before nascent post-War social structures fully solidified.

This chapter will then argue that Mark was also composed in Palestine, tentatively suggesting that the Gospel was composed in Capernaum by a refugee of the Judaean War. The Gospel of Mark has long been associated with the city of Rome – a hypothesis still advanced by many commentators, originating with the church fathers. Patristic testimonies, though, are not particularly useful and most other arguments marshalled in favour of a Roman origin are unpersuasive. Instead, it will be argued that Mark’s representation of Galilee is not merely an idealized locale of distant fantasy, but a place of ongoing significance for the author.

**The Date of Mark’s Composition**

There are two methods by which one can determine Mark’s *terminus ante quem*. The first is external evidence based on the Synoptic Problem. This dissertation assumes the validity of the two-source hypothesis, with its conclusion of Markan priority. Matthew’s Gospel is usually argued to reflect the conditions of Antioch in the 80s or 90s of the Common Era. Mark must have been in use for some time in the Matthean assembly to achieve sufficiently authoritative status that it might act as the narrative framework for Matthew’s own Gospel. This, however, is not a particularly good method for assessing the date of Mark’s composition, as it entails a bit of circular logic: the date of Matthew’s composition is often argued with extensive reference to Mark’s authorship. Indeed, there are few factors in Matthew that point to a date 80-95 CE independently of how Mark is dated.

A more useful, if still tentative, method of dating Mark’s *terminus ante quem* is on the basis of evidence internal to the Gospel. Namely, the author twice assumes some who were alive during Jesus’ ministry had not yet died. 1) The phrasing of Mark 9:1 supposes that the arrival of the kingdom was still anticipated as of Mark’s composition, with only some (τινες) of those from Jesus’ time still living. 2) Mark 13:30 assumes that the son of man had yet to arrive, but that some among Jesus’ generation (γενεὰ αὐτῆς) would still live to see his coming. Though Jesus is wrong elsewhere in the Gospel, there is no indication the evangelist expects the reader to infer he is mistaken here. Old age in the early Roman Empire was commonly mentioned as 60 or 65 years old in literary sources, with life expectancy rarely extending more than a decade beyond
that. “This generation” of 13:30 probably refers to adult Palestinian Jews and the phrasing of “some” in 9:1 probably refers to a minority of Jesus’ peers near the end of their expected lifespan (i.e., older than 60-65 years). Only “some” of the designated group was probably expected to survive to the period 70-80 CE, with nearly that entire generation deceased by 90 CE. The partial nature of the generation’s survival is supported by Adolf Jülicher’s observation that Mark assumes the readers were aware that both James and John were deceased. Likewise, Mark shows a peculiar interest in the youth of his time and their capacity to be saved (9:36-37, 9:42-43, 10:13-16), likely the author’s generation.

One is hesitant to make too much of these internal arguments, as both Matthew and Luke retain some of these references, despite the fact that they were probably written when few, if any, people alive during Jesus’ ministry were still living. But even so, one might contrast Mark 13:30 with its parallel in Luke 21:32, which is vaguer in what the evangelist expects to have occurred before “this generation” has passed. This may be understood as Luke’s method of obscuring a prophecy in Mark that had not come to pass by the time the Third Evangelist wrote his Gospel. Both internal and external evidence suggest the latest plausible date for Mark’s composition would be around 80 CE, though this is a very insecure date.

As to the terminus post quem, there are numerous indications that Mark was composed after the fall of the Jerusalem Temple. Evidence of a post-War date can be discerned through prophetic sayings, Mark’s treatment of the temple as a literary theme, and a few other pericopae as well. Hendrika Roskam notes that the Olivet Discourse is composed in a way that highlights its relevance for Mark’s readers: in Mark 13:19, the evangelist describes narrated events as occurring now (vōv), curiously changing perspectives from earlier in the verse (aī ἡμέρα τῶν ἐκείνων) from Jesus’ time to the author’s own. It is significant that this chronological shift occurs amidst Jesus’ discussion of various cataclysms, the significance of which will now be addressed.

24 Jülicher 1913: 282. Jesus affirms the capacity of James and John to drink Jesus’ drink and be baptized with his baptism (Mark 10:35-40), which are revealed to be metaphors for death shortly afterwards (14:36). Note that this would a very imprecise characterization during the Caligula crisis, when the vast majority of those present for Jesus’ ministry would still be alive; see, for example, Paul’s assessment of most witnesses to the resurrection still surviving (1 Cor 15:6: ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείους Μᾶνυς ἔσονται ἐν ἀρχῇ).
25 For a bibliography on pre-70 and post-70 datings of Mark, see Winn 2008: 56-57 nn. 32-33.
The reference to the temple’s eventual ruin in Mark 13:2, particularly that “no stone will remain standing,” has struck many interpreters as a post-70 CE saying that was actually invented by Christians and retrojected into Jesus’ mouth. Other commentators contend that this saying was a pre-Markan tradition and simply an accurate prediction. If one supposes the saying attests a pre-Markan tradition, the presence of the saying in itself may not indicate much about Mark’s date, according to many commentators.

I do not intend to resolve this debate, even if there are good reasons to suspect the saying is a redactional creation by Mark. Rather, I would like to suggest that Markan fabrication or redaction of the temple saying is not necessary to establish its relevance for Mark’s date. Even if the saying is pre-Markan, its importance to the Gospel’s editorial structure is difficult to overstate: Mark 13:1–4 frames the entire Olivet Discourse, encouraging the reader to understand all portents in relation to the temple’s destruction. Thus, while rumours of war, trials, persecution of Christians, rejection from the synagogue, and other omens may have also occurred during other times (e.g., the Caligula crisis, Neronian persecution), such contexts do not account for the fact that Jesus’ speech is prompted by the disciple’s interest as to when the temple buildings will fall. Thus, even if there is a connection between Mark 13 and the Caligula crisis of 40 CE, this link is tradition-historical and not intrinsic to Mark’s redactional interests. Since tradition history is not the present concern, one must distinguish between the use of the saying in the Gospel of Mark and its significance before its inclusion in the Gospel. That the sayings of the Olivet Discourse are introduced by a prediction of the temple’s fall indicates that the author understood those sayings as important in their relevance to the temple’s destruction.

Some commentators have objected that Mark 13:2 describes the state of the temple buildings after 70 CE too inaccurately to be a post hoc description. Though Mark describes the temple as having no stone left standing (οὐ μὴ ἄφεθη ὄρος λίθως ἐπὶ λίθων δὲ οὐ μὴ καταλαλθῆ), Titus’ armies destroyed the buildings mostly by arson. Mark also overstated the magnitude of the destruction: the western wall and Robinson’s Arch remain standing to this day, not to mention

27 That said, John Kloppenborg, following numerous other scholars, shows that Mark 13:2 owes little to tradition and should be mostly attributed to the Markan evangelist (2005: 429 n. 32, 447 n. 84).
28 E.g., Hengel 1985: 14-16; Sanders and Davies 1989: 18.
the towers that stood for several decades after the War. To say that “no stone” was left standing is very imprecise and hyperbolic. Since the means and extent of the temple’s destruction were presumably well known after 70 CE, Mark’s imprecise description of the temple’s fall is sometimes taken to indicate a pre-70 context for Mark’s Gospel.

Whatever the saying’s imprecision, Joel Marcus observes that Josephus’ testimony exaggerates the temple’s destruction in a manner similar to Mark: Josephus claimed that Titus’ soldiers razed the temple and the city of Jerusalem to complete destruction, though this is patently hyperbole. If Josephus, an eyewitness to the occasion, overstated the extent of the temple’s ruin in a narrative *history* that was finalized decades after the War, it is not too surprising that Mark employed “stereotypical” language of destruction in the context of a prophetic announcement. The *ex eventu* nature of the prophecy becomes clearer when one compares Mark with earlier Jewish prophecies of the Jerusalem Temple’s destruction (e.g., 1 Kgs 9:8, 1 En. 90.28-30, Josephus *J.W.* 6.300-309). Pre-destruction prophecies tended to be vaguer than Mark 13:2, warranting the inference that the passage was not simply a prediction in a style common during the Second Temple Period that proved accurate. Rather, Mark’s phrasing evinces awareness of events during the Judaean War.

Finally, John Kloppenborg observes that Mark 13:2 suggests the occurrence of *evocatio deorum* in Jerusalem – a ritualized calling out of a deity from temples the Romans were soon to siege. That is, Mark attests a widespread understanding that a temple should not be destroyed unless the deity had dissolved its bonds with the site and abandoned the temple. Literary representations of this ritual are consistently composed in retrospect of a temple’s destruction as a part of omens and portents anticipating such devastation.

**Mark 13:14**

Mark 13:14 is often identified as a reference to the destruction or the desecration of the temple, a reference that held special import for Mark’s imagined readers (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοείτω). But because the phrase “the abomination of desolation” (τὸ βοδέλυγμα τῆς ἑρμησίως) is ambiguous,
the precise referent remains debated. Three interpretations of the phrase in its Markan context are common: the aborted installation of a statue of the emperor Gaius in the temple, the Zealot leader Eleazar’s occupation of the temple, and some combination of events related to Titus and the temple (e.g., violation of the Holy of Holies, soldiers’ sacrifice to him in the temple court, destruction of the temple). These hypotheses are united in their assumption that Mark 13:14 also contains a prophecy ex eventu, albeit disagreeing on its referent. Of these possibilities, only the Caligula hypothesis would present significant difficulties for the present study, since the latter two occurred during the Judaean War and thus presume composition afterwards.

Some interpreters have found the Caligula crisis compelling because of Mark’s allusion to the text of Daniel (9:27, 11:31, 12:11; cf. 1 Macc 1:54), which refers to similar events under Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 164 BCE. Antiochus set up an idol to Zeus on the Altar of the Burnt Offering, an idol associated with the Seleucid king’s epithet ἐπιφανής and his claim to be a god manifest. The emperor Gaius threatened a similar action in Jerusalem in 40 CE. Gaius ordered a statue of himself as the manifestation of Jupiter to be built in the Jerusalem Temple, but ultimately relented upon the insistence of Syrian and Judaean leaders.

The historical and literary parallels between the Gaius and Antiochus episodes are remarkable, but one should recall that the Antiochus episode frames Jewish interpretation of the temple’s destruction in 70 CE. Josephus cites Daniel’s vision as a prediction of the temple’s destruction by Titus (A.J. 10.276), so it is entirely plausible that Mark used Daniel to the same end; the Antiochus episode lingers in the background of 4 Ezra 11-12, which also ruminates upon the temple’s destruction. The Gaius reading of 13:14 also fails to consider how Mark 13:1-2 acts as a framing device for this verse, as well as the parallel in Mark 15:38. This is evinced by the fact that N. H. Taylor’s two-part article advocating a Markan composition under Gaius spends ample

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34 So, e.g., Brandon 1960; 1967: 230-233; Head 2004; Hooker 1991: 313-315; Incigneri 2003: 132-135; Lührmann 1987: 222; Roskam 2004: 87-92; Such 1999. It is occasionally objected that the imperative to encourage others to flee to the mountains in 13:14 would not have been useful information by the time the army encamped around the city and so Mark’s composition must have preceded the preparation for the siege of Jerusalem (e.g., Hengel 1985: 16-20; Horsley 2001: 131). To the contrary, Brian Incigneri (2003: 122-126) notes that Josephus repeatedly reports refugees’ escape from Jerusalem in 70 CE (J.W. 5.422, 6.113-116, 6.382).
35 Lane 1974: 468-469.
space on Mark 13:14, but is dismissive of Mark 13:2 at the very end of his study. Indeed, Taylor seems to concede that these verses are detrimental to the hypothesis that Mark wrote before the temple’s fall: “In any event, the narrative frame is the work of the evangelist, and whether he wrote before or after the prophecy was fulfilled is beyond the scope of the present study.” Thus, whatever the tradition history of the verse, there are reasons to doubt its utility as literary evidence of the Gospel’s composition during Gaius’ reign.

Beyond the phrase τὸ βοῶπα τῆς ἐρημώσεως, the portents in the Olivet Discourse are generally more applicable to the Judaean War than to the reign of Gaius. Which of the other two possibilities is more plausible will be discussed when relevant in Chapter Six. The remainder of Mark 13 is more relevant to discussions of Mark’s geographic provenance than its date and so will be discussed in conjunction with the issue of location below.

Mark 14:57-58 and 15:29

False witnesses (14:57-58) and their ilk (15:29) slanderously attribute to Jesus the claim that he will destroy the temple in three days and build another not made with hands. The passage resolved a peculiar challenge for Mark, as it was necessary for Mark to “produce a record of the judicial proceedings in which the accusations were false but the charges were credible enough to warrant condemnation....” Mark accomplished this by having the false witnesses conflate and exaggerate sayings that were already attributed to Jesus. The slander should be read in tandem with 13:2, as Mark envisions the false witnesses’ charge as having an element of truth: Mark regarded the prediction of destruction as part of Jesus’ polemic, but treated other elements of the witnesses’ allegation as false. The slanderous form of the saying contains two components that Mark attempts to distance from his Jesus: 1) that Jesus would personally destroy the temple and 2) that he would erect a similar temple in three days.

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36 Taylor 1996b: 38–40. This issue of narrative framing applies equally to those advocating a setting during or shortly after the Neronian persecution of Roman Christians (e.g., Cook 2010: 104-105; Radcliffe 1987; Senior 1987; Van Iersel 1996).

37 Mark’s description of the impending wars (plural!) designates conflict not only between ethnē, but also between “states” (13:7-8). This clearly applies to the Judaean War, which extended outside the province of Judaea into Agrippa II’s kingdom of Batanaea, Ascalon, and the Decapolis, not to mention the troops supplied by the kings of Commagene, Armenia, and Emesa. While the Judaean War was in progress, the Roman civil war entailing a quick succession of four emperors was also underway, as was the Revolt of the Batavi.

38 Mack 1988: 293.
This slander appears to address Mark’s post-War contemporaries who are levelling similar accusations against Jesus or Christians. If so, Mark’s polemic against false witnesses may be rhetorically similar to the Gospel of Matthew’s attempt to refute rumours about the theft of Jesus’ corpse (Matt 28:11-15). That is, Mark was likely polemicizing against his real-world contemporaries that attributed audacious claims to Jesus or Christians about who destroyed the temple and might eventually rebuild it. Mark attributed these charges to Jewish false witnesses (as did Matthew for grave-robbing) in a narrative move that simultaneously acknowledged the seriousness of the charges and dismissed them as slander. The accusers, living well before the temple’s fall, do not focus especially on Jesus’ prophecy that the temple would be destroyed – a prophecy audacious in both its central claim and specificity. For both Mark and his contemporary opponents, the temple’s destruction was assumed as an uncontroversial matter of fact. Mark 13:2 and the accusation agree that Jesus predicted the temple’s destruction, so it seems Mark was not worried that the prediction was attributed to Jesus. It is only plausible that the evangelist and his opponents would both agree on this issue after the fall of the temple.

The Temple Theme

Another common objection is that because “no emphasis falls on the destruction of the temple, it seems doubtful that Mark wrote after the destruction.” Explicit discussion of the temple’s fall is only to be found in a few pericopae; the temple only becomes a concern upon Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem and even then Mark only briefly addresses its fall. There are two important counterarguments, however. First, other post-War writings decline to belabour the fall of the temple, even when that event propels much of its narrative and identity politics. The Gospel of Luke and Josephus’ Antiquities of the Jews are two obvious examples. There is little doubt about their post-War dating. This counter-argument from silence, however, may not be compelling to everyone.

Second, the claim that Mark is mostly silent about the temple in Mark fails to appreciate the extent to which the temple’s absence acts as a subtext in Mark’s Gospel. Drawing upon and tweaking the work of Eric Stewart, I would like to suggest that Mark is thoroughly preoccupied

40 Gundry 1993: 742.
with the implications of the temple’s destruction. Stewart demonstrates that Mark shows a recurrent interest in reconfiguring Jewish social space away from the temple instead locating it on Jesus’ person. For instance, the resurrected Jesus will provide an adequate substitute for the demolished temple (14:57-62), not to mention Jesus’ provision of forgiveness apart from the temple cult (2:1-12). Jesus is also the focal point in nearly every instance of συνάγω and related verbs in Mark, effectively replacing the temple and synagogues as gathering sites of Jewish cultic activity. Stewart avoids discussing the role of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple as the impetus for such reconfigurations of space and thus understates the importance of this point. Mark indicates a recurrent interest in replacing the temple by resituating the temple’s centrality onto Jesus’ person, endorsing John the Baptist’s alternative to temple sacrificial rituals, implicitly linking synagogues and the temple, among other literary features. The interruption of cultic activity as precipitated by the Judaean War – with the destruction of the temple and subsequent reorganization of regional social structures – seems to be common among Mark’s concerns. One might contrast Mark’s interest in the temple with its role in the Sayings Gospel Q: it is only mentioned twice (Q 4:9-11, 13:34-35), there is no hint of nostalgia or glee over its loss, it functions as a continuing symbol of the deuteronomistic cycle, and is entirely peripheral to Jesus’ ministry.

Mark also alludes to the temple’s destruction as divine punishment against the Jewish partisans. Three examples are most obvious. 1) John Kloppenborg and William Arnal demonstrate that the Parable of the Tenants (12:1-12) forms “a covert allegory” about God’s retribution against the temple authorities as redacted by Mark. Earlier versions of the parable – likely resembling Gos. Thom. 65 – did not imagine the owner as God, the slaves as the prophets, and the son as Jesus. Mark concludes the parable by explicitly identifying the temple leaders with the story’s tenants. These tenants will soon be slaughtered by the absent owner as punishment for their insolence.

41 Stewart 2009.
42 Stewart elaborates on the links Mark draws between synagogues and the Jerusalem temple. These buildings act as sites of civilized space: ritual practices, purity rules, unified opposition to Jesus, attempts by leadership to exert control on space outside their authority, etc. The link is also explicit in Mark: scribes are synagogue leaders (12:38-40), some scribes hail from Jerusalem (3:22), and scribes are repeatedly linked with the chief priests and elders in the conspiracy to kill Jesus (8:31, 10:33, 11:27).
44 On the Judaean War and Q’s date, see Tuckett 1996: 362-364, though some scholars (e.g., Hoffmann, Myllykoski, Walsh) have recently argued for a post-War date.
45 Arnal 2000; Kloppenborg 2006.
Mark signals that the temple cult will meet its demise soon after Jesus’ preaching. 2) The Cursing of the Fig Tree sandwiches the Cleansing of the Temple (11:12-21), which together forms similar polemic against the temple cult. The Cursing of the Fig Tree has long been recognized as an enacted parable that evokes similarities between an unfruitful tree and an unfruitful temple, resulting in the condemnation and eventual destruction of both. Mark’s narrative of the Cleansing of the Temple is fraught with historical improbabilities that lead David Seeley to note that “Mark is more concerned about the story’s impact on a reader caught up in his narrative than he is about the story’s making sense in logical and historical terms.” The imagery of the incident was especially significant after the fall of the temple. Seeley continues: “An episode wherein a challenge to the temple by Jesus sets in motion the plot which leads to his death would possess great value for the story Mark was constructing.” 3) The tearing of the temple veil upon Jesus’ death is another portent of the temple’s destruction (15:37-38). The juxtaposition of Jesus’ last breath with the divine damage to the temple is striking and coheres well with the other allusions to its eventual destruction. The tearing of the veil is a particularly important example insofar as the prediction occurs at the narrative level; this is not a saying that could have circulated before Mark’s composition, but part of Mark’s complex literary structure that has a series of well-known parallels to the tearing of the heavens at Jesus’ baptism.

These three instances of the temple theme are disputed among commentators, but their cumulative weight supports a Markan salvation history imagining the destruction of the temple as divine retribution for the temple elite’s rejection of Jesus. This schema, of course, was only tenable after the destruction of the temple. Against those who claim otherwise, it would seem

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48 Robert Gundry (1993: 971-972) objects to such a reading, but his counter-arguments are dubious. Gundry contends that the rending of the temple veil is otherwise unparalleled as a portent of the temple’s destruction (contrasting Josephus, J.W. 6.288-315; Tacitus, Hist. 5.13; b. Yoma 39b; y. Yoma 6:3). This, however, seems to be a distinction without difference: the veil functioned as a synecdoche for the temple as a whole in Second Temple and later literature. The fact that other ancient texts do not mention the veil specifically in their telling of the temple’s fall does not mean that Mark should not be understood as alluding to the entire temple’s destruction. Among the limited references to the temple veil during the Second Temple Period, it is used as a synecdoche in Sir 50:3 in the Hebrew original, but the Septuagint’s translation of οἴκου καταπετάσματος is an especially obvious circumlocution for the entire temple building. Also, Gundry’s assertion is contradicted by b. Git. 56b, where Titus’ destruction of the temple is foreshadowed by his removal of the temple veil (cited as fulfillment of Eccl 8:10); see the reading of the passage in Gurtner 2006: 110.
prudent to assent to the claim of Donald Juel: “From chapter 11 to 15:38, Mark seems occupied with the temple.”

Post-War Life

There are a number of other indicators of Mark’s post-War interests, many of which will be discussed further in Chapters Six and Seven. By way of example, any symbolic value of the demon named Legion (5:9; 5:15) would not have been particularly meaningful in Palestine before the Judaean War. This point will be discussed further in Chapter Six, but it is sufficient to note that no Roman legions remained in Palestine from 6 CE to 66 CE. Moreover, there is no firm evidence for a legion in Gerasa in particular until 119 CE (§P30; cf. §P23, §P40a, §P48, §§M21-44), though it is possible that a detachment from legio X Fretensis garrisoned in Gerasa sometime after the War and simply left no evidence. As an analogy, a story wherein a demon named “Spetsnaz” is exorcized from a Crimean denizen should strike the reader as anachronistic in its politics if depicted as occurring in 2010; one would assume the story had been written after the Russian annexation of Crimea in February 2014, in which the aforementioned special forces were active. Language of “legion” simply had not entered the Palestinian Greek lexicon in the pre-War period and polemicizing against it simply makes no sense. One thus has reason to believe that the pericope in its Markan form originates sometime after 70 CE, when the status of legio X Fretensis in Judaea became a garrison – after which its presence was permanent enough to warrant a desire to expel it as in the pericope.

Moreover, I argue in a forthcoming article that the taxation episode (12:13-17) has subtle indicators of Mark’s historical context, including geopolitical administration, coinage circulation, and tax policies. The article suggests that these data cumulatively indicate Mark was not written earlier than 29 August 71 CE, that is, after the initial collection of the fiscus Iudaicus.

Conclusion: Range of Dates for Composition

50 See the discussion in Klinghardt 2007.
51 This is particularly problematic in the case of Cohen 2010, who builds an interpretation around the category of “occupation.” Cohen’s article becomes especially untenable when “occupation” elides into the concepts of “legions,” “auxiliaries,” “Gentile,” and “Roman.” The political subtext Cohen detects in Mark is difficult to entertain before the Judaean War.
52 Zeichmann 2017.
The present arguments support a small range of probable dates for Mark’s composition, shortly after the temple’s fall at the earliest to the imminent demise of the generation witnessing Jesus’ ministry at the latest. Such a period would roughly correspond to the dates 71–80 CE. Jesus’ replacement of the temple cult indicates that Mark had sufficient chronological distance from the events to reflect upon, intellectualize the destruction, and claim a place within the emerging social world, which might indicate a date close to the middle of the decade. God’s choice to shorten the harrowing days preceding the son of man’s coming (13:20) also indicates that the immediate threat the Markan group had experienced – likely the Judaean War – had resolved itself; that is, those dangerous days had already been cut short. The apparent completion of the predicted events by the time of Mark’s composition is also assumed in 13:24, which assures the reader that the son of man will come following the aforementioned portents. This was a period when the dust of the Judaean War had yet to settle, though a new normal was starting to emerge within Palestinian social life – even as the nascent social structures had yet to solidify.

The Provenance of Mark’s Gospel: A Case against Rome

Many scholars hold that the Gospel of Mark was written in or near the city of Rome. The Gospel of Mark’s association with Rome originates with patristic testimonies, which suggest that the Second Evangelist was Peter’s associate John Mark and that both men lived in Rome. While the church fathers are still invoked to support this conclusion, patristic statements are increasingly recognized as tendentious: church fathers had ample reason to attribute the Second Gospel to a man with relative proximity to Jesus and other important figures in their narrative of Christian beginnings. Clifton Black offers two observations that further undercut their credibility: 1) most patristic testimonies are dependent on one another and 2) no church father links Mark with Rome apart from a Petrine connection. If, as Michael Goulder has argued, the Petrine residence in Rome developed as a late tradition, then there is little reason church fathers’ writings should figure into academic discussion of Markan provenance. We will instead attend to the literary features that may be taken as evidence of the Gospel’s origination.

53 For a helpful list of patristic testimonies on this matter, see Boring 2006: 10.
54 Black 1993: 36.

Furthermore, no Christian writings from the city of Rome evince familiarity with Mark until the third century. Western writers such as 1 Clement, pseudo-Paul, and the Shepherd of Hermas indicate no knowledge of its
Latinisms

The Latinisms found throughout the Mark are commonly cited as evidence for its Roman origins. Mark transliterates the following Latin terms into Greek:

- **grabatus** = κραβαττος, “mat” (2:4, 2:9, 2:11, 2:12, 6:55)
- **modius** = μοδιον, peck measure or “measuring basket” (4:21)
- **legio** = λεγιων, “legion” (5:9, 5:15; Mark: πολλοι [5:9])
- **speculator** = σπεκουλατωρ, “military scout” (6:27)
- **denarius** = δηναριον, Roman coin (6:37, 12:15, 14:5)
- **pugnus** = πυγμη, “fist” (7:3; but see Chapter One)
- **sextarius** = ξεστων, quart measure or “measuring cup” (7:4; but see Chapter One)
- **census** = κηνσος, “capitation tax” (12:14)
- **Caesar** = Καισαρ, “Caesar” (12:14, 12:16, 12:17 [2x])
- **quadrans** = κοδρατης, Roman coin (12:42; Mark: λεπτα δυο)
- **flagello** = φραγελλω, “to flog” (15:15)
- **praetorium** = πραιτωριον, “governor’s residence” (15:16; Mark: αυλη)
- **centurio** = κεντυριον, “centurion” (15:39, 15:44, 15:45)

Commentators have also detected a few Latin idioms with less certainty. Some scholars argue that because Latin was not commonly employed by most Levantine residents, Mark’s repeated use of the language may indicate that he wrote someplace where the language was common, namely Rome. While there is indeed little evidence for use of Latin in Palestine during the life of Jesus, this reasoning works on dubious assumptions.

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56 κραβαττος is included above because it is often treated as a Latinism by scholars, but it will not be discussed as much below because I do not find it helpfully classified as a “Latinism” for two reasons. First, the word does not actually derive from Latin nor did it come to Greek through Latin. Rather it is a Macedonian word and seems to have come to Greek through that language. Second, κραβαττος was in use among Greek writers before Latin influence – even before its first known use in Latin, see Gignac 1976: 192; Kramer 2011: 241-251.

57 E.g., Gundry 1993: 1044; Winn 2008: 80-82. Examples include viam facere (ὁδὸν ποιεῖν; 2:23), ultimum habere (ἐσχάτου ἔχει; 5:23), and capite damnare (κατακριόθην θανάτω; 10:33).
Helmut Koester and others observe that the Latin terms transliterated in Mark are exactly the sort of words one encountered anywhere a “garrison was stationed and Roman law was practiced,” which would characterize post-War Palestine. This is largely because Greek-speaking Palestinians probably only encountered memorable Latin terms in contexts that they experienced as “Roman.” Familiar Latin terms were thus likely to be words either lacking a Greek equivalent or sufficiently technical that transliteration made sense; ancient Greek texts with low-level bilingualism commonly evince writers’ difficulty with more mundane Latin vocabulary, but familiarity with legal and technical terminology. One notices that Mark’s Latinisms primarily consist of military, monetary, administrative, and legal terms – those that a provincial denizen would be likely to experience as Roman. We might observe that other post-War Palestinian Greek texts regularly transliterated the same Latin words, Semitic inscriptions transliterated the same or similar Latin words, and there are a number of bilingual inscriptions code-switching in accordance with the same words as well. It is precisely words that are encoded as Roman in a post-War context (e.g., military, monetary, administrative, and legal terms) that are transliterated in these texts and in the Gospel of Mark. The presence of transliterated Latin in itself therefore indicates little of geographic origins and the specific words used in Mark are those most typical outside of Rome.

59 See the discussion of low-level Latin competence and code-switching in Adams 2003: 305-308. Representative of the phenomenon described above is P.Mich. 7.434+P.Ryl. 4.612: this marriage contract was written in Latin by an author whose command of that language was limited. Many of the dowry items were simply Greek words transliterated into Latin – the author had no reason to know the corresponding Latin terms as his familiarity was limited to more “official” terms (Adams 2003: 623-628).
60 Limiting our scope merely to texts included in Database One. §P26, §P33 transliterate denarius. §P25, §P28, §P44, §P58, §F29 transliterate centurio or the rank primipilus (i.e., chief centurion). §P8a, §P26, §P39, §P43, §P49, §S9a, §F9, §F25a, §F25e transliterate legio. Cf. the transliterations of veteranus in §P23, §P43, §P45, §P49, §P59a and decurio in §P24. Several other administrative and political transliterations might be added from the inscriptions of Database One. This list includes standard abbreviations for these transliterations.
61 E.g., an Aramaic transliteration of centurio on a Nabataean tomb (CIS 2.217), an Aramaic transliteration of centurio from Algeria (CIL 8.2515), Aramaic transliterations of centurio and legio in an inscription from Palmyra (CIS 2.3692), an Aramaic transliteration of the rank optio from Palmyra (CIL 3.7999), and an abbreviated Aramaic transliteration of denarius on a Judaean ostrakon (CIIP 1.620).
62 This is evident in Palestine during the period of interest in §P47. A fascinating example can be found in CIL 3.125 from Egypt: Κλ(αύδιος) Κλαυδιανὸς οὐστ(ρανός) Θεοφάνου leg(atus) p(ro) p(raetore) ex leg(ione) III Κ(υρηναία) ἐποίησαν τὴν στηλὴν ὁδίας αὐτοῦ διαπάνας. This inscription has several interesting features, not least of which is the sole use of Latin for military rank. Note also the transliterated abbreviation of veteranus and the Hellenized abbreviation of Cyrenaica with the letter kappa. One might compare this with a set of familial epitaphs (AE 1984.893-895), the epitaphs are in Greek, with the exception of the veteran father’s, which is bilingual in Latin and Greek. See the excellent discussion throughout the book, but especially relevant pages are Adams 2003: 299-301.
However, two of Mark’s Latinisms explain Greek words: *quadrans* explains the word λεπτόν and *praetorium* explains the word αὐλή. This has led some commentators to surmise that Mark’s intended readership was more familiar with the Latin terms than the Greek equivalents. The preference for Latin terminology is striking in the case of *quadrans*, as this monetary denomination rarely circulated in Palestine during Jesus’ life, but was common in the Roman west. While this might appear to be evidence that Mark and his readers were more comfortable with Romanized Latin than Palestinian Greek, it should more probably be considered as evidence for Mark’s chronological lateness: the quadrans coin only entered heavy circulation in Palestine in the post-War period. This was also the case with the term *denarius*, which is present in Mark 12:15, despite the general absence of denarius coins in archaeological sites across the Levant during the Julio-Claudian era. The influx of legionaries after the War entailed a similar increase in imperial coinage such as denarii and quadrantes, but lepta had stopped being minted before the Herodians came to power and prutot ceased production with the Judaean War. Numismatist Danny Syon agrees: “It is also possible that [Mark], writing in the post-70 CE period—when *denars* were already common enough—assumed that *denars* had circulated under Tiberius as well….” That is, in post-War Palestine, the terms *denarius* and *quadrans* were more meaningful than λεπτόν. This is borne out in the epigraphic and papyrological record: a pair of recently published inscriptions from post-War Jerusalem used the letters τ and Δ as abbreviated transliterations of *denarius* (*CIIP* 1.620; 1.1102, respectively). Other War-era Palestinian texts indicate familiarity with denarius coinage; §P26 and §P32 transliterate δηνάρια in full and §P14 and §P26 (again) use κ, which was a common shorthand for *denarius*; one might also see P.Yadin 15, 17-18, 21-22, 27-30 and Mur 116, 121.

In a similar move, Joel Marcus contends that *praetorium* is probably not a translation of αὐλή, but a clarification. αὐλή in Mark 15:16 refers to one palace among others in Jerusalem and the reference to the praetorium was simply identifying the specific palace within the city, namely the gubernatorial residence.

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63 Hengel 1985: 29.
64 Katsari 2011: 72-75.
65 On the rarity of denarii in pre-War Palestine, see Syon 2015: 213-215. Syon further observes that coinage with portraits in the pre-War period were also generally uncommon in Palestine (despite the centrality of the image to the pericope in question). See also Udoh 2005: 228-236; Zeichmann 2017.
67 Marcus 1992: 142-146.
The Latin terms deployed in Mark are those one could encounter in various Romanized contexts. This is also evident in the locations where Mark’s characters use such words: most of Mark’s Latinisms are used when the characters are in the city of Jerusalem where such terms were more likely to be used, while others appear in relevant locations (a palace for *speculator*, Gerasa for *legio*) or may be interpolations to the text of Mark (*sextarius* and *pugnus*, see Chapter One). Consequently, the argument from Latinisms is weak. Mark was composed in the wake of the Judaean War, so the author was also writing at a time when Roman influence encroached heavily on cultural production: numerous Latin-speaking administrators, soldiers, and bureaucrats were introduced to the region in the years immediately after the War. The increased use of Roman measurements, coinage, and so on was experienced concomitantly, as noted by epigraphic expert Werner Eck: “Denn lateinische Inschriften sind auch sonst, wie schon angeführt, in Syria Palaestina fast nur dort anzutreffen, wo Militär permanent vorhanden war oder wo jedenfalls Leute lebten, die politisch, militärisch oder administrativ eng mit Roms Präsenz in der Provinz verbunden waren, z.B. Veteranen.”

If Mark were composed in Rome’s vicinity, one would expect fewer technical Latinisms and more mundane terms to be transliterated, given the evidence of Latin-Greek bilingualism from antiquity: transliterated technical terms tends to reflect unfamiliarity with the language and novelty of the words, whereas transliterated mundane words tends to indicate the opposite. To this effect, J.N. Adams observes that while Greek could be used in the military for many purposes, Latin “had super-high status which made it suitable for various symbolic purposes, whether in legalistic documents, or to highlight the Roman identity of a soldier, or to mark or acknowledge overriding authority.” These are precisely the domains that Mark’s Latinisms fall under.

**Geographic Problems**

An important objection to Mark’s Palestinian origin is its dubious depiction of the region’s geography. Brian Incigneri notes the two most egregious errors. 1) “The region of the Gerasenes” (τὴν χώραν τῶν Γερασηνῶν; 5:1) erroneously extends to the Lake of Gennesaret. The city of Gerasa was about 50 kilometers from the shoreline and was roughly equidistant from

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68 Eck 2015: 265.
69 By analogy, most Assyrian loanwords in the Hebrew Bible are found in Palestinian texts and the words themselves are political and military terms; see Mankowski 2000: 167-170, 173-175.
between the Dead Sea and the Lake of Gennesaret. 2) Jesus’ trip from Tyre to the Lake of Gennesaret via Sidon and the Decapolis (7:31) could be described as needlessly circuitous, while some commentators characterize it as geographically impossible. A few smaller peculiarities could also be noted, such as Mark’s locating Bethsaida somewhere other than the northeast coast of the Lake of Gennesaret (6:45) and Jesus’ trip from Jericho to Jerusalem via Bethphage and Bethany (11:1). Commentators argue that Mark’s geography of Palestine is so poorly reckoned that the author must have been unfamiliar with the region and thus written his Gospel outside Palestine.

Some advocates of a Levantine origin have attempted to show that such references are not impossible geographically. They suggest that one could in fact travel in the manner Mark 7:31 describes, even if Mark describes the route in an unintuitive manner. Though I am ultimately sympathetic to their conclusions, these counterarguments fail to convince in part because they act in a piecemeal fashion and so appear to be special pleading: this mistake is incompatible with, say, Syrian provenance, but this one is only apparently an error and thus compatible with Galilean provenance. The Markan propensity toward geographical error is greater than the sum of the evangelist’s individual mistakes.\(^1\)

The shortcomings of these pro-Levantine counterarguments do not preclude an eastern origin for Mark’s Gospel. Mark’s strange geography is typical of the time, given the cartographic limitations. Dean Chapman demonstrates this in his comparative work on space in Mark and his contemporaries.\(^2\) Modern cartographical exactness is unreasonable to expect of Mark; Chapman instead contends Mark is best characterized by “intellectual realism” rather than “visual realism.” Agrarian societies rarely conceive of space in terms of a projective Euclidean perspective typical of modern cartography, but instead by enclosures, egocentrism, topological characteristics, and three-dimensionality. As a result, scale, unified perspectives, static conceptions of geographic space tend to fall by the wayside. Chapman contends that Mark skews space in such a way that

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\(^1\) On Mark 7:31, see Lang 1978. Representative of how this piecemeal approach can work against itself to create the appearance of special pleading is Roskam 2004: 105-106, defending the plausibility of Mark 6:45. This type of geographic problem is hardly confined to antiquity. Bible.ca (http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-maps.htm) has collected various maps of the Levant beginning with the 16th century, whose geographic accuracy proves untenable by modern standards in ways similar to the Gospel of Mark. See also Chapman 1995, which includes an extremely helpful map reconstructing Mark’s geography of Palestine (1995: 32, figure 4).

Judaea is placed at the centre of its intellectual map, leading to distorted perspective on more distant areas. These more distant areas are positioned somewhat nebulously in Mark’s geography. Mark thus appears to be most familiar with Judaea and has modest familiarity with other areas, especially those at the perimeter of Palestine like the Phoenician coast and the Decapolis.

Finally, Josephus – well educated, born in Jerusalem, and having spent much time in Galilee – evinces similar problems in his geographic descriptions. To be sure, Josephus is generally accurate in his representation of Palestine, but major problems are evident even when one limits discussion to Josephus’ so-called “geographic excursuses,” which includes a variety of errors. This sometimes includes errors of calculation, as Josephus claimed the Jordan Valley was nearly five times smaller than in actuality (Josephus: 225 stadia; reality: 1061 stadia), likewise Mount Tabor is ascribed a height sixteen times higher than in actuality (Josephus: 5.6 stadia; reality: 0.35 stadia). Josephus commits errors of location, such as the Herodian palace at Masada (Josephus: western slope; reality: northern side of fortress), claiming Ai and Jericho neighbour one another (A.J. 5.35), and wildly misrepresenting the land of Zebulon (which overlaps with the tribes of Issachar and Asher for Josephus). Josephus also describes the land in patently inaccurate ways (e.g., the Holy Land having “rivers impossible to cross, so broad and deep withal were they, mountains impracticable for passage” [A.J. 3.304], the territory of king Sihon being similar to an island [A.J. 4.95]). Since Josephus was aiming to write something much closer to formal geography than the author of Mark, this would render the latter’s mistakes all the more understandable. Indeed, I will suggest below that Mark’s geographic emphasis on the Lake of Gennesaret suggests the Gospel’s composition in its proximity.

**Unfamiliarity with Practices of Palestinian Judaism**

One final argument against Mark’s Levantine origins is the evangelist’s alleged unfamiliarity with Jewish law and rituals, as well as his supposition that readers needed such practices explained to them. In particular, Mark appears to be ignorant of Jewish practices when Jesus teaches about divorce (10:11-12), since women cannot initiate divorce under Jewish law, but

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73 This paragraph draws extensively upon Safrai 1988. On ancient writers’ persistent inaccuracy in descriptions of Galilee, see Cappelletti 2007.
they were able to do so in Roman law. Commentators observe that Mark and Paul (1 Cor 7:10-11) are alone in sharing a Roman legal orientation toward divorce among early Christian writings, which may indicate that both writers were addressing readers located where divorce was primarily understood through such a lens.

Rather than understanding Mark 10:11-12 as suggestive of where Mark was written, it may be more helpful to imagine the issue temporally. The papyri discovered at Wadi Murabba’at indicate that a complex mixture of Roman, Hellenistic, Jewish, and Nabataean law were practiced in the Judaean desert during the early second century. This might be explained by the abrupt change in the legal status of Jewish law concomitant with the Judaean War; surviving pre-War documents indicate that some version of Jewish law was practiced, whereas in the period between the two Judaean Wars, rabbinic authorities had little influence outside of a limited range of ritual questions. This was due in no small part to the changes that accompanied the promotion of Judaea to a full-status imperial province following the War. Heftier provincial bureaucracy entailed the diminution of local Jewish courts’ legal standing, nearly to elimination. Much of the local courts’ authority shifted to corresponding Roman apparatuses, a matter to which Palestinian Jews were surprisingly amenable. Seth Schwartz thus writes, “strikingly, though, the post-annexation documents suggest that the Jews conducted their legal affairs almost exclusively according to the local version of Roman provincial law, not Jewish law.” Accordingly, the earliest competing version of the divorce saying lacks a Roman orientation (Luke 16:18/Matt 5:31-32; cf. Herm. Mand. 41.6, 41.10). This version of the saying derives from Q, which is generally agreed to have been written in Palestine before the Judaean War and so reflects an understanding of divorce proceedings appropriate to its context where Jewish law was still the norm.

The Provenance of Mark’s Gospel: A Case for Palestine

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74 E.g., Fitzmyer 1976: 85-86; Meier 2009: 110. Many commentators claim that Mark 7:3-4 misrepresents Jewish handwashing practices. In Chapter One, I follow William Arnal in attributing these verses to a later interpolation into Mark.

75 Schiffman 2005: 185.

Many scholars locate Mark’s composition in the Levant.\(^{77}\) This section will argue that this region is more tenable than Rome, though this section will abstain from suggesting a more precise location in that region. The subsequent section will suggest rural Galilee and the village of Capernaum (and to a certain extent Jerusalem as well) as the precise location of Mark’s composition.

**Semiticisms**

In addition to its transliterated Latin, Mark contains a number of Aramaic and Hebrew transliterations. In fact, Semitic loan words are far more common than Latin words in Mark. Martin Hengel observed that the density of Semitic-language transliterations in Mark is unparalleled in Greek literature.\(^{78}\)

- גמל = καμηλος, “camel” (1:6, 10:25)
- שטן / שטנא = σατανας, “the accuser” (1:13, 3:23 [2x], 3:26, 4:15, 8:33)
- שבת / שבתא = σαββατον, “the Sabbath” (1:21, 2:23, 2:24, 2:27 [2x], 2:28, 3:2, 3:4, 6:2, 15:42, 16:1, 16:2)
- בנו רע = βαον ριγς, “sons of tumult” (3:17; Mark: υἱοί βροντῆς)
- בר = βαρ, “son” (3:18, 10:46, 15:7, 15:11, 15:15; Mark: υἱός [10:46])
- קפא = καναναιος, “enthusiast” (3:18)
- איש קרייתו = ἵσ Καριωθ, “the man of Kerioth” (3:19, 14:10)
- בעל זבול / בעיל זבול = Βα'αλ ζεβουλ, “Ba’al the exalted” (3:22)
- טליתא קומי = ταλιθα κουμ, “Little lamb, get up.” (5:41; Mark: τὸ κοράσιον, σοι λέγω, ἐγείρει.)
- כתנת = χιτων, “tunic” (6:9, 14:63)
- קרבני / קרב = κορβαν, “offering” (7:11; Mark: δῶρον)
- אתפתח = ἐφφαθα, “Be open!” (7:34; Mark: διανοϊχθητι)
- רבי = ραββι, “my teacher” (9:5, 11:21, 14:45)

\(^{77}\) The two possibilities of the Levant and Rome have even been combined on occasion. For instance, Collins 2007: 2-10 supposes that the evangelist had spent much of his life in Judaea before moving to Rome and writing the Gospel there. This proposal will not be addressed here.

\(^{78}\) Hengel 1985: 46. Hengel, however, advocated Mark’s Roman provenance.
• γαί ην Ναα / נא הינום = γε ἑνα, “Gehenna” or “the valley of Hinnom” (9:43, 9:45, 9:47)
• ῥαββουνι, “my teacher” (10:51)
• δροσανα, “save us” (11:9, 11:10)
• πασχα, “Passover” (14:1, 14:12 [2x], 14:14, 14:16)
• ναρδος, “spikenard” (14:6)
• γεθ σημαν, “oil press” (14:32)
• ἀββα, “father” (14:36, 15:7, 15:11, 15:15; Mark: ὁ πάτερ [14:36])
• γολγοθα, “skull” (15:22; Mark: κρανίος)
• ἐλωι ἐλωι λεμα σαβαχθανι, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (15:34; Mark: ὁ θεὸς μου, ὁ θεὸς μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;) 79

It may raise suspicions that after first dismissing the relevance of Latinisms, I would now uphold Semiticisms as evidence of Markan provenance. While much about the languages of Palestine remains debated, there is little doubt that Aramaic and Hebrew were uncommon outside of the Levant. 80 The parochial use of Aramaic and Hebrew contrasts with the spread of Latin, which was used anywhere Roman functionaries were present. Furthermore, the Aramaic terms and phrases preserved in Mark were not the sort of legal and technical words most likely to be adopted into another language at the time. Mark’s Semitic words are generally mundane and could have easily been translated into Greek instead of transliterated, with the exceptions of words with no Greek equivalent (אמן, שבת, and אפסח), words that were already integrated into Greek (כוס, ברד, and חנה), or various proper nouns with Hebrew or Aramaic origins.

The relevance of Semiticisms is sometimes dismissed on the grounds that the Jesus tradition was replete with oral and written sources originating from Palestine, which would have naturally entailed the preservation of Semiticisms, even if Mark were composed in Rome. 81 This objection fails to appreciate that neither Matthew nor Luke display much fidelity to Mark’s transliterations aside from the untranslatable words noted above. Luke disregards the vast majority of Mark’s

79 The term is probably of Sanskrit origin, but probably came to Greek via Hebrew, hence its inclusion here.
80 Beyer 1986: 18-42. Mark typically prefers the Aramaic forms of these words and not the Hebrew ones, such as the Aramaic form of Ps 22:1 instead of simply transliterating the existing Hebrew text (Buth 2014).
Mark includes terms from other languages: κραβαττος (2:4, 2:9, 2:11, 2:12, 6:55, see note 56 above) from Macedonian, as well as ἀγγαρευω (15:21), γαζα (12:41 [2x], 12:43), and σανδαλιον (6:9) from Persian. These words were integrated to the Greek of Mark’s time, and so indicate little about Markan origins.
81 Incigneri 2003: 96-97; Winn 2008: 84.
Semiticisms, but Matthew more conclusively shows the problems with the supposition that Aramaic and Hebrew transliterations were retained as a matter of tradition. Matthew often omits (as with parallels to Mark 3:17, 5:41, 6:39, 7:11, 7:34, 9:43, 9:45, 11:21, 14:36), translates into Greek (as with parallels to Mark 1:13, 4:15, 8:12, 9:5, 10:51), or Hebraicizes Mark’s Aramaic words and phrases (as with the parallel to Mark 15:34).82 If Matthew was composed in Syrian Antioch, a context where Aramaic was common, and the author nevertheless omitted most Semiticisms from the primary written source for his narrative, then it is hardly likely that Mark would have preserved Semiticisms in a document written as far west as Rome, where Semitic words were intelligible to even fewer residents. Moreover, a Roman author of Mark would probably not have retained Semiticisms from the oral traditions he drew upon, as oral traditions are famously insecure methods of preserving wording, let alone across languages.83 The most important difference between Aramaic and Hebrew on the one hand and Latin on the other is that the latter was the language of the Empire, which was spoken and read in all its provinces, whereas Aramaic and Hebrew were much more geographically specific in its use. Consequently, Aramaic and Hebrew are far more likely to indicate provenance in the Levant than Latin is the Apennine peninsula.

Localized Perception and Knowledge of Palestine

82 Kee 1977: 101. Matthew adds two Hebrew transliterations, 1) Ἐμμανουὴλ (עמעי אל; 1:23) which is accompanied by an explanatory Greek translation and 2) κυμινον (כמון; 23:23) which is likely taken over from Q – and three Aramaicisms, 1) ῥακα (ריקה; 5:22) also accompanied by a Greek translation, 2) μαμωνα (ממון; 6:24; cf. Luke 16:13) which is likely taken over from Q, 3) σατον (סאתא; 13:33; cf. Luke 13:21) which is likely taken over from Q. Matthew omits the word κορβαν from Mark 7:11, but uses the word elsewhere (Matt 27:6). Matthew also duplicates more common and technical words, like πασχα, ἀμην, and Βεελ ζεβουλ, that he encountered in Mark. Contrast the use of ῥαββά (Matt 23:7, 23:8, 26:25), which is the target of Matthean polemic. See also Matt 5:18’s reference to Hebrew writing, evidently taken over from Q (cf. Luke 16:17).

83 Black 1946 and Casey 1999 argue that Mark used written Aramaic sources in the composition of his Gospel – to the point where he often translated the sources verbatim into Greek and are readily reconstructable back to their Aramaic Vorlage. There are a number of problems with this proposal, not least of which is the fact that Mark often becomes little more than a compiler of his sources, with few editorial inclinations of his own. It also fails to account for why Mark did not translate Hebrew or Aramaic words into their Greek equivalents. This approach, however, helpfully indicates Semitic syntactical constructions one finds in Mark.

Some commentators contend that Mark’s Greek translations alongside Aramaic transliterations indicate he did not expect his audience to be familiar with Aramaic. Best (1992: 844-846) lists translations accompanying Mark’s Aramaic transliterations during two healings (5:41, 7:34), two phrases from the passion narrative (14:36, 15:34), and three names (3:17, 10:46, 15:22). One might add 7:11 to this list. There are a few reasons to be hesitant about making too much of this argument: 1) Mark sometimes renders terms in both Greek and transliterated Latin as well; 2) the translations of names indicates very little aside from their symbolic importance; 3) Mark translates both ῥαββά and ῥαβ for his readers, despite that fact that both were likely among the Semitic words most likely to be understood by a Greek-speaking audience; and 4) translation of Aramaicisms are exceptional in Mark and not the rule – of the 70 Semitic transliterations in Mark only eight are accompanied by a translation.
Mark shows a localized perception of rural Palestine. The most important example of this knowledge is Mark’s consistent reference to the Lake of Gennesaret as a “sea” (θάλασσα), despite being a humbly sized body of water. Roughly contemporaneous writers refer to it as a λίμνη (lake), including Strabo (Geogr. 16.2.16), Josephus (J.W. 2.573, 3.57, 3.463, 3.506, 3.515-516, 4.456), and Luke (5:1-2, 8:22-23, 8:33). Pliny the Elder (Nat. 5.71) and Tacitus (Hist. 5.6.6) similarly use the word lacus in tandem with Gennesaret. Anyone whose conceptual point-of-reference for bodies of water was the Mediterranean Sea would be unlikely to describe the Lake of Gennesaret as a θάλασσα. Gerd Theissen thus writes, “the designation of a lake as a ‘sea’ can be taken as an indication of a limited horizon of life. For small farmers and fishers in Galilee, Lake Gennesaret could simply be ‘the sea.’” Writers outside northern Palestine consistently categorize this body of water as a lake, given its comparative unimportance and unimpressive size. Few people other than villagers for whom the Lake of Gennesaret was of unique importance might characterize it as a sea. The importance is all the clearer when Mark indicates its singular prominence by a definite article and no accompanying name: it is simply the sea. The fact that Mark overwhelmingly uses the term θάλασσα to describe the Lake of Gennesaret should be understood as part of a localized geography specific to northeastern Palestine.

This reading finds some affirmation in the use of θάλασσα in the papyrological record. The term is not particularly common, but two instances are known from the Levant: §P34b and P.Hever 62, the latter of which was found in the Judaean village of Nahal Hever. In both instances, the word θάλασσα is applied to the Dead Sea, despite the fact that – like the Lake of Gennesaret – the term is not appropriate for a body of water that size, especially in comparison to the Mediterranean. The use of the term presumably indicates that the body of water most intelligible as a “sea” to the author was not the grandiose Mediterranean, but the comparatively diminutive Dead Sea. The author’s localized knowledge renders the Dead Sea more significant than those

84 See the discussion in Baergen 2013: 86-89, written with reference to Theissen 1991: 105-108.
85 The only non-Markan texts to use the word θάλασσα in reference to the Lake of Gennesaret are Matthean passages dependent upon Mark, the Gospel of John (6:1, 21:1, both plausibly from the Signs Gospel), and the Septuagint (Num 34:11, Josh 12:3, 13:27). Note that these Septuagint passages translate the Hebrew word גָּם, the semantic domain of which includes smaller bodies of water than θάλασσα. The Hebrew Bible accurately characterizes the significance of the Lake of Gennesaret, even if the Greek translation is not quite as precise.
87 Mark uses the word θάλασσα in an absolute sense (i.e., apart from the phrase “the Sea of Galilee”) in reference to the Lake of Gennesaret in 1:16, 2:13, 3:7, 4:1, 4:39, 4:41, 5:1, 5:13, 5:21, 6:47, 6:48, and 6:49.
whose frame of reference was the Mediterranean would do so. The same seems to be going on, *mutatis mutandis*, in the Gospel of Mark. Thus, while Theissen’s argument may be problematic in some ways, it is nevertheless usefully in naming the peculiarity of Mark’s terming the Lake of Gennesaret a θαλάσσα.

Mark indicates familiarity with other Palestinian localities. Roskam points out that Mark and texts dependent on it contain the only references to the villages of Magdala and Dalmanoutha, to which one might also add Bethphage and Arimathea.\(^88\) Mark takes for granted that his readership needs no explanation as to their locations, despite their continued obscurity. Mark also makes vague references to “the high priest” (14:53) and “Pilate” (15:2) that are assumed to be intelligible to the reader. Matthew revises Mark to clarify the identity of both: the high priest is named Caiaphas (26:57) and Pilate’s administrative significance as governor is stated (27:11). It is difficult to imagine a Roman Christian being similarly conversant in otherwise-unattested villages and assorted persons in Palestine.

Connected with this is Mark’s awareness of Palestinian Christian and Jewish groups during his own day. Both Jesus (14:28) and the young man at the empty tomb (16:7) portray Galilee as a place where the Christian gospel will be preached, at the very least indicating Mark was aware of Christian presence in that portion of Palestine. The Gerasene Demoniac is authorized to preach the word suggesting Christian associations in the Decapolis, and the warning to flee to the mountains in Mark 13:14 may indicate that Mark knew of Christians near a mountainous region.\(^89\) Mark also knows former residents of Jerusalem’s villages personally, including the sons of Simon of Cyrene, Alexander and Rufus (15:21) – Simon is described as a labourer who works in the fields outside the city of Jerusalem. Matthew and Luke omit reference to these men, suggesting Mark wielded a closer social proximity than did later evangelists, who apparently deemed them irrelevant.

Mark indicates acquaintance with *realia* of the lake region as well. Rene Baergen has shown that later evangelists redact Mark’s parochial depiction of the Gennesaret miracles to make them less


geographically specific.\textsuperscript{90} For instance, “other boats” in Mark 4:36 are replaced with typical language of discipleship (Matt 8:23) and Luke omits some of the miracles entirely (i.e., Mark 6:45-56, 7:24-30). Mark’s familiarity with Palestinian \textit{realia} includes region-specific social formations. The comments of Kloppenborg are worth quoting in full: “Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ opponents, which, unlike Matthew’s account, distinguishes between scribes and Pharisees (Mark 2:15) and, unlike Matthew (3:7, 16:1), restricts the Sadducees to the environs of Jerusalem, reflects a greater awareness of the religious topography of Judea prior to the first revolt.”\textsuperscript{91} As much as Matthew is concerned with the politics of Jewish groups, it seems that Mark has a far better representation of their local spread and character in Palestine.\textsuperscript{92}

\textit{Post-War Palestine in the Olivet Discourse}

Finally, the contents of the Olivet Discourse are especially compatible with the post-War conditions in the Levant. It was argued earlier that Mark 13:1-4 and 13:14 should be read as reflections upon the War’s effects on Palestine. In addition to these intimations of a post-War Judaean context, Mark warns of messianic claimants that would lead others astray (13:5-6; cf. 13:21-22). Josephus records several people that may have been perceived as messianic claimants during the Judaean War: 1) Menahem son of Judas the Galilean, who was greeted as a king in Jerusalem (\textit{J.W.} 2.433-434); 2) Josephus’ rival John of Giscala (\textit{J.W.} 4.566-576); 3) Simon bar Giora was celebrated by slaves (\textit{J.W.} 4.503-508); 4) Josephus himself acclaimed Vespasian as the messiah (\textit{J.W.} 6.313), though there is reason to suspect he may have been alone in this; and 5) a popular oracle predicted that a Jew would rule the inhabited world (\textit{J.W.} 6.312; cf. Tacitus, \textit{Hist.} 5.13; Suetonius, \textit{Vesp.} 4.5). All of these men were located in Palestine during their acclamation. The sole instance Josephus cites of a possible claimant outside of Palestine is Jonathan the weaver, located in Cyrenaica (\textit{J.W.} 7.437-441). Josephus cites Cyrenaica as the furthest extent of rebellious Jewish enthusiasm during the War, which is overlooked when scholars assume that messianic claimants were known in Rome.\textsuperscript{93} Mark’s warning against false

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Baergen 2013: 99-102.
\item Kloppenborg 2005: 421-422; cf. Hengel 1985: 9-10; Wardle 2015. Kloppenborg links this argument with Mark’s date, though it seems at least as applicable to its geographic setting.
\item I refer to the thesis famously articulated in Salardini 1994 and developed by numerous subsequent scholars, that Matthew is deeply invested in demarcating authentic Judaism and his criticism of other groups should be understood as an emic critique.
\item Winn 2008: 84-85 cites 2 Thess 2:1-12 and 1 John 2:18-27 as evidence of Messianic claimants’ spread throughout the Empire and the problem they presented for early Christians. Winn overlooks the fact that these
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messiahs is directly addressed to his readership, employing second person plural pronouns and verbs (13:21-22). This caution had little relevance for those outside Palestine.

Mark’s warning of imminent trials is also more pertinent in the Levant than Rome (Mark 13:9). This warning is emphatically directed to Mark’s readers with its excess of second-person plural identifiers (βλέπετε δέ ὑμεῖς ἐκατονταύς). Mark refers to a variety of institutions specific to the Levant and their imminent abuse of Markan Christians, including συνέδρια and συναγωγαί. This is not to deny that there were buildings that one might term “synagogues” in Italy and even the immediate vicinity of Rome. Rather, there is a terminological gap between Jewish associations in the capital of Rome and those in the Levant. Juvenal (Sat. 3.295), Philo (Legat. 155-161), and an inscription (CII 15.531) all prefer the term προσευχή or the Latin transliteration proseucha when referring to Rome’s Jewish associations. This leads Anders Runesson, Donald Binder, and Birger Olsson to conclude that προσευχή “was the normative term for the synagogue in the Roman capital during [the first and second centuries C.E.]” Only in the third and fourth centuries did the word συναγωγή become popular in the city of Rome. Mark thus uses the preferred terminology of Levantine rather than Roman Jewish associations during the early Empire, not only here, but throughout the Gospel.

More decisive is Mark’s warning about being dragged in front of governors and kings (ἡγεμόνων καὶ βασιλέων; 13:9). The reference to governors is not particularly helpful: Judaea was subject to governors before, during, and after the War, as were all provinces. More interesting is the reference to kings in the plural, since shortly after the War Rome all-but formalized its policy of annexing client kingdoms as quickly as diplomacy permitted. By the 70s few kingdoms existed at all, let alone with the density comparable to the Levant, including Batanaea, Nabataea, Homs, and Chalcis; one could also include the rebel states within Palestine during the War. While there were a handful of kingdoms in the Western frontier, none were in geographical proximity to the city of Rome itself, meaning the warning in Mark 13:9 was far more pertinent for Levantine readers.

documents are typically dated around two decades after the Judaean War and so probably reflect later developments within Christianity and Judaism.

94 Richardson 2004: 120-121, 208-209, whose argument depends on inscriptions from much later periods.
95 Runesson, Binder, and Olsson 2008: 237.
Other points in the Olivet Discourse also assume proximity to the events of the Judaean War. Mark 13:14 is addressed in the second-person plural (ἵνα) and its portent would only have been visible to those in Jerusalem at the time. The cutting short of suffering (13:20; cf. 13:24) was also experienced by those directly affected by the Judaean War.

**The Provenance of Mark’s Gospel: A Location within Palestine**

Palestine was far from a homogeneous region in the early Roman period. Within it one encountered considerable variations in ethnic and religious demography, density of population, agricultural features, military presence, and so on. The differences in daily life between, say, Caesarea Maritima and Hebron may have been comparable to the differences between Caesarea and Rome. One should therefore avoid generalizations such as “Syria-Palestine” or “southern Syria” when discussing provenance, as that may obscure as much as it clarifies. Commentators have been understandably reluctant to hazard guesses as to the exact location of Mark’s composition. To pursue the investigation of local particularity discussed in the introduction, I will advance my own argument of Mark’s place of composition. A handful of locations within Palestine have been suggested in recent years: Paneas, Caesarea Maritima, Pella, Jerusalem, and rural Galilee. I will briefly evaluate previous arguments before offering a suggestion of my own.

Thomas Schmeller first pursued Paneas/Caesarea Philippi, a thesis developed more recently by Theodore Weeden. Many of their arguments appear equally or more applicable to other parts of northern Palestine. Weeden notes, for instance, that a crowd appears out of nowhere in 8:34, which he suspects is a stand-in for the Markan community; of course, such crowds are hardly uncommon in Mark. Schmeller observes that Mark 8:27-30 is unique in several respects (e.g., Peter’s confession, Jesus being alone with the twelve). This argument assumes Mark holds a more elevated view of Peter and his confession than the Gospel warrants; Peter is one among several buffoonish disciples for Mark and Jesus never accords him with the ecclesial significance that Matthew does. Most interesting is Weeden’s observation of various correspondences

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between the sayings directed to the Caesarean crowd and the advice of the Olivet Discourse.\textsuperscript{97} Weeden is not clear how this would indicate a provenance near Paneas, though.

Caesarea Maritima also has little to recommend it. E. Earle Ellis’ case for Caesarea is based largely on patristic associations of Mark’s Gospel with Simon Peter.\textsuperscript{98} The church fathers are tendentious and their discussion of first-century Christianity cannot be taken at face value. Ellis also points to Mark’s Latinisms, Gentile perspective, and Galilean interests. These arguments are also weak, especially Mark’s investment in Galilee; Matthew and Luke were likely written at some distance from Palestine but also retain a heavy interest in Galilee. It might be noted that Caesarea evinces little more civilian use of Latin than the rest of Palestine until the second and third centuries CE, a time when Roman colonization accelerated the use of the language.\textsuperscript{99}

Joel Marcus proffers Pella as a possible location, linking the imperative to flee to the mountains in Mark 13:14 with the flight of Christians to Pella as described by Eusebius (\textit{Hist. eccl.} 3.5.3; cf. Epiphanius, \textit{Pan.} 29.7.7-8, 30.2.7).\textsuperscript{100} Joseph Verheyden, however, has shown the patristic reports of the flight to Pella to be unreliable: the concentration of themes and polemic typical of Eusebius suggest the flight was probably his invention.\textsuperscript{101} The Markan passage is also ambiguous and could refer to other mountainous regions nearby, since the Mark also refers to mountains near the lake of Gennesaret (3:13, 6:46), Gerasa (5:5, 5:11), and Caesarea Philippi (9:2, 9:9). Marcus treats Pella as a mere possibility, one that he does not pursue too vigorously.

Two locales are more promising sites for Mark’s provenance. Jerusalem is not an especially popular suggestion, but Dean Chapman offers reason to entertain the possibility.\textsuperscript{102} Chapman observes that for all of Mark’s interest in the region of Palestine, his Gospel contains many geographic mistakes and lacks detail. One major exception to this is the city of Jerusalem, which Mark shows considerable knowledge about. For instance, Mark knows that the road from Jericho

\textsuperscript{97} Weeden names the overlaps: 1) the Christ-issue (8:28/13:22, 13:6), 2) witnessing Christ (8:38/13:9), 3) assurance of salvation (8:35/13:13), 4) Jesus’ credibility (8:38/13:30), 5) the son of man’s exaltation (8:38/13:26-27), and 6) the end of the current generation (9:1/13:30).

\textsuperscript{98} Ellis 1992; 1999: 368-376.

\textsuperscript{99} See Eck and Cotton 2002.

\textsuperscript{100} Marcus 1992: 461-462; cf. Marxen 1969: 102-103. The Decapolis more generally was suggested as a possibility by Siegfried Schulz and Johannes Schreiber, though neither elaborate upon their reasoning nor has it proven to be an especially popular suggestion (e.g., Schreiber 1961: 183 n. 2; Schulz 1967: 9). See the more recent suggestion of the Decapolis in Wardle 2015.

\textsuperscript{101} Verheyden 1988.

pass by Bethphage and Bethany (11:1-12). And while Mark avoids naming the villages near major cities, Chapman observes the preponderance of local spaces in and near Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{103} William Arnal observes that the characters Mark assumes are familiar to his readers have some association with Jerusalem – Alexander, Rufus, Pilate, and the High Priest.\textsuperscript{104} Tellingly, these are almost the only characters that Mark mentions without explanation, and their concentration near Jerusalem seems to be more than coincidental. These arguments cumulatively suggest some kind of familiarity with Jerusalem and its environs.

Galilee is more commonly suggested as a viable provenance for Mark. Mark’s special affinity for Galilee is well known and this has more recently developed into arguments for the Gospel’s origination there.\textsuperscript{105} Hendrika Roskam’s arguments in favour of Galilee are the most extended on the issue. Four of her reasons are particularly compelling. 1) Several obscure locations Mark mentions are located in Galilee (Magdala, Dalmanoutha, Nazareth, “the mountain”); as noted earlier, Mark and writings dependent upon it are the only sources of written evidence of these particular villages. One might go further than Roskam and note that Mark tends to avoid naming villages, despite the significance of rural sites for Jesus’ ministry. The exceptions to the anonymity of villages are sites at the north and western shores of the Lake of Gennesaret (Magdala, Capernaum, Dalmanoutha, Bethsaida), as well as those in and around Jerusalem. 2) Jesus (14:28) and the young man at the empty tomb (16:7) locate Galilee as a site of continued Christian activity and Jesus’ post-resurrection presence. One could push Roskam’s argument

\textsuperscript{103} Mark refers only to the region of the Gerasenes (τὴν χώραν τῶν Γερασηνῶν; 5:1), the country of Tyre (τὰ ὄρια Τύρου; 7:24), the villages of Caesarea Philippi (τὰς κώμας Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου; 8:24), and the road exiting Jericho (10:46) for specific incidents. Elsewhere, Jesus travels in κώμαι (6:6, 6:56, 8:23, 8:26, 8:27), κώμαι καὶ ἄγροι (6:36), κωμοπόλεις (1:38), and avoids πόλεις in favour of ἔρημοι τόποι (1:45). Note the exceptional combination of κώμαι, πόλεις, and ἄγροι in 6:56. See the discussion in Freyne 2011: 188-189.

Some Markan sites near Jerusalem include Golgotha, Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, Bethany, Bethphage, and perhaps Arimathea. Some Markan sites inside Jerusalem include the temple, the treasury, high priest’s house, and the praetorium.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{104} Arnal 2008.


There are three primary ways of reading “Galilee” in Mark: legally (i.e., the strict legal-administrative boundaries of Antipas’ kingdom; contrasting with Syria, Batanaea, Judaea), theologically (i.e., an ill-defined area that exists in theological contrast with Judaea), and territorially (i.e., common parlance for a geographic region that largely conforms to Antipas’ kingdom; contrasting with Idumaea or the Decapolis). The third of these seems most plausible, given what Mark seems to deem as its categorical siblings: Idumaea, Decapolis, Judaea, the environs of Jerusalem, and Perea (i.e., across the Jordan). That is, its categorical siblings are not provinces nor does the term designate all areas welcoming Jesus.
further to suggest that the young man’s words also authorize Christian presence in Galilee. 3) Mark assumes his readers will be familiar with James and Joses, whose mother Mary was Galilean (15:40-41; cf. 16:1). 4) The title of Herod Antipas during his entire reign of Galilee was tetrarch (τετράρχης), though Mark repeatedly refers to him as “king” (βασιλέως; 6:14, 6:22, 6:25, 6:26; cf. 13:9). Northeastern Galilee was the only area in Palestine under a client ruler from 55-97 CE – Agrippa II under the title “king.” It is possible Mark reveals his concern with the present king of Galilee in this historiographic slippage; that is, βασιλέως was a more significant title than τετράρχης for the author of Mark. One could go a step farther and contend that the presence of the villainous Herodians is also indicative of a competing social formation in Mark’s context. Luke (probably writing from Ephesus) omits them entirely and Matthew downplays their role. The spread of Herodian partisans far outside the kingdom of Batanaea during Agrippa II’s reign seems intuitively improbable. To these four arguments, one might add Gerd Theissen’s aforementioned observations about the import of the lake region to Mark’s Gospel. It is difficult to imagine that the author would have referred to Gennesaret as “the sea” had he written in Caesarea Maritima, given its proximity to much larger bodies of water that would cast into relief the diminutive Gennesaret.

A compulsion to select either Galilee or Jerusalem’s vicinity may present a false dilemma. William Arnal offers the compelling suggestion that Mark was written by a Jewish Jerusalemite exiled to Galilee after the Judaean War. Throughout Mark there are a number of ways of indicating a movement of bodies away from Jerusalem toward Galilee, most evident in the words of the young man at the empty tomb (16:7) and Jesus at the last supper (14:28). There are many commonalities between Jerusalem and Galilee in Mark’s Gospel. Mark’s Jesus almost exclusively travels among Galilean villages and avoids every city except Jerusalem. Richard Rohrbaugh and others have argued that this preference for the rural may be taken as indicative of Mark’s social sphere. It is surprising that Mark’s preference for travel among the villages did not lead to much specificity among them, as noted above: they are described only in relation to

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106 Arnal 2008; cf. Marxen 1969: 106-107; Such 1999: 171-173. Arnal offers compelling arguments that the Gospel of Mark attempts to authorize Galilee as Jewish space; as a Jewish refugee in an unfamiliar place, Mark attempts to show Galilee as a legitimate location of Jewish activity. Arnal observes Mark’s careful delineation of Jewish space (i.e., Judaea, Galilee, and western Batanaea) apart from Gentile space: pigs, dogs, legions, non-Jewish epithets for God, and Gentiles themselves are present in the latter but not the former, not to mention the absence of Pharisees, scribes, Herodians, and other Jewish characters in Gentile space.

their metropolis (see note 103 above). The exceptions to this, as the competing claims of Markan provenance have suggested, are near Jerusalem (Bethany, Bethphage, etc.) and the lake of Gennesaret (Capernaum, Bethsaida, etc.). For all of Jesus’ activity in the villages of the Levant, these are the only ones named in the Gospel. This is not to mention the various nods toward the righteousness of refugees. One could thus tentatively conclude that the author lived in the city of Jerusalem itself before arrival in Galilee.

Mark’s ecumenical attitude toward other Christian associations complicates efforts to determine where in Galilee the author wrote. The problem can be understood in contrast with two other early Gospels and their polemics of place. Peter Richardson offers a brief but compelling analysis of the Signs Gospel, which “emphasizes Cana’s role, downgrades Capernaum’s, and locates Jesus’ proper ‘place’ in Galilee differently from Mark.” Richardson points out that the first two signs occur in Cana (John 2:1-11; 2:12a, 4:46-54), the first Galilean disciple is called there (21:2), and the catching of the fish is associated with the village (21:1-14). Capernaum, by contrast, seems to be downplayed in the Signs Gospel: its significance is minimized with the purposeless reference in 2:12, Jesus remaining in Cana while healing a boy in Capernaum (John 4:46-47; contrast Matt 8:5; Luke/Q 7:1), and Jesus once more avoiding entering it in 6:16-17.

These features suggest that the Signs Gospel attempted to establish Cana as the preeminent locus of Jesus’ activity at Capernaum’s expense. The role of geographic place in early Christian identification practices is more explicit in the Sayings Gospel Q, which engages in open polemic against various villages. The only villages named in Q are near the Lake of Gennesaret, which may indicate their vicinity to Q’s author. But whereas the Signs Gospel’s polemic may be against other Galilean Christian groups, Q’s tirade against villages in the region is more likely indicative of disappointed expectations from interactions with Jewish villagers. It is outside of the purview of this chapter to pursue these examples further, but it is likely that these politics of

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110 I.e., Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Q 10:13-15). On Q’s Galilean provenance, see Arnal 2001: 157-164; Reed 1995; Richardson 2004: 73-90. Arnal’s argument that Q was composed in Capernaum is difficult to reconcile with the polemic of Q 10:15, invective building upon the preceding woes. Kloppenborg (2000: 174-175) suggests that the repeated mention of Capernaum is best explained by the author’s proximity to the village, a conclusion that is more consistent with Q’s rhetoric. It is also possible that Capernaum was a site of former activity by the Q people, given the language of rejection in the passage. In this vein, Jonathan Reed understands Capernaum as a problematical centre for the Sayings Gospel Q.
place were the products of social histories rooted in Galilean conflicts, resulting from an extended process of social distinction, competition for identity claims, and so on.

Conversely, Mark depicts Christian space inclusively, but not absolutely so. Capernaum is Jesus’ home (2:1, 2:15, 3:20, 9:33), the first apostle was commissioned in Gerasa and preached to the Decapolis (5:19-20), Jesus’ preaching is described as taking place throughout Galilee, and Jesus rejects delimitation of sources for Christian authenticity on occasion (3:35, 9:38-41). In fact, there are very few places where Mark’s Jesus travels where he does not make some positive impression – one might contrast Q’s rhetoric of near-total rejection. Mark locates Christianity’s origins in Galilee and southern Syria, but no one location in these regions is privileged to the detriment of others, albeit with the explicit exclusion of Nazareth.

With those cautions in mind, I would like to advance Capernaum as the tentative location of Mark’s composition on the basis of eleven interrelated arguments.¹¹¹ What coordinates these eleven arguments is Mark’s rhetoric of Jesus’ identification with Capernaum. Mark puts extensive intellectual effort in authorizing the Lake of Gennesaret and Capernaum in particular as legitimate sites of activity. The arguments will largely focus on issues of Mark’s redaction, which largely obviates explanatory recourse to Markan sources from the region. These eleven arguments fall into a few clusters: the geography of Capernaum in Mark (1-2), significant events Mark depicts in Capernaum (3-5), the overall narrative significance of Capernaum for Mark (6-9), and Capernaum as a specifically Markan feature (10-11).

1) Capernaum was located on the northern shore of the Lake of Gennesaret, and its denizens were heavily dependent upon the lake for their livelihood, usually via fishing and related industries. Its residents were among the few people in the world apt to understand the lake as so important that its characterization as “the sea” would be anything other than a patently disingenuous exaggeration.¹¹² As noted above, roughly contemporaneous writers refer to it as a λίμνη, including Strabo (Geogr. 16.2.16), Josephus (J.W. 2.573, 3.57, 3.463, 3.506, 3.515-516, 4.456), and Luke (5:1-2, 8:22-23, 8:33). Pliny the Elder (Nat. 5.71) and Tacitus (Hist. 5.6.6)

¹¹¹ Ched Myers (1988: 421-423) suggested Capernaum as the location for Mark’s composition, though I am not aware of anyone else who has followed up this idea.
¹¹² Baergen 2013: 69-77; Theissen 1991: 105-108. See the discussion in note 85 above.
similarly use the word *lacus* in tandem with Gennesaret. Mark indicates its singular prominence with a definite article and no accompanying name: it is simply *the sea*.

2) Mark refers to three settlements as a πόλις: Gerasa (5:14), Jerusalem (11:19, 14:13, 14:16), and Capernaum (1:33). Gerasa and Jerusalem were major urban centres and acted as metropolises for the surrounding region, both warranting extensive road systems linking them to other metropolises. Capernaum was by any estimation a modest rural town (κώμη): Jonathan Reed calculates a population between 600 and 1500 around the turn of the Era.\textsuperscript{113} By Ze’ev Safrai’s reckoning, the six hectare size of Capernaum would render it a medium-sized town, so Capernaum was certainly not a πόλις.\textsuperscript{114} Capernaum’s relative insignificance is confirmed by Josephus’ use of the word κώμη (*Life* 403). Since Mark otherwise prefers κώμη and related terms when describing individual sites that Jesus visits, this suggests Mark’s designation of Capernaum as a πόλις was significant. The overstated importance of Capernaum is similar to Mark’s aforementioned characterization of the Lake of Gennesaret as a “sea” – ancient writers had a propensity to understand space egocentrically and reckon the size of locations according to personal significance.\textsuperscript{115} This point can be emphasized, the village is almost never mentioned in the ancient record: after Josephus and texts dependent upon Mark, *Rab. (Eccl.)* 1.8 seems to be the chronologically next text to discuss it, deriving from some time in the sixth century CE. That is to say, the mere mention of such a minor village seems significant in itself.

3) The whole first day of Jesus’ ministry occurs in Capernaum or its immediate vicinity, including the Sabbath exorcism (1:20-28) and the healing of many on the lake shore (1:29-34). Mark introduces Jesus’ ministry not only by the lake, but at Capernaum in particular. Several scholars have noted how these pericopae authorize activity in Capernaum.\textsuperscript{116} The material from Jesus’ first few days in Capernaum is programmatic, further suggesting the significance of this

\textsuperscript{113} Reed 2000: 149-152; cf. Mattila 2013: 84-85, who is generally critical of Reed, but concurs with estimates of a “thousand or so inhabitants.”

\textsuperscript{114} Safrai 1994: 40-42, 65-67. Mark’s characterization of a few significant locations as cities should be contrasted with Luke’s reckoning of any inhabited place as a πόλις: Nazareth, Capernaum, Bethlehem, Nain, etc.


\textsuperscript{116} Guelich 1989: 61; Marcus 1999: 177-179; Pesch 1968: 272-274; 1977-1980: 129; Taylor 1966: 178. These writers are primarily interested in a pre-Markan tradition (bringing with it a problematic notion of Gemeindegründungstradition), though their arguments actually seem more pertinent to the completed version of Mark, given the prevalence of Markan redactional features in this section (e.g., messianic secret, teaching with authority, Jesus’ forgiveness of sins, nature of Jesus’ mission); see the extended study of this section’s programmatic function in Iwe 1999.
village for Mark. Jesus’ residence in Capernaum lasts several eventful days (1:16-38, 2:1-3:12, 3:20-4:36). The group-founding function of the Capernaum material is nearly explicit when Jesus states that those gathered around him are his authentic family (3:34-35). This latter passage is rife with identity concerns and social distinctions and seems to be the only instance where Jesus identifies his true disciples through spatial proximity – “looking about at those circled around him, he said, ‘behold my mother and brothers.’”

4) Even after the first part of Jesus’ ministry, Jesus returns to Capernaum in preparation for his trip to Jerusalem (9:33-50). Though this visit is much briefer, Jesus’ teachings in the village are once again rife with identity politics. Twice during Jesus’ short stay, he discusses the importance of hospitality to the children of his day (9:36-37, 9:42). This younger generation, of course, were adults by the time Mark was written – it is telling that Jesus sanctions Mark’s generation while in Capernaum. Also significant is the narrative about the other exorcist, which explicitly engages in authorization of Jewish healing activity in his name (9:38-41). This exorcist was apparently located in Capernaum.

5) One particularly significant point is how the Gospel’s conclusion points the reader toward a return to Galilee. The young man at the tomb announced the eventual appearance of Jesus in Galilee (16:7), a claim also attributed to Jesus (14:27-28). Willi Marxen famously argued that the author of Mark awaited the son of man’s coming in Galilee on the basis of these verses. Marxen’s interpretation has its critics, but his reading helpfully points toward the cyclical function of Galilee in the Gospel, particularly its import for authorizing the activities of the author. Though more tenuous, one might also link the advice of Jesus to let those in Judaea flee to the mountains (13:14) to the mountainous region near the Sea of Galilee (3:13). The words of the young man at Mark’s conclusion (and earlier those of Jesus himself) indicate that even though the Gospel of Mark has reached its conclusion, the story continues in Galilee.

6) Over one-fifth of Mark’s Gospel occurs in Capernaum or its shore, extending well beyond the inaugural day of Jesus’ ministry. During these sections of Mark, Capernaum acts as a central

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118 Mark 1:16-38, 2:1-4:36, 5:21-43 (implicitly, see note 119 below), 9:33-50; assuming “the mountain” near Capernaum was the Mount of Beatitudes or another nearby landmark (3:13-19). This comprises four total trips.
location from which Jesus and his disciples evangelize nearby villages. There are other indications that Capernaum was imagined as significant for Mark’s group. The inaugural sermon in the synagogue introduces many themes that pervade the Gospel, the parable discourse highlights growth from humble beginnings, Jesus identifies Capernaum’s following generation as inheritors of God’s Kingdom, he discusses who is permitted to perform miracles in his name, etc. The sheer density of activity in the village is striking, given its relative unimportance during the pre- and post-War periods – Capernaum was not an obvious place to locate Jesus’ activity unlike, say, the more politically or theologically salient locations of Jerusalem or Bethlehem.

7) Mark not only depicts Capernaum as the originating point for Jesus’ fame in Galilee (1:28, 2:2), but also narrates Capernaum and the lake region as a gathering point for Jewish pilgrims throughout Palestine and nearby regions (3:7–8; cf. 1:45, 2:13, 3:19, 4:1, 5:21, 6:55). Eric Stewart observes that every act of gathering (συνάγω, ἐπισυνάγο) to the person of Jesus occurs in Galilee, though we might be more precise in identifying the location as the western shore of the Lake of Gennesaret, often Capernaum more specifically.119 Consistent with the reading of the Markan author as a refugee from the Judaean War, this gathering includes Jerusalemites and Judeans – among others in areas where Jews were negatively impacted by the Jewish War – who traveled to Capernaum in order to be near Jesus (3:8). Mark thus configures space by imagining Capernaum not only as the centre of Jesus’ activity, but also as a location to which Galileans seeking healing and teaching were expected to gather.

8) Extending beyond the role of Capernaum as a “hub” in Mark, Jesus himself has a home there. Mark notes that Jesus occupies a house in the village multiple times (2:1, 2:15, 3:20, 9:33). Capernaum seems to represent a type of permanent residence for Jesus that is downplayed elsewhere in Mark (e.g., 10:29-30), anchoring him uniquely in the village along with Simon and

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119 Stewart 2009: 212-213. 1:33 [Capernaum (cf. 1:21)]; 2:2 [Capernaum (cf. 2:1)]; 4:1 [coast at Capernaum (cf. 3:19)]; 5:21 [implicitly coast at Capernaum (Gerasa is across from Capernaum in 5:1, here Jesus travels back)]; 6:30 [Galilee near coast (cf. 6:14, 6:32)]; 7:1 [Galilee (cf. 6:56)]; 13:27 [Galilee? (cf. 14:28, 16:7)]. See also similar acts of large-scale gathering to Jesus while he was in Capernaum: 2:13 (πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτὸν), 3:7 (πλῆθος πολὺ ... ἠλθεν πρὸς αὐτόν), 3:20 (συνέρχεται πάλιν ὄχλος), 5:24 (Ȳκωλούθει αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολὺς καὶ συνέβλημεν αὐτὸν).

120 Mark 2:15 is grammatically ambiguous as to whether Jesus or Levi owned the house. Malbon 1985 presents influential arguments for Jesus’ ownership, but see the article suggesting the contrary by May 1993. May’s counterarguments do not account as easily for Jesus’ request that Levi follow him.
Andrew. The tradition of Jesus’ home is otherwise poorly attested. Q (9:58) explicitly renders Jesus homeless on earth, and it is heavily implied in both the Gospel of John (1:14, 14:23) and the Gospel of Thomas (42, 86) as well. In these latter two Gospels, Jesus’ transitory experience of earth is a pivotal component of their christology. Jesus’ house in Capernaum is entirely unique to Mark and it provides further credentials to the village’s import for Mark.

9) Mark has long been interpreted as operating with a symbolic polarity that contrasts Galilee with Jerusalem, Galilee comprising the more positive part of Jesus’ ministry and eventual place of resurrection and Judaea the more negative (see note 105 above). In fact, Jesus spends very little time in Galilee apart from Capernaum. One might slightly modify the contrast between Galilee and Jerusalem, to one between the two Jewish poleis in Mark: Capernaum and Jerusalem, a point Eric Stewart has already made. These two “cities” share a number of features: Jesus’ home (his [2:1, 2:15, 3:20, 9:33] vs. his father’s [11:17]), contrasting fruitfulness (4:1-20 vs. 12:1-12), contrasting reactions of the twelve (following vs. deserting), among other similar qualities. Mark encourages the reader to contrast the hostility of Jerusalem with the more positive reception at Capernaum when Jesus is opposed by scribes who explicitly travelled from the former to the latter (3:22). Indeed, most of the literary points about the supposed Galilee-Judaea contrast could be revised to account for the specificity of Capernaum in Mark’s narrative.

10) It might be objected that Mark’s emphasis on Capernaum results from the retention of earlier traditions locating Jesus’ activity in that village and has less editorial significance for Mark than it did the historical Jesus or pre-Markan traditions; Mark’s Jesus may spend ample time in Capernaum simply because that is where the life of Jesus happened. This line of reasoning fails to account for the aforementioned comparison of Mark with earlier and contemporaneous sources. The geographic centre of activity was a matter of dispute among early writings, so other texts authorize other loci in as the pre-eminent site of Jesus’ activity. The Signs Gospel and Q briefly mention Capernaum, but the village plays no authoritative role in their stories and they treat it dismissively. Indeed, the Signs Gospel prefers the village of Cana as the centre of Jesus’ ministry and Q is particularly hostile to the village of Capernaum. Still other gospels focus on

121 Jesus’ narrative activity in the region of Galilee that does not occur in Capernaum or its immediate vicinity is limited to Mark 1:14-15, 1:39-45, 6:1-16, 6:30-52, 8:10-21, 9:30-32.
Jerusalem. By contrast, the Gospel of Thomas, the Didache, and surviving epistolary literature do not imagine the location of Jesus’ ministry to be an authorizing mechanism as evinced by the nearly absolute omission of the topic. It was far from inevitable that Capernaum was narrated as the principal location of Jesus’ activity, so the amount of attention Mark devotes to Capernaum in particular is significant.

11) Finally, Mark’s positioning of Jesus’ activity in Capernaum is not only significant, it is also innovative. Comparison with pre-Markan writings indicates a politics of location about the locus of Jesus and “authentic” Judaism, though no previous writer imagined Capernaum as significant as Mark does. Mark is the first Gospel to invest Capernaum with the importance of Jesus’ activity, residence, teaching, and proximity to his eventual return. Consequently, one should not imagine the centrality of Capernaum and the lake region of Galilee as accidental or traditional, but a salient move that emerges from the Mark’s localized interests. One might characterize the Capernaum theme as distinctively Markan.

Conclusion

A reasonable case can be made for Mark’s composition somewhere in Galilee after the Judaean War. Mark’s familiarity with events of the War is evident upon careful reading of the Gospel, with special attention to his reconfiguration of Jewish space and the ex eventu prophecies of the Olivet Discourse. I have suggested that Mark was grappling with the immediate consequences of the temple’s destruction, the Judaean War, and the resulting transformations to the social landscape. Arguments favoring Mark’s Roman provenance often depend on unreliable patristic testimonies and Latinisms that indicate little about the Gospel’s composition. By contrast, Mark displays knowledge of rural Palestinian life and language, as well as concern over events specific to the region. I have tentatively suggested that a refugee from Jerusalem moved to Capernaum and wrote the Gospel of Mark. This location gives us sufficient reason to assume that Mark’s author was a man socialized in Palestinian life and so his perceptions of, expectations concerning, and meanings ascribed to the military should be understood in relation to this particular background. Thus, this context will be salient to our central problematic of Mark’s

Richardson 2004: 94: “Some gospels are explicitly set in Jerusalem: Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840, Papyrus Egerton 2, Gospel of Peter (with Galilean post-resurrection incidents), Acts of Pilate, and Protevangelium of James. There is, thus, no unanimity on Jesus’ central place.”
evident ambivalence toward soldiers. The immediately following chapters – those comprising Part II of this dissertation – will elucidate the numerous functions and perceptions of the military in the region.
Chapter 3

Who Were the Soldiers in Palestine?

Gospel scholarship commonly treats soldiers as though they were all legionaries – they are consistently depicted as Roman citizens, ethnically different from Palestinian civilians, relatively wealthy, etc. The problems with this depiction can be seen in Database Two, for the simple reason that legions were rarely in Palestine before the Judaean War. Typifying this problem is a *JBL* article by Theodore Jennings and Tat-Siong Benny Liew arguing that Matt 8:5-13 suggests a same-sex relationship between a centurion and his slave, of which Jesus seems to approve.\(^{124}\) I use this example not to argue one way or the other about Jennings and Liew’s conclusion, but to examine the assumptions driving their argument. Jennings and Liew provide considerable literary evidence that legionaries had sexual intercourse with younger men (often slaves). The problem, however, is that the episode occurs in Capernaum, which was a part of Antipas’ Galilean tetrarchy at the time and therefore garrisoned no Roman soldiers.\(^{125}\) Even though Galilee was a client kingdom that existed at the whims of Rome, the difference between Roman legionary and Galilean employment was not simply a matter of which administration signed the paychecks. Rather, the social systems that crucially structured the values of military institutions differed between client kingdoms and imperial provinces. A close reading of Jennings and Liew’s primary sources reveals that the unequal relationship between Rome and the inhabitants of the regions occupied played a large role in generating the conditions for the use of slaves as sexual objects. Saddlington notes, “the instances they quote are of centurions raping adolescent boys in actual warfare or forcing themselves on unwilling young recruits.” The Roman imperial army was perhaps the single most transparent index of the emperor’s might and thus served a significantly different purpose from the small army of a petty king; the norms of military masculinity into which the soldiers were socialized were therefore considerably different. This was especially with respect to how sexuality was understood in relation to maximising the Empire’s maintainable dominion, preparing frontier regions for economic integration, minimising violence from potentially hostile subjects, affording of legal privileges to Roman

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\(^{124}\) Jennings and Liew 2004.

\(^{125}\) Saddlington 2006; Zeichmann 2015c.
citizens, etc.\textsuperscript{126} Such sexual acts would be unlikely to occur in Herodian Palestine, since \textit{none} of these components were constitutive of the military order – however salient they may have been for other apparatuses of Antipas’ Galilean state. It is consequently important to note that, despite the frequent tendency of scholars to discuss the concerns of Levantine kingdoms’ forces in light of legionaries, this sort of equivocation is often unhelpful. Indeed, soldiers were acutely aware of the benefits of serving in one branch as opposed to another (e.g., legionaries vs. auxiliaries), as this had a direct impact on the status and privilege that accompanied their employment.\textsuperscript{127} Thus, I hope to show that the claim of T. R. Hobbs, that “the distinction [between the types of soldiers stationed in Palestine at different times] is a fine one and of no great consequence,” is untenable.\textsuperscript{128}

If we are to avoid such ahistorical impositions of ostensibly universal patterns of Roman civilian-military relations onto first-century Palestine, then it is necessary to describe their demographic character in all its particularity. The goal of this thesis is to explain why Mark, written at this particular time and this particular place, depicted soldiers in this particular manner.

\textbf{The Demographic Makeup of Palestinian Recruits before the Judaean War}

The demographic makeup of the military forces in Palestine was intimately linked to the places from which soldiers were most heavily recruited. When Herod refounded Strato’s Tower as Caesarea Maritima and Samaria as Sebaste in 27 BCE, he granted his veterans land plots in these cities; almost inevitably, Caesarea and the Sebaste became the primary recruiting grounds of Judaean soldiers.\textsuperscript{129} These cities provided five cohorts of infantry and one ala of cavalry as a standing army. From the time of Herod the Great through his son Archelaus, these soldiers functioned as an independent client king’s army, with only incidental interaction with Roman legions or its commanders. It is therefore useful to discuss the demography of soldiers of this era as a distinct chronological period, despite significant differences between auxiliary and client kings’ forces. Roman military historian Jonathan Roth summarizes:

\begin{quote}
While there certainly were some changes, the military forces of the region remained basically the same from the reign of Herod, through his successors Archelaus, Antipas, etc.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{126} For more on the social structures linking military sexual norms to the Roman military and its imperial ambitions, see Mattingly 2011: 94-121; Whittaker 2004: 115-143; Zeichmann 2015c: 48-50.
\textsuperscript{127} See \textit{P. Fouad} 1.21 (63 CE) and its discussion in Saddington 1982: 65, 189.
\textsuperscript{128} Hobbs 2001: 329.
\textsuperscript{129} See, e.g., Josephus, \textit{A.J.} 15.296, 20.122, 20.176, \textit{J.W.} 1.403, 2.52, 2.58, 2.74, 2.236, 3.66.
Philip, Agrippa I and II, down to the end of the Jewish War. Even the so-called Roman garrison [i.e., *auxilia*] was in fact only a number of Herodian units put in Roman service. Most, perhaps all, of these soldiers were Aramaic speakers …

This continuity was particularly useful in ensuring stability through the administrative vicissitudes of the region, though it was not always harnessed with the greatest effectiveness. We will see later that the Judaean War marked a significant change for military demographics, with the shift toward an army of occupation and a new prevalence of foreign-born soldiers.

Though Palestinian soldiers remained in their home province after Archelaus was banished and his ethnarchy was annexed in 6 CE, some noteworthy changes occurred. It seems that these soldiers were subsumed into the Roman army as auxiliaries, and the Roman governors decided to continue recruitment policies in place since the time of Herod the Great. Military diplomas attest units named *cohors I Sebastenorum* and *ala Sebastenorum*. However, the mere fact that the cohort is given an ordinal number indicates that there was, at the very least, also a *cohors II Sebastenorum*. We can therefore ascertain that there were at least three auxiliary units; we

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130 Roth 2004: 5. *Pace*, e.g., Cohen 2010; Cotter 2000; Hamblin 1997; Jennings and Liew 2004 and many others that see the army and soldiers in pre-War Judaea as completely Roman in character.

131 See the discussion of this process throughout the Empire in Haynes 2013: 116-119. Evidence of the effects of annexation on the military in new Eastern provinces is scarce, though Judaea appears to have been very simple in its process. Soldiers of Galatia – annexed 25 BCE and so before Rome had standardized its auxiliaries – were split between several different units, both legionary and auxiliary (so Wheeler 2007: 258). After Nabataea was annexed in 106 CE, its soldiers were divided up into six *cohortes Ulpiae Petraeorum*, a transition aided by the Nabataean kings' modelling of theirs upon Roman military hierarchies (Graf 1994). The annexation of Pontus and the Gallic Julii (Drinkwater 1978: 824-831) involved direct transfer of soldiers from the existing army to the Roman military, like Judaea (Tacitus, *Hist*. 3.47). The continuity before and after Judaean annexation is made apparent by the fact that Herod's and the auxiliary army both numbered about 3400 soldiers, the sites of recruitment and settlement were the same (i.e., Sebaste and Caesarea), Josephus' works assume continuity of provincial soldiers, and most importantly it held a distinctive administrative status as an equestrian sub-province of Syria, a type of province which typically garrisoned local recruits. The process was all the smoother in Batanaea, as at least some of the units were already aided Rome under Agrippa II during Nero's Parthian campaign and Judaean War.

132 The standard argument on the name of the auxiliary units in Judaea remains Schürer 1973: 363-365. See also the texts cited in note 129 above. Josephus once describes the auxiliaries as being from Syria (*J.W*. 2.268), but Gracey 1981: 180 is certainly correct in suggesting that ἐκ Συρίας is a loose reference to their demographic of the Syrian *ethnos* and not their geographic origins as recent Syrian immigrants.

133 §§D1i-k, m-t; §§D2a-g on *cohors I Sebastenorum*, §§D3a-n on *ala Sebastenorum*. It is curious that aside from a doubtful conjectures for *cohors V Sebastenorum* (§§P67a-b), no direct evidence of *cohortes II-V Sebastenorum* survive. This is not as surprising as it may initially seem. Three factors could contribute this peculiarity. 1) Diploma evidence is heavily weighted toward certain regions for reasons that have nothing to do with garrison strength. As of 2005, 54 diplomas were attested for Moesia Inferior, 56 for Pannonia Inferior, 43 for Mauretania Tingitana, but only one for each of Asia, Cilicia, and Macedonia (several have none: Gaul, Lusitania, the small Alpine provinces, etc. and until recently Africa, Arabia, and Galatia-Cappadocia), so they may have been located in obscure provinces or received diplomas at obscure times. 2) Some of these regiments could have been entirely wiped out shortly after leaving Judaea – most likely in the Bar Kokhba War, but also possibly in Trajan’s
have no reason to doubt Josephus’ claim that the other three cohorts were recruited from Caesarea and Sebaste as well, probably forming _cohortes III et III et V Sebastenorum._

A _cohors Ascalonitanorum_ is also attested; this is not surprising, given that Ascalon was a free city operating independently of Judaea.\(^\text{134}\) Josephus mentions a garrison of one cohort and one _ala_ in Ascalon on the eve of the Judaean War (_J.W._ 3.12); though no direct evidence of _ala Ascalonitanorum_ survives, we might infer that it along with _cohors Ascalonitanorum_ garrisoned the city after which they were named and not the province of Judaea proper. All evidence indicates that the Judaean governors and Agrippa I continued recruiting troops primarily from Caesarea and Sebaste, who were then stationed within Judaea’s borders. This, of course, changed during and after the Judaean War, when the Syrian legions became a vital part of the social landscape.\(^\text{135}\)

The Herodian policy of recruiting locals for Palestinian armies is evidenced elsewhere, too. Herod also transplanted a number of Idumaeans into Trachonitis to serve as a garrison against regional bandits (Josephus, _A.J._ 16.285, 16.292), though the unit was destroyed in a local rebellion in 9 BCE. As to Galilee, Herod initially set up a number of fortresses to pacify the region’s Hasmonaean sympathizers (Josephus, _J.W._ 1.210), he formed another but it seems that as this concern declined so also did the strength of his forces in Galilee: the hoard of royal arms at Sepphoris fell out of authorized use and into the hands of Judas the Galilean before Antipas began his reign (Josephus, _J.W._ 2.56, 3.35-36). Other colonies are mentioned in Hesbonitis, Gaba, and Idumaea, though little data survives regarding these sites. Herod set up a particularly important colony of Babylonian Jewish cavalry in Bathyra, which seems to have lasted longer than the Hesbonitis or Gaba colonies. Its soldiers eventually served in the armies of Philip,

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\(^\text{134}\) Parthian Campaign, the War of Quietus, etc. 3) If the cohorts saw significant losses in battle, they could have been disbanded, reorganized, or combined with other cohorts, and thus received new names. We know, for instance, that _cohors I Sebastenorum_ was reorganized from a quingenary regiment to a milliary one (i.e., from a nominally 500 soldier unit to a nominally 1000 soldier unit) by the end of the Bar Kokhba War.

\(^\text{135}\) Evidence for the makeup of _cohorte Sebastenorum_ and _ala Sebastenorum_ after the Judaean War is limited, but it suggests that soldiers were no longer drawn from Judaea: §D1t (160 CE, thus recruited during the Bar Kokhba War) was issued to Vaxadus son of Vaxadus from Syedra in Cilicia.
Agrippa I, and came to comprise about half of Agrippa II’s forces.\textsuperscript{136} Two epigraphs attest one soldier named Diomedes we can be fairly sure was Bathyran cavalry commander under Agrippa II (§§P22a-b).

The military and veteran colonies in Palestine were formed in the overlap between the Hellenistic and Roman eras and so exhibit qualities typical of each type, tending increasingly more toward the latter as time progressed, especially after the War.\textsuperscript{137} Both Roman and Hellenistic military colonies were integral to the rest of the city.\textsuperscript{138} In the Bathyra colony, for instance, not only was the cavalry comprised of Babylonian Jews, but the civilians accompanying them were Jewish as well (A.J. 17.25-26; συγγενεῖς). Civilians included women to marry soldiers and veterans to encourage the cavalry’s proliferation. The colonies of Caesarea and Sebaste necessarily served different functions from that of Bathyra, but the cities nevertheless encouraged veteran settlement and marriage. People in these cities were predominantly of Syrian origin and this was reflected in the ethnic makeup of the recruits; Josephus notes that it was a point of pride among Syrian Caesareans that their kin comprised the bulk of the auxiliaries (Josephus, A.J. 20.176). Even so, there is evidence of several Caesarean Jews serving in the Roman army (§F44; §D8; §D14).

Upon his death, the vast majority of Herod’s army acceded to Archelaus, leaving Philip with the colonies in Trachonitis and Bathyra and Antipas to more or less recruit his own army from scratch. As noted in the previous chapter, Antipas’ failure to use the arms at Sepphoris suggests that he took his time recruiting forces and during the sole battle attested under his reign – the Nabataean War in 36 CE – since his troops were eviscerated by Nabataean forces. It is therefore not surprising that the account of Antipas’ banishment implies that the aforementioned armory at Sepphoris was not in use (Josephus, A.J. 18.250-252).

While nearly all of the forces of Herodian Palestine and pre-War Judaea comprised local recruits, there is evidence that some foreigners were in their ranks as well. Samuel Rocca notes that “scholars long argued that Herod’s soldiers were for the most part foreign mercenaries, modern


\textsuperscript{137} See the competing emphases about Herod the Great’s army in Rocca 2008b: 140-147; Shatzman 1991: 198-214.

authorities such as [Israel] Shatzman believe that the majority of his troops were in fact Jews, and that Herod’s army thus did not differ much from the Hasmonaean army that preceded it.”\(^{139}\) Josephus mentions Thracian, Galatian, and German soldiers in attendance at Herod’s funeral (\textit{A.J.} 17.198, \textit{J.W.} 1.672), but there is no evidence of his sons making use of mercenaries for their armies. Ultimately, soldiers born outside Palestine are poorly attested from the time of Herod’s death to the outbreak of the Judaean War, with the exception of commissioned officers.

The heavy enrollment of Palestinian soldiers resulted in a prominent Jewish and native Gentile presence among its forces. This is seen in the epigraphic record for both Herodian and Roman forces. Both attest soldiers that can be identified as Jews or other Palestinians with a fair amount of confidence. 1) Diomedes son of Chares was in the Babylonian Jewish cavalry at Bathyra, serving as eparch under Agrippa II and in \textit{cohors Augusta} during the War (§§P22a-c). Despite his Judaism, Diomedes seems to have been very open to supporting non-Jewish cults.\(^{140}\) 2) Herod son of Aumos was an Idumaean colonist in Trachonitis, who served as Agrippa II’s stratopedarch (§P15). 3) Lucius Cornelius Simon was a Caesarean Jew that probably served under Rome in the Judaean War.\(^{141}\) 4) Publius Aelius Mercator was a Caesarean native who fought in \textit{legio I Adiutrix} during the Bar Kokhba War (§F44). 5) Aelius Silvanus was a Jerusalem native who fought in \textit{legio II Adiutrix} during the Bar Kokhba War as a centurion (§F45). 6) Barsimsus Callisthenes was a Jewish man from Caesarea in \textit{cohors I Vindelicorum milliaria} (§D14). 7) A soldier named Matthew garrisoned in Herodium, though it is not clear whether he worked under a Herodian client ruler or a Judaean governor (§P65). 8) Gaius Atilius was a legionary who served in \textit{legio V Macedonica} during the late first century, and hailed from Emmaus (§P19). 9) Titus Flavius Iuncus was an officer in various auxiliary cohorts and \textit{legio X Fretensis} hailed from Neapolis (§§F38a-b). 10) One inscription attests two soldiers from Caesarea and individual soldiers from Gaza and Anthedon in \textit{legio III Augusta} during the early 139 Rocca 2009: 13. The strongest case is that of Shatzman 1991: 170-216, but contrast Kasher 1990: 209-214.

\(^{140}\) Though this may seem to indicate Diomedes was not a Jew, scholars often overstate Jewish preoccupation with monolatry. Note that while this identity practice was regulated by social norms, it was not always observed strictly, as there are many examples of Jews engaging in cultic rituals with other deities. For instance, a Jewish slave owner in Delphi followed local custom by manumitting his slave through the symbolic act of selling him to Apollo (\textit{IJud.Ori.} 1.Ach44) – a few Jewish slaves were freed this way as well (\textit{IJud.Ori.} 1.Ach42-43; cf. \textit{IJud.Ori.} 1.Ach45 to the god Amphiaras); Niketas of Jerusalem helped fund a Dionysian festival (\textit{IJud.Ori.} 2.21); Herod the Great funded the construction of many non-Jewish cultic sites; Jews occasionally made offerings to Charon as well (Evans 2003: 106-107). Diomedes would seem to be engaging in a similar activity. 141 §D8; Isaac 1980-81: 50.
second century. 11) Ausos son of Aios seems to have been an Arabian Batanaean who joined Agrippa II’s army (§P24). 12) Matthias son of Polaius from somewhere in Syria-Palestine served in legio I Adiutrix (§D7). 13) DNA tests of the lath on a composite bow used by the Roman auxiliaries during the siege of Masada indicate it was produced in Palestine – presumably the archer’s homeland. 14) The Decapolis produced many soldiers as well.

Somewhat frustrating for the study of Jews in the army is the extent to which historical accident prevents us from knowing much about most soldiers. Aside from obvious problems of fragmentary inscriptions and the unpredictability of such finds, the question of soldiers’ names proves an impediment to identification of origination and ethnicity. While many biblical scholars assume that soldiers with Roman names must have been Roman citizens (and thus either aristocratic or from outside Palestine), evidence suggests otherwise: a document from the archives of cohors III Ituraeorum from 103 CE indicates that some auxiliaries received the full tria nomina shortly after recruitment, before the training process was complete. Auxiliaries in cohors I Hispanorum also had the tria nomina in 83 CE (IGR 1.1337). Because soldiers usually changed their name after recruitment, the mere act of joining the military often obscured soldiers’ ethnic and geographic background. Benjamin Isaac thus observes a few obvious instances where soldiers from the Decapolis dropped their Semitic birth name to take up a Roman one. Consequently, there is no way to know the birth name of, say, Domitius son of Domitius, since he followed the convention of adopting the name of his commander or the emperor (§D10, in this case the Syrian legate Domitius Corbulo).

The difficulty of determining ethnic and geographic background is exacerbated by the skewed

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142 §F30. Cf. CPJ 3.465=P.Oxy. 735 (205 CE), which lists several soldiers with Semitic names, but there is no way of knowing their origins on the basis of such names (e.g., Zabdius, Gaddius, Malichus), though a somewhat stronger case can be made for Barichius. Note also Strabo’s (incredible) claim that Gaza was capable of recruiting 40,000 troops (Geogr. 16.2.28).

143 Stiebel 2005: 100-101. This would further suggest that understanding of the last stand at Masada was a moment of pan-Jewish identity formation is entirely retrospective. See also the final section of Chapter Five below.

144 See, e.g., §P23, §F7, §F16, §F20, §F43, §D1c/D9, §D1h/D11, §D8, §D10 and §F30 one from Scythopolis and two from both Damascus and Hippos (with several from Ptolemais, Tyre, and Sidon as well).

145 Evidence of Jews serving the military both preceding and following the period of interest is extensive. See, e.g., CPJ 1.18, 1.22, 1.24, 1.28, 3.463, 3.465, 3.476; CII 1531.


147 Isaac (1981: 72-73) cites §D10 and §F7. Recall also the names of Agrippa I and II: Gaius Julius Agrippa and Marcus Julius Agrippa, neither of which suggests Jewish ethnic identity.
epigraphic and literary data upon which we depend. Inevitably, inscriptions and literature honour those with disposable income, which has generally precluded most veterans from erecting monuments or being men deemed worthy of historical note. This leads to a dramatic over-representation of commissioned officers (i.e., above the rank centurion) in the epigraphic record. 

Thus, while it is true that Rome did not usually conscript Jews into military service against their will, there is no indication that this lenience prevented them from serving on their own accord. In addition to the Palestinian Jews mentioned above, several other soldiers warrant attention despite hailing from elsewhere. 1) Best documented is a collection of letters from an Egyptian soldier named Julius Apollonarius to his family (§§F25a-e). Julius had Jewish ancestry, evinced by a grandmother named Sambathion, and served in legio III Cyrenaica. His father was also a member of that legion. 2) A number of ostraka from a Jewish decurion named Jesus around the turn of the first century survive from Edfu (§§F26a-h). 3) An ostrakon from Egypt attests a Jewish centurion named Hananiah on the eve of the War of Quietus (§F29). 4) A somewhat later inscription honors the descendant of another Egyptian centurion, this one named Benjamin (§P58). 5) A recently discovered diploma of Aggaeus Bar Callippus was likely issued for a Jewish (or otherwise Semitic) individual with ancestry from Palestine who as of retirement resided in Samosata (§D4l/D13).

But how did Judaism fit into the Roman army? Despite the common assumption that soldiers were obliged to worship the emperor or the Roman pantheon, the Roman military was respectful

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148 Numerous Jews partook in Roman military service before the emperor Honorius prohibited their enlistment in 418 CE. See the studies in Oppenheimer 2005: 183-191; Roth 2006; Schoenfeld 2006, but especially insightful is González Salinero 2003. See Rocca 2010 for a nuanced discussion of the ban on Jewish conscription, though Rocca too readily assumes the accuracy of Josephus’ wording. It is worth noting the incredible Talmudic claim that Aquilas the Convert himself converted four legionary detachments to Hadrian’s chagrin (b. ‘Abod. Zar. 11a).

It is important to avoid involvement in the authenticity politics of first-century debates as to whether Jews in the military were “really” Jewish or not. Schoenfeld 2006: 116-117 is particularly critical of the assumption that Jews in the Roman army were effectively Gentile. As with the general populace of Palestine, Jewish practices varied considerably, such that one person’s piety might be another’s apostasy – all while identifying as Jewish. To be sure, upon reintegration in civilian life, certain military practices may have compromised their adherence to Judaism in the eyes of some (e.g., Sabbath labour, table fellowship). However, in-group debates among early Roman Jews about the (in)sincerity of Jews in the military and the resulting parameters of “real Judaism” should not be mistaken for scholarly constructs and definitions. In all cases, identification remains strategic.

149 Julius’ references to “the gods” suggest that this Judaism was peripheral to his identity practices (§§F25a-b); this may also be the case with Chares who though a Zamarid dedicated a statue to Zeus Beelbaaros (§P22c). Note also that Julius’ father was a legionary; it is not clear whether Sambathion was his maternal or paternal grandmother.
of auxiliary troops’ religious practices before the Flavians acquired the princeps. Their tolerance was especially evident in culturally homogeneous auxiliary units, where there was little reason to defect from one’s traditions. Identification practices – whether ethnic or religious – remained strategic: a Jewish soldier named Matthew tended to the pigs at Herodium and was reputed to have engaged with them indecorously (§P65d); even if his practices were unclean by certain ritual standards, Judaism may have nevertheless been a salient point of identification for him. The fact that several veterans kept some part of their Semitic birth names even when eligible for the tria nomina (e.g., Matthias §D7, Lucius Cornelius Simon §D8, Barcallipus §D13, Barsimsus §D14) indicates that ethnic heritage served as a continuing point of identity among Jews and other Palestinians in the military.

The Benefits of Service for Palestinian Recruits

Since military service was not mandatory for anyone in Palestine, it would be helpful to consider the factors leading men to volunteer for service. One should nevertheless be cautious to avoid overemphasizing the “self-selecting” nature of soldierly work in Palestine: the vast majority of recruits were born and raised in colonies, whether in Caesarea, Sebaste, Bathyra, Gaba, or elsewhere. As young men, they would have been socialized into the values, customs, and discourses that were cultivated in the military. This was especially so in Caesarea and Sebaste, where a large number of soldiers were on active duty in the cities themselves, unlike, say, Bathyra. Seneca cites an example that is valuable less for its narrative than for the expectations it reveals about military enrollment of able-bodied youth within colonies.

Fabianus says, as my parents also saw, that as a boy at Rome he had the stature of a large man. But he swiftly departed this life and no one of discernment could have failed to say that he would soon die; for he was not able to reach that age of life which he had attained prematurely. … Although his stature, his fairness of form, and his particularly robust physical constitution marked him out as one born for service in the field as a soldier, he

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150 Hoey 1939; Stoll 2007: 464-471; cf. the locus classicus in Tacitus, Germ. 43. Even after the Julio-Claudians, there is the Egyptian archive of Claudius Terentianus (enlisted in the classis Alexandrianae 110-136 CE; P.Mich. 8.476-481). In the letters between Claudius and his friends, cultic vocabulary is regularly invoked, but Roman deities are never named; Claudius and his friends instead opt for the god Serapis and associated deities (Strassi 2008). Likewise, the soldiers of legio I Minervia located in Germania Inferior had no interest in Roman deities (despite their legion’s name!), instead worshipping local goddesses such as the Matronae Aufaniae (Haensch 2001). This will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

151 See the analysis of Josephus’ description of the Bathyra colony by Cohen (1972: 87-88).
refused to follow the colors so that he might remain with you. Consider, Marcia, how seldom women who live in a different dwelling from you see their children. Reflect upon the fact that all those years count as lost years and years passed with never ending anxiety for mothers who have sons in the army.\textsuperscript{152}

Seneca, writing a letter of consolation to the deceased youth’s mother, clearly finds this case to exceptional and makes sure the grieving mother is aware of it; Seneca had earlier expressed anxiety over his own son’s nearly-assured military service (\textit{Marc.} 9). We might think of this less as a matter of mandatory inevitability than as a nearly universal process in which employment strategies were inseparable from the other strategies of biological, cultural, and social reproduction in which the eventual recruits partook.\textsuperscript{153} Many young men were socialized into norms that rendered military service appealing, not simply because of the benefits of military service, but especially because their subjectivity had already been produced within the frame of military masculinity. This is worth mentioning to militate against a rational-actor reading of the recruitment process, instead encouraging one to understand it as related to a variety of social interests.

What interests would lead a Palestinian man to join the military? The Marian Reforms instituted 107 BCE included opening up military service regardless of wealth; previously a man need to own property totaling a minimum of 3500 sestertii, had to supply his own weapons, and could not be a member of the \textit{proletarii}. Most of the common soldiers of the legions, \textit{auxilia}, and client kingdoms were recruited from the lower classes during the first century.\textsuperscript{154} Palestine was no exception. Josephus reports “though [the Syrian Caesareans] were inferior regarding wealth \textit{vis-à-vis} Jewish Caesareans, they prided themselves in the fact that they were most of the Romans garrisoned there, whether Caesarea or Sebaste….”\textsuperscript{155} More revealing is the modest pay that

\textsuperscript{153} I echo here Bourdieu 1990a: 160-161.
\textsuperscript{154} Tacitus’ (\textit{Ann.} 4.4) unhappy formulation of recruits under Tiberius is typical: “Volunteers were not forthcoming, and even if they were sufficiently numerous, they had not the same bravery and discipline, as it is chiefly the needy and the homeless who adopt by their own choice a soldier’s life.”
\textsuperscript{155} Josephus \textit{A.J.} 20.176; translation Christopher B. Zeichmann. Though data only arrives from the period of the Judaean War and later, inscriptional data indicates a prevalence of names common among the lower classes in soldiers serving in Judaea; see, for instance, Di Segni and Weksler-Bdolah 2012 on §§P62c-e; but contrast the exceptional §P54 – though the soldier’s rank is unknown.
soldiers received in exchange for their labor.\textsuperscript{156} Pay amounted to 750 sestertii or 250 Syrian tetradrachmae per year for the vast majority of auxiliaries (i.e., low-ranking infantry known as \textit{pedes}) before Domitian mandated a raise in 84 CE. About half of the pay went to living expenses, such as food; soldiers nominally earned about two sestertii per day, but after deductions it was closer to one sesterius.\textsuperscript{157} This rate of pay is comparable (albeit unfavorably) to the wages of manual laborers in the first and early second century. Sources are severely limited for Palestine, but reports seem to indicate pay was typically four sestertii per day. Rabbi Hillel worked for four to eight sestertii per day (b. Yoma 35b; ’Abot R. Nat. 27b); Matt 20:1-15 reports four sestertii per day; b. ‘Abod Zar. 62a reports four sestertii per day. By way of comparison, \textit{P.Lond.} 131 reports the equivalent of one-and-a-half to two sestertii per day for labourers in Egypt in the first century CE and Cicero (\textit{Rosc.} 28) reports three per day in Rome during his own time.\textsuperscript{158} Poor pay was not only typical of Roman auxiliaries, as there are indications that soldiers of the Herodian client kings received low pay as well. In reward for a year’s labor, Herod paid his men 450 sesterces.\textsuperscript{159} Josephus (\textit{A.J.} 15.353) notes that Herod’s Arabian opponents tried to sow sedition among his soldiers by capitalizing on resentment over wages in 22 BCE. Even legionaries stationed in Judaea seem to have spent nearly their entire pay on necessary expenses, ending up penniless after payday (§P14). Likewise, Luke 3:14, while probably a redactional addition by that evangelist, suggests that Antipas’ soldiers were not content with their wages and were consequently prone to extort civilians, though we will address this phenomenon further in the next chapter. Tacitus’ assessment of legionary life in the early years of Tiberius’ reign is relevant: “In fact the whole trade of war was comfortless and profitless. Ten asses a day was the assessment of body and soul: with which they had to buy clothes, weapons and tents, bribe the

\textsuperscript{156} The question of pay for auxiliaries was long contested, but Michael P. Speidel’s suggestion that it was five-sixths of a legionary’s pay (1973) has been confirmed by his nephew’s analysis of a tablet from Vindonissa in Switzerland (1992a; 2014). The debate had long revolved around ambiguities in another text, that of \textit{P.Gen.Lat.} 1=\textit{Rom.Mil.Rec.} 68=Campbell 1994: no. 24. Legionary pay is well documented at 900 sestertii per year until it was raised in the early years of Domitian’s princeps. The arguments that auxiliaries received the same pay as legionaries – advanced in Alston 1994: 122 – lacks sufficient evidence.

\textsuperscript{157} Paul seems to be misinformed in 1 Cor 9:7: soldiers indeed served at their own expense, as is widely documented and a matter of consensus among military historians (cf. §P14, apparently a legionary). If nothing else, Paul’s comments indicate the gap between the lived life of soldiers and its perception among civilians.

\textsuperscript{158} Sperber 1965: 250-251; 1966: 190; 1991: 101-102, 122-123. Wages for women and youth, of course, were less. An exceptionally low number is given in m. Šeb. 8.4: seemingly one-sixth of one sestertius per day. See also the thorough compilation of Egyptian data in Johnson 1936: 306-310.

\textsuperscript{159} Josephus, \textit{A.J.} 14.417, \textit{J.W.} 1.308; Shatzman 1991: 190. I assume Herod paid in Syrian drachmae. Shatzman contends that Herod’s soldiers received “generous” pay, though this claim is flatly contradicted by primary source data, and is further questionable because of the now-outdated nature of the studies he cites.
bullying centurion, and purchase a respite from the duty.” (Ann. 1.17)

Given that soldierly wages were comparatively meager – especially after mandatory deductions – most men could not expect to find wealth in the military. Palestine was not subject to the variety of hostile combat that predicated looting (unlike other frontier territories) until the Judaean War, so even looting was rare in this region. Donatives are likewise unattested in pre-War Judaea or among auxiliaries in general. With the exception of commissioned officers, there is no reason to believe that eventual wealth would have been a factor in the recruitment process, as soldiers were unlikely to have been able save money for retirement. Indeed, we will see that veteran poverty posed problems for the military in the following chapter.

What benefits, then, did the military proffer its soldiers in Palestine, if not prosperity? Plenty, keeping in mind that impoverishment is not simply a matter of finances, as construed in modern legal notions of an income-determined “poverty threshold.” Roman historians Peter Garnsey and Greg Woolf encourage us to think of the poor as “those living at or near subsistence level, whose prime concern it is to obtain the minimum food, shelter, and clothing necessary to sustain life, whose lives are dominated by the struggle for physical survival.” Garnsey and Woolf suggest we consider a number of other indices of poverty in antiquity, including underemployment, health care, premature mortality, nourishment, gender discrimination, and legal status. Some recent estimates place 90% to 99% of the population of the Roman Empire within Garnsey’s definition of impoverishment (with roughly the same percentage in Palestine in particular). I would like to suggest that the military offered a means of assuring stability and even modest surplus in light of the prevailing – even endemic – insecurity of vital necessities for the most of the Roman world, thus explaining why potential recruits were typically found among the

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160 It is likely that the land grants provided to Herod’s veterans (Josephus A.J. 15.296, J.W. 1.403) were insufficient for subsistence; see (Finley 1999: 80-81) on similar instances from the turn of the Era. It is not clear the extent to which the military farms found in Samaria were in use during the early Roman era (see Dar 1986: 12-16), so one cannot be certain of the size of the Herodian military land allotments, though the deliberately poor quality of the land for purposes of farming is noteworthy. On the exclusion of auxilia from donatavia, see Dio Cassius 73.8.4.


162 Scheidel 2006.


There were, of course, some denizens who lived comfortable or even privileged lives in Palestine, as demonstrated in Fiesy and Hawkins 2013; however, as Rollens 2015 contends, this is exactly what one would expect to find in an economically exploitative environment.
To start with the most obviously applicable, military service offered 25 years of guaranteed, consistent employment in the *auxilia* and similarly long-term employment among client kings’ forces. The Roman army professionalized into a standing force after the Second Punic War at the turn of the second century BCE. Auxiliaries were professionals in the Roman army as of 23 BCE and it seems that the Herodian client kings consistently kept a standing army as well. Soldiers did not need to contemplate long-term employment as did day laborers, worry about crop failure as did farmers, or the availability of contracts as did tradesworkers. Moreover, income and employment was assured year-round (and from a reliable employer), as opposed to the estimated 225 working days a year for day laborers of antiquity. There was no question of whether one would be cheated out of their wages or if there were sufficient resources to last until the next harvest. There were further financial benefits of military service: housing was reliable, whether in a fortress or some other barracks, and it was also free. Consequently, it was rare for soldiers to incur significant debt that was common among farmers and other laborers. While soldiers had to pay for some of their expenses, guaranteed shelter and near-complete freedom from the threat of debt were two considerable benefits.

A corollary of such employment was the availability of nutritious food. Archaeologists have discovered, for instance, a number of “bread stamps” throughout Palestine. Under each centurion in a legion or auxiliary cohort, a single soldier acted as the designated baker. He was responsible for producing bread for his unit and then stamping it to indicate the *centuria* for which it was produced. Throughout the Empire, soldiers could expect an excellent selection of food in comparison to their civilian peers. A number of Roman military “shopping lists” have been discovered in Vindolanda of Britain, one indicating the wide variety of food and expectation of quality for the legion garrisoned there: “two modii of bruised beans, twenty chickens, a hundred apples, if you can find nice ones, a hundred or two hundred eggs, if they are for sale there at a fair price. […] eight sextarii of fish-sauce […] a modius of olives […]” (T.Vind. 302.2) Roy Davies provides an excellent overview of the animal waste products found

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164 Goldsmith 1984: 269; Goldsmith acknowledges a “rather wide margin of uncertainty” with this number of working days.

165 §§P62a-i; for a concise overview of bread stamps found in Palestine, albeit with a focus on one from a later period, see Stiebel 2011.
in fortresses throughout the Empire.\textsuperscript{166} Davies demonstrates that excavations at Roman fortresses (whether legionary or auxiliary) indicate that soldiers had access to a number of different meat products, including oxen, sheep, pigs, goats, deer, oysters, and various fowl. Josephus likewise describes Herod the Great as giving his soldiers “corn, wine, oil, cattle, and all other provisions…”\textsuperscript{167} In areas not conducive to pastoralism, soldiers were sometimes sent on hunting missions; an auxiliary soldier from Egypt wrote a letter to an officer noting that his team had been “until now hunting all sorts of wild animals and birds for a year for the prefects.”\textsuperscript{168} Many letters indicate that soldiers were in contact with their family for additional foodstuffs, though it is not clear what this means beyond some disparity between desired food and the food available. Most of these letters seem to derive from the second century or later and so may indicate the complications that arose from auxiliary units comprised of mixed populations and their conflicting eating habits; other requests for food may only indicate squandered pay, as is demonstrable in at least a few instances.\textsuperscript{169} It is also worth noting that a uniform diet was not imposed upon all soldiers: the eating habits of ethnic auxiliaries and allies were accommodated if possible.\textsuperscript{170} It seems to have been easier for some soldiers to simply adjust their own eating habits to what the army offered: a presumably-Jewish soldier at Herodium was a swineherd for his unit (§P65d).

While the soldiering life is often imagined to have been life-threatening, this was rarely so in pre-War Palestine. There were few major conflicts of arms, soldiers rarely left their homeland, regular exercise aided longevity, and health care was provided. Combat was less common than other parts of the Empire, rendering the lives of Palestinian soldiers more secure. The importance of health care in the military is worth discussing further. Soldiers were permitted sick days for rest and recuperation (see, e.g., \textit{T.Vind.} 154) and Roy Davies argues that each auxiliary cohort and ala had its own medical officer and staff.\textsuperscript{171} Doctors also granted discharges to ill or injured

\textsuperscript{166} The definitive study of Roman soldiers’ diets remains Davies 1989: 187-206; Davies’ conclusions were confirmed more recently in Groenman-van Waateringe 1997; King 1984.
\textsuperscript{167} \textit{A.J.} 14.408; cf. \textit{J.W.} 1.299.
\textsuperscript{168} ἔδως ἄρτι ὑπ’ ὑπὸς ἐπάρχοντος γυνηγονοὶ πάντα τὰ θηρία καὶ πατέρας ἐν ἔφο ἔτους (Guéraud 1942: no. 14).
\textsuperscript{169} Davies 1989: 200; he observes that food is a uniting concern among the numerous military letters found at Wadi Fawakhir (i.e., Guéraud 1942).
\textsuperscript{170} Roth 1999: 16-17.
\textsuperscript{171} Roman medical practice is discussed in Baker 2000; Davies 1989: 209-236; Wilmanns 1995; on this particular point, see Davies 1989: 214. Given that Herod the great engaged in a number of consecutive battles, one surmises that Herodian client kings also had a number of doctors on staff, though there is no evidence for it.
soldiers. Even if they were permanently injured and became ineligible for service, they were nevertheless given full benefits as though they had completed their full term.\textsuperscript{172} Judaea was no exception: a hospital was identified in the camps preparing for the siege of Masada and a medical document was found at the same place.\textsuperscript{173}

Finally, there is the complex issue of Roman citizenship and status. Though the emperor Augustus formed the auxilia, it is doubtful peregrine soldiers were accorded citizenship upon retirement under his princeps.\textsuperscript{174} Some grants of citizenship are attested under Tiberius and Gaius, but Claudius is credited with turning this into a standard policy sometime 43-45 CE. Citizenship was initially awarded after 30 years of service, but the time was reduced to 25 years and the grant expanded to include auxiliaries’ wives and children around 50 CE.\textsuperscript{175} This latter benefit was a considerable boon. First, auxiliary soldiers’ marriages were recognized by the state, unlike legionaries, whose relationships with women were technically illegal.\textsuperscript{176} The fact that auxiliaries’ marriages and offspring were legally recognized was a benefit in itself. Wives and children were included in auxiliary diplomas until 140 CE; nearly half of the diplomas indicate families took advantage of this opportunity.\textsuperscript{177} Thus, while legionaries were legally required to remain single during their prime years,\textsuperscript{178} auxiliaries were permitted to have their own families, with legal rights conferred upon them as well. Second, the cives Romani held enormous privilege in their own right, being guaranteed trials, the right to sue, assurances against beatings, freedom from certain taxes, and many other benefits. Only auxiliaries could expect such benefits, as client kings did not have the authority to grant citizenship, let alone conubium. For this reason, auxiliary service was inherently more desirable than service under a client king. Roman citizenship, given its rarity even among the upper classes of the Roman East, was all the more valuable for soldiers. This relative infrequency of citizenship ensured social advancement in a way that soldiers might not expect outside of frontier provinces, where citizenship was more

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\item \textsuperscript{172} AE 1932.27=CIL 16.10; cf. CPR 165.
\item \textsuperscript{173} Richmond 1962: 148; Schulten 1933: 127-128; cf. §P12. Another military hospital is attested in Sebaste after the Bar Kokhba War (BGU 7.1564; 138 CE).
\item \textsuperscript{174} Helpful studies on the development of policies on granting auxiliaries citizenship – if somewhat out of date – can be found in Birley 1986; Holder 1980: 46-63; Mann 1996: 17-27.
\item \textsuperscript{175} Allöldy 1968; CIL 16.1 is pivotal in his argument.
\item \textsuperscript{176} See Phang 2001.
\item \textsuperscript{177} Roxan 1991: 465.
\item \textsuperscript{178} Contravention of this policy was taken for granted: a child born to a legionary was illegitimate and thus ineligible as an heir until their father’s discharge, whereupon the lineage was legally acknowledged. Exceptions were granted to soldiers who died in active service; see the rescript of Hadrian in BGU 140.
\end{itemize}
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common. One might contrast this with being a veteran *qua* veteran, which was unlikely to engender special treatment except when legally mandated.\(^{179}\)

The interests that would lead an impoverished Palestinian man to join the army as a low-level infantry soldier should now be clear. In the words of Sara Phang, “from an absolute perspective, compared to the masses, soldiers were privileged, though less so than the elite groups.”\(^{180}\)

Relative to occupations of soldier’s civilian counterparts, military service offered an escape from the variegated precarity that defined daily life. Food security, healthcare, and various other assurances could be taken for granted in military life – facets of life that can only be construed as “privilege” insofar as they were not available to all, as they are basic to the experience of a tolerable life. Thus, if one is to characterize military recruitment in colonies as “voluntary,” it would only be in the sense that soldiers were rarely conscripted against their will. This was not a matter debated at length with their families; if a recruitment officer expressed interest in enlisting a young man, he was rarely in a position to decline the offer.\(^{181}\)

In that youth in military colonies were habituated into military norms and found a seemingly natural “fit” for their tastes, practices, and ambitions in soldiering, it was hardly a decision brought about by their own free accord; rather, the cultivation of desires and expectations from their social context played a significant role. If one hoped to escape from the rigged game of ancient economics, military employment provided one of the most assured ways of doing so. The overlap of non-elite living conditions and military benefits was hardly accidental, as we will see it provided a self-authorizing form of imperial-military legitimation.

**Legionaries Serving in Judaea before the Bar Kokhba War**

Since Mark was written shortly after legions became part of the Judaean landscape, it is worth describing their demographic character as well.\(^ {182}\)

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\(^{179}\) For instance, Haynes 2013: 347 notes that Julius Niger, veteran of *ala veteran Gallica*, attempted to avoid a liturgy as a civic guard not on the basis of his status as a veteran, but as a citizen of Antinoopolis (*SB* 5.7558; 173 CE).

\(^{180}\) Phang 2008: 19.

\(^{181}\) The words of Pierre Bourdieu (1984: 175) are relevant: “a virtue [was] made of necessity which continuously transforms necessity into virtue by inducing ‘choices’ which correspond to the condition of which it is the product.”

\(^{182}\) Legionary recruitment has been a far more popular topic among academics than that of client kings or auxiliaries. The most important works on the topic are Forni 1953; 1974; Mann 1983. On Syria in particular, see Pollard 2000: 114-134. The topic is commonly addressed in books on the Roman army.
prerequisite for legionary recruitment, though this did not entail a prevalence of westerners in the Palestinian legions. Roman citizenship was fairly widespread by the time of the Flavian emperors. Though his numbers are now severely out of date, J. C. Mann’s survey of epigraphic data on legionaries indicated evidence of only three westerners in the Eastern legions until the year of five emperors in 193 CE.\footnote{Mann 1983: 144-146, with CIL 12.2230 (from Cularo, Italy in legio III Gallica), 5.4377 (Brixia, Italy in legio XII Fulminata), and 3.414 (Florentia, Italy in legio XII Fulminata) providing the exceptions; see also §P31, though the legion is not given.} Of the 28 epigraphs Mann finds attesting legionaries, eighteen of them are soldiers from Syria or Arabia, most of the remaining are from Asia Minor. Interest in military service among Italians steadily declined after the Republic’s fall. Under the Julio-Claudians, roughly half of the legions comprised Italian recruits; by the time of Trajan, they made up less than a one-fifth. The Italians who enlisted usually joined legions stationed in the Roman West.\footnote{E.g., legiones IV Macedonica, VI Victix, VII Gemina, IX Hispana, X Gemina, XIV Gemina. See Mann 1983: 73-141. The proportion of Italian recruits was high in the west among the legionaries, but dropped significantly east of Moesia during Flavian and Antonine periods.}

*Legio X Fretensis* was the only legion garrisoned in Palestine from the end of the Judaean War until late in Trajan’s reign, when it was replaced by *III Cyrenaica* and supplemented by *II Traiani*. It seems that *X Fretensis* spent nearly the entirety of the pre-War first century in Syria, except for combat missions to Judaea after its annexation in 6 CE and participation in Corbulo’s Parthian campaigns 58-63 CE. Mann observes that the comparative frequency of battle and death in the East led to a policy of local recruitment for legions as well; thus, a settlement is known in Syrian Ptolemais during the reign of Claudius.\footnote{Mann 1983: 55; on the settlement at Ptolemais, see Pliny, *Nat.* 5.13, 69.} Mann suggests that until the refoundation of Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina, there was no real effort to create veteran communities with a distinctively *Roman* character, a contention affirmed in Palestine by the archaeological data of veteran settlements and military colonies (see Database Two). The common soldiers of *legio X Fretensis* were drawn primarily from Syria and were only partially Romanized (e.g., spoke Greek as a native language with some Latin familiarity, modest use of Roman social conventions).\footnote{Mann 1983: 41; on the history of *legio X Fretensis*, see Dąbrowa 1993: 11-22.}

After the War, there was a modest increase in the number of Palestinians with Roman citizenship, thanks to a generation of auxiliaries having received citizenship in Caesarea and
Sebaste and the influx of administrators concomitant with the arrival of a legate; such people contributed to the reservoir of citizens eligible for military service. The Syrian legions, while certainly not alien in their demographic, nevertheless lent a newfound foreignness to the military in Palestine immediately after the Judaean War. Less familiar were the post-War auxiliaries coming from even further away (§F18, §§D1a-h). As a province where Latin had been exceedingly rare, Judaeans apparently experienced the military as a Roman intrusion, even if the demographics would seem quite “native” in comparison to other provinces.

Legionaries received somewhat higher pay than auxiliaries and most of what was said earlier about the life of an auxiliary could be reiterated here, with a few exceptions. First, legionaries were slightly less likely to be impoverished, though they seem to have reflected general demographics of their society before recruitment. Second, because eventual citizenship could not act as a lure for recruitment, legions were awarded donativia of differing sums from the emperor and legionaries all received praemia of 3000 denarii upon retirement. In the tumultuous year of 69 CE, each of the emperors promised donatives to the legions, though that under Galba was never actualized; financial assurances were thus much greater for legionaries than auxiliaries. Third, plunder was a far more common method of income among legionaries than auxiliaries, especially those auxiliaries stationed in their home province. Looting was commonplace during warfare and Josephus records a number of incidents (e.g., J.W. 2.494, 503-506, 508-509, 646) including the plundering of the temple itself (J.W. 5.550-566). This set the tone for soldier-civilian relations in Palestine after the War, as we will see in Chapter Five that there was an intensification of extortion and strong-arm tactics by both legionaries and the new auxiliaries. Finally, legionaries were more fluent in Latin, though Greek continued to function as the lingua franca among civilians in the Roman East. This inevitably led to occasional barriers in communication, though the prevalence of Greek inscriptions and papyri from legionaries indicates that they sometimes preferred that language over Latin.¹⁸⁷

There were also auxiliaries garrisoned in Judaea after the War. These auxiliaries, though, were recruited from other provinces and the cohortes et ala Sebastenorum were transferred outside Judaea after the War. The auxiliary units present in Judaea can be ascertained based on the

diplomas collected in Database One. The post-War auxiliaries were also from the Roman East, so they were not particularly stringent in their use of Latin in the surviving record. That said, their origination outside Syria and Palestine contributed greatly to their perceived foreignness.

**Recruitment and Promotion of Centurions in Palestine before the Judaean War**

It is worthwhile to contrast this depiction of life of common soldiers with that of non-commissioned officers, such as centurions. Centuries were the basic sub-unit of identification in auxiliary and legionary forces (as evinced by the aforementioned bread-stamps §§P62a-i; cf. §P18, §P47), with the centurions as the head of each. Palestinian client kingdoms of the first century seem to have been organized along Roman lines and so centurions are attested among their ranks. These units were nominally 100 men, but usually were around 80 in practice.

Since Rome expected low-level officers to communicate directly with their troops, it was common for auxiliaries to remain in or near their homeland at the time. The various dialects of Western Aramaic were mutually intelligible, but centurions, being the highest ranking of non-commissioned officers, needed to both understand their Latin- or Greek-speaking superiors and direct their Greek- and Aramaic-speaking subordinates. The lenient policy permitting one to garrison in his homeland was abolished under the Flavians, whose generals stationed auxiliary regiments far from native soil, expended little effort to maintain ethnically homogeneous cohorts, and more actively encouraged soldiers to assimilate to Roman cultural mores. Thus, the Roman auxiliaries recruited from Judaea remained in Palestine through the Judaean War, after which they were dispersed as necessary throughout the Empire (Josephus, *A.J.* 19.366).

Various data indicate that Jews and other Palestinians served as auxiliary centurions, as discussed above. While it is not clear how these men acquired the rank centurio, there were five primary ways that auxiliaries attained this position before the Flavians came to power. 1) Common soldiers were promoted within auxiliary regiments; 2) the provincial governor appointed sons of legionary veterans; 3) indigenous military hierarchies were transferred into the

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188 For a helpful, if somewhat outdated, look at the auxiliary units stationed in Judaea after the War, see Russell 1995.
190 See §§P10a-g, §P48, §P58, §F29, §F45; cf. §P28.
corresponding roles of auxiliary units, even if they lacked Roman training; 4) individuals were promoted within legionary forces and transferred to the *auxilia*; and 5) the provincial governor appointed sons of provincial aristocrats.\(^{191}\) Thus, the rank of centurion was typically non-commissioned and was the highest rank that did not require equestrian status. It was more typical in the pre-Flavian period to draw auxiliary centurions from *peregrini*, especially from among the indigenous population. The aforementioned data suggests that this was also the case in Judaea.

The proportions of how auxiliary centurions acquired their rank in Palestine are unclear, as evidence is sparse. Josephus gives the name of only one man assuredly an auxiliary centurion garrisoned in Judaea in his oeuvre: Capito (*J.W.* 2.298-300), a Latin cognomen meaning “big head.”\(^{192}\) Steve Mason is hesitant to make too much of this name as ethnic index, as Mason sees a trope in Josephus’ *Judaean War* of emphasizing the Roman element among auxiliary officers.\(^{193}\) Josephus also mentions several unnamed centurions under Florus as well (*J.W.* 2.319), though no information about them is present other than their disrespect toward attendees at the Jerusalem Temple. It is not clear whether another centurion mentioned by Josephus, Arius, was auxiliary or legionary, but his name is Greek.\(^{194}\) Epigraphic data is more informative about centurions from Palestine (see note 190 above), especially Lucius Obulnius (§§P10a-g) and Aelius Silvanus (§F45). Little is known about the former and the latter was a legionary, though the conditions behind his recruitment suggest he rose through the ranks organically. That said, Archieus (§P28) was centurion under Agrippa II until the king died, when he was transferred into the Roman army, presumably initially at the same rank before retiring as a general under Trajan. Somewhat frustratingly, historical accident has left us with inscriptions primarily from post-War legionaries and only rarely the Palestinian auxiliares and client kings’ forces before or coterminous with them. Dozens of centurions serving in Palestine during and after the Judaean


\(^{192}\) Mason (2008: 241 n. 1925) further identifies this cognomen as common to the *gens* Ateia.

\(^{193}\) Also, Celer the auxiliary tribune (*J.W.* 2.244-246; *A.J.* 20.132, 136) and Metilius the cohort commander (*J.W.* 2.450-454). This also applies to Herodian forces: Jucundus and Tyrannus are mentioned as part of Herod’s cavalry (Roman and Greek names, respectively; *J.W.* 1.527), and various other commissioned Herodian officers have Roman names including Volumnius (*J.W.* 1.535), Gratus (*J.W.* 2.58), and Rufus (*J.W.* 2.52, *A.J.* 17.266, §P2).

\(^{194}\) *J.W.* 2.63; Mason 2008: 241 n. 1925.
War are also known from inscriptions collected in Database One (e.g., §P3, §P8a, §P13, §P20, §P25).

If we broaden our consideration to other auxiliary officers in Palestine, we can tentatively infer that the third and fifth possibilities occurred before the Judaean War. Pointing to the third is the aforementioned epigraph concerning Titus Mucius Clemens, whom M. H. Gracey describes as “a member of the local nobility … moving between the service of [Agrippa II] and that of Rome,” remaining eparch in both forces, a pattern that also characterizes Diomedes’ transfer between Agrippa II’s army and *cohors I Canathanorum Augusta* and Archius’ incorporation into Trajan’s army. Furthermore, Agrippa II’s support of the Roman campaigns in both Parthia and Judaea resulted in the temporary incorporation of his men into auxiliary cohorts and thereby necessitated *ad hoc* conformity to Rome’s military hierarchies.

Supporting the possibility that sons of provincial aristocrats were a common source for officer recruitment is Tiberius Julius Alexander, an Alexandrian Jew and nephew of Philo, who served as governor of Judaea 46-48 CE and partook in the siege of Jerusalem as Titus’ chief of staff. Tiberius had enviable social connections that aided his ascent in the Roman military, including a father who served as alabarch and a brother who married Agrippa I’s daughter (and thus Agrippa II’s sister) Berenice. Familial associates appear to have fostered the career of another diaspora Jew named Antiochus, a ruthless officer who commanded a detachment of Roman soldiers shortly before the Judaean War. He too came from an influential family, as his father was a magistrate in Antioch. Finally, it is worth noting that Diomedes (§§P22a-b; Josephus, *Life* 35, 37) was part of a prominent family, being related to Philip the governor of Gamala. These examples are not of centurions specifically and some of them concern commissioned officers, but they nonetheless indicate the methods of promotion within the *auxilia*. There is no direct evidence for promotion along the three other lines, though one assumes they occurred in proportion with the rest of the Empire.

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197 Mélèze-Modrzejewski 1995: 185-190. The primary source data on Tiberius is extensive, but most important are Josephus, *J.W.* 2.220, 2.490-97; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.11, *Ann.* 15.28; *CPJ* 2.148a; *CIG* 3.1278.
There was no universal process for promoting centurions in the client kingdoms, though the
evidence suggests it was along similar lines, albeit focused less on external recruitment. Even so,
Lucius Obulnius (§§P10a-g), Archieus (§P28), Titus Mucius Clemens (§F8), and Diomedes
(§§P22a-b) all served in both Roman and Herodian armies as officers. Herod son of Aumos
(§P15) was likely indigenous to Agrippa II’s kingdom; he achieved the rank stratopedarch,
presumably through some sort of commission.

How did a soldier come to the rank centurion through promotion? Most of the data comes from
legions, but the limited data set from auxiliaries suggests similar procedures.199 One assumes that
analogous practices took place in the client kingdoms, despite the complete absence of evidence
form Herodian Palestine. For the period of our consideration, provincial governors were
responsible for decisions of promotion to rank centurio, one that in later periods was exclusive to
the Emperor for reasons of loyalty. In both cases, though, other officers played an integral role in
the selection process by recommending specific individuals for such promotion. This is evinced
in the case of Apollonarius, a legionary with a Jewish background, who requested a promotion to
the consularis’ secretary; however, no positions were open, but the consularis recommended him
for the position of secretary of the legion with the possibility of further advancement (§F25a).
The most typical method of advancement was to pass slowly through the ranks, from pedes to
immunis to tesserarius to optio to centurio.200 Fundamental to the promotion process was
performance of exceptional deeds and support of one’s troops. Michael P. Speidel points to an
Egyptian epigraph whose subject claims to have been “promoted [to centurion] because of brave
deeds and the detachment’s support….“201 Epistolary evidence from Egypt suggests that literacy
was taken into consideration during the promotion process. In one letter, a new recruit named
Apion thanks his father because “you educated me well and as a result of that I hope to be
advanced quickly” and in another letter a different Egyptian soldier explicitly attributed his own
advancement to education.202 That said, “quick” promotion was entirely relative, as a survey of

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199 This paragraph draws from the fullest studies on the topic: Birley 1988; Dobson 1974: 403-409; Gilliver
200 Testimonies on auxiliary promotion are frustratingly rare, but see Breeze 1974: 445-447; Breeze
observes that soldiers below the rank of decurion lacked sufficient wealth to erect monuments containing their
cursus honorum.
201 “Aur(elius) Varixen, ordin(arius), qui ex foritia et suff(ragio) vex(illationis) profec(it) ….” Text and
202 BGU 423 Campbell 1994: no. 10; cf. §F25b.
cursus honorum indicates it typically required ten to twenty years of excellent service to acquire the centurionate. In exceptional circumstances, most notably during civil wars, units would elect their own centurions, which Eric Birley suggests encouraged loyalty to both the unit and the commanders.\textsuperscript{203}

Centurions were thus promoted largely on the basis of individual characteristics. Personality, socio-economic origins, ability to interact with peers and subordinates, as well as other individual factors were central to the process. We will see in the next chapter that this difference played a pivotal role in the divergent ways in which civilians interacted with common soldiers as opposed to centurions.

\textsuperscript{203} Birley 1988: 208, citing, e.g., Tacitus, \textit{Hist.} 3.49; \textit{ILS} 1.2658.
Chapter 4

What Did the Military Do in Early Roman Palestine?

The titular question of the chapter will be addressed in three main sections. The first part will describe the “official” functions of the military in Palestine. This section will limit its attention to the duties of soldiers while “on duty.” The second part of this chapter will do the same with the “unofficial” functions of soldiers, examining the economic, social, and other practices common in Palestine and how they fit into Rome’s broader aims. These two sections will be eclectic with respect to chronology, geography, and sources in hopes of providing the most vivid description possible. “Official” and “unofficial” duties are used here only as heuristic categories; it will be argued in Chapter Five that the distinction between “official” and “unofficial” obscures more than it clarifies. It is simply used here for convenience thanks to its resonance in the popular imaginary. This chapter will conclude with the analysis of a single site that provides extensive data of military functions in Palestine: the fortress of Masada before, during, and after the Judaean War. Masada will thus act as an “e.g.” for the military functions in rural Palestine and how the three eras described in Database Three were experienced at a single location.

This chapter focuses on soldier-civilian interactions, an issue that has been central to a number of recent publications on the military of the Roman Empire. While a handful of monographs have been devoted to such relations in the Roman East, none on Palestine have foregrounded civilian perspectives on the day-to-day life of the first century CE. The reason for limiting the scope to that of civilian perspectives is simple: the author of Mark was most likely a civilian residing in or near Palestine shortly after the Judaean War’s conclusion, as argued in Chapter Two, and he depicts events in Palestine a few decades earlier. This chapter thus attempts to reconstruct the sort of interactions the author of Mark, his peers, and his sources may have had with the military.

Excursus: Palestine in Rome’s Grand Strategy

204 The first major publication on the topic was MacMullen 1966. See also, e.g., Alston 1995; 1999; Blagg and King 1984; Bloemers 1991; Breeze 1985; 1990; Davies 2002; Gardner 2007; Isaac 1992; Mattern 1999; Maxfield 1995; Pollard 2000; Sommer 1999.
The function of garrisons in Palestine are impossible to separate from debates about Roman “grand strategy” and frontier policy. The study of Roman grand strategy in its present form was inaugurated by American military strategist Edward Luttwak.\textsuperscript{205} The importance of Luttwak’s work within the fields of Roman military, economic, frontier, and social history is difficult to overstate. Luttwak argued that from the late Republic until the Flavians, Roman military strategy understood the Empire as four concentric circles buffering the inner zones from external threats (e.g., Parthia in the east, Germania in the north). 1) The central zone comprised the most central Roman provinces, especially provinces of senatorial status, marked by an absence of garrisons. 2) Immediately outside this zone were imperial provinces that garrisoned auxilia and/or legions, depending on the province’s status. Luttwak argued that these forces were garrisoned with a degree of permanence, but were positioned so that they could move to adjacent territories should conflict arise nearby. 3) Immediately outside Rome’s provinces was its zone of diplomatic control, comprising client kingdoms. These minor states maintained their own forces and acted as a cushion between Rome and neighboring regions, though imperial troops could intervene should it be necessary. Client kingdoms were often immediately adjacent to perceived threats. 4) Finally, a number of nomadic client tribes with no geographically-stable state were useful because of their frequent incursions into territory at the perimeter of Roman influence and perhaps even inside the zone of their enemies’ influence. Luttwak contended that the highly developed client system in the East compensated for the relative paucity of legions on that frontier: the lives of client kings’ forces were at stake instead of the Roman citizens comprising the legions. Levantine military forces were primarily oriented outwards against the Parthian threat, but were able to intervene when internal revolts occurred.

The literature critical of Luttwak’s thesis is extensive, albeit sometimes devolving into caricature.\textsuperscript{206} The numerous criticisms will not be rehearsed here, save those most pertinent to

\textsuperscript{205} Luttwak 1976; see pages 7-50 for his discussion of the Julio-Claudians and pages 51-126 on the Flavians to the Severi. Luttwak recently released an “updated and revised” edition of the text (2016), which has not fared well in scholarly opinion so far; reviews have been negative, citing inter alia his recalcitrant approach and unwillingness to learn from his critics, whom he dismisses as lacking “any experience of military or policy planning, let alone war, unlike the present writer….” (2016: xii)

\textsuperscript{206} On Luttwak’s deeply flawed understanding of the siege of Masada, the central example of his monograph, see Cotton 2006: 400-406. Among the most important works relating to Roman grand strategy, especially with respect to the East: Ball 2000; Braund 1984; Cherry 1998; Dyson 1985; Elton 1996; Fentress 1979; Ferrill 1991; Gambash 2013; Isaac 1992; Kagan 2006; Kennedy 1987; Mann 1979; Mattern 1999; Mattingly 2011;
the present chapter. First, Luttwak tends to overlook the *internally* directed functions of the military in frontier regions. That is, Luttwak imagines the central prerogative of the military was protecting the Empire from external forces and so minimizes the internal functions of the military. Simply said, there is little indication that a Parthian threat figured into the military’s operations in Palestine.\textsuperscript{207} Rather, Josephus and other sources see virtually all of the actions by soldiers stationed in Palestine to be directed inward, toward its own residents. Indeed, there is no evidence that the Sebastene auxiliaries ever left Palestine before the conclusion of the Judaean War. Drawing upon insights from frontier studies, we will find support for the hypothesis that the military presence in Palestine was not simply to protect against outside forces, but to promote various internal policies, foremost among which was facilitating the region’s economic integration into the Roman Empire.

Second, Luttwak’s continual employment as a professional military strategist is troubling.\textsuperscript{208} Setting aside the fact that he had no formal degree in classics, Roman military history, or related fields, the striking similarities between Luttwak’s description of Julio-Claudian client states and the U.S.’s strategies during the Cold War has been disconcerting to many scholars for political-ideological reasons. Luttwak advised numerous U.S. and allied departments and military bodies (e.g., U.S. Department of State, U.S. Navy, Army, and Air Force) and is known *inter alia* for promoting the odious notion that it is important to “give war a chance.” His historical work should be read with these proclivities and objectives in mind, as his works have a crypto-normative element that attempts to legitimate very specific foreign policies.

Though not directly related to Luttwak, one must name the elephant in the room regarding academic discussion of Roman military strategy in the Levant: the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. This conflict has been a common subtext in research of the military in the Levant. One particularly obvious example can be found in the works of the highly respected Mordechai Gichon.\textsuperscript{209} Gichon begins his retrospective on the study of *limes Palaestinae* with the long history of conflicts between Jews and their neighbours to the east, then discusses Herodian

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\textsuperscript{207} Isaac 1992: 22; but see the objections in Wheeler 1993: 19-20. Isaac 1992 and Pollard 2000 present the best sustained arguments against a primarily outward-directed military in the East (i.e., defending from Parthia).

\textsuperscript{208} Luttwak 1999.

\textsuperscript{209} Gichon 2002.
policies of policing and fortifying their borders, whether Rome maintained a border defense to protect Judaea, the southern extent of Judaean territory, and the persistent threat of unprovoked attacks from stateless “Ishmaelites” upon peaceful Jewish civilians – matters that all map onto talking points about Israel-Palestine. My own opinions on Israel-Palestine may be obvious to those inclined to discern them over the course of this dissertation, though I would like to be clear that the efficacy of ancient policy and biblical precedent strike me as irrelevant to any worthwhile discussion about Israel-Palestine.

**Official Functions of the Military in Palestine**

The single most obvious function of the military was its role in combat. In Database Three, we can see that Palestine was the subject of numerous military interventions and combat missions from the invasion of Pompey through the Bar Kokhba War. Combat was primarily directed against foes internal to Palestine (e.g., Hyrcanus II vs. Aristobulus II, post-Herod revolts, Judaean War, Bar Kokhba War), though there were a few incidents against external forces (e.g., Antipas instigating against Aretas IV, Agrippa II aiding against Parthia). Josephus depicts Judaea as a turbulent territory, but it is difficult to assess whether it was uniquely so. The dearth of thorough provincial histories by other participant-observers may give an undue impression of Palestine’s uniqueness; for instance, we have no Rhineland analogue to Josephus to provide a court history of military vicissitudes leading to the revolt of the Batavi.\(^{210}\)

But even if Judaea was not particularly unique with respect to the number and scale of military interventions, we saw in Database Three that military combat occurred with some regularity in Palestine, though usually in a localized fashion. This frequency-without-consistency would have two major implications for the local population. First, most conflicts – even those directed against Palestinian civilians – would have no immediate implications for the vast majority of other Palestinian residents: for instance, Pilate’s slaughter of the Samaritan cult at Mount Gerizim probably had little effect upon other residents of Samaria. Even the region-wide combat of the Judaean War left many villages and cities entirely unaffected by destruction. The size and diversity of Palestine meant that it was generally easy for commoners to avoid involvement in

\(^{210}\) See the humorous thought experiment in Goodman 1998, where Martin Goodman shows how inaccurate our knowledge of Jews and Judaea would be if we did not have sources that survived primarily because they authorized religious groups (e.g., the bible, rabbinic literature, Josephus, Philo) and we relied solely upon Greek and Roman writers as well as archaeological finds.
military conflicts if their village was not directly implicated. Most soldiers garrisoned in Palestine never went to battle, with the obvious exception of those serving 66-73 CE. Second and contradictorily, literature about early Roman Palestine tends to remember moments of combat most vividly and so their primary associations with military are of such events (e.g., Ps. Sol. 17, Mark 13/parallels, War Scroll, As. Mos. 6-7, Sib. Or. 1-5, Josephus). Clearly these memories were salient in Jewish and Palestinian memory.

The infliction of physical violence upon others is crucial to the Gospel narrative in the punitive measures soldiers delivered upon civilians. Despite its centrality to the passion narrative, evidence of soldiers meting out punishments on civilians is sparse. Physical punishments such as scourging, beating, and beheading were usually the prerogative of lictors, not soldiers. In Palestine before the War, governors did not hold sufficient status to have lictors as bodyguards, so it is conceivable that soldiers administered such punishments, though any number of other possibilities is imaginable. Scholarly knowledge of soldier’s role in criminal discipline during the early Principate is extremely limited. When punishment by beating is described in ancient literature, those meting it out are rarely mentioned, if simply because they rarely held narrative importance as characters. Rather, texts attribute the beatings to the superiors who order it, such as magistrates and governors.

Military forces also carried out violence in a preventative manner to deter unrest. Examples from Palestine are numerous, but Felix’s attack upon the Egyptian prophet and his followers was a clear instance of the pre-emptive violence against civilians (Josephus, J.W. 2.261-263; A.J. 20.169-171). Roman and Herodian policies of preventative violence have recently seen a surge of interest among social historians. This attention has focused largely on state violence against bandits (λησταί). Richard Horsley popularized the hypothesis that the brigands in pre-War Palestine should be understood through the lens of Eric Hobsbawn’s work on “social banditry.” Horsley contends that Palestinian bandits did not harass their peasant peers, but directed their actions against the wealthy. Bandit gangs consisted of disaffected peasants, whom

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211 One gets the impression of restless boredom from soldiers’ graffiti at Herodium before the Judaean War (§§P65a-d).
212 E.g., Cicero Verr. 2.5.161-162; Aulus Gellius, Noct. att. 10.3.1-20; Suetonius, Aug. 45.4; Philo, Flacc. 78-80; John 19:1; Acts 16:22-23; 2 Cor 11:24-25.
213 The most famous publications by each on the topic are Hobsbawn 1981; Horsley 1993; Horsley and Hanson 1985. See also the pioneering work in Shaw 1984.
villagers understood to be allies against mutually oppressive forces and so offered them aid whenever possible. Elites perceived bandits as popular (in both the populist and widely admired senses) threat to their hegemony and directed the military to take police action against them. Horsley argues that Galilee in particular was a hotbed of radicalism.

Though Horsley provides several examples of such banditry, his analyses have come under scrutiny. Consider, for example, the bandits associated with the caves at Arbel of 39-38 BCE, who drowned Herodian elites in the Lake of Gennesaret. Horsley sees these figures as representatives of a widespread discontent with the increase in taxes and other burdens under the client kings. Herod ultimately used military force to disperse and kill the participants, acts representative of his brutal reign. John Kloppenborg and Seán Freyne, however, contend that these bandits were not peasants disillusioned with Herodian policies, but in fact veterans loyal to the Hasmonaean ruler Antigonus. Josephus notes that these brigands were forced out of Sepphoris and then terrorized residents of surrounding villages; these are hardly the marks of a populist movement against Romanized elite. It is probable that Herod’s military intervention was even welcomed by locals, since it brought an end to their harassment. In another instance, after the Judaean War, the residents of Ascalon dedicated a monument to a centurion named Aulus Instuleius Tenax for aiding the city after Jewish rebels sacked the city in 68 CE. The brigandage that Josephus describes seems to manifest existing political conflicts rather than a semi-unified “fourth philosophy.” This is not to suggest that more mundane pillaging and banditry did not attract military attention. Herodian military colonies were located in Batanaea at least partially because of the region’s reputation for outlaws.

Another salient duty was patrol routines. Two extremes emerge in civilian understandings of military patrols and the resulting intervention into civilian affairs. On the one hand, rabbinic sources understand army patrols as systematic, unwanted bands of foreigners interrupting daily life. In their view, soldiers sexually assaulted Jewish women whenever opportunity arose.

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215 Freyne 1988: 58; Kloppenborg 2009: 470-471; at the time, Antigonus was midst a brief stay on the Judaean throne as a Parthian client king. Hobsbawm’s model of social banditry has also been heavily criticized on theoretical grounds; see the discussion and notes in Kloppenborg 2009: 460-462.
216 §P8a; cf. J.W. 2.460, 2.477.
217 For this policy in general, see Richardson 1996: 139-142, 232, though he argues that Judaean watchtowers were not placed to keep bandits in check (2004: 24-25).
218 On policing the Roman provinces, see Fuhrmann 2012: 172-200.
Consequently, the rabbis maneuvered the Torah so as to permit apparent abrogations of standard practices, should the army arrive unexpectedly and the well-being of Jewish villagers needed to be preserved. Benjamin Isaac points to a story related by Simeon Hatemani, a source from the second century: “A patrol of gentiles came into town and [the townspeople] were afraid that [the soldiers] might harm them and therefore we prepared them a calf and we fed them and gave them drink and rubbed them with oil so that they would not harm the townspeople.” Here the author describes an exception to the rule that no food is to be prepared for gentiles on festival days; evidently the soldiers presented a sufficient threat to the welfare of Jewish residents that norms did not necessarily apply. This type of activity is similar to the soldier-as-bully trope in Josephus’ works, especially evident the incidents when an auxiliary soldier destroyed a village’s Torah scroll (A.J. 20.115, J.W. 2.229) and when another “flashed” temple attendees shortly before (A.J. 20.108, J.W. 2.224). Patrols after the War also monitored road traffic during festivals, but given the influx of soldiers during festivals while the temple still stood, this may have been practiced before the War as well.

On the other hand, documentary evidence from Egypt suggests that military intervention was actively sought by distressed civilians. A number of papyri and inscriptions indicate that military officers were petitioned for protection or to bring offenders to justice. Over sixty texts attest to this phenomenon from 20 BCE to 255 CE. One papyrus representative of the genre reads as follows:

To Longinus, decurion of the Arsinoite nome, from Pakebkis son of Onnophris from the village of Tebtunis, exempted priest of the famous temple in the village. On the 30th of the month Epeiph, when the hour was late, one Saturnilus, with a great many others, I know not why, having no complaint against us, picked a quarrel, going so far as to rush in

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219 Isaac 1991; 1992: 115-118. Similar interactions are related in m.‘Abod.Zar. 5.6; ‘Erub. 3.5. Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 8.12.3 reports similarly on Antioch.
220 T. Bešah 2.6, translation from Isaac 1991: 458.
with staves, and seizing my brother Onnophris they wounded him, so that his life is endangered in consequence. Wherefore, sir, being careful for the danger to his life, I submit this statement and beg you to order [the perpetrator] to be brought before you so that he may take the consequences, and that I may obtain the requisite satisfaction. …

The inverse of the rabbis’ situation, wherein civilians feared a roving gang of army thugs, holding out no hope for recompense, the author Pakebkis of this petition sees the military as an outlet for justice against malignant locals. About half of these petitionary papyri seek redress for physical assault, indicating that Pakebkis was hardly alone in this experience. Petitions sometimes took the form of a request for pre-emptive protection against agitated parties; one papyrus pleas that a centurion might intervene to prevent violence by an unsuccessful litigant that became disgruntled. The social class of the supplicants varies and is sometimes difficult to discern, since the petitions universally emphasize (and thus presumably exaggerate on occasion) their social standing. Even so, some generalizations can be abstracted from the data. The petitioners were often priests or administrators, 55% claiming “some kind of special status.”

The exceptions to this are widows and other marginalized civilians who tugged at the heart-strings of the district centurion, drawing attention to their humble state. It would be fair to characterize most supplicants as above average in their social status. Those against whom action is hoped to be taken, however, are extremely diverse: relatives, mobs, thieves, and even town elders; the only point of commonality is that they are implicitly subject to the judgment of the district centurion, despite the fact they held no legally recognized jurisdiction.

There is reason to believe that the soldier-civilian relations reflected in Egyptian texts were similar to that of first-century Palestine. First, Egyptian documents attest these practices over the duration of the Principate. Even though Egypt was subject to its own political turmoil and vicissitudes, the content of these petitions remains strikingly consistent throughout the early Empire. It would therefore stand to suppose that it was not a temporary practice enacted in a single province. Second, Josephus attests a few high-profile instances of civilian petitions to military officers: the legate Petronius interceded on behalf of the temple cult to delay Gaius’

223 P.Tebt. 2.304 (text and translation); 167 CE.
224 SB 1.5238; 14 CE.
225 Alston 1995: 91-92 notes that 13% of petitioners were tax-collectors, 22% were of higher legal status than tax-collectors, 11% were priests, and 7% were public farmers, though these numbers require an update.
attempt to install a statue in Jerusalem (A.J. 18.269-278, J.W. 2.192), the governor Cumanus was petitioned to bring justice during a Galilean-Samaritan conflict (A.J. 20.119, J.W. 2.233), etc. Josephus has little to say about non-commissioned army personnel outside of combat situations and has no interest in the mundane character of village life, which precludes his inclusion of banal petitions like the Egyptian papyri. Notably, one of the few exceptions to this silence is his comment that Vespasian set up decurions in villages and centurions in towns during the Judaean War to facilitate the rebuilding of both social and physical structures (J.W. 4.442).

Third, Egypt is unique in the number of surviving papyri thanks to its climate and the availability of papyrus. The shortage of documentary evidence in Judaea should not be taken as an indication that similar practices and interactions did not occur there as well. Papyrological data, though from a later period, indicates that officers garrisoned in Syria Palaestina (formerly Judaea) also received petitions to intervene on behalf of locals, including a Jewish woman who sought justice for her brother’s murder. Similar petitions have been found among the Vindolanda tablets from Britain, indicating the practice was widespread. At least one find from Palestine attests the virtue of officers while acting in official capacities (§§P8a-b; cf. §F18). The practice was probably widespread, since the office of centurio regionarius is attested in legio X Fretensis – these officers were accorded such responsibilities in Egypt and presumably did so in the legion most associated with Judaea as well. It is also worth noting that the rabbis cite a number of incidents where soldiers readily helped Palestinian villagers. While their depiction of the Roman military is mostly negative, a number of positive anecdotes are also present – for instance, it seems soldiers actually supervised legal studies at Jamnia in the school’s formative days.

The fourth and most compelling reason to suppose that the Egyptian data also applies to first century Palestine is that these apparently contradictory patterns of military policing – acting as both bully and protector – occurred simultaneously in Egypt itself. A papyrus so absurd it verges

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227 P.Euphrates 1-5, see especially 2 and 5, the latter of which is mentioned here and dated to 234 CE.
228 T.Vind. 2.257, 281, 322, 344; Peachin 1999. Whitehorne 2004 argues that the geographical lopsidedness of the papyrological record is attributable to the demands of frontier regions and attendant inaccessibility of higher authorities for legal recourse (e.g., strategoi, prefects).
229 Piso 2014; CIL 3.7625.
230 y.B.Qam. 4.4a (so Applebaum 1977: 395); Safrai 1992: 113, citing t.Šabb. 13.9; y.Šabb. 15d; y.Yoma 8.5.45b; y.Ned. 4.9.38d; b.Šabb. 121a.
on comedy is a private accounting ledger containing multiple and escalating entries for money extorted by soldiers among more typical expenses. It begins:

To the guard on duty: 2 drachmae, 1 obol
Gift: 240 drachmae
Suckling pig: 24 drachmae
To the guard: 20 drachmae …

Perhaps most ridiculous are two subsequent entries: one explicitly labeled “extortion” (ὑπὲρ διασεισμοῦ) at 2200 drachmae, with another at 400 drachmae “to the soldier by demand”! The record also includes pay-outs to the police chief: apparently the unlucky author had once attempted to bring an end to strong-armed offers of “protection” by appealing to the soldiers’ superior though the sort of petitions mentioned earlier. This appeal must have been unsuccessful, given the aforementioned payout and subsequent 400 drachmae payout to another soldier.

Entries for extortion comprise the greatest expenses in the ledger – by a wide margin. The mere fact that these were now listed as expenses indicates that the author had lost any confidence in eventual financial recompense; he had literally written the money off as a loss. Caesar’s decree that money not be exacted from Judaeans cannot be seriously considered as reflective of actual practice, so it presumably occurred there as well.232 A more optimistic example can be found in another Egyptian papyrus. The author, a civilian named Hermon, sought redress against both soldiers and civilians for the theft of fish from his pond and subsequent threats against his person.233 Hermon asked the centurion to pursue recompense for the fish and to prevent further harassment. These papyri recall the scene at the Jordan in Luke 3:14: “The soldiers also asked [John the Baptist], ‘And what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Do not extort (μηδὲνα διασέισητε) money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wage.’” While this tradition probably reflects Luke’s compositional context more than Herodian Palestine, it nevertheless speaks to a widespread pattern of interaction in the Roman East.

Soldiers’ duties on patrol were directly related to geographic questions of garrison and fortification placement. Samuel Rocca estimates that about 30 fortresses were used by the Hasmonaeans on the eve of Pompey’s conquest – 22 of them featuring prominently in the war.

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between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II.\textsuperscript{234} Strategy for nearly all Judaean civil wars and insurrections of the Herodian and early Roman eras concentrated on control of fortifications and in general client kings spent large sums of money fortifying and refounding existing cities.\textsuperscript{235} While the use of major fortresses was significant for urban dwellers, more notable for rural inhabitants were minor forts, watchtowers, and road stations dispersed along the road system. Literary sources rarely remark on their existence, but a number of such structures have been observed by archaeologists and are collected in Database Two. The best documented evidence comes from the Jaffa-Jerusalem roads. Surviving evidence indicates several military structures during the Herodian and post-annexation period. The distribution of these centres was not proportionate to the density of nearby civilian settlements, though governors tended to place military structures within ten kilometers of fortified cities at satellite villages (e.g., three or possibly four west of Jerusalem, another one or possibly two near Emmaus).\textsuperscript{236} These forts facilitated active policing. The aforementioned proximity to fortified cities suggests these structures were so positioned in order to aid intercommunication in the event of trouble. Egyptian ostraca document two guards of low rank at each watchtower: one spending the day up in the tower and the other patrolling the road;\textsuperscript{237} presumably Palestinian towers were manned similarly.

One might expect further increases in patrolling and fortifications after the Judaean War: the influx of soldiers, new roads, and escalated tensions could have led to a greater density of village patrols that kept civilians from considering further revolt (one thinks of the panopticon). In fact, though, most rural towers and forts were abandoned around the time of the War. On the Jaffa-Jerusalem roads, Kiryat Ye’arim, Emmaus, and Giv’at Ram were the only ones known to have been used in the War’s wake, and seem to have functioned as satellites of the Jerusalem garrison.\textsuperscript{238} Israel Shatzman makes a persuasive case for the systematic abandonment of military sites after the Judaean War along the southern Judaea-Nabataea/Arabia in Idumaea: most likely

\textsuperscript{234} Rocca 2008a: 17.
\textsuperscript{235} Isaac 1990; Roller 1998; cf. Database Two.
\textsuperscript{236} For example, the only evidence of military presence from the early Roman period on the densely populated Nahmat al Hadali-Khirbit el Hawanit portion of the northern Lydda-Jerusalem road is at Rujum Abu Hashabe. By contrast, the sparser Emmaus-Jerusalem road has five sites (excluding both of those fortified cities with larger garrisons).
\textsuperscript{237} Alston 1995: 81-82, citing O.Amst. 8-14.
\textsuperscript{238} Fischer, Isaac, and Roll 1996.
Beersheba, Tel ‘Ira, Tel Sharuhen, Tel ‘Arad, and Tel ‘Arorer were empty after the War, leaving only a handful of isolated sites along Judaea’s southern border.\textsuperscript{239} Near the Judaean-Galilean border with Syria, almost every military site was empty after the War as well. Many other military sites appear to have been abandoned after the Judaean War, as can be seen in Database Two. Even those post-War rural sites with a military presence both before and after the War tended to see a reduction in number of soldiers (e.g., Masada and Jericho). This policy was overhauled once more after the Bar Kokhba War, though that is another matter entirely. The Decapolis, by contrast, had little military presence before or after the War – David Kennedy and others note that there is no evidence of rural garrison in the region and most urban sites evince a limited military presence.\textsuperscript{240}

With the loss of rural patrolling came a much heavier concentration of single units at specific sites, often urban. While the exact size of the pre-War Jerusalem garrison is not certain, the presence of legio X Fretensis alone was sufficient to double the size of the entire pre-War Judaean army. Similarly, legio VI Ferrata was located almost entirely at Caparcotna/Legio and its environs. Two whole auxiliary units garrisoned near Beth Guvrin at Khirbet ‘Arak Hala, though the unit names are not certain.\textsuperscript{241} Other examples could be cited. This concentration was neither useful nor feasible in the pre-War period, given the wider distribution of military outposts throughout the region.

Benjamin Isaac suggests that this is because the pre-War distribution of soldiers in small villages to aid civilian communities could thin out forces in a potentially disastrous manner, as had happened in Germany under Varus’ command in 9 CE.\textsuperscript{242} Legionaries were instead concentrated in Palestinian cities in massive garrisons, the subsequent Roman policy in hostile territory; should another revolt break out, Rome would control access to financial resources, strategic sites, and the like.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[239] Israel Shatzman (1983; 1991: 233-246) offers a devastating critique of Mordechai Gichon’s arguments to the contrary (e.g., 1967; 1971; 1974; 1980; 1991; 2002; Applebaum and Gichon 1967; cf. Applebaum 1989: 132-142). Gichon developed the earlier thesis of Albrecht Alt (1930) that, after the Judaean War (Gichon: under Vespasian; Alt: under Trajan), a defensive perimeter was developed on the southern Judaean-Nabataea border – that is, a limes Palaestinae. Gichon contends that this system had its origins in a highly developed fortification system created by Herod the Great. There are significant problems with Gichon’s dating of numerous sites, inference of a road connecting Raphia to the Dead Sea, and the extent of Judaea’s southern limits. See the similar critiques of Gichon’s thesis in Gracey 1986: 311-318, Pažout 2015, Tsafir 1982, and in the Excursus above.
\item[241] Zissu and Ecker 2014 argue persuasively for cohors I Thracum milliaria and ala Antiana Gallorum et Thracum sagittaria.
\end{footnotes}
etc. To be sure, soldiers remained at a number of smaller sites, but they were much fewer in number than they had been before the War. It is worth noting as a caveat that soldiers probably also billeted in less archaeologically conspicuous buildings. No specifically military structures have been found in post-War Emmaus and the existing fortifications were abandoned after the War’s conclusion.\textsuperscript{243} Nevertheless, inscriptional data (§P19, §P20, §P21, §P46) renders an Emmaus garrison beyond doubt: Moshe Fischer and his co-authors contend that the epigraphic evidence indicates a sufficient stability of military presence for a stone mason to set up shop.\textsuperscript{244}

Smaller units were also placed to address concerns other than patrolling and policing. The Healing of the Centurion’s Slave (Q/Luke 7:1-10, Matt 8:5-13), for instance, is plausible in its depiction of an officer in the village of Capernaum during the reign of Antipas. Capernaum had a complex history of administration, but it was usually a border town from 4 BCE until Agrippa II’s death in 97 CE.\textsuperscript{245} Egyptian papyri indicate that tax collectors and customs officials one would expect to find near a border regularly encountered or caused problems that resulted in the sort of petitions described above. Indeed, Mark 2:13-14 depicts Levi the tax-collector as stationed on the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret at Capernaum. Two contrasting examples will suffice.\textsuperscript{246} On the one hand, centurions could intervene on behalf of civilians who were abused by tax collectors: one plea comes from a family unable to pay the full grain tax demanded and leading a tax collector and his companions to strip and beat the family matriarch to the point of severe injury. One of her sons sought justice against the tax collector’s gang through the centurion. On the other hand, a petition from a tax collector beseeches the aid of a decurion against local hunters. The hunters not only reported their income fraudulently and refused to comply with tax laws, but started abusing the tax collector and others. The connection between officers and collection of tolls, taxes, etc. is also evidenced in the Nabataean client kingdom: a

\textsuperscript{243} Similarly, no watchtower remains have been found in the Nile Valley, despite the abundant attestation of their presence through textual finds; see Alston 1995: 81-83. Presumably many Palestinian watchtowers have either been lost to time or are archeologically indiscernible.

\textsuperscript{244} Fischer, Isaac, and Roll 1996: 151-160.

\textsuperscript{245} It was on the Galilean border with Batanaea 4 BCE–34 CE, the Galilean border with Syria 34-37 CE, the Galilean border with Batanaea 37-39 CE, the Judaean border with Batanaea 53-55 CE, the Batanaean border with Judaea 55-66 CE, the Galilean border with Batanaea 66-70 CE, and possibly once again the Batanaean border with Judaea 70-97 CE. Only 39-53 CE was Capernaum not in the immediate vicinity of an international border.

\textsuperscript{246} \textit{BGU} 2.515 (193 CE) and \textit{PSI} 3.222 (late 3\textsuperscript{rd} century), respectively. Cf. \textit{P.Corn.} 90; \textit{P.Mich.} 6.425, 10.582; \textit{BGU} 1.81; \textit{P.Gen.} 1.17; \textit{SB} 6.9203; \textit{P.Oxy.} 1185; \textit{P.Amh.} 2.77. Hanson (1989: 435-436; 2001) discusses the archive of Nemesion – a first century collector of capitation taxes in Egyptian Philadelphia – and its evidence for military bodyguards. Beginning in the early third century, it became common for officers to become directly involved in the collection of taxes in Palestine; see Sperber 1969.
first-century periplus describes a centurion and his men aiding a customs official levying a toll at an Arabian port.\textsuperscript{247} A centurion placed near Capernaum could ensure the protection of those extracting tolls and taxes from merchants on nearby regional and interregional trade routes, or perhaps those exacting a fish tax (cf. \textit{OGIS} 496), either of which would explain Levi’s presence on the coast of Gennesaret.

Soldiers also played a role in public construction efforts. Brick tiles produced by the legions or auxiliaries were used near several post-War Palestinian garrisons: Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom notes their use in military and civic constructions, such as bathhouses and water conduits.\textsuperscript{248} Such bricks are easily identified by the stamps bearing an abbreviated form of the legion’s or cohort’s name. Affecting a much larger portion of the Palestinian population were provincial and imperial constructions. Two major civic building projects are notable. First is the road paving project. The earliest evidence of military road construction is a milestone on the Caesarea-Scythopolis road from the Judaean War (§M1; cf. §M45). A handful of other inscriptions are occasionally suggested to be milestones with uncertainty surrounding some of them (§§M2-6), but the next evidence of extensive paving comes from the reign of Hadrian. The paving began in 119-120 CE and resumed 129-130 CE thanks to Hadrian’s presence in the province of Judaea; Hadrianic milestones evince attention to numerous roads in Syria Palaestina (§§M1-20) and the Decapolis (§§M21-44).\textsuperscript{249} William Arnal observes that road pavement not only expedited trade routes and eased commerce for civilian use, but also facilitated travel for tax collectors to villages that were previously inaccessible.\textsuperscript{250} These previously-isolated villages were now in the orbit of consumer-cities that eased their integration into the provincial and


\textsuperscript{248} Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2008: 93-94.

\textsuperscript{249} We await the final volume of \textit{CIIP} for a full collection of Palestinian milestones (it is not clear how many documented by the Israel Milestone Committee have yet to be published), but see Isaac 1978: 47-49. The slight updating in Isaac 1998: 69 is included above. See §§M6-20 for a provisional collection of Hadrianic milestones; Isaac also cites the later milestones under Marcus Aurelius that imply the roads existed under Hadrian (Thomsen 1917: nos. 230a, 272; Roll 1974: 507-508). For more on the roads of Judaea, see the thorough work in Fischer, Isaac, and Roll 1996; Isaac 1992: 107-113; 2010; Isaac and Roll 1982; Roll 1983; 1996; 1999; 2002; Roll and Ayalon 1986.

\textsuperscript{250} Arnal 2001: 115-155. Benjamin Isaac (2010: 147) is careful to note, however, that “Roman roads were constructed for the use of the military organization in the provinces. The economic benefits for the local provincial population, which may have resulted from their existence, were a by-product rather than a primary aim in their construction.”
imperial economy. Consequently, villages’ that were small-but-self-sufficient during the time of Herod the Great came to focus their production on offering resources to cities during the early Roman period, and then increased economic specialization in a more or less an open economy with international trade by the middle of the second century – expedited by the paving of these very roads.\textsuperscript{251}

The other major civic construction projects were waterworks, such as aqueducts and wells. Judaean aqueducts are in evidence from the beginning of the early Hellenistic era; by the end of the Herodian period, there were aqueduct systems to over a dozen Palestinian cities, some supplied by multiple systems.\textsuperscript{252} Our interest begins with the annexation of Judaea, since it was a Roman policy to heavily involve soldiers in such construction efforts.\textsuperscript{253} Of the Judaean aqueducts built during the first century, Josephus only sees fit to mention the construction that Pilate oversaw in Jerusalem, since he had intended to fund it with money from the temple treasury (\textit{A.J.} 18.60-62, \textit{J.W.} 2.175-177; cf. Luke 13:1-5). Despite Jewish outcry about the funding, this work was eventually completed, now known as Jerusalem’s ‘Arrub aqueduct. Josephus’ lack of interest in labourers means that he does not explicitly say whether the Sebastene cohorts were active in the construction process. About a century later, though, we find clear evidence of soldiers constructing Hadrian’s aqueduct to Caesarea (§§P66a-j). Hadrian financed aqueducts elsewhere in the Empire at several million sestertii each, though no numbers survive for Caesarea.\textsuperscript{254} Regardless, the funding often had a substantial impact on regional civilians: taxes were either remitted or exacted from elsewhere to encourage local aristocrats to contribute money as a supplement to imperial funds. Elites were the primary beneficiaries of aqueducts, as their lifestyle was more water-extravagant (e.g., bathhouses) and they might directly benefit by licensing water rights to nearby farmers. Beyond these civic constructions, the military built many structures for their own purposes, though some of the most interesting came after the Bar Kokhba War (e.g., Capernaum’s bath house, Romanization of Aelia Capitolina). Civilian attitudes about military construction were complex, as evident in a well-known story from the Mishnah:

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item See the concise overview in Patrich and Amit 2002; cf. Eck 2014; Lönnqvist 2000.
\item Férvier 1979. Note the presence of an auxiliary architect in Syria Palaestina (\textit{AE} 1983.380).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Jose, and Rabbi Simeon were sitting, and Judah, a son of proselytes, was sitting near them. Rabbi Judah commenced [the discussion] by observing, “How fine are the works of [the Romans]! They have made streets, they have built bridges, and they have erected bath houses.” Rabbi Jose was silent. Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai answered and said, “All that they made they made for themselves; they built marketplaces, to set prostitutes in them; baths, to rejuvenate themselves; bridges, to levy tolls for them.”

Informal Functions of the Military in Palestine

The on-duty responsibilities of soldiers hardly give a complete portrait of their role in Palestine. We will see that even when not operating in an official capacity, soldiers remained ambiguous in the eyes of civilians. To start with the most obvious, the military was heavily involved in the economy of Palestine through purchase of supplies. Because Palestine’s economy was relatively closed until Hadrian’s reign, these items were purchased locally. Josephus records an incident where a bandit gang slaughtered 40 soldiers and a centurion at Emmaus; these soldiers were supplying their garrison with corn and weapons (A.J. 17.282-283; 4 BCE). Also revealing is an expense sheet of a legionary from Masada, which lists some of the items the soldier purchased at the market: barley, a linen tunic, boots, and a broad category of “food expenses.” The Roman economy was nothing like free-market capitalism, so the military dictated its own prices – for instance, a pair of papyri from Dura Europos indicates that cohors XX Palmyrenorum paid merely 125 denarii for each of its replacement horses, regardless of their age or quality. Sometimes, villages were compensated by tax easement in exchange for supplies, when direct payment was not possible. At least in the case of §P14, prices tend toward fair rather than extortionate.
As in other provinces, markets (*canabae*) emerged around more permanent Palestinian army bases; certainly civilian settlements are found outside army camps (e.g., Legio, Scythopolis).260 Dio Cassius states that Palestinian Jews even sold weapons to the Roman army until the outbreak of the Bar Kokhba War.261 If an order were large enough, the military would delegate the responsibility to a district authority that would then disperse the duties among its constituent villages (see *p.Oxy.* 1448). Herod the Great personally oversaw food contributions to the military in times of crisis.262 In other cases, merchants might form part of the army supply train. Lucius Tettius Crescens (§F36) may have been one such merchant. Though his epitaph seems to intentionally mislead the reader so as to infer he was a soldier, scholars have concluded that he was more probably a Roman businessman (perhaps a slave trader) who followed the army *inter alia* into Judaea in its prevention of a violent outbreak during the War of Quietus.263 It is not certain how these transactions were perceived by Palestinian civilians, though a graffito at Khirbet ‘Arak Hala suggests some held a positive view of these interactions: at an olive press where soldiers purchased oil from civilians (§P56), one inscription reads [...] ""May the memory of Lord Trajan be blessed …”264 Boaz Zissu and Avner Ecker note that the formula of inscription was typically used for “esteemed persons in general and synagogue donors in particular.”

Around the time of Jesus’ death, there were approximately 7000 soldiers in Palestine, each in need of life’s requirements. This number increased to somewhere around 12000 after the end of the War – now almost entirely under the authority of a single administrative apparatus as opposed to distinct kingdoms, provinces, and free cities.265 This additional population in itself

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261 Dio claims that the Jews sabotaged Roman weapons so the military would dispose of them and thus be used by the Jews themselves. Why Jewish rebels would want damaged weapons is unfathomable, so at least this element of Dio’s telling is likely unhistorical.
262 Bruun 1992 first suggested he was a civilian, but Pucci Ben Zeev 2000 is probably correct in tweaking Bruun’s proposal to link Lucius Tettius Crescens with the War of Quietus.
264 In the Herodian period, soldiers include those in Judaea (3400 auxiliaries), Ascalon (600 auxiliaries), Batanaea (2000 soldiers?), Galilee and Perea (1000 soldiers?), plus various bodyguards and mercenaries. Post-War soldiers include Judaea (4800 legionaries, 3400 auxiliaries), Batanaea (4000 soldiers?), plus other irregulars; see Roth 1995: 91-92. The number of legionaries doubled under Trajan (Eck 1984; Isaac 1992: 105-107), though Batanaea had been divided between Judaea and Syria by that point. The numbers would be considerably higher if the Decapolis were included.
would amplify the economic importance of the military, but three factors rendered the army even more central to the economy after the Judaean War.

First, soldiers played a major role in the monetization of Palestine. To this point, coinage was not particularly common, such that taxes were usually exacted in kind rather than via coin. The monetization of the Palestinian economy during the pre-War period was uneven. Rural areas tended to have a disproportionately large number of low-value bronze coinage – especially in Batanaea and Galilee – with occasional silver pieces from Syria; by contrast, Jerusalem, Caesarea and much of Judaea proper were fully monetized. Cities already tended to be economic magnets, siphoning agricultural or other material surpluses from nearby villages. This is not to suggest that money was entirely unfamiliar in rural areas, as nearly the entire region made use of provincial (or, rarely imperial) currency systems. Rather, physical money was not a necessary part of life for parts of Palestine and one could thus survive with only a modest amount of low-value currency, thanks to other methods of economic transaction.

Soldiers’ purchase of many of their own goods introduced coinage into exchange processes that had previously tended to occur via barter or payment in kind. Legions were far more regular in their payment practices than provincial auxilia, leading to a massive influx of imperial coinage and the imperialization of provincial coinage via countermarks. By merely injecting coins into the economy, the military substantially changed the character of Palestinian economic transactions, especially in rural areas. Coinage provided far easier means of extracting and transporting taxes, rent, loans, tithes, bribes, and extortion than the cumbersome use of material goods. Even when locals paid taxes in kind, the post-War army did not use the resources for

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266 Udoh 2005: 221-223.
267 The countermarks of legio X Fretensis marks in the East are uniquely prevalent among all legionary countermarks (see Howgego 1985: 22 [with nos. 117, 281-282, 291, 409-410, 727-735]; Rosenberger 1978: 78-84) – surprisingly, none of the legion’s countermarked coins were minted later than Domitian. By Howgego’s (now outdated) count, an astounding 71% of all legionary countermarks recovered throughout the Empire were stamped by legio X Fretensis! The Sebastene cohorts – for reasons that are entirely obscure – may have countermarked some Judaean prutot from the 30s CE; see Ciecieląg 2004; Kogon 2012; Lönnqvist 1992-93, though they problematically attribute the countermarks to cohors II Italica c.R. based on an uncritical reading of Acts.
268 The process of monetization through urbanization in Palestine is discussed in various publications (e.g., Arnal 2001: 134-150; Freyne 1995; Jensen 2010; Kloppenborg 2000: 240-242). I adopt a model similar to Arnal’s: 1) Tax collection was difficult in rural Palestine, resulting in a de facto exemption in these areas. 2) Increased urbanization (as bureaucratic centres), monetization (as a means of transporting wealth), and new infrastructure (increasing accessibility) made tax collection considerably easier and affected villagers in predictable ways. 3) The resulting loss of income among villagers led to an increase in debt and loss of property. 4) To forestall debt, villagers often produced specialized goods that maximized profit. 5) Specialization required villagers to shift away
soldiers. Rather, the goods were sold to the populace to further encourage monetization, thereby allowing the army to allocate the finances with greater ease. As elsewhere in the empire, the extent of monetization was directly correlated to the extent of military presence in a given province; this correlation is also found with respect to the specific cities garrisoning troops in Palestine. In short, more soldiers meant greater use of coinage. As Syon describes it, “in [the post-War period], however, things change dramatically. All over the southern Levant, the number of denars found increased nearly fourfold and the aes coins sixfold. … I think that it is quite clear that Roman imperial coins started arriving in Palestine in any appreciable numbers only in the Flavian period, i.e., from around 70 CE.” Local taxes and imperial tributes were primary means of funding troop pay, rendering the process cyclical, in that more coinage resulted in easier exaction of taxes. The fact that coins were minted in cities where the army garrisoned (Jerusalem and Caesarea, foremost in Palestine) fostered this system all the more.

Second, the Jerusalem garrison of legio X Fretensis functioned to partially fill the economic void of the temple’s loss after the War. As noted above, goods and money tended to flow toward cities, but Jerusalem was the primary economic motor of the Second Temple period thanks to its massive cultic apparatus. In addition to the collection of tithes, Jerusalem housed a sizable land-owning aristocracy, required sacrificial victims, and saw the regular appearance of Jewish pilgrims from both Palestine and the Diaspora. The architecture of Herod the Great, including the renovation of the temple itself, also increased the prominence and economic centrality of the city. In short, Jerusalem’s population required more resources than its immediate vicinity could

from self-sufficient subsistence-farming and toward cash-cropping, resulting in their economic dependence on cities and elites. Objections to Arnal’s model concern the particulars of Antipas’ Galilee, especially the absence of silver coinage most commonly used in tax exaction (e.g., Chancey 2005: 181; Jensen 2010: 190-191). That is, objections tend more toward the application of the model to the dataset of Herodian Galilee than the validity of the model itself. I apply the model to the post-War period, a period wherein the sharp increase in the production and use of silver currency is unambiguous (Zeichmann 2017). Consequently, such criticisms are less pertinent to the present study. Moreover, it is clear from the military pay receipts (§P14, §P26) that soldiers tended to operate in physical currency in their expenditures. The most relevant models for monetization, coinage, and the military for first-century Palestine can be found in Katsari 2008; Pollard 2000: 171-211; Wigg 1997.


On the Empire broadly, see: Crawford 1970: 46. In Egypt, denarii are found foremost in military contexts until their formal introduction into the economy in 296 CE (Christiansen 1984). On Palestinian cities, see Roth 2002: 384 in turn citing data from Safrai 1994: 403. Danny Syon (2012: 53 n. 11) cautions against Safrai’s numismatic analysis; Syon notes, for instance, that the totals of Safrai’s percentages exceed 100%. Syon (2015: 212-213) offers a more compelling interpretation of the data: in post-War northern Palestine one finds a heavy concentration of Roman coinage at and near Legio and Scythopolis – two major legionary camps at the time.

Syon 2015: 212.

See the discussion in Lapin 2017.
furnish, so it drew from a much larger area. The temple had long been the central economic institution in Palestine and its destruction left a massive void. This economic vacuum was filled by the legion stationed in the city—though the legion’s role paled in comparison with that of the temple. The economic function of the army was considerably greater after the War thanks to a combination of the aforementioned increase in number of soldiers, the higher pay of legionaries than auxiliaries, the heftier administrative apparatus concomitant with Judaea’s new status as a major imperial province, the construction of new roads connecting Jerusalem to nearby cities (thus easing tax collection), the presence of foreign legionaries with more standardized purchasing habits, and the shift toward city-based garrisons. Even the sale of sacrificial animals was partially replaced by the meat-heavy diet of soldiers. Jonathan Roth notes that while the Jerusalem garrison “in no way substituted for the Temple as an economic motor,” the military eliminated “many of the constraints that the Temple and its priesthood had placed on the Judaean economy and had an overall positive effect on its growth in the long term.” While Roth’s point is well taken, one should dispute some of the connotations around his phrase “positive effect”; Jeffrey L. Davies instead suggests that “military demands … consistently drained the agricultural resources of a locality rather than enhance[d] it.” Regardless, the army aided the economic expansion of Jerusalem and acted as the default replacement for the temple’s commercial activity.

Third, soldiers and veterans became more heavily involved in land ownership in Palestine after the War, entailing a heavy interaction with civilians through their personal financial transactions. Vespasian confiscated a substantial portion of Judaean land that had belonged to rebels and their sympathizers, giving this property to favoured citizens, including veterans and loyalists. Josephus records the gift of property in Motza to a settlement of 800 veterans (J.W. 7.218), and several other veteran settlement sites are known (see Database Two). These settlements incorporated veterans into existing Palestinian communities, which also had the effect of integrating these smaller locales into province-wide structures. The abundance of property and land grants positioned veterans as a strong presence among the landed and they were able to rent out their own property to locals as private citizens. Midrashim attest Jewish tenancy on land

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owned by military officers in the late first century, land which had been owned by Jews before the War.\textsuperscript{275} Though no relevant papyri survive from Palestine in particular, numerous documents from Egypt record the role of veterans and soldiers as landlords.\textsuperscript{276}

The increased use of coinage in the Palestinian economy entailed a sharp increase in debt among small landholders, thanks to the newfound ease of financial extraction.\textsuperscript{277} The upsurge of debt can be linked with an increase in loans. The best attestation to this phenomenon in Palestine is a document attesting a forty denarii loan from the centurion Magonius Valens to an Ein-Gedi resident named Judah (§P33). The surviving document is a Greek copy of an Aramaic original treating a courtyard as collateral for a loan. Magonius was part of a temporary garrison (\textit{cohors I Thracum milliaria}) that camped on both the eastern and western border of the courtyard in question, as well as a \textit{praesidium} to the north; a bathhouse in the area was discovered and may have served this cohort.\textsuperscript{278} The document was given to Judah, while the Aramaic original stayed with Magonius, leading to a strange situation where neither the creditor nor the debtor held a copy in a language they found intelligible;\textsuperscript{279} the witnesses include a combination of Jewish and Roman names – the latter names presumably belonging to other auxiliaries. In this particular case, it seems the centurion convinced Judah to sign an agreement to repay a 60 denarii loan, when in fact Judah had only received 40: in the initial copy of the text, the word forty is scratched out and replaced by sixty, but only in the second copy did the scribe correctly list the amount Magonius demanded.\textsuperscript{280} Comparison with \textit{P.Yadin} 19 reveals that Judah managed to repay the loan, since he still owned the courtyard in 128 CE.\textsuperscript{281} Loaning practices were predatory by their very nature: the loan attested in §P26, as well as most other documents for soldiers’ loans to civilians during the Principate, appear voluntary to the extent that anyone would consent

\textsuperscript{275} Midr. de-Bei Rav 317; on the dating and interpretation, see Applebaum 1977: 389-392. Applebaum cites §F8 and §§P42a-b as instances of rural veteran colonization in Palestine.
\textsuperscript{276} E.g., \textit{P.Mich}. 6.427, 9.542; \textit{SB} 6.9636, 12.10982, 22.15346. Legionaries also received a 3000 denarii retirement bonus for 20 years of service.
\textsuperscript{277} See again Arnal 2001: 134-150, albeit on Antipas’ considerably less monetized Galilean economy.
\textsuperscript{278} Cotton 1996; 2001: 148-149. Cotton also observes that comparison with \textit{P.Yadin} 19 indicates the cohort left Ein-Gedi by April 128, but §D1j shows it remained in Palestine. However, Gwyn Davies and Jodi Magness (2013) recently disputed that the cohort was ever in Ein-Gedi.
\textsuperscript{279} Oudshoorn 2007: 156.
\textsuperscript{280} Lewis 1989: 41; Oudshoorn 2007: 160.
\textsuperscript{281} See Cotton 1996 for a discussion of how the courtyards mentioned in \textit{P.Yadin} 11 (=§P33), 19, and 20 relate.
to such terms.\textsuperscript{282} Soldiers also acted as business partners to provincials: a centurion named Lucius initially ensured protection of an Egyptian tax collector Nemesion, but eventually Nemesion helped Lucius circumvent laws against soldiers owning property in their garrison province by engaging in shared agricultural enterprises.\textsuperscript{283} There is also some evidence of loans flowing the opposite direction; \textit{O. Florida} 5 is a soldier’s letter requesting funds from his garrison’s curator to repay money he borrowed from a nearby villager.

While soldiers’ pay was hardly exorbitant (but we should not forget the retirement bonuses awarded to legionaries), they were among the fortunate few to have surplus income. Their habits of consumption – especially after the temple’s fall – comprised a major part of the Romanization of Palestine. Roman-style theatres are evinced in at sites of sizable garrisons or fortresses including Antipatris, Sebaste, Jerusalem, Jericho, Caesarea, and Gerasa.\textsuperscript{284} While these buildings should be partially attributed to the tastes of populations already residing in these cities, evidence from the village of Caparotna/Legio is only explainable by the legionary presence. Caparotna/Legio had a theatre to entertain the nearby garrison of \textit{legio VI Ferrata}, even though the village was otherwise unremarkable.\textsuperscript{286} Indeed, the village came to be the nexus of three Judaean roads. Evidence is similar near Beth Guvrin: the village of Beth Guvrin was barely populated during the first century, but with the post-War garrison it steadily grew in prominence; an amphitheatre was built there after the Judaean War and it eventually received city status under Septimius Severus as Eleutheropolis. Likewise, Shechem was re-established as the veteran colony Neapolis in 72 CE, where numerous entertainment buildings were found. Indeed, it is nearly a rule that military fortresses were accompanied by amphitheatres throughout the Empire.\textsuperscript{287} Jonathan Roth notes that officers’ considerably higher wages “would have created

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\item \textsuperscript{282} Cf. §P45. See the extensive discussion of the papyrological data in Wierschowski 1984: 17-30. Additional documents are relevant: 1) §F3 involves a 600 drachmae transaction between three Egyptian Jews and a soldier of \textit{ala Vocontiorum}. 2) One soldier in Aelia Capitolina loaned a sum to another in 188 CE, as documented in \textit{P.Mich.} 7.445.
\item \textsuperscript{283} Hanson 2001: 94-95. Also worth noting is \textit{P.Wisc.} 2.70, which permits a very long leave of absence for a soldier; the editors suggest that this was to permit him to look after his possessions back home after the destruction of the War of Quietus.
\item \textsuperscript{284} Segal 1994 and Weiss 1999 list and discuss all known Palestinian theatres, hippodromes, and amphitheatres.
\item \textsuperscript{285} See Haynes 2013: 171-174.
\item \textsuperscript{286} Safrai (1992: 111) notes that Legio was the only village in either Galilee or Judaea to contain a theatre.
\item \textsuperscript{287} Davies 1989: 67.
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a market not only for the best wine and foodstuffs, but for other luxury goods as well."  Even common legionaries would bring with them the tastes and habits of consumption that their life as a Syrian and Roman citizen had cultivated.

That said, merchants did not simply import goods to market to legionaries after the War. Before the Judaean War, sites occupied by auxiliaries and client kings’ soldiers are hardly distinguishable from civilians with respect to assemblages found; Roman influence on locally-produced wares is minimal. This was probably because Palestine’s armies were relatively autonomous before the Judaean War, most detachments consisted of a few men per fortlet, and their soldiers had long used similar goods as civilians and continued doing so without interruption. At larger pre-War garrisons (e.g., Jerusalem, Caesarea, Herodium), one also finds a number of distinctively Roman wares, such as lamps and fibulae – albeit with little influence on other goods. Once Syrian legionaries arrived, local craftspeople adapted to the new tastes, marking change in the wares locals produced. Somewhat surprisingly, pottery and similar goods were imported less frequently in the post-War period.

This pattern of auxiliaries’ importation-without-influence and legionaries’ Romanized-local-comestibles is attested elsewhere on the Roman frontier. Gregg Woolf notes that in early Roman Gaul, Roman influence on consumption habits tended to be small goods that indicated the owner’s new Roman persona – such as objects of adornment that were also common in pre-War garrisons. These wares were inexpensive and mundane, but signalled a transformation of non-citizen auxiliaries into a new Romanized subject, albeit within the soldiers’ outsider-conception of Roman consumption in anticipation of their eventual citizenship. By contrast, citizen legionaries were less interested in imported permanent wares for a number of reasons, not least of which was a markedly different conception of Roman consumption habits and little need for conspicuous Romanized consumption. As Woolf notes, the exact value regimes underlying these contrasting patterns of consumption are impossible to reconstruct with detail, but a central distinction seems to be auxiliaries’ appreciation of Roman objects as opposed to legionaries’ preference for objects of Roman appreciation.

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288 Roth 2002: 386.
289 Cotton 2006; Fischer 2011.
Military spending was also experienced through benefaction, especially by lower level officers – those who had sufficient income to warrant generosity, but low-ranking enough that their influence was limited in its prestige. Nigel Pollard suggests that it was precisely distance from major sites of Roman power that allowed these officers – usually centurions and decurions – to exert influence they otherwise would not have. In a late second century inscription from Phaena (formerly in Batanaea), the villagers honour a legionary centurion named Petusius Eudemus as friend and benefactor. A contemporary centurion was also in former Batanaean territory was thanked by the residents of Aere for similar reasons. The case of Titus Flavius Dionysius may also attest to this phenomenon in Gerasa.

Between these three factors (monetization, loss of temple, land ownership), the Judaean War entailed a number of significant changes in the military’s unofficial roles in Palestine. Matters changed more permanently under Hadrian. His road-paving efforts had large implications on Palestine’s economy and army supply chain, already evident in a papyrus from 128 CE. The sender, Dionysius, writing on behalf of the “associate collectors of public clothing for the guards” received a few cloaks destined for Judaea; Dionysius was writing from Socnopaii Nesus in the Nile Valley. Another papyrus records an order for a large blanket for the hospital at Sebaste (BGU 7.1564; 138 CE). As the paving continued and the demand for luxury goods increased with the foundation of Aelia Capitolina, so did the availability of imported merchandise. Consequently, the heavy dependence of the military on local merchants and producers for their goods decreased with an increase in cosmopolitan trade from a variety of regionally specialized economies.

Finally, family life is a form of soldier-civilian interaction that is well attested in the documentary record. Several Palestinian epitaphs were erected on behalf of soldiers or veterans by their families (§P4, §P25, §F41, §F7, §F8, §F43, §F44, §F45), including spouses, siblings, children, and freedpersons. Patronymics remain common in epigraphs as well, including the strangely bilingual case of Barsimsus Callisthenes (§D14); one can only speculate as to the

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291 Pollard 2000: 88; Pollard documents ample evidence of the phenomenon in Syria. Note also two cases of veteran officers from cohors I Damascenorum becoming a priest of Serapis in Oxyrhynchus (§F39, §F40).
292 τὸν φίλον καὶ εὔεργέτην; ILS 1122; cf. ILS 1121.
293 ILS 2413. See other inscriptions of centurions as benefactors for temples listed in Ward 2012: 224 n. 31.
significance Barsimsus found in retaining a Latin transliteration of his Aramaic patronymic. During the period of their military service, soldiers commonly corresponded with their families. Most of the data survives from Egypt, including letters from an anxious brother (P.Mich. 8.484), siblings petitioning officers to get their brother transferred to a closer garrison (P.Oxy. 1666), a soldier seeking his father’s approval for the purchase of a slave woman (P.Mich. 8.476), among many others. A particularly vivid letter comes from a soldier named Saturnilus stationed in Nubia to his mother Aphrodes in Egyptian Karanis (P.Mich. 3.203; 114–116 CE). Saturnilus related a variety of concerns to his mother, foremost among them is the birth of another child. Aphrodes sent her son supplies regularly (olives and other unnamed allowances) and had also been tending pigs intended for each of her grandchildren. Saturnilus had been collecting letters as an excuse to travel to Karanis to see his mother, but the presence of the prefect has made him cautious, lest Saturnilus’ explanation prove inadequate and his supplies be confiscated. Another example is a strange divorce contract indicating a peculiar position the military could put a family in: a couple involuntarily goes through divorce because the husband enlists in the army; only 400 of the 1000 drachmae dowry were returned in the divorce, probably indicating the couple planned to remarry upon his discharge. In pre-War Palestine, auxiliary and client kings’ soldiers rarely left the province, but the post-War garrison of legio X Fretensis was recruited primarily from Syria. Brief leaves of absence would permit legionaries to visit home on occasion. It is worth noting that even after the War, some veterans not placed in settlements nonetheless opted to remain in Palestine and make it their new home (§P31, §P41, §§P42a-b, §F8) – just as some Palestinian veterans opted not to return to their home region (§F44, §F45; §D7, §D8, §D9, §D10, §D11, §D12, §D13, §D14).

The presence of the military profoundly impacted daily life for provincial civilians. We can ascertain that soldiers and civilians lived and interacted with great proximity in Palestine. In Jerusalem, the headquarters of legio X Fretensis were in western part of the city – possibly near the location of the Antonia fortress that served as the barracks for the auxiliaries during the

295 P.Mich. 7.422; Fink 1966.
296 To be sure, the vast majority of legionaries stationed in the Levant opted to return to their home province. Mann 1983: 150 counts 28 of 30 legionaries (69-160 CE) in Eastern provinces returning to their home outside the province of their garrison upon retirement, though these numbers are severely out of date. Veterans in the west seem to have strongly favoured staying in the province of their garrison, by contrast.
Second Temple period – and thus near civilian dwellings. It thus appears that the model of the “total institution,” largely separate from the rest of culture and self-sufficient, is not especially helpful for understanding the role of the Roman army in Palestine either before or after the Judaean War.

Case Study: Masada

In that the preceding two sections of the chapter were eclectic in their reconstruction of soldier-civilian interactions in Palestine, a look at how these dynamics played out in a single site may be illustrative. The fortress of Masada will be used not only because of the extensive excavations performed there, but also because its control changed hands during the period of concern. To what extent and in what ways were mundane soldier-civilian interactions similar under Herodian soldiers, Judaean auxiliaries, the Jewish sicarii, and legionaries? To answer this question, we will direct our attention to the economic practices that sustained daily life at Masada.

The initial construction of Masada’s fortress occurred under the Maccabees – either Alexander Jannaeus or Judas Maccabee. Five distinct periods are of present interest. 1) In the second half of the first century BCE, Herod built a massive complex to serve as refuge for his family; construction seems to have been completed around 26 BCE and it remained under Herodian control until the expulsion of Archelaus in 6 CE. Masada had little military presence at this point. 2) Following the annexation of Judaea that same year, a small garrison of auxiliaries remained until the outbreak of the Judaean War (Josephus, J.W. 2.408) alongside a modest Jewish civilian population. 3) Jewish rebels captured the fortress in 66 CE. While the Jews occupying Masada have frequently been depicted as a cross-section of freedom-fighting Jews (especially the seminal work by Yigael Yadin), Nachman Ben-Yehuda reminds us that the inhabitants were mostly sicarii, who had a complex relationship with other rebels and Jews in Judaean War. For instance, Josephus reports that the sicarii inhabiting Masada slew the civilians

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298 Pace Pollard 1996 and Shaw 1983 on other provinces, who draw upon the theoretical work of Goffman 1961. Contrast also the models advocated in Hobbs 2001: 338-343.
299 See the conflicting testimonies in Josephus: “ancient kings” meaning the Hasmonaens in J.W. 4.399, but “the high priest Jonathan” in J.W. 7.285. For the status quaestionis of Masada’s foundation, see Netzer 1993: 973.
inhabiting nearby Ein-Gedi and adjacent villages. 4) Masada’s occupation by the *sicarii* ceased after a successful assault by *legio X Fretensis* and attending auxiliaries in the spring of either 73 or 74 CE – a siege likely lasting between one and two months. 302 Rather than risk the indignity of capture, some *sicarii* and their families opted for suicide; this marked the end of the Judaean War. 5) Finally, a legionary garrison held Masada from the War’s end until 87 CE, but returning 100-113 CE, when they left presumably in order to partake in Trajan’s Parthian campaigns. Masada was abandoned until a small monastery occupied the fortress in the fourth century.

The remarkably thorough work of Dan Barag and Malka Hershkovitz on the lamps found at Masada is helpful for our analysis. Beyond traditional methods for provenancing the lamps, they received the aid of archaeologist *cum* physicist Joseph Yellin, who subjected a sampling of the lamps to a neutron activation analysis (NAA), permitting greater precision in determining the origins of finds originating within Palestine. Also useful are papyrological, numismatic, and pottery analyses, though the latter two do not permit the same exactness with its data. Matters are somewhat complicated during the first two periods of consideration (i.e., Herodian and the first Roman garrison) due to the disruptive nature of the *sicarii*’s occupation; traditional stratigraphic analysis is nearly impossible because *sicarii* had a propensity to disturb existing elements of the fortress. Thus, no Herodian finds and few early Roman finds can be subjected to stratigraphic analysis for precise dating. Naturally, the site was more favorable for determining the goings-on of the *sicarii* occupation and later Roman soldiers, if simply because they were the last to use the fortress until Byzantine times.

During the first period, Masada functioned foremost as a safe-house for Herod the Great and his family and so reflects his distinctive interests. The fortress had a pottery workshop, which was

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301 J.W. 2.400-405, but see the discussion below; Ben-Yehuda 1995; 2002.
302 The date of Masada’s fall remains unclear, occurring in either 73 or 74 CE; the most essential publications on the matter include Cotton 1989; Cotton and Geiger 1989: 21-23; Eck 1969. Jonathan Roth’s arguments that the siege of Masada lasted less than seven weeks (as opposed to the three years of popular lore) is generally accepted among military historians (1995). Jodi Magness advocates the general reliability of Josephus’ depiction of the tactics of Masada’s siege (2010), but this has been contested in recent years. The excavated Roman siege ramp, it has been argued (Goldfus and Arubas 2002: 209-210), is not consistent with Josephus’ description, nor is evidence concerning the rebels’ mass suicide (so Atkinson 2007; Zias, Segal, and Carmi 1994: 349-358). The Masada narrative also fits well with Josephus’ literary goals: Brighton 2009: 105-131; Ladouceur 1987.
303 Barag and Hershkovitz 1994.
304 On the utility of NAA for the study of economic practices in first century Palestine, see Adan-Bayewitz 1993; Arnal 2001, both of which focus on pottery in Galilee.
sufficient for its relatively small population, though the initial effects of Herod’s internationalizing projects can be detected in the influence of Roman vessels on Masada-produced wares. The storerooms seem to have held locally-purchased foodstuffs, evidenced by the seventeen inscribed vessels with Semitic names (Ze’ev, Ysh, Bar, etc.) – either the names of merchants or estate owners. Jack Pastor points out that several vessels bear the Jewish designation καλὸν κεράμιον, though its Greek script indicates its marketing to an increasingly Hellenized population. More luxurious goods, which tended to be easily transportable, came from further away. Of the four Herodian lamps subjected to neutron activation analysis, two came from the Phoenician coast, while the other two come from areas unknown, but appear similar to contemporaneous Jerusalem lamps. Among the 29 lamps likely from this period, four were produced outside of Palestine: three were imported from Ephesus and the other is a Nabataean imitation of an Italian type. Likewise, Bar-Nathan observes the prevalence of Italian wines (recall the halakhic prohibition on non-Jewish wine), Italian dried apples, and Spanish fish sauce attest the royal diet, since imported foods were infrequent at the time. The extravagance of life atop Masada is also evident in the swimming pool and bath house from this period; the heavy use of water midst the desert required the construction of two aqueducts at the site.

Discussion of the second period – that of auxiliary garrison 6-66 CE – is complicated by the dearth of data that can be located with any certainty from this time. Indeed, it is impossible to determine what pottery at Masada, if any, was introduced by the first Roman garrison. It is likely that many vessels attributed to the Herodian period were either used by or actually derive from the first Roman garrison; lamp and pottery types from the Herodian period were produced well into the Roman era and the aforementioned stratigraphic complications render certitude

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307 From period #1, 29 lamps were identified (3-26, 169-171, 194, including 7a), four of which were subjected to NAA (13, 15, 23, 25).
308 Safrai 1994: 228; e.g., Mas 796-797, 819, 822, 826.
309 Bar-Nathan 2006: 24-25. Following the final reports of the Masada excavations, I include the reign of Agrippa I under the taxon “early Roman occupation” due to the presumed continuity in Masada between with the preceding and succeeding status as a minor imperial province. Ya’akov Meshorer argues on numismatic grounds that the garrison saw an increase in size under Pilate that was sustained under Agrippa I until the Jewish occupation during the War (1989: 72).
impossible. Likewise, it is probable that the pottery workshop at Masada would have been used during the early Roman period as well. Even so, Latin was evidently in use even during the Herodian period in Masada, especially in reference to imported goods: nearly every Latin tituli picti on the Masada amphorae contained imported luxury foods and undoubtedly date to the Herodian period.

There was a gradual process of Roman acculturation and consumption at the site, albeit without the economic distinctions that are obvious in Herod’s luxury goods. That said, one sees a substantial increase in imported wares during this period and with more concentrated origins. For instance, 52 lamps from this period were identified as imports, 32 of which were identified as Italian in origin, fourteen from Nabataea (many of which imitate Italian styles), and a few Phoenician and Anatolian lamps. J. P. Kane argues that Roman lamps were imported to Caesarea Maritima during this period, given the city’s role in inter-province trade, its gubernatorial prominence, and its concentration of wealth. The import of these lamps to Caesarea was facilitated by its harbour, the city’s ever-increasing prevalence of Roman citizens (thanks in large part to the diplomas granted to auxiliaries in the city) and similarly growing pretensions of Roman culture at more modest levels of the social hierarchy as well, including among veterans, their children, and potential recruits. In that the Sebastene auxiliaries fostered their identification as Roman subjects, the use of imported goods to supplement their much more extensive use of local wares added to their perceived Roman-ness vis-à-vis the local populace of the Judaeans. It is therefore likely that merchants brought the imports to the area, particularly suggested by a lamp with the name Faustus on it. Faustus lamps are known throughout the Empire, including large numbers at Cyprus, Egypt, and Petra – where there seem to have been imitation or franchise shops set up as well. While the Faustus lamp is probably

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310 Barag and Hershkovitz 1994: 126 also note this of Zealot-era lamps: “Some wheel-made knife-pared lamps of [the Zealot class] were probably used by the First Roman Garrison but there is no way of identifying them.”

311 Mas 795-851. The only exception is §P16. Note that the tituli picti found in Jericho and Cypros seem to date from the Herodian period as well (Ecker 2013).

312 Lamps are numbers 138-159, 161-168, 172, 174-190, 195-198.


314 Donald M. Bailey in Barag and Hershkovitz 1994: 97; see lamp no. 141.
Italian in origin, it may have come from a merchant who acquired it in Arabia along with other Italian lamps that ended up in Masada as well.

But while import goods were common during both the Herodian and early Roman periods, the objects in question, not to mention the transactions and practices associated therewith, differed significantly. The shift from royalty’s luxury comestibles to more permanent possessions, combined with a more stable garrison at the site, brought with it a greater dependence on local production for foodstuffs and other goods. This is evident from the numismatic record: functionally all of coins from the Herodian era are of Herod and Archelaus, being small denominations minted in Jerusalem. But during the first Roman garrison, Judaean coinage – while still most common – has a modest supplement of Nabataean (8%) and non-Judaean city issues (3%). It is worth noting coinage of the Judaean governors remained in circulation well beyond their issue; Ya’akov Meshorer contends that many of the Judaean provincial coins minted during the second period continued to arrive during the War, as the provincial types found in Masada are of varieties that circulated long after they ceased production. This diversity of origin indicates an opening of Masada to the international (if still regional) economy, presumably facilitated by a shift from Herod’s direct control over the goods in the area to a more open stance adopted by the auxiliaries with no interest in maintaining programmatic trade connections internal to Judaea. The wide array of coins originating as far away as Alexandria, as well as the iconic forms on certain lamps, suggest an increased interaction with mercatores of the southern Levant. The vast majority of interactions, though, were undoubtedly with the nearby farmers and others who provided most of the necessities. Hannah Cotton and Joseph Geiger concur: “The presence of a Roman garrison there must have been conducive to the presence of Jews engaged in peaceful activities ….”

The third period, the sicarii occupation 66-73/74 CE, brought with it several more changes. As one would expect, Jewish coins are more prevalent during this period: well over half of the 315 Meshorer 1989: 395 of Herod the Great, 177 of Archelaus, 3 of Ascalon, and 1 of Antioch. 316 Meshorer 1989: 20 of Coponius, 28 of Ambibulus, 61 of either Coponius or Ambibulus, 65 of Gratus, 124 of Pilate, 114 of Agrippa I, 39 of Felix, 184 of Festus, 7 Caesarea city coins, for a total 642 from Judaea proper. Additionally, 22 of Aretas IV (Nabataea 20-40 CE), 35 of Malichus II (Nabataea 40-70 CE), 2 of Ptolemais, 1 of Alexandria, 5 of Antioch, 1 of Canatha, 2 of Dora, 2 of Caesarea Philippi, 1 of Sidon, and 3 of Tyre, for a total of 74 outside of Judaea proper. I do not include the 7 provincial tetradrachmae from Nero’s princeps, as they are part of a hoard from the second garrison (so Meshorer 1989: 77). 317 Cotton and Geiger 1989: 4.
identifiable coins found at Masada (2329 of 3914) are Jewish War coins produced during this period, not to mention a hoard of 56 Ascalonite coins from 72/73 CE that must have been brought by someone arriving late to the fortress. Significantly, this is the first period where large-denomination coins are found in large portion at Masada; valuable coins were found among three distinct hoards. Meshorer suggests that these coins were not recovered by their owners due to their sale into slavery, as is known to have occurred at Masada.\(^\text{318}\) The wealth of numismatic data is no doubt attributable to the fact that most recent inhabitants are, as a rule, those best attested archaeologically. Jewish wares are also prevalent in this period. Of the 102 lamps identified, seventeen were subjected to neutron-activation analysis, most from Jerusalem but with a few from the north coast;\(^\text{319}\) Barag and Hershkovitz reasonably speculate that most were brought to Masada by the *sicarii* and their families – a contention further strengthened by the over-representation of War-era Ascalonite coins, indicating the propensity to bring one’s transportable goods to Masada. Nevertheless, the rebels seem to have maintained healthy relationships with nearby merchants, as Nabataean wares are found among their goods.\(^\text{320}\)

It is difficult to determine the source of the *sicarii*’s comestibles. Josephus reports that the Masada-*sicarii*’s massacre of the denizens at Ein-Gedi and nearby villages was precisely to procure food (\textit{J.W.} 4.400-405), though the anecdote fits far too well with Josephus’ depiction of the *sicarii* as emblematic of Jewish \textit{stasis} during the Revolt to be taken at face value.\(^\text{321}\) Rachel Bar-Nathan plausibly suggests that these villages instead might have interacted commercially with these villages during the early years of the War and only raided them when Roman intervention appeared immanent, ascertained by the “marked similarity” between the moulded wares at the two sites.\(^\text{322}\) Likewise, the textiles found in Masada may be attributable to the War period; these textiles are of high quality and imported from around the Empire – it is not clear whether those who fled to Masada brought them or if they were taken during the assault on

\(^{318}\) Meshorer 1989: 73-76.

\(^{319}\) Nos. 27-126, with 61a, 96a, 109a (nos. 28, 43, 56, 66, 69, 76, 80, 85, 86, 95, 96, 98, 99, 105, 109, 111, 120 were subjected to NAA). On the origins of the lamps, see Barag and Hershkovitz 1994: 126-127.

\(^{320}\) Bar-Nathan 2006: 379.

\(^{321}\) See the analysis in Brighton 2009: 84-89.

nearby villages.\textsuperscript{323} The \textit{sicarii} made extensive use of found goods, evinced by their use of the Herodian military equipment that had been stored in the fortress.\textsuperscript{324}

While archaeological findings are sparser during the Roman siege in the spring of 73/74, relevant papyri begin to emerge at this point and this time seem to differ little from earlier periods. Once more, we find a heavy degree of economic interaction between soldiers and civilians, though it seems to have taken on more forceful features. \textsection P14, examined above, is a receipt shortly before or shortly after the siege indicating that reasonable prices were paid for most goods, though Jonathan Roth notes the cost of 2.5 denarii for a horse’s hay, irrespective of amount consumed.\textsuperscript{325} Traders likely stayed in nearby \textit{canabae} and it is difficult to believe that they would have been susceptible to extensive extortion; presumably the hay was procured from local farmers who were unable to refuse unfair compensation and had sufficient crop to sustain the garrison.\textsuperscript{326} The coinage produced and used in Palestine also changed with the War’s conclusion. Prutot were no longer minted as provincial coins, though Agrippa II’s kingdom and autonomous city issues (Ascalon) continued, while others were introduced (Neapolis) or were expanded (Caesarea). Despite the use of Nabataean pottery during this period, their coinage is poorly reflected during this phase – excavators found only two pieces from Rabbel II, the final Nabataean king who reigned until 106, despite reigning for a similar timespan to his predecessors. In general, coinage is poorly represented after the War’s end.\textsuperscript{327} The post-War Masada garrison was small, given the aforementioned systematic movement of soldiers to cities-based garrisons at the time. Masada was not abandoned for two reasons: its obvious strategic capabilities and its frontier perimeter. When Rome annexed Nabataea as the province of Arabia in 106 CE, a small Masada garrison no longer served this frontier purpose and in less than a decade it was abandoned permanently.

During the siege of Masada, one finds almost exclusively local pottery and lamps; even when a more permanent garrison was established after the War, local types (including Nabataean) predominate. It seems that, unlike the auxiliaries insistent upon supplementing their goods with

\begin{footnotes}
\item[324] Stiebel and Magness 2007: 31-33. Surprisingly, no surviving equipment has been attributed to the either of the Roman garrisons.
\item[325] Roth 1999: 63.
\item[326] Cotton and Geiger 1989: 133, note also the mention of oil merchants (\textit{oleari[us]}) on Mas 851.
\item[327] But see the hoard of provincial tetradrachmæ mentioned in note 316 above.
\end{footnotes}
imported Italian wares, the legionaries used locally purchased goods free of cosmopolitan pretensions. Jodi Magness observes that the vessels used by legio X Fretensis at Masada are significantly different than those used by soldiers of legio X Fretensis at Jerusalem. Specifically, assemblages found in Masada have tended to be locally crafted with minor Roman influence in its production, whereas those in Jerusalem resembled those typical of Romanized Europe more than the Roman East. Jerusalem wares appear to have been crafted by the army itself. While one might assume that the Jerusalem production of ceramics was more typical in Palestine than that of Masada, Magness presents cogent reasons to suppose the contrary. The Roman army did not regularly employ potters and produced its own wares only when there was no other option. Jerusalem, a fairly remote city experiencing the trauma of the temple’s destruction and other devastations, had few locals remaining with knowledge of the army’s required wares. Residents near Masada had a considerably longer and more positive history of interaction with soldiers employed by Rome, albeit without any strong influence on their crafting style; the auxiliaries that had long occupied Masada were unable to influence locals into producing specifically Roman style pottery, as local wares were fully capable of suiting their approximation of Roman diet, storing habits, etc. These ceramics were largely suitable for the subsequent legionaries as well, despite their greater conformity to the standardized practices of the Roman military than the Sebastene auxiliaries.

328 Magness 2002.
Chapter 5

Ambivalence towards State Violence

The preceding chapters have sought to demonstrate that the military played a variety of roles in early Roman Palestine, roles that the civilian population perceived both positively and negatively. But what implications might this ambivalence have had on New Testament authors? Scholars commonly treat the military as a straightforwardly malevolent force acting on behalf of imperial elites. Richard Horsley, for example, understands the Roman military as having directly served the interests of Roman elites, who were driven by their insatiable desire for glory and gold:

The “forceful suasion” of Roman military power functioned through the perceptions of subject peoples. The Romans simply terrorized peoples into submission and, they hoped, submissiveness through the ruthless devastation of the land and towns, slaughter and enslavement of the people, and crucifixion of people along the roadways or in public places.\(^\text{329}\)

Horsley and others depict the military as an establishment devoted to physically brutalizing imperial denizens into submission. It is not uncommon to heap hyperbole to paint a vivid scenario of abusive soldiers terrorizing Jewish villagers; the spectacle of the crucifixion and other public punishments ostensibly served as a perennial reminder of Roman cruelty. To use the terminology of Louis Althusser, military personnel operated in a “purely repressive” manner.\(^\text{330}\)

Soldiers curtailed the peasantry through physical violence or its threat; any other activities in which soldiers partook were at best secondary to this. The military is reducible to the strong-arm of the ruling class, wholly dependent upon the imperial patron for their livelihood – a favour which soldiers usually returned in their loyalty.

On the one hand, this type of reading remembers that the Gospels were produced in a context where military contact extended to the authors’ social relations. This type of recollection acts as a much-needed corrective to the overwhelming scholarly silence on the role of the military in early Roman Palestine. This also has a distinctive political component, in that Horsley and others

\(^{329}\) Horsley 1995: 116; the first sentence is an unattributed quotation from Luttwak 1976: 33.
\(^{330}\) Althusser 1971.
suggest that the Gospels are *inter alia* responding to their experience of imperial violence, a response that might be more precisely characterized as condemnation of imperial violence. This interpretation is built upon an emancipatory politics presuming that earliest (and thus prescriptively normative) Christianity held an antagonistic posture toward hegemonic institutions. Evangelists singled out the Roman state for criticism because it encouraged settler colonialism, exploitation of impoverished populations, and so on. There is much to laud in these readings, most especially attention to the unequal distribution of social resources in the Roman Empire. The Roman state was a profoundly negative force in the lives of ancient Palestinians and claims to the contrary increasingly appear difficult to defend.\(^\text{331}\)

But there are aspects of such interpretations that might make us uneasy in their convenience. Of particular concern is the failure to account for the ambiguities and messiness of everyday life. The most prominent approach to the social world of Palestine and Rome opts for a dualistic imaginary that sees social practices as *either* complicit (usually imperial operators, Sadducees, scribes, aristocrats, etc.) *or* resistant (usually Jesus, New Testament authors, Jewish peasants, romanticized bandits, rebels, etc.). Slavoj Žižek is suspicious of the tendency to see violence as limited to the activities of clearly identifiable agents in the contemporary liberal imaginary:

> Is there not something suspicious … about this focus on subjective violence—*that* violence which is enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds? Doesn’t it desperately try to distract our attention from the true locus of trouble, by obliterating from view other forms of violence and thus actively participating in them?\(^\text{332}\)

Absolutist dualism tends to highlight spectacular forms of violence and complicity, giving an inordinate amount of attention to those of high visibility.

Chapters Three and Four argued that the military and ambivalence towards it were an ordinary part of life in early Roman Palestine. The notion of ordinariness is used here not merely to invoke the *regularity* with which Roman state violence occurred — a point to which those advocating an emancipatory reading of the Gospels would surely assent. Rather, the word ordinariness connotes the sheer mundane nature of activities implicated in systemic violence and

\(^{331}\) E.g., Bryan 2005; Kim 2008; McKnight and Modica 2013.

\(^{332}\) Žižek 2008: 10-11.
the irrelevance of the extent to which such practices were voluntary or even intentional. Daily life was inevitably interwoven with the military; whatever grievances one might have against “the government” or “militarism” – the economy is sufficiently interwoven with state violence that one’s own livelihood is never more than a step or two removed from it. In short, the commonplace practices at the nexus of state violence and complicity warrant further consideration.

Žižek is helpful in his critique of the dominant imaginary in which practices are intelligible as “violence” insofar as they are spectacular. The tendency to read violence as spectacular is easily demonstrated in contemporary understandings of violence and its semantic cluster. One need only call to mind popular discourse around terrorist attacks, certain types of warfare or murder, physical assault, and so on. The discourse on spectacular violence can be identified by several features: pathologizing its enactor, the act of violence being marked as excessive, and rendered maximally visible. As discussed in Chapter One, this interpretive grid is at play in emancipatory biblical interpretations due to the pervasive conditioning to understand violence in such a manner. This is evinced by the analytic weight placed on acts of physical violence perpetrated by the Roman army, such as public executions and warfare.

Needless to say, this interpretive framework is not politically innocent. Modern hermeneutics of the spectacular are a product of liberalism; this hermeneutic frame thus performs ideological work in service of liberalism. In an effort to uncover this ideological work, this chapter will consider the ways in which ambivalence comes about through economic, ideological, and subjectivizing activities. How would one, for instance, talk about villagers (farmers, craftspeople, etc.) at Caparcotna/Legio whose sustenance depended on the economic activity associated with the garrison? The preceding chapter suggested that the conditions of slow death were commensurate with the Roman state’s access to exploitable village populations via newly paved roads, strategic garrison placement, etc. While civilians may have benefited from the military’s presence in some sense, they nevertheless had additional burdens to bear as well. Those at the subsistence level reaped what benefits they could from an institution that was central to

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333 One must distinguish between Roman hermeneutics of spectacular violence and those of modern liberalism, the development of the latter from the former Donald Kyle (1998: 24 n. 22) describes: “The growing central power of the state, the demilitarization of the aristocracy, and the nature of modern life and work are said to have led to new social and moral constraints on interpersonal expressive violence among the European nobility, and this internalization of codes of self-restraint and gentility in sport and society filtered down the social ladder.”
maintaining their subjection. The army could not function without the provisions such villagers sold, not to mention the men recruited into its forces.

One should therefore reject both the supposition of the army’s irrelevance and the model of pure repression when considering the complexities of the imperial state in ancient Palestine. There are complications in any effort to clarify ambivalence toward the state in the Roman Principate, though. Rome was not a “state” in the modern sense of the word, and thus not in the sense used by most social theorists. Beth Severy articulates the problem of the Roman “state” concisely: one cannot refer to “the modern concept of the industrialized nation-state, but the Roman concept of the civic institutions which formed the sometimes amorphous res publica, the ‘public thing.’”

In the following discussion, one must eschew various anachronistic notions around “the state” when imagining the early Empire: nationalizing identification practices, a strong centralized bureaucratic apparatus, extensive use of biopower, etc. For this chapter, I will adopt Pierre Bourdieu’s understanding of the state, which will be described below. The military can be understood as a state apparatus during the Roman Principate within Bourdieu’s framework. The extent and functions of the military were delimited with relative clarity in comparison with other aspects of the Roman state during the first century as well.

In this chapter, three understandings of state violence will be discussed for their utility in remembering its ordinariness: objective-structural violence, symbolic violence, and subjectivation. Though these theories were not developed by historians of Roman antiquity, they nevertheless provide useful ways of historicizing the relations of state violence constitutive of early Roman Palestine; this will require some modification of the theories so as to avoid egregious anachronism. These theories problematize the interpretive grids of spectacular violence and will be helpful for articulating provisional alternative understandings of violence. These theories are far from comprehensive, but help explain how certain activities were important in generating an ambivalent stance toward the Roman state.

Objective-structural violence, symbolic violence, and anti-humanist theories of subjectivation overlap in many ways, but especially in their enactment of similar political gestures. First, these theories help us to understand how power operates through means other than repression. This is

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334 Severy 2003: 3; cf. the extensive historical discussion in Bang 2013.
important given that the military is marked foremost in the use of weaponry and so is prone to being understood solely through their occasional use of spectacular violence. These theories create space to understand how the military functions to reinforce the hegemonic social order by means other than physical violence. Second, and importantly for this discussion, these theories allow us to clarify the historical questions we wish to ask. The prevailing liberal imaginary tends to understand violence in an ahistorical manner – attributable to mentally ill individuals, “religious” fanaticism, bad apples in an otherwise good system, etc. – that effectively depoliticizes them by rendering them “private” affairs. Russell McCutcheon writes:

This is why I find … the study of violence to be but an instance of conflict management and status quo maintenance. Studying certain sorts of violence – for instance, the Aum Shinrikyo nerve gas attack in the Tokyo subway in 1995 – as more symbolic and religious than practical, as ritual rather than politics, segregates a particular zone of human action within the realm of inner meaning, thereby reserving the public realm of action for those actions some “we” find less troublesome and less perplexing. Deploying these conflict management techniques (i.e., the thoroughly modernist binaries of private/public, faith/action, symbolic/real, in which the former is consistently privileged over the latter), [Mark] Juergensmeyer is able to look back in history and, just as [others] observed, remake the past in a manner conducive to the contemporary need for a specific type of public civility.335

If the study of early Christian texts is to be something other than an ideological repository for the liberal status quo of the North Atlantic, it important to reconceptualize violence in a manner that emphatically politicizes it, a manoeuvre that requires historicization of relevant social processes. Common sense notions of “violence” are prevalent precisely because they conform to and reinforce the hegemonic political order, and are thus inherently problematic for second-order scholarly explanations. Thus, theories that historicize the practice and intelligibility of something as “violence” will help alleviate us of anachronistic notions attending directly to the 21st century in favour of conceptual models more germane to the study of Roman antiquity.

**Objective-Structural Violence**

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335 McCutcheon 2003: 270.
Slavoj Žižek suggests that the smooth functioning of a given economic system is inherently violent, what he terms “objective-structural violence.” In short, Žižek follows many other thinkers in suggesting that the relegation of economic activity to the “private sphere” is a means of disavowing one’s role in the exploitation of others’ labour. Thus, whatever harm may come from one’s economic actions, one is not encouraged to understand their actions as “violent” or as part of a broader violence. The way in which economic conditions are not understood as violent serves the capitalist liberal imaginary well: “Liberalism’s exclusion of economic relations from politics proper is an ideological buttress of capitalism. Where people are most affected by power—in relation to work, wages, and the material necessities of life—they are granted no decision-making faculty. We do not vote over our wages, work hours, unemployment status, benefits, or the accessibility of child care and health care—all in realms designated under capitalism as private.” Thus, even though literally every computer uses parts produced by Foxconn—a company known for work conditions so dismal that it led to a suicide epidemic—the consumer rarely understands themselves to be morally implicated in such exploitation. It is precisely by keeping these issues at arm’s length that exploitative economic systems are able to function smoothly; economic practices that are too easily perceived as “unjust” are liable to be interrupted, whether by work stoppage (see, e.g., O.Ber. 2.126), boycott (one thinks of the Jewish refusal to purchase Roman pottery after mass crucifixion in 4 BCE), or even revolt. The point Žižek makes with objective-structural violence is that even when an economic system appears to function smoothly, it is built upon invisible violence.

While Žižek is primarily interested in examining capitalism, his foregrounding of economic relations helps us to understand economic relations as political in nature, serving the interests of some people at others’ expense. For our purposes, objective-structural violence was a major component of the Roman military’s functioning, particularly its roles in infrastructural projects. For instance, Chapter Four argued that military paving was central not only to the economic integration of Palestine into the greater Roman Empire. However, they also facilitated the incorporation of the hinterland into the Palestinian economy, because such roads expedited travel and aided regional accessibility. This in turn indirectly aided the exploitation of Palestinian

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336 Žižek 2008 is his most explicit theorization of objective violence.
The presence of the military itself was sometimes beside the point: Palestinian provincials, whether elite or otherwise, had a hand in perpetuating an unjust system. The military could not have functioned without the basic provisions acquired from provincials, nor the practices and ideological grounding that resulted in extensive cooperation. The consequences of such infrastructure and shifts in economy were on the one hand less visible than spectacular violence, but nevertheless negative and effecting large populations: malnutrition, debt, loss of self-sufficiency, etc. Hadrian’s infrastructural constructions added a new dimension to the peacetime supply system. The paved roads encouraged purchase of goods not from locals but from adjacent provinces, adding various types of distance between provincial supplier and military consumer. This shift of supply rendered questions of complicity all the more marginal to everyday transactions, in that one’s wares were less likely to be used by proximate agents of state violence.

While academics commonly depict Judaea and Galilee as regions especially hostile to Roman interests, there is only modest evidence that the issue of collaborationism was an issue among Jewish Palestinian during the early Roman Empire. The sicarii’s attack on Jewish elites, the general contempt for tax collectors, and Dio Cassius’ improbable claim about sabotaging production of Roman weapons (69.12.2) were among the rare instances where Palestinian denizens took action against native collaborators. Conversely, Matt 5:41, Q 7:1-10, and Acts 10:1-33 all promote cooperation between Jewish Palestinian Christians and soldiers. Partnerships with the military brought about economic, symbolic, and cultural goods and so served ordinary human interests and investments. Early Christian friendliness toward imperial functionaries indicates that they did not necessarily perceive practices as reinforcing social hierarchies that put them at a disadvantage. Thus, while ancient villagers may have resented the specific soldiers that

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338 Arnal 2001: 97-155 details this process, discussed above in Chapter Four.
339 The phrase comes from Bagnall 1997 in his review of Alston 1995. One is reminded of the famous scene in Monty Python’s Life of Brian (1979): “But apart from better sanitation, and medicine, and education, and irrigation, and public health, and roads, and a freshwater system, and baths, and public order – what have the Romans done for us?!”
harassed their particular hamlet or even noticed a correlation between the paving of a nearby road and an increased frequency of visits from tax collectors, it is doubtful that villagers would have related this to changes in frontier policy, practices of specific administrators, or any program that extended beyond their immediate sphere of activity. This presumably entailed highly localized perceptions of “the military,” “the Roman Empire,” “Herodian kings,” or “post-War Judaea”; the perceptions of the military in Jerusalem would have been quite different from those in villages like Legio/Caparcotna or Capernaum. The resulting social fragmentation among civilians was no doubt integral in maintaining the relations of production that were favourable to Rome and its client kings.

Objective-structural violence removes the problematic notion of “intent” from analysis of practices of collaboration – habituated practices are by definition difficult to analyse by participants. Thus, concerns about choice and knowledge of outcome are irrelevant to assessing the significance of various practices. There is modest evidence that Judaeans had some concept of violence with objective-structural qualities, witnessed in occasional demonstrations of discontent. Some of these outbursts seem to have been oriented towards disrupting the taken-for-granteds that sustained Roman hegemony: the destruction of debt records leading into the Judaean War and also that of paved roads during the Wars of Quietus and Bar Kokhba are easily understood as such.340 The grassroots nature of these acts is sometimes overstated, particularly when researchers have eyes toward “popular protest” that fail to account for elites who enabled and benefited from such outbursts.

**Symbolic Violence**

Pierre Bourdieu’s work on symbolic violence provides another helpful way of thinking about the complexity of military-civilian interactions.341 This concept elaborates upon the state’s cultivation of favourable discourse among its subjects. Such discourses encourage subjects to understand existing social stratifications as having arisen as part of the natural order; those in power are there because of qualities deserving of prestige (e.g., hard work, moral fiber).

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340 On the records, see Josephus, *J.W.* 2.427. On roads, see Isaac 1978: 49; cf. the explicit wording of §M45, albeit outside of Judaea. Recall also the Talmudic anecdote about Rabbi Jose in Chapter Four and its interest in infrastructure (b. Šabb. 33b).

Because these social hierarchies are misrecognized as natural, they are often not only invisible to the actors operating within them, these hierarchies are reproduced unknowingly; that which is natural is inherently legitimate. One sees this in the prominent “bootstraps” rhetoric in American political discourse: the only thing holding back the poor is their lack of gumption. This has the effect of both naturalizing the wealth of those who are already elite and laying the blame for impoverishment at the feet of those who are already destitute. This rhetoric becomes symbolic violence when it is taken up as legitimate by those that it seeks to marginalize.

The extent to which the Roman Empire conformed to modern notions of “the state” is debatable, but Bourdieu tweaks Max Weber’s famous definition of the state in a manner helpful here: “the state is [that] which successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over a definite territory and over the totality of the corresponding population.”  

342 The legitimacy of Roman rule in Judaea was never truly a “monopoly” and the Herodian client kings faced similar interrogations of their authority. This contestation compels us to investigate the symbolic measures that were active in such attempts at legitimating its authority. What forms of symbolic violence were useful for legitimating Roman rule? How did Rome and its client kings encourage inter-group struggles that facilitated Roman claims of legitimacy? That is, how might Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence allow us to better historicize soldier-civilian relations of early Roman Palestine? I would like to focus on one particular site of struggle for legitimacy vis-à-vis military-civilian relations: economic and social mobility.  

343 Resentments relating to economic status were an effective tool in shaping an interpretive grid of the army’s strengths and shortcomings – one in which the rank of centurion played an ambivalent function.

Nearly all representations of low-ranking soldiers during the Principate are negative, though there were fundamental differences between aristocratic and popular civilian representations of

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342 Bourdieu (1994: 3, emphasis original) echoes Weber 1922: 29: “Staat soll ein politischer Anstaltsbetrieb heißen, wenn und insoweit sein Verwaltungsstab erfolgreich das Monopol legitimen physischen Zwanges für die Durchführung der Ordnungen in Anspruch nimmt.” Note also the apparent redundancy in Bourdieu’s definition; “legitimacy” refers to a monopoly on symbolic violence, indicating that “legitimacy” instead denotes a meta-symbolic violence for Bourdieu. That is, a symbolically violent use of symbolic violence. This is consistent with Bourdieu’s understanding of the state as a “meta-capital granting power” thanks to its concentration of various types of capital (physical, economic, symbolic, etc.). See the in-depth exposition in Swartz 2004.

343 Less successful endeavours were numerous: Herod’s use of monuments to legitimate his rule (so Kropp 2013: 344-357), Rome’s attempts to maintain ties with priestly aristocrats (so Goodman 1987), etc.
the soldier as bully. The elite framework for understanding military violence served their interests. Veterans were an upwardly mobile class at the expense of older Roman elites during the Principate and, by discrediting their newest competitors for political resources, older elites could retain some claim to legitimacy.\textsuperscript{344} Elite depictions of the military were invariably caught up in the prevailing ideology of wealth, especially soldiers’ embodiment of lowly vices and the spectre of military tyranny over Roman civilians. Consequently, elite writings engender a phobic response to the possibility of military authority. Midst his discussion of another topic, Herodian of Antioch offers a revealing comment: “The soldiers too were given a substantial sum of money and with this many other privileges that they had not had before such as an increase in pay (which Severus was the first to give), permission to wear a gold ring and the right to live at home with their wives.”\textsuperscript{345} Sara Phang elaborates on the significance of Herodian’s aside: “By criticizing Severus’ grant of golden rings to milites, Herodian suggests that military decorations, including golden rings, should belong entirely to the symbolic order as signs of honor, neither confused with objects of personal adornment and vanity nor associated with indiscipline.”\textsuperscript{346} Pliny the Elder engages in a long dissertation on the same topic, lamenting instances when soldiers wore a crown seized as loot, the gift of gold necklaces to client kings’ soldiers (but only silver for legionaries), and other evidence for the threat of the poor’s hubris via luxuria (Nat. 33.6-12). Cicero expresses similar frustration with Mark Antony’s guard comprised of “belligerent and burly” centurions (Phil. 8.9).

Narrative portrayals are similar. Apuleius (Metam. 9.39-42) depicts a legionary as one would expect: speaking haughtily (superbo atque arroganti sermone) and unable to restrain his natural arrogance, the soldier is able to marshal powerful support to exact revenge upon an unlucky gardener with whom he instigated a fight. The rank of Apuleius’ legionary, tellingly, is centurion.\textsuperscript{347} Centurions commonly experienced a sharp increase of their status upon return to civilian status despite their often-humble origins. This was precisely the type of man against whom aristocrats perceived to be a threat and thus directed their ire. Juvenal similarly laments the lack of legal recourse against soldiers who have the entire system in their favour, snobbishly

\textsuperscript{345} Hist. 3.8.4-5; translation from LCL.
\textsuperscript{346} Phang 2008: 199.
\textsuperscript{347} For an interesting discussion of the near-transitivity of robbers and soldiers in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses, see Garraffoni 2004. Whatever sentimentality Apuleius may espouse for the poor, it was a product of an elite status.
citing how a “hob-nailed centurion” would preside as judge with boorish and partisan soldiers as jurors (Sat. 16). Note the usurpation of traditional juridical procedure wherein senators acted as judge in favour of a kangaroo court run by the dregs of society – meathead soldiers. Other depictions of unruly centurions and soldiers are too numerous to list. Phang suggests that literary preoccupations with the politics of soldierly wealth had a prescriptive element: the hedonistic ferocia of the poor could be channeled into a more productive bodily conduct through a ritualized military austerity believed to cultivate virtus for the sake of selfless combat.

By contrast, popular representations of soldier-civilian interactions have little interest in establishing the soldier as a violent social type in the way elite writings do. Papyri, for instance, tend to focus on specific grievances against specific soldiers that require rectification. One example is the petition of Hermon discussed in Chapter Four, concerned with redress from a soldier’s cooperation with local thieves (P.Oxy. 19.2234). Similarly, the rabbinic testimony on the army’s systemic abuse of power is inflected with politics of ethnicity (i.e., Jew vs. Gentile) and cult (i.e., normative Jewish practices) far more than it is wealth. Soldiers appear to be an accepted part of life with which one must regularly contend. One Mishnaic tractate reads, “If a Roman legion which passes from place to place enters a house, the house is unclean, for there is not a legion that does not carry with it several scalps. And be not surprised at this; for Rabbi Yishma’el’s scalp was placed upon the head of kings.” The strange insistence upon the truthfulness of the claim tacitly acknowledges it as absurd. Nevertheless, the uncleanliness of the corpse ostensibly brought into the household must be dealt with appropriately, regardless of the interaction.

This is hardly the only example from the rabbis. Rabbi Mana, for instance, ordered the bakers of Sepphoris to serve soldiers food on the Sabbath and anonymous rabbis in the Golan instructed local bakers to serve the army leavened bread on Passover. Any of these examples would seem to violate the commandment to rest on the Sabbath, even one as nuanced as the rabbis’. Aaron Oppenheimer is surely correct in suggesting that this accommodation was an effort to avoid confrontation with men prepared to enact physical violence. The command to go an extra mile

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348 See the comments in Ward 2012: 231-233.
349 Phang 2008: 46-49.
350 M. Ḥul. 123a-b. It is widely speculated that this is in reference to Num 5:2-4, 19:1-20.
351 Both anecdotes are from y. Sanh. 3.21b; see Oppenheimer 2005: 185.
when conscripted (Matt 5:41) also seems to be making a virtue of necessity; imposing the appearance of choice where one by definition does not exist. Popular discussion of soldiers revolves around the lingering threat of state violence, violence usually associated with the riffraff of the lowest ranks. In a complementary move, officers and men of relative privilege tended to act as the more benevolent face of the regime in the papyrological record. One thinks of the role of centurions as dispute-mediators, discussed in Chapter Four. Centurions and other officers are accorded a far higher degree of agency than common soldiers in the civilian imaginary.

Scholars often conflate aristocratic and popular data into a single caricature of the Roman soldier. The schematic literary denunciations by elites are often transposed onto popular documentary data; in so doing, scholars reinscribe aristocratic biases as the underlying socio-historical causes for soldiers’ abuse of civilians attested in popular writings. Instead, one might understand the social type of the soldier found in elite writings as an ideological construct serving the aristocratic interests, interests bearing little connection to the concerns found in popular writings. Literature was one medium elites used to contest the increasing influence of veterans and soldiers in Roman politics, and their depictions should not be mistaken for popular discussion of soldiers concerned with the fact of soldiers’ sovereign power in daily life. Brian Campbell, upon examining both types of evidence, offers a representative conflation: “the widespread oppression of civilians by soldiers [was] a symptom of the general inability of emperors to control any of their servants … or at least in part result[ing] from the difficulties of prosecuting soldiers in court and a deliberate reluctance by officials and governors, who took their guidance from the emperors, to proceed against the soldiers on behalf of the civilians, who were not as important to the welfare of the empire and its ruler.” Apuleius and Juvenal probably would have agreed with Campbell’s analysis: soldiers exert too much influence and are thus able to wreak havoc on civilians across the socio-economic spectrum. But it is unlikely that governance policies were an intelligible source of problems to the vast majority of those residing in the Roman East, if their surviving writings are any gauge of the matter. Popular writings tend to link the cruelty of low-ranking soldiers not with governance policies, but nevertheless draw upon widespread stereotypes of the unruly poor. Thus, while aristocrats and the impoverished

may share a fear of low-ranking soldiers, the focus of that fear as well as some of the purported causes of malbehaviour are distinct.

The basis of aristocratic contempt for soldiers was distinctive to that class, but there is detectable continuity with popular understandings of the soldier as bully. To be sure, differences between these depictions in highbrow literature and popular texts are numerous. Popular texts evince concern with soldiers as a part of regular life and seem to originate with their experiences of violence, whereas literary texts imagine them as a cipher for status-related anxieties that sometimes bear a dubious connection to reality. While common soldiers were the target of contempt among civilians of all statuses, centurions and other low-to-mid level officers are not treated so uniformly. Centurions are regularly derided in aristocratic discourse but frequently appear as sympathetic figures in popular writings. The emergent consensus around the depravity of low-ranking soldiers and the virtue of the relatively privileged (i.e., centurions among villagers, prefects and equestrians among regional elites, and senatorial officers among aristocrats) suggests symbolic violence is at play; an ideology of status amenable to elites was engendered among more dispossessed populations. Villagers were habituated into discourses and practices wherein economic status acted as a salient measure of potential goodwill with the military. These ideological moves naturalized a social order by redirecting popular civilian resentments against the military from the greatest beneficiaries of imperial rule to the poor and their unruliness. This is significant not least because those who were understood as quintessentially “Roman” by provincials were framed as an object of contempt by elites; “Rome” is thus a concept of high valence. Moreover, these symbolic moves acted as ways of “changing the topic” from the objective structures profiting the interests of elites to the individualized and spectacular physical violence perpetrated by low-status soldiers.

Wealth politics also extended to the logic of the military hierarchy; Michael Mann writes: “The army was a main route of upward social mobility, and for a peasant, booty from the cities was a way of substantially bettering himself. However, in order to accomplish this he had to submit to the authority of his commander, almost certainly a rich landowner.”

By engendering a system where elites’ interests partially overlapped with nearly all other social strata, symbolic moves that plainly served elite interests were not always perceived as such. Complementarily, the

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354 Mann 1986: 263.
program of granting auxiliary soldiers citizenship did much to hail veterans as Roman subjects, though other aspects of military service did so as well. Ian Haynes presents cogent arguments that military routine was an important factor in cultivating a distinctively Roman habitus among auxiliaries. Haynes points to the politics of hygiene in the military as especially salient examples of Romanization. Veterans retiring in frontier provinces had all the more reason to invest in Roman values, systems, and institutions; their own flourishing came to be contingent upon popular perceptions of Romanness. The Roman state was able to provide subjects many more reasons to continually reinvest in Roman identity markers to an extent that was impossible for competing Jewish and other Palestinian authorities. The retention of a loyal class of veterans and soldiers based on their imparted status played a major part of the social reproduction of Roman legitimacy, especially in light of two major revolts in Palestine as well as a number of smaller rebellions.

These systems of symbolic violence did not require conscious planning on the part of authors, military officers, elites, or emperors: certain practices had more optimal outcomes than others, were adaptable to varying situations, and required little effort from those allocating resources. Practices fulfilling such conditions were more likely to be retained and repeated. For instance, the local centurion system was probably first introduced because of the difficulties associated with administrating and maintaining Roman interests in sparsely populated areas of the Empire, such as southern Egypt. The system of local centurions proved effective and thus spread to other regions on the frontier. The fact that this was practiced in other provinces indicates that it was suitable and permitted the improvisations required for the variations of everyday life.

Hannah Cotton summarizes how state violence was maintained in early Roman Palestine, which cannot be solely attributed to repression.

The Roman Empire survived for as long as it did not because it successfully put down local revolts, but because it did not have to do so: there were very few revolts. Roman rule was on the whole acceptable to its subjects, especially to the local elites. The absence

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356 Though the codification of rabbinic teachings occurred well after the Bar Kokhba War, it provides an instructive example of how such investments worked: a Jew could achieve a favourable legal status through military service at the expense of ritual purity as defined by the rabbis. One should not understand this as simply a Roman imposition of such standards upon Jews, but an asymmetrical competition between Roman and rabbinic social formations for various social resources.
of revolts is not to be explained by the exercise of force: after all, not all provinces had much of a military presence in them. Rome managed to obtain the co-operation of those subjects who at the end of the process received Roman citizenship, shared the benefits of the empire and finally came to identify with Rome’s history and ideology. This is not to belittle the military threat that Rome presented; the Roman army’s efficiency, superiority and cruelty were familiar to Rome’s subjects, at least in the first years after the conquest. But if Rome had to use its force in the way it used it to suppress two successive revolts in Judaea rather than merely display it, holding it out as an ever present threat, its empire would have fallen apart long before it did. The second half of the last century taught us the limits of the use of military force in keeping down hostile and rebellious populations. Rome would not have survived for hundreds of years as a world empire had its rule not been acceptable to its subjects, sometimes more than acceptable—desirable.  

Symbolic violence was integral to the maintenance of Roman authority in Palestine. Symbolic violence was not merely the prerogative of so-called ideological state apparatuses, since the military played a substantial role in maintaining Roman claims to legitimacy.

**Violent Subjectivities**

Though it is common for New Testament scholars to be preoccupied with the physical violence carried out by the military, we have seen that this was a relatively small part of soldiers’ duties in Palestine. The emphasis on objective violence as the primary aspect of soldier-civilian interactions fails to explain how positive relations between soldiers and civilians (or the hegemonic social order more broadly) were sustained. Other means were necessary to perpetuate the institution’s authority – often requiring active or passive participation by subordinate populations. Louis Althusser himself was explicit on the matter. Even though he characterized the military as a repressive state apparatus, Althusser offered a careful qualification on the term, indicating that “purely repressive” apparatuses do not exist: “the Repressive State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by repression, while functioning secondarily by ideology. For example, the Army and the Police also function by ideology both to ensure their

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own cohesion and reproduction, and in the ‘values’ they propound externally.”358 This final point – how the military might propound values externally – is of special interest here. Althusser is a precursor to Bourdieu in suggesting that all state apparatuses not only propound an ideology favourable to the ruling class, but that such “ideology interpellates individuals as subjects.” The temple cult, for instance, hailed one as a Torah-observant Jew, the provincial administration as a Judaean denizen, the court system as a legal subject, and so on. There has been little attention to the military’s role in the formation of Palestinian subjectivity.

Various scholars have argued that the Roman army’s “soldierly” identity – first emerging with the formation of the professionalized legions after the Second Punic War in 201 BCE as distinct from the previous militias – was only imaginable vis-à-vis a vulnerable, but life-worthy “civilian” (often more specifically, “citizen”) population; the role of the military was to assure civilians safety and offer some of them various benefits (e.g., territorial expansion, economic partnerships).359 Sites such as Caparcotna/Legio exemplify the multifarious benefits of living alongside and collaborating with the military after the Judaean War. These benefits were by nature granted selectively, thereby excluding most of the regional population to the advantage of a lucky few. Processes of subjectivation are quite evident, for instance, in the petitions to centurions discussed in Chapter Four; the predictable use of titles, Romanized names, and other indices of citizenship, wealth, and status in these petitions indicate that the military apparatus facilitated the adoption of multiple subject positionings, subject positionings that were emphatically civilian.

The role of the military in subjectivation is also evident in early Christian writings, including the use of imagery in early Christian identification practices and constitution of God’s body. Though this dissertation centres on Palestinian soldier-civilian interactions, a few revealing passages might broaden our scope for a more generalizable theory of state violence in early Christian

358 Althusser 1971: 97-98. Problems with Althusser’s particular theory of the state and ideology are well-known and are indirectly addressed here through the work of Pierre Bourdieu. The use of parentheses in this translation of Althusser is confusing and so is modified in the above quotations for clarity. See also the phenomenal study Ando 2016.

359 On the emergence of civilian and soldier subjectivities in Rome, see Carrié 1993; Santosuosso 2001. Judaea had previously experienced professional standing armies under the Seleucids and Hasmonaean. While the post-Pompey client kingdoms were functionally independent as military units, their subsumption into the Roman political economy entailed an increasing integration into the social distinctions noted above. The precise means by which civilian subjectivities were constituted through soldierly ones in Herodian Palestine awaits study elsewhere.
literature applicable to other geographical regions. The book of Ephesians presents a complex but helpful example.

Ephesians is brimming with assertions of incomparable peace (1:2; 2:14, 17; 4:2) and love (2:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15-16, 26, 32; 5:2, 28, 33; 6:23-24), so it is somewhat surprising that its Christian body-building (εἰς ὁμοιομοίων τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ; 4:12) is an overtly martial process. The bodies of Christ and God are explicitly attributed a kingdom in the heavenly places (5:5). The author pays homage to God through standard demonstrations of subservience before the potentate (3:14) and claims to be his ambassador to the nations (6:20). While God’s realm is primarily in heavenly places, his authority also extends to the earthly realm where his vice-regent Christ intervenes as necessary (1:20-23). Notable among Christ’s res gestae is the establishment of peace between hostile neighbours: Jews and gentiles (2:11-22). Christ accomplished this reconciliation by expanding God’s territory and annexing an adjacent population. To acquire this larger territory, Christ destroyed the defensive partition separating the two domains that he might grant his new citizens the benefits of Israel’s politeia.

While the universal church comprises the body of the cosmic Christ throughout Ephesians, God is accorded a much more anthropomorphic figure. God’s right hand was noted early in the letter (1:20), but a fuller image of the divine body comes forth in the lengthy description of the deity’s armour in Eph 6:10-17: a belt for his waist, a breastplate, shoes for feet, a shield to protect the abdomen, a helmet for the head, and finally a sword for that same right hand. Ephesian Christians are to equip themselves with this gear in order to prepare themselves for holy combat. Clinton Arnold observes that God’s armor serves to empower Christians in their battle: the verb δύναμαι is repeated in 6:11, 13, and 16. But rather than rushing into combat, Christians should opt for a defensive stance against their opponents – they must stand firm against the tempter and the cosmic powers on the day of evil.

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360 On Christ as God’s vice-regent in Ephesians, see Smith 2011: 175-206.
361 Maier 2013: 103-136 instead understands Ephesians’ metaphoric language as primarily civic, particularly with reference to rival cities that require a righting of relations via ὁμοιομοίως; as compelling as this reading may be, it has difficulty accounting for the language of walls and military imagery throughout the letter.
Some commentators read Ephesians as subverting either militancy or Roman norms. They contest the reading that Ephesians was thinly-veiled sermonizing by Roman-sympathetic Christians, instead suggesting the author held a critical posture toward the Roman state.\(^{364}\) Such interpretations recall anti-imperial readings of the Gospels. Commentators thus contend that Ephesians deploys military metaphors to undermine Roman hegemony by imagining a deity exceeding all earthly authorities (1:21) and spiritualizing combat as a criticism of Rome’s earthly militarism (6:12). Ephesians might thus be understood as directly critical of spectacular violence and institutions promoting such violence. There are important reasons to doubt an emancipatory reading of Ephesians, but even if this approach accurately characterizes the social program the author tried to advance, this reading would fail to appreciate the extent to which the military was central to the epistle’s imaginary. I would like to suggest that the centrality of the military becomes clear when one considers the difficulty of a parodic understanding of Ephesians’ metaphor of annexation.

Two aspects of Christ’s role as military vice-regent vis-à-vis territorial expansion might elucidate the problem. First, there are parallels to the ostensive beneficence of Roman peace through incorporation into the Empire, whether by client kingship or annexation. Philip Freeman argues that distinguishing annexation via military capture as opposed to annexation via peaceful acquisition was entirely retrospective – it was not obvious the extent to which the process would be accepted as legitimate until the dust had settled.\(^{365}\) This alone should lead one to be hesitant to accept assertions of compassionate territorial expansion. Ephesians explicitly identifies Christ as the agent of the benevolent destruction that culminates in a territorial and political unity. It may be tempting to explain this as irony-laden appropriation of Roman language that nevertheless eschews imperial structuring of human relations. Such a position is difficult to maintain in light of the correspondence with Roman valuation of these metaphors, including the fascination with the power constitutive of God’s and Christ’s cosmic sovereignty as well as its implications for practices of spiritual warfare. The desire to extend one’s political reach across the world and the

\(^{364}\) E.g., Gombis 2010: 155-179; 2013; Wright 2011.

\(^{365}\) Freeman 1998. One aureus minted in September 70 CE declares *Iudaea recepta*, a message revised in favour of the more famous *Iudaea capta* (Gambash, Gitler, and Cotton 2013). Likewise, the kingdom of Nabataea was invaded and reduced to provincial status under the name Arabia in 106 CE. This process was not characterized until 111 CE, at which point coinage insisted it was acquired (*Arabia acquidista*) and not captured (*Arabia capta*).
necessity of violence to achieve it remain unquestioned in Ephesians. The baggage of imperial language is therefore shed less easily than typically assumed.\footnote{366}

Second, and more crucially, is that the military is woven into the fabric of Ephesians’ argument. That is, the semantic clusters around imperialism are not simply a few isolatable passages that could be easily separated from the epistle’s themes, logic, and explicitly normative understanding of Christian subjectivity. The military’s role in early Christian cultural production was not only material, but ideological; Ephesians’ author could not “think outside the imperial box.”\footnote{367} That is, even if the use of imperial terminology was \textit{really} to discuss Christ, the author made recourse to army-talk to elucidate his ruminations. The medium of expression, namely language specific to Roman state violence, should not be dismissed as peripheral to Ephesians’ politics. Whatever the intention of the author may have been, Ephesians’ rhetoric seems almost entirely congenial to Roman interests.

Ephesians may be characterized as a “Roman” document not only in that it was composed within the Roman Empire, but in that it advanced interests favourable to the Roman state – regardless of the author’s intent. The epistle’s efforts to incorporate Christians into typical Roman habits of living and family structures, as well as their recognition of certain types of activity as laudatory and the words used to express that laudation, suggest that any implied criticism of Roman imperialism in Ephesians is severely truncated.

Judith Butler helpfully frames the issue by noting that “violence is not, at the start, presumptively ‘outside.’ Violence and non-violence are not only strategies or tactics, but form the subject and become its constitutive possibilities and, so, an ongoing struggle.”\footnote{368} Butler is interested in what it would mean for a human subject to be “non-violent,” so its relevance here is different. Namely, there is no point at which violence is external to the subject. Subjectivities of all sorts are implicated in one or another form of violence: civilian subjectivity – even those civilian

\footnote{366} The confluence of Christ’s cosmic headship (with all its connotations of power, autonomy, and might) with the household code’s laudation of subjection, discipline, and mastery is also normative of the Christian \textit{paterfamilias} (5:21–6:9). Christ’s similar functions as head of the church could be understood as Ephesians’ extension of the emperor’s function as \textit{pater patriae} to Christ. 
\footnote{367} Droge 2011: 343, though discussing the Gospel of Mark.
subjectivities that disavow spectacular forms of state violence – nevertheless depends upon the practice of state violence for its own existence.

**Conclusion: Theories of Violence in Rome**

The military played a role considerably more complex than pure repression. The theories briefly described above direct our readings away from a spectacularized hermeneutic to consider the violence inherent to more banal and seemingly benign activities. Any distinction between “official” and “unofficial” functions of the military in Palestine is thus naïve insofar as the garrisons functioned variously regardless of a given soldier’s duties. These theories, though not without problems, nevertheless help us arrive at a clearer ignorance on the topic. They position us to account for the structures as well as pre-reflective habits of practice that not only encouraged physical violence, but also reduced the perception of other types of harm to normalcy. These theories of violence thus help us to better understand how Roman state violence, “in all its ordinariness,” worked.\(^{369}\)

Beyond the types of violence described above, the military also acted as a hidden generative force in cultural production; for instance, monetization and military-constructed infrastructure – as negative as their effects may have been – were nevertheless responsible for the movement of various goods and people around the Roman East that rendered the composition of much Jewish literature possible. This goes doubly so for Mark’s Gospel, as it was composed in the wake of the Judaean War and we will see that the resulting trauma lingered throughout the document – the loss of the temple, change in military practices, etc.\(^{370}\) It is therefore unhelpful to imagine a dualistic world comprised of the empire and its collaborators on the one hand against a small but clearly-defined resistance on the other; whatever posture Mark may have imagined himself to hold toward the military, his Gospel is unimaginable apart from it.

In the preceding section, an initial assessment of Ephesians’ politics was proffered. This assessment was partial, given the well-known problems in determining Ephesians’ provenance –

\(^{369}\) The phrase comes from Bourdieu 1998: 21.

\(^{370}\) The material conditions necessary for literary composition were also facilitated by the military. Insofar as papyrus was produced in Egypt, its trade to Palestine at even vaguely affordable prices was only possible through the policing of the Coastal Trunk Road and Herod’s refoundation of Caesarea Maritima as a major port city for inter-regional trade.
as it is commonly known as the epistle without a context. Consequently, the analysis was geographically, socially, and chronologically non-specific. If one adopts the proposal of Chapter Two, that the Gospel of Mark was composed in Capernaum shortly after the Judaean War, then one is in a much better position to understand Mark’s evaluation of and positioning with respect to the military than with Ephesians. In short, it will be much easier to historicize Mark’s representation of the military than it was to historicize Ephesians’ representation of the military. The following chapters will draw upon preceding chapters, and attempt to reconsider how the military was perceived by one particular villager on the Roman frontier, the author of Mark. The theories explored in the present chapter will be helpful in redescribing Mark’s Gospel as emerging from a social context that led to distinctive social interests and investments. In other words, the following chapters will investigate the extent to which it reveals a worldview reflective of the relations described earlier and the ways in which Mark was ambivalent towards the role of the military.
Chapter 6

The Military in the Gospel of Mark

Chapter Two argued that the Gospel of Mark was composed in the Galilean village of Capernaum in the mid-70s CE. We are now positioned to compare the conditions of post-War Palestine (i.e., Mark’s compositional setting) with Mark’s depiction of similar conditions a half-century prior (i.e., Mark’s literary setting), while also keeping an eye toward the historical situation of the period which Mark depicts. This chapter will position us for an assessment of Mark’s politics, which will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

This chapter will proceed in three sections. The first section is a “sweep” of material that is immediately recognizable as related to the military and I suggest is most significant for assessing Mark’s positioning toward the military. Special attention will be devoted to the cry of the centurion at the cross, which I have been suggesting that it is an important example of Markan ambivalence toward the military. The second section is a “sweep” of material that commentators have recognized pertains to the military in some fashion, but upon analysis provides little direct information. Material from this sweep may nevertheless reveal Mark’s subtle presumptions about the nature or function of soldiers. The final section will “sweep” Markan passages that are rarely if ever discussed with reference to the military. In the first two sections, material either explicitly or implicitly evoked the military; in this final section, I will examine implications of the military on Mark’s social and theological landscape. The point of these sweeps is not always to offer an interpretation of the pericopae, much less assess their theology; rather, the goal is to determine Mark’s assumptions about and depiction of the military. Over the course of this analysis, we will see that the military’s presence in the Gospel of Mark is ambivalent: those narratives in which the military is most visible it appears to be beside the point, but in many narratives where the military is invisible it nevertheless shapes Mark’s story in important ways. I will attempt to explain and alleviate this paradox in this chapter and the following one. Over the course of this chapter, I will examine not only those pericopae where the military is explicitly present, but places where it is indirectly implicated in the Gospel’s narrative, such as the economic practices and choice of wording.
Mark attributes Jesus’ execution to a centurion, a responsibility that is otherwise unattested for soldiers of that rank. The centurion’s acclamation of Jesus as God’s son has attracted attention in Roman-oriented readings of Mark. The passage has long been read as the first human acknowledgement of Jesus’ divine sonship, though many scholars now interpret it as a sarcastic taunt to the effect of, “some son of God this guy was!” Arguments that the declaration mocked Jesus are numerous.

1) Death by crucifixion was unlikely to persuade a bystander of divine sonship, as it would more likely indicate his inconsequentiality to an impartial or hostile spectator (ἰδὼν δὲ … ὁτι οὗτος ἐξέπνευσεν). Crucifixion, in short, was sufficiently humiliating that it would have been more likely to prompt an outsider’s mockery than the supposition of divine sonship. 2) The confession appears in succession with other ironic scenes wherein the Jerusalem garrison unknowingly enacted a regal christology when they cloaked Jesus, crowned him, hailed him as king of the Jews, and knelt in a sardonic act of obeisance (15:17-19). A taunt from the centurion would be one further instance of dramatic irony in the passion narrative, as he unknowingly named Jesus’ divine sonship for what it is. 3) The centurion displays an apathetic attitude toward Jesus later in the Gospel (15:44-45), which would not be expected of a recently confessed Christian. 4) It is intuitively unlikely that an outsider – one partially responsible for Jesus’ execution – understood Jesus’ christological significance, especially since those much closer to him were unable to grasp it. 5) The syntax of centurion’s claim that Jesus was God’s son does not function well as a Christian confession (ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος θεός ἦν; note the use of the imperfect tense), if Mark understood Jesus’ divine sonship to continue after death. Jesus would no longer be God’s son, according to the centurion. 6) A series of civilians

373 It might be objected that the post-mortem recognition of Jesus as divine is indeed the only viable point for such, given that is when emperor divinization occurred (note the controversy when Domitian claimed to be divine before death). That is, the Senate declared an emperor divine only upon death. I would proffer two counter-arguments. 1) It would be most appropriate in this framework to claim that Jesus is God’s son, since he only became so upon his death. That is, imperial apotheosis was retrospective, not retroactive. 2) More importantly, I suspect this knowledge was either not available or not of interest to the Markan author, writing in a frontier province. Mark slips on occasion with his references to Roman politics, and there is no reason to think he was particularly knowledgeable
taunt Jesus at his crucifixion: those writing the epigraph on the cross (15:26), passersby (15:29-30), chief priests and scribes (15:31-32), and those crucified with him (15:32). The centurion may be yet another in this sequence. 7) It is not plausible that a Roman soldier, let alone a centurion, would violate expectations of emperor worship to acclaim another man God’s son.

Some of these arguments helpfully moderate the prevailing reading of a confession-with-gusto. But while they may be instructive, they are not entirely convincing individually or as the basis for their conclusion. Indeed, proponents of the sarcastic reading often make hyperbolic or otherwise untenable claims to support their conclusion. The comments of Earl Johnson on point seven are worth quoting in this regard:

Soldiers … took religious oaths to the Emperor, praising him as a god or a Son of God. … A Roman soldier’s allegiance to the Emperor was expected to be absolute and it is unlikely that Mark’s readers would find it believable that a professional soldier would risk his career in order to worship a crucified man, especially if by such a confession he might be risking his own death for treason.³⁷⁴

Johnson acknowledges the acceptance of multiple cults within the Roman army (especially that of Mithras), but he asserts that these other military cults only arose in the late Principate and early Dominate. This claim is patently false and there is no evidence that execution would be expected if a soldier did not affirm the status of the emperor as divi filius or asserted another person held a similarly divine status. As discussed in Chapter Three, there was no expectation of exclusivity to the imperial or Olympian cults: numerous religions were represented in the military during the first century CE, including several that did not necessarily recognize the Roman pantheon, such as the cults of Isis and Serapis, Cybele, the Matronae Aufaniae, and Yahweh.³⁷⁵ Because imperial divinity was usually claimed through sonship of the goddess Venus, cults which did not include her in their pantheon necessarily modified these claims,

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³⁷⁴ Johnson 1987: 12-13. Johnson himself does not explicitly commit to a reading of mockery, but it seems to be implied here and in his follow-up article (2000).
³⁷⁵ Hoey 1939; Stoll 2007: 464-471; cf. the locus classicus in Tacitus, Germ. 43. There is also the Egyptian archive of Claudius Terentianus (enlisted in the classis Alexandriæ 110-136 CE; P.Mich. 8.476-481). In the letters between Claudius and his friends, cultic vocabulary is regularly invoked, but Roman deities are never named; Claudius and his friends instead opt for the god Serapis and associated deities (Strassi 2008). Likewise, the soldiers of legio I Minervia located in Germania Inferior had no interest in Roman deities, instead worshipping local goddesses such as the Matronae Aufaniae (Haensch 2001).
sometimes eschewing emperor divinity entirely.\textsuperscript{376} There was no requirement for soldiers to practice emperor worship, despite the expectation of loyalty to the imperator. This is worth repeating: Jews were predominantly monolatrous in the early Roman period to the exclusion of emperor divinity, yet Jewish soldiers (and men in other non-Olympian cults) are nevertheless clearly attested in the Roman army.

If anything, the army was lenient with cultic practices that did not egregiously violate soldiers’ professional obligations. Oliver Stoll directs our attention to §P40, an inscription erected by the legionaries of \textit{V Macedonica} almost immediately upon their arrival in the city of Gerasa.\textsuperscript{377} The inscription is dedicated to Deania Augusta, also known as Artemis of Gerasa. Stoll suggests this inscription to a foreign deity acted as a means of negotiating life and obtaining divine favour in \textit{terra incognita}; one could proffer similar interpretations of Lucius Obulnius’ dedications to Zeus Kyrios and Atargatis Kyria (§§P10f-g), as well as Diomedes’ to Zeus Beelbaaros (§P22c). One should also recall the ritual of \textit{evocatio deorum} practiced by the military before destroying the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE – an act performed by the military out of respect to the Jewish deity.\textsuperscript{378} Examples of non-Roman cults in the army are widespread, with a sampling collected by Stoll. Stoll goes so far as to claim that the phenomenon of military dedications to local deities “can be observed in every military site throughout the empire.” The combination of the Roman \textit{pietas} with the difficulty of policing military cultic practices meant that local deities were usually

\textsuperscript{376} Brent 1999: 255-265; Hekster 2015: 266-275. The issue is complicated by the fact that emperors claimed to be child of a single pantheon – occasionally permitting overlap with Egyptian deities (continuous with traditions of both \textit{Ἷις γολύνυμος} and \textit{interpretation romana} – even if they encouraged or allowed cults to acclaim them as sons of other deities (e.g., Domitian as son of Harachte [obelisk at Piazza Navona], Domitian as son of Isis, Osirus, and Re [Hölbl 2005: 59]). To be sure, Rome incorporated foreign deities into its pantheon, but this process was slow, uneven, mostly evidenced after the Judaean War, and only formalized in the Severan Reformation.

Vespasian was reportedly the first emperor to encourage provincials to identify him as the son of a deity other than Venus. Though sources do not explicitly say Vespasian was claimed to be Horus incarnate (and thus the son of Isis and Serapis), he clearly cultivated a myth around the matter. Vespasian’s self-mythologizing with Isis and Serapis should be understood as similar to his self-mythologizing with other Eastern cults as part of a propaganda campaign, including Judaism (Josephus), Ba’al Carmelus (oracle at Mt. Carmel), the cult of Ammon (\textit{F.Pouad 8}), and Cyprus’ cult of Venus (oracle at Paphos). Incorporation of foreign cults into the imperial myth did not entail their incorporation into the Roman pantheon, nor did it entail compulsory recognition of emperor divinity within these foreign cults.

From the period of the Judaean War until the Bar Kokhba War, amulets, inscriptions, and other ritual or otherwise cultic items have been found in Judaean military assemblages for the following deities: Isis, Kore, Neotera (Aphrodite?), Serapis, Harpocrates, Eros, and Jupiter. This indicates diverse religious activity within the post-War Judaean garrison (Friedheim 2007; Stiebel 2015: 160).

\textsuperscript{377} Stoll 2007: 466.
\textsuperscript{378} Kloppenborg 2005.
respected and sometimes revered in frontier garrisons. Johnson’s assertion that the acclamation of Christ as υἱὸς θεοῦ – an appellation for a number of demigods and divinities throughout the empire – would have been regarded as subversive or treason is patently false; moreover, the implied evocatio deorum in Mark 13:2 indicates that Mark may have been aware of the military’s openness to other Palestinian cults. Johnson’s quotation above seems to be working from a reading of later Christian polemic against military service as inherently idolatrous. John Shean, to the contrary, demonstrates that the Christian perception that military service was idolatrous developed among a specific class of intellectuals in the patristic era (especially rooted in Tertullian and the Military Martyrs) – an interest for which there is no evidence in Mark.379

There are other indicators that the centurion’s confession was not mockery. Foremost is the fact that every other instance of insincerity in Mark is signaled as such, often explicitly. This is sometimes expressed through Jesus’ successful riposte to a challenge (e.g., 2:5-12), but also through the narrator’s descriptions of opponents’ intentions (e.g., 3:2-6). There is no literary indication any malicious intent on the centurion’s part, quite unlike Mark’s depiction of the soldiers’ beating of Jesus (15:20; καὶ ὃτε ἐνέπαιξαν αὐτῷ). Conversely, there are indications that Mark’s centurion is to be understood as sincere. The most obvious indication is that the confession’s statement followed a series of four portents: Jesus’ death cry, the darkness that accompanied Jesus’ death, the ripping of the temple veil, and the rapidity of Jesus’ demise.380

Darkness at Jesus’ death is particularly telling as a sign, since it was widely identified as a divine omen; indeed, Philo claimed that eclipses were “indications either of the death of kings or of the destruction of cities.”381 The popularity of Philo’s understanding is substantiated throughout

379 Shean 2010: 172-216. Indeed, Christians openly served in the military as evident from among the earliest Christian inscriptions (201 CE – under the reputedly anti-Christian emperor Septimius Severus, who also oversaw an expansion of the imperial cult in the military), contemporaneous with Tertullian. Thus, Tertullian’s normative assertions about Christian practices should not be mistaken as representative of all or most Christian lives. For a collection of early Christian literary texts discussing the military (absent are many vital epigraphs), see Kalantzis 2012.

380 Shiner 2000: 9-11. Cf. Brown 1994: 2.1144-1145, who helpfully distinguishes between historical readings (e.g., the temple veil’s non-visibility from Golgotha) and literary readings (e.g., the rending of the temple veil as part of Mark’s story flow).

381 Philo, Prov. 2.46 is quoted in Eusebius, Praep. ev. 8.14 and translated by Allison 2005: 95-96 n. 63. Allison and other commentators cite unnatural darkness at the deaths of Julius Caesar (Virgil, Georg. 1.463-468; Pliny, Nat. 2.30; Josephus, A.J. 14.309), Augustus (Cassius Dio, Hist. rom. 56.29.3), Romulus (Cicero, Rep. 6.21-22; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ant. rom. 2.56; Ovid, Fast. 485-498; Plutarch, Rom. 27; Florus, Epit. 1.1), Carneades (Diogenes Laertius 4.64), Pelopidas (Plutarch, Pel. 295a), Proculus (Marinus, Proc. 37), Enoch (2 En. 67.1-2), Adam (T. Adam 3.6), Matthias the high priest (Josephus, A.J. 17.167), and Theodosius I (Ambrose, Ob.
Greek and Roman texts, among which Jewish literature was no exception. Some combination of these four signs provides a more-than-sufficient literary basis to amaze the character of the centurion by way of Jesus’ death (15:39; ἵδὼν δὲ … ὅτι οὗτος ἐξεπνευσεν). The succession of unusual occurrences at the time of Jesus’ death is difficult to account for in a sarcastic reading of the passage: as humiliating as death by crucifixion may have been, it was surely overshadowed by the repeated occurrence of divine omens and the unnatural.

Another reading that must be dismissed is one wherein the centurion’s recognition of Jesus as God’s son is incompatible with military service, leading him to disavow the imperial cult. Take, for instance, the remarks of Philip Bligh:

Emperor Worship was obligatory on all (bar the Jew), especially on the soldier for whom it was the test of honour and obedience towards him who claimed his whole allegiance.

… And it is left to a pagan soldier, a centurion, the backbone of the Roman army, from whom utter loyalty was demanded, who stands looking upward at the lacerated corpse of a Galilean peasant on a Roman gallows, to give the final verdict in the words of the imperial title: ‘This man, not Caesar, is the Son of God!’

This is a poor representation of military worship and cultic practices for reasons noted above. Note also that emperor worship was never required of imperial denizens at the time. There are also literary problems with the idea that the centurion abandoned his post: the centurion continues to perform his duties as a Roman soldier by turning Jesus’ cadaver over to Joseph of Arimathea (15:44-45). The continuation of his duties under Pilate indicates that Mark does not imagine military duties to be incompatible with the centurion’s claim, despite Bligh’s claim to the contrary. Likewise, the divine sonship of Jesus is framed as a past state in the use of the Theo.

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382 Bligh 1968: 53; emphasis in original; more recently, see Álvarez Cineira 2013; Yencich 2017.

383 Contrary to Bligh’s claim about Jewish exception form the imperial cult, Bernett 2007: 341 notes that “no law requiring veneration of the Roman emperor in cultic forms existed, and therefore nobody could be exempted from it.” Indeed, there is no evidence of the imperial cult at all in the neighbouring kingdom of Nabataea! Rex Winsbury (2014: 203-216) is similarly critical of anachronistic readings of Pliny the Younger and Trajan’s correspondence (Ep. Tra. 96, 97) that identify Christians’ crime as a treasonous failure to worship the emperor. Rather, these policies were adopted under Decius and Diocletian, and so were not representative of earlier periods.
imperfect tense within the confession, which is difficult to reconcile with the centurion’s affirmation of Jesus’ continuing significance.

But what is the significance of the centurion’s confession if neither sarcastic denigration nor confession-with-gusto? Whitney Shiner more plausibly understands the centurion’s confession as a “near miss” of Markan Christianity. Most of the characters in Mark’s Gospel figure into the three-fold typology of gospel-reception laid out in 4:14-19: those who encounter the good news but lack enduring enthusiasm (e.g., Peter, James, John), those who encounter the good news but are driven to profane pleasures (e.g., the rich man, Judas Iscariot), and those who receive the good news with joy (e.g., Bartimaeus, Levi, Gerasene Demoniac). The centurion appears to fall outside this schema: the centurion adopts the attitude of an outsider’s respect toward Jesus, but he never approximates Markan Christianity. The centurion “hears, but does not understand” (Mark 4:12; cf. Isa 6:9-10), like Pilate. Shiner notes several reasons to interpret the passage as something other than a full Christian confession. First, Shiner suggests that Mark was likely to understand the affirmation of Jesus as υἱὸς θεοῦ – without definite articles – as a non-monotheistic affirmation of divine sonship that may evoke the Greek imperial title υἱὸς θεοῦ, and thus inadequate. Shiner observes that all non-appositive instances of the title “the Son of God” have two definite articles in Mark (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ; 1:11, 3:11, 9:7, 14:61; cf. 1:24, 13:32, but note 1:1).

Shiner’s suspicions that υἱὸς θεοῦ may signal a non-Jewish conception of God may be borne out in the Gerasene Demoniac’s confession of Jesus as υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου (5:7). θεὸς ὑψίστος was an epithet applied to Yahweh, Zeus, and other preeminent gods and was thus not exclusive to Judaism. Its use in the Septuagint and foreign cults led to an interesting function, according to Paul Trebilco, who observes that “Hypsistos was used … as an appropriate name

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385 See the excellent study Price 1984. Instances of υἱὸς θεοῦ (which Price notes was quite distinct from divi filius, relating to different conceptual systems for the Greek and Latin languages and their cultic formations) for emperors include IG 7.2713; IGR 3.286, 4.201, 4.309-311, 4.314, 4.594, 4.1302. See also (Cook 2010: 29-37). The evidence primarily relates to first-century emperors in the Roman East.
386 See the extensive discussion in Mitchell 1999. It was also commonly used of Ba’al in Syria, the Mother Goddess in Lydia, and Isis in Egypt, as well as less frequent applications to Sabazios, Men, Attis, Poseidon, Eshmun, Eshmun-Melkart, and perhaps Helios (Trebilco 1991: 128-129, 239 n. 8).
for God which could be put in the mouth of pagans in Jewish literature.” The exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac took place in Gentile territory and the phrase acts as one among other signifiers of the demoniac’s non-Judaism. Mark therefore follows the Jewish literary practice of placing appropriate titles for deities in the mouths of Gentiles. Though grammar permits one to interpret the phrase τις θεός in 15:39 in a definite and thus monotheistic sense (i.e., “the son of [the only] God”), the Markan phrasing is sufficiently ambiguous to permit that the author deployed it as an inadequate confession.

Second, Shiner contends that the portents prompting the centurion’s confession provided an insufficient basis for “authentic” Markan theology. That is, it was not enough to be amazed at the miraculous to be a Markan Christian, but required enactment of various practices and affirmation of certain beliefs – indeed, even Pilate was amazed at Jesus (15:6). Shiner’s argument should be modified at this point. It may be more helpful to understand the centurion’s confession as a misunderstanding provoked by a combination of Jesus’ cry of dereliction and the portents at his death. The use of the imperfect indicative in the centurion’s confession indicates that the centurion understood Jesus no longer to be God’s son, with the relationship presumably terminating at the same time as Jesus’ life. If so, the centurion’s christology corresponds with Jesus’ quotation of Ps 22:1 and its lamentation of God’s absence (Mark 15:34).

Some of those present at the crucifixion (τινες τῶν παρεστηκότων; 15:35) misheard Jesus and understood him to be calling for Elijah. I would like to suggest that the centurion also misunderstood Jesus’ cry in Aramaic, albeit differently from others present. Mark positions the centurion directly in front of Jesus (παρεστηκὼς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ), so the character could hear Jesus’ dying words better than others nearby. The centurion understood Jesus’ Aramaic, but the centurion did not recognize it as a quotation of Psalm 22, but rather misinterpreted his cry as a straightforward description of divine abandonment. The centurion incorrectly understood this inference to be confirmed in the portents immediately after Jesus’ final words. These factors are

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387 Trebilco 1991: 129. As examples, Trebilco cites T.Ash. 5:4; Jos. Asen. 8.2, 17.5; Josephus, A.J. 16.163. One could also include Gen 14:18-20 LXX; Num 24:16 LXX; 2 Macc 3:31; 3 Macc 7:9; 1 Esd 2:2, 6:30, 8:19, 8:21; Dan 3:93, 4:2, 4:17, 4:34, 5:21 LXX-TH; Dan 3:93, 4:34, 4:37 LXX-OG; Esth 8E:17 LXX-OG; Acts 16:17; Philo, Legat. 157, 317, Leg. 3.82.
388 Although there were many Jews in the Judaean auxilia before the Judaean War, Mark understands the centurion and soldiers at the cross to be Gentiles: the passion predictions refer to the son of man’s executors as “Gentiles.”
depicted as leading the centurion to assert that Jesus was a son of God, albeit in a past tense: up until the deity abandoned Jesus, he had been the God’s son. As discussed in Chapter Three, low-ranking auxiliaries in pre-War Judaea spoke Aramaic and Mark was presumably aware of this. Mark depicts the Jerusalem garrison as auxiliaries, and it stands to reason that the author was also aware that Judaean soldiers understood Aramaic as well: Jesus spoke Aramaic to a man who was presumably Gentile elsewhere in Mark (i.e., ἐφφαθα in 7:34 to a resident of the Decapolis).

The centurion holds a distinctive position in the Gospel. Though he ultimately misunderstood Jesus’ cry, unlike others who misinterpreted Jesus’ last words, the centurion adopts a stance of respect toward Jesus and thus becomes a potential Christian. This potential, however, is squandered like the rich man in 10:17-22; he is nearly Christian, but not quite. The centurion’s acknowledgement of Jesus’ past sonship seems to hold no implications for his behaviour, as his subsequent actions do not indicate a special attitude toward Jesus or his followers. The centurion is accorded greater personality and agency than any other military figure in Mark: even Titus’ eventual destruction of Jerusalem was predetermined and initiates a sequence of cataclysmic events. The uniqueness of the centurion is consistent with the prevailing politics of the military among rural villagers in the Roman East, though this will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

The Gerasene Demoniac – Mark 5:1-20

The Exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac is increasingly interpreted as polemic against the Roman army, though this reading has yet to approach consensus. There are two primary

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389 Mark claims “the whole cohort” participated in the beating of Jesus (ὅλην τὴν σπείραν; 15:16). The passage is hyperbolic, but Mark describes the Jerusalem garrison – one cohort of the Sebastene auxiliaries – as the actors in Jesus’ beating.

390 The reading of the centurion’s confession advocated here has some similarities with that which Leander 2013: 143-144 identifies in Swete 1898: 366. Swete is among the few interpreters to consider the implications of the centurion’s origin as an auxiliary from Judaea. Also noteworthy is Raymond Brown’s connection of Jesus’ cry of God’s abandonment with the centurion’s acknowledgement of Jesus as God’s son (1994: 2.1144).


Tellingly, the vast majority of publications advocating a military reading were printed after 9/11, which suggests that the military situation of the interpreter has played a substantial role in the history of interpretation – it is even more disproportionate than the citations above imply, as I have listed almost every military discussion of it from before 2001 and only more important discussions from after. The implicit analogy of the American occupation
arguments supporting a military subtext in the passage. First, the demonic force is named Legion (5:9; 5:15). \(\text{λεγιών/legio}\) is among Mark’s occasional Latinisms and, as noted in Chapter Two, transliterated Latin almost uniformly signals something encoded as Roman in the post-War period. The word \(\text{λεγιών/legio}\) nearly always refers to a Roman military unit, an association that one might reasonably infer that Mark evokes. Legions were a significant aspect of the social landscape in Palestine after the Judaean War, so this reference would have been particularly salient in Mark’s context. Second, Mark’s pericope uses images associated with the specific legion present in post-War Judaea, \textit{legio X Fretensis}. The legion’s symbols included a boar, a ship, and the deity Neptune, each of which Mark may evoke in his telling of the story; Legion is sent into pigs and drowns in the sea. There is reason to suppose that if Mark were a resident of the Levant, he knew these symbols, since they were prominently displayed in Judaea; for example, the legion countermarked Judaean coins with images including a boar, Neptune standing, a dolphin, and a war galley. Such images and their association with the military may have been encountered in any financial transaction between Judaean denizens involving coinage. The boar was also featured on roof tiles produced by \textit{legio X Fretensis} and Neptune was found on some of its inscriptions.\textsuperscript{392} This is not to mention the presence of a boar on the standard for \textit{legio X Fretensis} itself. Consequently, Judaean provincials were likely to be familiar with the legion’s imagery and may have associated such symbols with \textit{legio X Fretensis} in particular.

A third argument, but one of substantially less merit, is the ostensive use of military terminology throughout the pericope. For instance, Richard Horsley suggests that “in a series of military images, Legion is ‘dismissed’ [5:13; \(\text{ἐπέτρεψεν}\)] to enter the ‘troop’ [5:11, 5:13; \(\text{ἀγέλη}\)] of swine, who then ‘charge’ [5:13; \(\text{ὠρμησεν}\)] headlong down the slope as if into battle….\textsuperscript{393} Despite

\textsuperscript{392} See, e.g., the collection of inscriptions, coinage, and imagery in Klinghardt 2007: 46-48 and \textit{AE} 2012.1761. Note, however, that the vast majority of the legion’s brick stamps in Judaea do \textit{not} have the aforementioned symbols on them (Deines 2011: 208 n. 25) nor do most inscriptions in Judaea – none included in Database One have any such symbols. The legionary countermarks, by contrast, were unusually common in Judaea and were the most likely way a Palestinian denizen would have become familiar with such symbols; see the discussion of its countermarks in note 267 above.

\textsuperscript{393} Horsley 2003: 100; Greek terms and verse citations added for clarity. Even more far-fetched are the suggestions of Carter (2015), who contends the use of \(\text{ἀποστελλῃ, πέμψον, and εἰσέλθομεν}\) are intentionally evocative of the military in this pericope. For instance, the demon’s desire to enter (\(\text{εἰσέλθομεν}\)) into pigs is ostensibly suggestive of sexual assault, overlooking the fact that Jesus facilitates this request of the demon, that Mark also describes \textit{heavenly} powers as entering people (e.g., Mark 1:10), which would mean Mark implies the
Horsley’s claims, none of these words are particularly evocative of the military. ἐπέτρεψεν is a common enough word and seems to bear no unusual significance in Mark here and ὥρμησεν is a standard verb in contexts of stampeding, as with agitated animals. ἀγέλη is also the typical noun for herds, though it is sometimes noted that pigs were not herd animals – a fact that there is no reason to suppose Mark knew. Regardless of the unusual behaviour of the pigs as a group, there is little to suggest a specifically military connotation to the words. Mark’s narrative terminology and those words’ context in the Gospel are sufficiently typical that a military subtext is superfluous.

This third argument is unnecessary, since the transliterated Latin is sufficient to suggest some kind of military aspect to the pericope; the cumulative weight with legio X Fretensis’ symbols confirm the matter beyond doubt for some interpreters. Commentators almost uniformly understand this pericope’s allusion to the army as some type of polemic against the Roman occupation of Palestine. The name “Legion” and its association with demons and pigs indicate Markan hostility toward Rome. This anti-military-oppression reading sometimes takes on a semi-allegorical quality: Jesus’ exorcism of the demon Legion manifests a desire to expel the occupying Roman legion from the territory; the demon (and thus Rome) is an invasive force whose dislodgment returns the man to his proper mode of living. The polemic against Rome is heightened by the use of pigs, a ritually unclean animal, and is sometimes taken to depict the legion as a polluting presence in Jewish territory. Jesus’ exorcism might read as an anticipation of God’s kingdom, a kingdom in which Roman imperialism would have no part. Literature from Qumran evidences a similar conception of Roman military forces as demonic; the War Scroll imagines Roman soldiers as “the sons of darkness” under the command of the dark-angel king Belial. The parallel in contemporaneous Jewish literature contributes plausibility to the military reading of the Gerasene Demoniac.

It is unlikely the author of Mark was particularly knowledgeable about porcine grouping habits (cf. Matt 7:6). The reason for this is not an assumption that Jews of the first century had no familiarity with pigs, since Palestinian Jews could and did act as swineherds in the first century (e.g., §P65d), pig bones have been found in Judaean settlements of the early Roman period, and the prohibition against Jews herding swine was only codified in the time of the rabbis (Stern 1994: 57 nn. 42-44). Rather, there is little reason for anyone other than swineherds to be aware of whether pigs stampede or not; even in the contemporary North Atlantic, where pork is widely consumed, most are unfamiliar with pigs’ behaviour, as is evidenced in the very insistence of recent biblical commentaries on remarking how unusual it is for pigs to herd! Mark was no zoologist; thus, occasional encounters with pigs in Palestine need not indicate one’s knowledge of their lack of herding.
The two primary arguments may appear a strong enough basis to sustain the anti-military-oppression reading, but there are important objections. Most notable is the complete absence of evidence for any properly legionary garrison near Gerasa until 119 CE (§P30; cf. §P23, §P40, §P47, §§M23-34), and therefore well after Mark’s composition. Indeed, there is no evidence that _legio X Fretensis_ was ever in Gerasa, as detachments of _legio VI Ferrata_ and later _V Macedonica_ are better attested, but are also late. Rather, the unit that was attested in Gerasa during the post-War period was _ala I Thracum Augusta_, an auxiliary cohort unconnected to any legion (§P4, §P5, §P6, §P7). Mark’s reference to Legion therefore does not cohere with his narrative context of Gerasa, since there were no legions as such garrisoned there before or during the time of Mark’s composition. The present military force was entirely another type, for whom “Legion” would be technically incorrect, an egregious misnomer. This is not merely to object that military specialists would have noted this, as Mark and most other Jews of Palestine were not especially conversant in military terms. Rather, this is to draw attention to the fact that the terminology of “Legion” would not have even been used in pre-War Palestine, because legions were not at all a significant presence. Thus, there was no reason for locals to know the term, let alone use it in a polemical manner.

There are also numerical discrepancies: the roughly 2000 pigs have no obvious connection to military units in the region. Legsions were nominally 6000 soldiers, but the functional number was closer to 5400; most auxiliary _cohortes_ and _alae_ were quingenary and so had a nominal strength of 600 men in most cases (including _ala I Thracum Augusta_), but in practice they were around 480 soldiers; milliary _cohortes_ and milliary _alae_ were 800 at full strength with a nominal strength of 1000. John Donahue and Daniel Harrington contend that the name Legion has no

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395 It is plausible that part of the tenth legion’s Judaean garrison had a detachment in Gerasa shortly after the War. §P50 and §F16 indicate that after the War a vexillation of _legio X Fretensis_ garrisoned in Gadara, whose territory extended to the lake of Gennesaret. It is thus conceivable – but nothing more than conceivable – that another detachment was in Gerasa to supplement the city’s post-War garrison of _ala I Thracum Augusta_. Cf. §D7, whose Vespasianus Marco hailed from Gerasa.

396 Lau 2007 attempts to link the 2000 pigs with a vexillation of 2000 legionaries who attacked Jews along the Phoenician coast at the outbreak of the Jewish War (Josephus, _J.W._ 2.499-506). This reading is unsustainable for three major reasons: first, the legionaries were only part of a large composite force comprising an additional 5400 legionaries from _legio XII Fulminata_, 2880 auxiliary infantry, 1920 auxiliary cavalry, 2000 cavalry from Commagene, 3000 infantry from Commagene, 3000 infantry from Batanaea, 1000 cavalry from Batanaea, and 4000 Armenian soldiers. The 2000 legionaries were unlikely to stand out as a particularly significant component. The reliability of these numbers (which is unlikely) is another matter in itself. Second, the vexillation of 2000 legionaries Lau mentions was itself a composite force of the Syrian legions. This calls into question the symbolic import of the porcine imagery specific to _legio X Fretensis_. Third, the Phoenician coast is not particularly proximate to Gerasa or the Sea of Galilee, calling into question the geographic applicability of Lau’s example.
military significance for Mark; they understand it merely as a numerical reference to the many demons in the man, as evident in the author’s explanatory note (ὅτι πολλοὶ ἐσμέν; 5:9). Donahue and Harrington prematurely dismiss the significance of the military entirely, but they helpfully identify the problems of Mark’s enumeration.

These objections may not totally refute the anti-military-oppression reading, though. The author of Mark is unlikely to have known the specifics of the different military units or their sizes, as he was clearly not a military historian; we will see below that Mark strangely refers to a Herodian executioner by a Latin office, a matter that is hardly plausible historically, but may have been used in Mark’s context. One should separate two distinct methodological questions: on the one hand, the military-historical problem of the army units in the region and, on the other hand, the sociology of knowledge question regarding who was likely to understand such distinctions. In the same way, say, an Iraqi civilian might characterize all American soldiers as “Marines,” regardless of which military branch they serve in, so also might a refugee of the Judaean War characterize all foreign Roman forces as “legion,” regardless of their composition and size. Writing from Capernaum, Mark was not in the immediate vicinity of Gerasa, so this sort of terminological slippage might be expected of a writer speaking of a less familiar territory. Whatever the inaccuracies of Mark’s depiction of a legion of 2000 in Gerasa, it is possible that someone in his situation would make such a mistake. The inconsistencies between the military-historical evidence and Mark’s account do not inspire confidence about the anti-military-oppression interpretation, but do not discredit it entirely.

While military-historical factors do not present insurmountable difficulties for anti-military-oppression readings of the Gerasene Demoniac, much more significant problems lie in the pericope itself. Seyoon Kim observes that a liberatory reading only accounts for the first half of the pericope, up to Jesus’ exorcism of Legion. The anti-military-oppression reading has difficulty accounting for why the residents of Gerasa reject Jesus after the exorcism (5:17). This final part of the pericope is conspicuously absent from most anti-military-oppression readings of the pericope, since within a military reading this would imply that many residents of the Roman East did not desire liberation from Roman occupation. This problem is significant, since those

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397 Donahue and Harrington 2002: 166.
398 Kim 2008: 120; Kim is interested in Luke, but many of his insights apply to Mark.
rejecting Jesus’ symbolic liberation from Rome are not elites, but apparently common denizens of the Decapolis. Richard Horsley is among the few to anticipate the ending’s problems for his reading, linking it with the work of Frantz Fanon:

The revelation that behind the mystification of demon-possession lay the Roman military as the real agent of their possession, however, was frightening to the community. They desperately begged Jesus to leave. It was difficult, indeed impossible, to face the real political-economic situation of imperial violence. Even though the hearers of Mark’s story were hearing in this episode and others the “gospel” of God’s liberation from Roman rule, they too would likely have felt uneasy and ambivalent about facing the concrete political-military forces that controlled their lives.399 In Horsley’s framework, the city of Gerasa was subject to Roman oppression, and rather than come in direct conflict with the Roman Empire (or blame themselves and the Lord), an individual man acted a repository for the city’s resentment and adopted the subjectivity of a demoniac. Jesus exorcized the demon by naming the oppressive experience for what it is (i.e., rooted in Roman imperialism).

Horsley’s explanation is difficult to accept, not least because of his unargued assertions – most important of which is that Jesus “reveals” the true identity of the demon as Legion. Horsley’s reading also fails to account for why the denizens of the Decapolis eventually welcome the preaching of the former demoniac (5:20) despite their rejection of Jesus. This reaction suggests their hesitation related more to the person of Jesus and his role in the pigs’ death than the political implications of his exorcism. Horsley’s explanation of the pericope also falls prey to what Pierre Bourdieu terms the “theoreticist fallacy.”400 Horsley seems to assume the Gerasene residents’ familiarity with the work of 20th century anthropologist Frantz Fanon and his work on psychosomatic illnesses and cognitive dissonance among colonized people: Gerasenes were unhappy with this information because it threatened “their delicately balanced adjustment to the Roman order.”401 The identity of the demon is troubling information only if the Gerasenes are consciously operating on the system theorized by Horsley and Fanon. Horsley’s explanation

400 Bourdieu 1990b: the theoreticist fallacy is “the most serious epistemological mistake in the social sciences, namely, that which consists in putting ‘a scholar inside the machine,’ in picturing all social agents in the image of the scientist ....” Cf. the criticism of Horsley’s interpretation in Engberg-Pedersen 2003: 244-245.
401 Horsley 2001: 145.
bounces between Mark’s literary world and the real-life Gerasenes with whom the historical Jesus may have interacted;\textsuperscript{402} this methodological confusion further diminishes confidence in the anti-military-oppression reading of the pericope.

Finally, this reading often elides the province of Judaea (and its associations with Judaism) with the Decapolis. The two regions had very different postures toward the Roman Empire. Gerasa was a city of the Decapolis, a network of free cities north and east of Roman Judaea. The Decapolis comprised several cities whose relationship with Rome was far more positive than it was with Judaea. The cities were mostly independent from their foundation under the Ptolemies and Seleucids, but were conquered by Alexander Jannaeus around 80 BCE and annexed to Hasmonaean Judaea. For some time, Judaea (not Rome!) was the imperial power operating in the Decapolis and the Hasmonaean program of Judaization was not well received in its cities. When the Roman general Pompey conquered the eastern Mediterranean in 64-63 BCE, he separated them from Judaea and authorized their independence. There is every indication that residents of the Decapolis were thankful for this emancipation – not only do historical sources, inscriptions, and coinage attest such gratitude, but the cities of the Decapolis even adopted a Pompeian Calendar in appreciation: most of the Decapolis took Pompey’s conquest as their epochal year and enumerated their calendar thence.\textsuperscript{403} Thus, the Roman army was apparently “greeted as liberators” in the Decapolis, as residents of the Decapolis experienced Judaea as a colonial power. The author of Mark lived near the Decapolis and was presumably aware of the very positive opinion of Rome in that region, an opinion evidenced at Mark’s time in their staunch loyalty to Rome during the Judaean War. It should be noted that the locational significance of Gerasa and the Decapolis is not incidental to Mark’s story: Jesus entered the region of the Gerasenes (χώραν τῶν Γερασηνῶν; 5:1) which extends to the lake of Gennesaret, the demons beg that they not be expelled from the region (ἐξω τῆς χώρας; 5:10), the resulting exorcism is announced in the city and countryside (εἰς τὴν πολιν καὶ εἰς τὸὺς ἄγραυς; 5:14), the denizens ask Jesus to depart from the district (ἀπὸ τῶν ὄριων; 5:17), but the ex-demoniac ultimately is ordered by Jesus to return home (εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου; 5:19) and to preach to the Decapolis (ἐν τῇ Δεκαπόλει; 5:20). Mark’s repeated insistence on the miracle’s location near Gerasa – a city known for its Roman affinities – is thus difficult to reconcile with the politics of an anti-Roman

\textsuperscript{402} Cf. Leander 2013: 208-209.
\textsuperscript{403} See the discussion in Schürer 1979: 126; Smallwood 1981: 28-29.
reading. Thus, while Horsley and others are likely correct in suggesting the military plays a role in the pericope, scholars tend to simultaneously over-describe and under-historicize the military. The rejection of Jesus by the Gerasenes does not cohere with the anti-military-oppression reading of the pericope, and attempts to explain it make recourse to theoreticism. Also problematic is the failure to adequately address the pericope’s location of Gerasa, as the Decapolis was known for its favourable stance toward the Roman Empire.

What can be said about the military in this passage, if an anti-military-oppression interpretation is not satisfactory? What is clear is that the military is given a privileged position that cannot be named directly, but is encoded within a different kind of discourse, one that is abstracted: Mark couches its polemic in a narrative about supernatural beings. Mark nevertheless offers this narrative as a topic of dispute: the Exorcism of the Gerasene Demoniac is the only exorcism directly resulting in Jesus’ expulsion from the site of the miracle. As William Arnal and Russell McCutcheon observe of other pericopae, “the effect [of doubt and inquiry in the Gospels] is to cue the hearer of such tales to their tentative, non-ordinary nature, and thus to stimulate further examination and exploration.”404 As examples elsewhere in Mark, Arnal and McCutcheon cite how Jesus’ claim to forgive sins is met with charges of blasphemy by Jewish peers (2:7), which functioned to prompt further discussion among Markan Christians on the significance and authority of this particular practice. Likewise, Peter’s bumbling confession at Caesarea Philippi (8:27-29) shows Jesus’ identity to be an object of inquiry that might be addressed in different ways, some of which are preferable to others.

Mark may have sought to provoke further discussion about several aspects of the Gerasene Demoniac. The primary controversy in the narrative is when the Gerasenes ask Jesus to leave on account of “what happened to the demoniac and the pigs” (5:16), which had led to their fear. This might seem a logical starting point, but the ex-demoniac’s preaching about “how much Jesus had done for him” (5:20) seems nearly synonymous and its reception in the Decapolis was unambiguously positive. How might one resolve the tension between the presence of Jesus and the preaching of the former demoniac? The reference to pigs is absent in the ex-demoniac’s preaching, despite its presence in the explanation for Jesus’ expulsion. The discrepancies

404 Arnal and McCutcheon 2013: 165. This will be examined further below in the discussion of spiritual warfare in Mark.
between the reception of Jesus and the former demoniac may indicate that the loss of 2000 pigs prompted the hostility to Jesus – that is, the destruction of the property the swineherds charged with. This partially explains why Jesus was asked to leave the territory: however the exorcism may have eased travel for residents of the Decapolis, Jesus’ action nevertheless resulted in loss of stock, notably the death of 2000 pigs, and so interrupted other parts of life. Returning to Arnal and McCutcheon, the exorcism may have acted to encourage discussion of collateral damage for Markan ritual practices and the implications of such damage for interaction with outsiders. There is no evidence that Mark intended to provoke thought on the military (i.e., it has no obvious connection to “what happened to the demoniac and the pigs”) and so military matters presumably occupy a secondary or tertiary position within pericope. This is problematic for those who advance an anti-military-oppression reading; in such interpretations, Jesus’ exorcism doubles as an exorcism of the Roman army and so this connection between the military and the demon is an essential (if not the essential) component of the story. This is difficult to sustain because Mark provides no indication that the military was a topic of controversy or even disagreement in the pericope. That is, however the army figures into narrative of the Gerasene demoniac, the exorcism is not about the military.

How, then, does the military figure into the pericope? One rarely considered possibility is that the story alludes to the Roman army, but does so in a non-polemical manner. While the word “legion” is a dead metaphor today that acts as a generic large numerical designation, this was not the case in post-War Palestine. To the contrary, λεγεών/λεγεὐὸν seems to have first come to common use in Palestine after the Judaean War, as the word gained political salience at that point: Mark is the oldest known Greek Jewish text to use λεγεὐὸν and the term legio has not been found in Latin Palestinian literature, inscriptions, and papyri until the Judaean War, either.405 One can thus assume that Mark understood the word in relation to the Roman army.

Mark is not alone in using military language to refer to the demonic. Unholy forces are described militarily in other texts of the Second Temple period, such as the Kittim of the War Scroll and

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405 It was also used by Nicolaus of Damascus (FGH 130), who, while not Jewish, was a confidant of Herod the Great and advocated for him in Rome; cf. T. Sol. 11.3. The very use of the word was used as an argument for the post-War composition of Mark in Chapter Two; see also the discussion of Latinisms below. It should be noted that this does not mean the pericope as a whole was a post-War creation. See P. Oxy. 5072, which seems to be a pigless, Legion-less version of this same exorcism story, though the text is too fragmentary to determine its literary relationship to Mark.
the watchers of 1 Enoch. The impulse to read these as anti-Roman or anti-military must be tempered with the observation that holy supernatural beings are often described similarly in early Christian and Second Temple Jewish literature. The reference to the twelve legions of angels at Jesus’ command (Matt 26:53) and the heavenly host praising God (Luke 2:13-15) are hardly exceptional, since angels were regularly described in such terms by Second Temple Jewish authors. Not only do Michael and other angels perform military functions in numerous texts (e.g., War Scroll; 1 En.; Sib. Or. 2.214-237; Apoc. Mos. 40; 3 Bar. 4:7), but military terminology is regularly used to describe the hierarchical organization of angels.  

For instance, God commands the angels to “gather before him, each according to his rank” in LAE 38.2, Philo assumes angels are organized into military ranks (Conf. 34.174), and the same can be said of various texts from Qumran (e.g., 4Q405, 4Q503). Arnal and McCutcheon suggest that “the fading presence of God in the early gospel literature must simply reflect the widespread distancing of deity in the Hellenistic and Roman periods … corresponding to the imperial distancing of centers of power and governance.” One witnesses an increase in the activity of delegates and functionaries during this period – angels, demons, and sons of God in Jewish literature – to mediate for an increasingly distant deity. As Arnal and McCutcheon imply, conceptions of divine action are mediated by the provincial experiences with terrestrial authorities, so the theological exchange of deities for lesser agents was partially shaped by similar shifts in administration by proxy under Greek and Roman empires. Thus, while early Jewish literature imagined the Lord directly participating in battle against Israel’s enemies (e.g., Josh 10, Ps 18:8-16), late Second Temple Jewish literature largely exchanges the Lord’s personal action for his functionaries’ activity (e.g., 2 Macc 15:22-23, Dan 10:10-13). To be sure, angels acted as the Lord’s soldiers in earlier Jewish literature, but the shift of emphasis is clear and mirrors the changing role of heads-of-state with respect to warfare in the Near East. It is entirely predictable that the operation of the demonic would be understood similarly.

I would like to suggest that this schema of otherworldly proxy and delegation sees fruition in the Gerasene Demoniac. The pericope understands Roman legions as the most proximate functionaries of governmental power, and in turn represent the most proximate functionaries of

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406 Michalak 2012: passim, esp. 86-98.
407 Arnal and McCutcheon 2013: 164; their argument notes the insights of Martin 1987. This will be examined further in the discussion of spiritual warfare in Mark below.
supernatural power. This reading must be non-polemical, since the Lord had his own legion of angels, as implied in Mark 8:38 and 13:24-27; the former imagines an imperial procession from in the heavens and the latter implies numerous angels at the son of man’s command. Mark made use of the language available to him to describe both demons and the son of man’s angels, doing so via military imagery. The interpretation proposed here, to tweak that of Pheme Perkins, suggests that the passage compares the demons to the Roman army, not *vice versa*. The present interpretation avoids the problem with garrison placement that comes with anti-military-oppression interpretations; Mark’s word λεγιών need not relate to *legio X Fretensis* specifically, but probably treats legions in general as a type of power-by-proxy. Thus, as elsewhere in Mark, ordinary people never encounter Satan directly, but only his functionaries.

This interpretation would require us to attribute the pig and aquatic imagery to coincidence, which is warranted. Misgav Har-Peled has written thoroughly on Jewish polemic against Rome that drew upon porcine imagery. After examining rabbinic and patristic evidence, he determines that “the Midrashim and the Talmudim do not even mention *Legio X Fretensis*, its boar emblems, the statue of a sow at the Jaffa Gate, or Aeneas’ sow. If the boar emblem was ‘an insult thrown in the face of the Jewish nation,’ … we do not find any evidence of this in Jewish sources. The silence of the rabbinic sources makes it difficult to argue that the identification of Rome with the pig is a direct reaction to Rome’s porcine symbols.” If later Jewish writers, writing well into the garrison of Jerusalem/Aelia Capitolina by *legio X Fretensis*, make no allusions to Rome’s porcine symbols in their polemic, it is all the more improbable that Mark contains an oblique reference to it.

The military obviously is present in the text with the demon’s name Legion, which some have taken as evidence of anti-Roman polemic. There are other items that might be *prima facie* interpreted as relevant to the army, including the reference to the pigs and the aquatic setting of the story – which arguably evoke *legio X Fretensis*. But it becomes clear upon closer analysis that the parallels to *legio X Fretensis* and supposed criticism of Roman occupation are problematic. But rather than negating the significance of the military for the narrative, its import can be understood as occurring at a subtler level. This subtle mode of interpretation attends to the

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409 Har-Peled 2013: 130-131, lightly edited for clarity.
way in which the civilians’ experience of the military was internalized and became a part of their conception of related matters – power-by-proxy and cosmic dualism, in this case. Thus, rather than a face-to-face encounter between God and Satan, Jesus engages Satan’s demonic subordinates taking the form of Legion.

The Question of Taxation – Mark 12:13-17

In a forthcoming article for Catholic Biblical Quarterly, I propose a new interpretation for the question of taxation in the Gospel of Mark. For the sake of brevity and to avoid repetition, I will merely summarize it here, as it pertains to the military in Mark. Despite the fact that Mark never explicitly names the fiscus Iudaicus, there is some basis to suspect the passage alludes to that particular tax. Consider the evidence against the pericope’s origination with Jesus or someone in his context. 1) Palestinian residents never paid monetary capitation taxes to Rome before the War, which casts doubt upon the saying’s origination with Jesus or anyone in his proximity. 2) Denarii and other coins depicting the emperor’s profile rarely circulated in Palestine before the War, coinage central to the ensuing debate. These two factors more or less rule out the likelihood that the Markan Jesus refers to any particular taxes of Galilee in the early decades of the first century. One could further point to the oddity of a Galilean’s concern with a Judaean capitation tax, the Latinisms of denarius and census, and the fixation upon Caesar as ruler. The very unusual use of the Latinism κῆνσον suggests the term’s novelty for Mark. Likewise, the saying refers to coinage that was introduced and increasingly common in the post-War period. The fiscus Iudaicus was the most obvious point of reference for census-based taxes after the Judaean War among Palestinian denizens. Mark’s anachronistic reference to the monetary denomination in which the Jewish tax was paid is also significant.

The Markan Jesus insinuates that the denarius belongs to Caesar, as is evident by his profile on the coin. Jesus encourages the coin to be returned to Caesar (ἀπόδοτε; not simply “give,” δότε), implying that money was properly Caesar’s in the first place. In so doing, Mark insinuates two things: 1) the fiscus Iudaicus is not paid to Jupiter, but the reigning emperor, and 2) the denarius was the emperor’s by default, so one is simply giving back what one has temporarily acquired from him. Mark’s rhetorical moves obviate ethical concerns about Jews knowingly funding the

temple of Jupiter. The first of these two points is fairly similar to the rhetorical moves made by Josephus and those describing the Jewish tax as merely another λαογραφία, in that they all rhetorically distance the tax from veneration of other deities. Thus, whatever the tradition history of the pericope may be, its Markan form bears numerous indications of post-War reflection; the fiscus Iudaicus was undoubtedly the most salient point of reference for capitation taxes in a post-War Palestinian context. When examined in light of this post-War context, the pericope may be far more straightforward than it is generally understood to be: this is neither part of a timeless debate about civil and divine authorities, nor even an interlocutory remark in a dispute about the Roman Empire and the will of the Jewish deity. Rather, the passage involves the niceties of economic and legal existence in the distinctive historical situation of post-War Palestine.

Rather than arguing over whether it is appropriate to pay the fiscus Iudaicus in particular, Mark presents Jesus as an interlocutor in a debate about whether to pay taxes to Caesar in general. That Markan readers also pay the Jewish tax is presented as following a tradition from the pre-War period rooted in the activity of Jesus 40-some years earlier. Mark thus broadens historically-specific practices to general principles about the temple cult and forgiveness, god vs. Caesar, and Galilee as a viable site for the activity of Markan readers. Thus, the Markan Jesus would pay his taxes and apparently encourages others to do likewise, but there is no indication that the evangelist imagined Jesus needed to or actually paid denarii “to Caesar” – indeed, Jesus does not even have a denarius in his possession.

Soldiers Mock and Crucify Jesus – Mark 15:16-32

The mockery of Jesus (Mark 15:16-20) might be fruitfully explored in connection with its Matthean parallel (27:27-31), an episode entirely absent from Luke. There are two primary differences between Matthew’s and Mark’s narrative here. First is the colour of the cloak in which the soldiers bedeck Jesus; the second is the extent of the abuse Jesus receives at their hands. To begin with the soldiers’ cloak, purple dye was produced in the eastern Mediterranean,

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411 The parallel account in Gos.Thom. 100 was also clearly composed post-War. Beyond Jesus’ similar pre-occupation with Caesar and others’ tax laws (though no Latinisms are present in the surviving Coptic), Jesus is presented with a gold coin – gold coinage circulated even more rarely than denarii in pre-War Palestine. Another version of the pericope appears to be attested in P.Egerton 2.3, but it is too fragmentary be of use here.
mostly Tyre and its immediate vicinity. The Phoenician coast was home to the mollusks *murex brandaris* and *murex trunculus*, which secreted the fluid necessary for purple dye production. Purple dye was thus proximate to Palestine, but it was prohibitively expensive – Pliny the Elder claims that a pound was priced at 100 denarii during his youth, which skyrocketed to 1000 denarii per pound during his adulthood (Nat. 9.60-65). Pliny’s prices are hyperbolic, but they may still be taken to indicate the dye’s cost exceeded an auxiliary soldier’s means. Matthew’s change of the cloak’s colour to red is certainly more plausible generally in that red dye was abundant throughout the Empire, even if further evidence of its military use in Judaea is lacking. Graham Sumner has collected the limited evidence that survives from early Roman Palestine, the sum of which indicates that soldiers usually wore white clothing. 1) §P14 is a pay receipt that identifies linen tunics in use among soldiers at Masada, one of which is explicitly described as white. Graham Sumner notes that while linen was more expensive than wool, climatological concerns likely played a role in clothing decisions in Judaea. 2) Nearly all linen fragments excavated from Masada were undyed white, though it is not entirely clear which fragments were used for clothing and which were used for other purposes; it is also not clear which were used by military personnel and which were used by civilians. Regardless, one is justified in assuming at least some fragments are from military dress. 3) Josephus describes an incident when Simon bar Giora attempted to escape Roman capture during the siege of Jerusalem by impersonating a Roman soldier (*J.W.* 7.26-36). Simon’s imitation involved wearing a white tunic and a purple cloak (available to anyone wealthy enough to purchase one), but his ruse was unsuccessful. 4) §F35 is a receipt from 128 CE that includes the order of five white cloaks from Egypt to soldiers in Judaea. Unfortunately, no data precedes the Judaean War with any certainty, and much of the evidence relates to the legionary garrison. Mark’s depiction of soldiers’ clothing Jesus in a purple cloak does not necessarily indicate the author’s ignorance of soldierly garb in Palestine. Rather, one may take Mark’s purple cloak for its obvious symbolic import as an index of military hubris and ironic acclamation of Jesus as king. The purple cloak is not historically accurate to Mark’s context, but its colour implies the purchaser’s wealth. Matthew depicts the robe as scarlet instead of purple, a decision that likely reflects its Syrian provenance. That is, the legionaries of

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412 See the excellent discussion in Sumner 2002: 16-17.
413 Sumner 2002: 34-35, though Sumner unjustifiably characterizes the cloak used by Simon bar Giora as “reddish-purple” (πορφυράν ἐμπεριονθήμενον γέλανιόν; Josephus, J.W. 7.29). Sumner seems to assume Matthean Priority, and so treats the red cloak as representative of Judaean auxiliaries. This probably explains his peculiar mischaracterization of Simon bar Giora’s cloak as “reddish.”
Syria may have used red cloaks; if so, Matthew’s redactional move here serves to add realism to Mark’s depiction.

Matthew and Mark’s depiction of the soldiers’ mockery of Jesus might be fruitfully compared to each other in light of aristocratic polemic against soldiers’s supposed political aspirations. This was discussed at length in the previous chapter, but in short, the elite of the early Roman Empire commonly understood soldiers as tactless rabble whose rise in influence was a threat to the prevailing order in that soldiers’ and veterans’ influence came at the expense of the old aristocracy; aristocratic authors attempted to discredit soldiers as a class by depicting them as an arrogant social type marked by a desire for wealth and power, willing to inflict cruelty on any passersby. Mark’s version of the pericope appears at first glance to be similar to aristocratic polemic. The use of the purple cloak creates an atmosphere of affluence, given the well-known expense of purple dye. The repeated acts of hubris during the beating were also familiar images to any reader of Apuleius or even Josephus, among many other classical authors. There is also the irony of the soldiers hailing Jesus as king, oblivious to their acknowledgment of Jesus’ true royal status. Despite the similarity to aristocratic polemic against soldiers, Mark’s narrative is probably less connected with critique of soldiers’ political ambitions than it is linking decadence with immorality (cf. Mark 10:17-31, 14:10-11). In a similar vein, high ranking officers acted as shorthand for the opulence of Antipas’ birthday party in Mark 6:21. Mark does not appear particularly invested in the immorality of soldiers as a class, but he makes use of an existing stereotype for his own purposes – filtered, as it was, from aristocratic literature into a more popular form.

Matthew, on the other hand, alters two elements particularly suggestive of soldierly arrogance: the robe is now scarlet (and therefore less regal) and the sequence of events is revised such that mockery leads to physical violence. Immediately prior to this episode, Matthew added the note about Pontius Pilate washing his hands in innocence, a character moment that contrasts the Judaean governor with his sadistic soldiers. The evangelist further draws the reader’s attention to the relationship between Pilate and his soldiers, noting that they were “the soldiers of the governor” (27:27). Matthew’s juxtaposition of the saintly Pilate with the cruel soldiers also recalls aristocratic polemic against soldiers. But whereas Mark evinces little interest in the faults of soldiers as a class, the mere contrast between Pilate and his soldiers in Matthew generates
such an effect. The fact that centurions are both positive figures in Matthew (8:5-13, 27:54) is sufficient to distinguish Matthew’s depiction from elite literature, in that centurions were consistently depicted as equally corrupt as their subordinates in highbrow literature. This difference locates Matthew’s narrative among non-aristocrats, but it nevertheless operates on the distinctions salient to aristocratic discourse. Thus, whether or not Matthew intends to discredit soldiers by attributing them lowly vices in contrast with the nobility of the old elite, his depiction nevertheless participates in a popularized version of aristocratic discourse.

In both Mark and Matthew, elements of standard polemic are adopted, but revised for the evangelists’ own ends. Mark drew upon the imagery of a widespread critique of soldiers: soldiers’ ownership of purple garments and their arrogant behaviour toward others is too common a trope to attribute to coincidence. Mark seems to have little interest in attributing the soldiers’ actions to a lower-class culture of violence, but readily employs imagery consistent therewith. Matthew contrasts the aristocratic innocence of Pilate with the gritty sadism of his soldiers.

Soldiers are also major participants in the act of crucifying Jesus (Mark 15:21-32). They conscript Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross, bring Jesus to Golgotha, offer him wine with myrrh, crucify Jesus, cast lots for his clothes, and crucify bandits. A few scholars offer the appealing suggestion that the soldiers’ actions continue the mockery that began in the preceding section, albeit less explicitly. T. E. Schmidt pursues this line of thinking farther than others in arguing that the soldiers bore (φέροσιν; 15:22) Jesus to Golgotha, recalling “the custom of the triumphator being borne in a portable curule chair which was placed in his chariot.” Schmidt then argues that Jesus was carried on a litter, as an act of mockery. Adela Yarbro Collins counters by observing that the evidence for this reading is thin: no litter is mentioned and there seems to be no allusions to a chariot. While we should therefore be hesitant to see an allusion to the chair, Schmidt notes that this is the first instance when Jesus is described as carried rather than led (ἀπάγω) by the soldiers. This lends credence to the idea that an ironic triumphal parade might be evoked, though such a parade lacks specificity.

415 Collins 2007: 738; δημος/carnifex is most frequently responsible: Lucian, Peregr. 34; Char. 4.3.10; Cicero, Rab. Perd. 10, 11, 16; Ovid, Am. 1.12.17-18; Quintillian, Decl. 6.9.
The argument for the continued mockery of Jesus is much stronger in reference to the offer of spoiled wine to Jesus in 15:23. Aromatic wine was considered a delicacy during the early Roman period, the offer of spoiled wine can be seen as little other than cruelty – probably with reference to Ps 69:21 in this case. The soldiers’ offer of bad wine to Jesus continues the parodic exaltation of the King of the Jews. Indeed, we might note that the soldiers had previously clothed Jesus’ beaten body in their fine purple cloak. The irony and unknowing acknowledgement of Jesus as true king continues with the placard of the charge against Jesus (15:26), and while Mark is not explicit on who placed it, one may reasonably infer the soldiers did so.

Though military is heavily implicated in the mockery of Jesus, there is no indication that soldiers qua soldiers are singled out for criticism by Mark. Passersby, chief priests, scribes, and others being executed also ridicule Jesus about his alleged royalty. Moreover, the soldiers are never explicitly named as actors in the crucifixion scene: they are merely the implied actors in verbs with third-person plural subjects that require the reader’s inference. It is therefore difficult to understand the passion narrative as a critique of the Roman Empire or its military: the soldiers are one among many participants in Jesus’ humiliation. Nor does it seem the soldiers are involuntary actors in this charade, as is evident in the use of imagery relating to soldier’s decadence discussed in the preceding section. The soldiers are not conspirators against Jesus and seem to have no special vendetta against him, but they nevertheless participate eagerly in his execution.

**Sweep Two: Directly Related, Less Important Material**

*The Beginning of the Good News of the Son of God, Saviour – 1:1*

Craig Evans and others have presented compelling parallels between the Markan incipit and inscription known as the Priene Calendar, which survives in both Greek and Latin versions. Several fragmentary copies of the inscription have been found in Asia Minor, including Apamea, Dorylaeum, Maionia, Eumenia, but the best-surviving version was discovered at Priene. The calendar, erected around 9 BCE, speaks of Augustus in terms reminiscent of the Markan Jesus. The most relevant portion reads:

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Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior [σωτήρ], both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance [ἐπιφανεῖν] excelled even our anticipations, surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good news for the world that came by reason of him [ἡρέξεν δὲ τῷ κόσμῳ τῶν δι’ αὐτὸν ἡ γενέθλιος τοῦ θεοῦ] ….417

Evans notes several elements whose parallels to Mark are particularly compelling: 1) use of the word εὐαγγέλιον, 2) interest in the gospel’s beginning (ἀρχεῖν), 3) the divinized nature of the referent, and 4) the referent’s status as saviour of the people. Notably, the first three of these components are present in the Markan incipit, although there are text-critical issues around the inclusion of υἱὸς θεοῦ in the first verse of Mark. Evans suggests Mark advances an implicit comparison between Jesus and Augustus, a comparison that favours Jesus over and against the emperor. The parallels that Evans cites between the two texts are compelling, but the Priene Calendar is specific to Asia Minor, a long distance from Palestine, which calls into question the accessibility of the inscription to Mark. Mark need not have had access to the Priene Calendar in particular, though. The Priene Calendar is instructive not because it uniquely discusses the emperor in terms reminiscent of Jesus, but because such terms are so densely collected into a single epigraph. The individual components (e.g., σωτήρ, υἱὸς θεοῦ, εὐαγγέλιον) could be encountered in any number of places: coinage, imperial temples, public dedications, etc. This type of discourse presumably occurred with comparable frequency in Palestine, as the imperial temples are attested at Sebaste, Caesarea Maritima, Gerasa, and Paneas. Thus, the parallels between Mark and the Priene Calendar are sufficient to lead one to suppose Mark somehow depended upon imperial inscriptions for the phrasing of 1:1.418

417 Translation lightly edited from Evans 2000. For the Greek text, see OGIS 458.
418 The criteria developed by Dennis MacDonald (2001) for ascertaining literary intertextuality are relevant. Accessibility: the Priene Calendar is specific to Asia Minor, but imperial inscriptions are attested in post-War Palestine. Analogy: roughly contemporaneous texts use similar language regarding the emperors (e.g., Josephus, J.W. 4.618, 4.656; cf. note 385 above). Density: nearly all meaningful vocabulary in Mark 1:1 is directly related to the Priene Calendar. Order: Markan order deviates from the Priene Calendar, but this does not seem to be significant. Distinctive Traits: these two texts share language that was unusual in common discourse. Interpretablity: this will be addressed below.
Arthur Droge is critical of the interpretation proffered by Evans.\(^{419}\) Droge is suspicious of “christological” readings of Mark and the Roman Empire, which tend to treat the Gospel of Mark as though it were interested foremost in elevated theological matters instead of “mundane, contingent, and historical” concerns. Droge contends that the Roman Empire is reduced to a “theological problem” for Mark, where Jesus remains the text’s central focus. An example of this is when Adam Winn contends that “Mark presents Jesus as a legitimate world ruler, one who is in all ways superior to the current world ruler, Vespasian.”\(^ {420}\) The christological approach is inadequate not least because it operates on problematic assumptions about christological crises and the nature of Roman propaganda. It also treats the Roman Empire as a merely intellectual issue for Christians, rather than being something that permeated daily life.

Droge hesitates to offer an alternative interpretation of this passage, uncertain whether to take the Markan incipit as an echo of imperial language or conscious co-optation of it. Some clues may lie behind the peculiar mixture of terms that he observes in the passage: the Jewish χριστός sits beside the Roman υἱὸς θεοῦ and εὐαγγέλιον. However, one does not want to make too much of a single ambiguous passage in Mark, some of which is text-critically uncertain.\(^ {421}\) Even so, Bradley McLean observes the “sequencing relations [of:] god > son of god > citizen” that was central to the imperial cult (e.g., Olympians > Julius Caesar > Augustus > Roman citizens) is here applied to Jesus.\(^ {422}\) McLean suggests that Mark 1:1 effectively installs Jesus in this same sequence, inscribing prevailing Roman relations into early Christian discourse.

The Execution of John the Baptist – Mark 6:14-29

The first pericope in which military figures actually appear in Mark is during the decapitation of John the Baptist. Two military figures appear: senior officers (χιλιάρχοι; 6:21) and an executioner acting on Antipas’ behalf (σπεκουλάτωρ; 6:27-28). The senior officers are termed chiliarchs, which had long been used for military commanders – nominally of a thousand men. Roman literature and epigraphs use the term χιλιάρχος as a Greek translation of the Roman office tribune, but it is not clear if the term is Mark’s or Antipas’. The matter is irrelevant.

\(^ {419}\) Droge 2011.
\(^ {420}\) Winn 2008: 200.
\(^ {421}\) υἱὸς θεοῦ is uncertain for Mark 1:1. Other important variants omit χριστός υἱὸς θεοῦ, read χριστός υἱὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, read χριστοῦ υἱὸ τοῦ κυρίου, or omit χριστοῦ. See the discussion in Collins 1995.
\(^ {422}\) McLean 2015: 59-61.
though. These officers are faceless and functionless, simply acting as an indicator of the luxurious quality of Antipas’ birthday party. The chiliarchs are pleased by Herodias’ dancing and Antipas’ desire to continue entertaining his guests is one factor in leading him to execute John (6:26). One infers that such officers were not part of the author’s experience of the military, as they represent a concentration of power that exists at a distance from exemplary characters (socially, temporally, etc.).

The case of the executioner is a bit more complex. Mark transliterates the Latin *speculator,* which was most likely a term of Mark’s own and not Antipas’, as it seems the pericope’s historical accuracy is a secondary concern to Mark and it is unlikely Antipas’ army was so Romanized. The duties Antipas assigns the *speculator* were not particularly typical of such army scouts, though several pieces of literature describe *specatores* as enacting executions. Though the executioner is faceless, he has a clear function, beheading John, bringing his head on a platter and giving it to Herodias. The executioner is accorded no narrative significance: Antipas alone is credited with the execution, with soldiers otherwise unmentioned (6:16), even when they act as an extension of Herod’s power (6:17). The military is simultaneously both integral to the narrative, in that it provides Antipas his prestige and performs the act of execution, and irrelevant in the soldiers’ inability to do anything on their own accord.

Much of the pericope is messy. The reference to Philip’s mother-in-law and Herodias is confused and Mark implies the execution occurred in Galilee instead of Peræa (contrast Josephus, *A.J.* 18.109-115, 136-137). More important to Mark’s depiction than the historical proceedings of John’s execution are broad polemics of characterization: Antipas as God-fearing but weak-willed, Herodias as temptress, and her mother as manipulative. Military representatives by contrast are of no special significance and occupy Mark’s attention only insofar as they further other narrative goals: when Mark alludes to John’s execution later (9:12-13), the act of execution is not explicitly mentioned, and it is only a component of the generally poor treatment the new Elijah received. Soldiers are clearly not aligned with God’s coming kingdom but neither are they especially aligned with Satan, and act with neither zeal nor hesitation.

*The Feeding of 5000 – 6:40*

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It is noted on occasion that the grouping at Gennesaret may be understood militarily: 1) Jesus only feeds men (6:44), 2) they are organized in units of fifty and one hundred, one of which corresponds to the nominal size of centuries and the other approximates the size of a cavalry turma, and 3) the 5000 people fed corresponds roughly to the size of a Roman legion.\footnote{424 See the interpretations in Brower 2012: 176; France 2002: 261; Hare 1996: 76; MacDonald 2000: 86-87; Placher 2010: 98-99; Wright 2001: 79.} An allusion to the military seems unlikely, given Mark’s use of an agricultural metaphor: πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ in the same verse refers literally to rows of leeks and here provides imagery for the organization of the 5000. Thus, rather than being ordered according the practices of military units, those about to eat the loaves and fish are ordered in accordance with gardening techniques.

To this point, Mark’s gardening and harvesting metaphors primarily concern issues of group growth (e.g., 1:17, 4:1-20, 4:26-29, 4:30-32). The grouping of those at Gennesaret more strongly evokes the surprising success of Jesus’ ministry than it does the military. Note also that the ordering of the crowd goes unmentioned in the Feeding of 4000 (8:1-10).

\textit{Three Passion Predictions – Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34}

Jesus foretells his death three times in Mark’s Gospel, each time mentioning his execution and alluding to those who carry it out. Mark 8:31 refers to the suffering and rejection that the son of man must undergo, as well as his eventual death. The two actions which soldiers perform – inflicting suffering and killing Jesus – are described in agentless ways. It is necessary that the son of man suffer much (δεῖ … πολλά παθεῖν) and that he be killed, both of which are narrated in the passive voice (ἀποκτανθῆναι). The act of rejection, by contrast, is given explicit perpetrators in the same passage; Mark attributes it to elders, chief priests, and scribes. Soldiers are similarly devoid of individual agency in Mark 9:31. The son of man will be turned over to human hands that will then kill him (χεῖρ[α] ἀνθρώπων … ἀποκτενοῦσιν αὐτὸν), a description that subsumes soldiers into the same category as Jesus’ Jewish opponents.

The final passion prediction offers greater detail both about the actions surrounding Jesus’ death and their perpetrators. Though the act of condemnation is strangely attributed to the chief priests and the scribes, they will turn the son of man over to the Gentiles, who will then mock, spit upon, flog, and kill him (10:33-34). It is significant that those carrying out the punishment – that is, soldiers – are identified as Gentile, as this differentiates them from other conspirators and may
amplify Jesus’ degradation. Thus, while soldiers had no agency in the first two passion predictions, the third is considerably more vivid and but does not show familiarity with punitive measures beyond stereotypical acts of humiliation. Soldiers have more personality than in the previous predictions as well, but this is only in terms of an ethnic generalization; one is presented a sea of hostile faces that lacks the specificity and recognizability of other groups such as “scribes” and “chief priests.”

Mock Imperial Parade – 11:1-11

The triumphal entry is sometimes understood in the context of imperial processions.425 There was a recognizable literary trope of military leaders entering a city, David Catchpole cites twelve examples from Judaea alone, including Alexander the Great into Jerusalem (Josephus, A.J. 11.325-339), Apollonius into Jerusalem (2 Macc 4:21-22), Simon Maccabee into Jerusalem (1 Macc 13:49-51), and Marcus Agrippa into Jerusalem (Josephus, A.J. 16.12-15). Catchpole notes that these stories follow a fairly consistent formula: a) a recognized person achieves victory, almost always military victory; b) a formal ceremonial entrance; c) greetings or acclamation with an invocation of God; d) entry to the city climaxing with a visit to the temple; and e) cultic activity either positive or negative. Mark coheres reasonably well with this schema, but one has difficult explaining the entire text on this basis, since there are intertextual references to Zech 9:9, with further parallels to Ps 118:25-26 and Zech 14.

Some have suggested that Mark presents a parody of the imperial parade, contrasting the humble donkey and Jesus’ kingdom of God with the splendor of Roman emperors and their subordinates. In such a way, Mark might be read as thumbing his nose at the arrogance of Roman imperial claims, proffering an unlikely entry by the oft-unrecognized Messiah. Indeed, the reference to “the kingdom of our father David” (11:10) is suggestive of an alternative to the present Roman order. The parallels to other processions are sufficient to indicate that at the very least Jesus’ entry was modelled on proof-texts from the Hebrew Bible as mediated by the Roman context in which the Gospel was produced. But is this a sufficient basis to infer subversive politics?

The passage bears certain ideological similarities to the anti-imperial readings of Ephesians discussed in the previous chapter. On the one hand, indeed, Jesus may be presented as an alternative kingdom to the Roman imperium. But this observation would limit the analysis to the level of authorial intent. If one continues by examining the rhetorics and politics informing Mark’s articulation, the scene takes on a different significance. One notices that Jesus is but one among many who have heralded the arrival of a newly legitimate reign upon arrival in Jerusalem – a claim that consistently supersedes all previous claims to the same. The claim to introduce real peace, true kingship, and authentic Judaism, and so on, in contrast to preceding regimes were routine aspects of such entrances, rhetoric also employed by Mark: Alexander’s respect for the Jerusalem temple (at the expense of the Samaritan temple), the Maccabees’ restoration of a fully autonomous Judaean state, etc. Mark’s adoption of the literary form of the entrance narrative also deploys rhetorical content that is deeply consistent with similar narratives. This parade, of course, follows a series of violent encounters against opposing forces, both spiritual and terrestrial. Therefore even if Mark undermines certain aspects of such parades (e.g., the use of a humble donkey), exceptionalist rhetoric and authenticity politics were a major facet of such entrances. It is precisely Mark’s insistence on the uniqueness of Jesus and his coming reign that renders this narrative so ordinary. So, while Mark may subvert certain understandings of imperial might, the Gospel nevertheless fully participates in the same discourse.

The Olivet Discourse – Mark 13

It was argued in Chapter Two that much of the Olivet Discourse should be understood as a vaticinium ex eventu about the Judaean War. Here it would be helpful to consider how the military is understood in relevant passages from the Olivet Discourse. We will see that there is often very little to be said about the military, even in relevant passages, further suggesting their peripheral nature as an explicit concern to the evangelist.

Mark 13:1-2 contains the Gospel’s most direct reference to the fall of the Jerusalem Temple. Though Jesus speaks to one of his disciples (and apparently the reader as well) informing him in the second-person singular that he will see the destruction of the temple (βλέπεις), there is no interest in who will carry out the destruction. As John Kloppenborg has argued, Mark seems to

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426 Vaage 2012.
be aware of military rituals preceding the temple’s destruction,\textsuperscript{427} indicating that Mark knew who carried out the siege of Jerusalem. Even so, there is no indication that the Roman army is the object of blame or resentment in Mark. Mark 13:1–2 uses the passive voice to describe the fallen state of the temple, thereby minimizing the significance of the actors who historically caused its destruction.

Mark 13:7–8 mentions a series of conflicts as portents preceding the son of man’s coming. Once more, the actors are irrelevant for Mark’s interests. But while it may be tempting to dismiss this passage as implying the reader was safe from these wars – after all, the reader is only hearing about wars and rumours thereof – we will see a few verses later that this is not the case. Rather, the passage frames the War in a foretelling retrospect: the readers need not be alarmed about the War and other conflicts on account of their own health, as they have already survived it. The portents merely point toward the eventual arrival of God’s kingdom soon after. The reader’s proximity to the War is assumed and warranted no elaboration.

Mark 13:14 presents a much more complex problem in the identification of “the abomination of desolation” (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως). It was argued in Chapter Two that the referent of the abomination probably relates to Titus’ siege of the temple, as the only person understood as a desecrator in other post-War texts is Titus (e.g., Sib. Or. 5.399, 4 Ezra 11:1). While the significance of the temple’s fall reverberates throughout the Gospel, Mark nevertheless identifies the perpetrators’ significance principally as the most potent of portents preceding the son of man’s coming, secondarily as an act of extreme blasphemy, and tertiarily as cause to flee Jerusalem. That is, as W. A. Such and others argue, actions of Titus and his army are significant in that they trigger the final series of events leading to the son of man’s coming: “the Jewish war up to Titus’ ruin of the city is preparatory for the trigger event, which ‘minimizes’ or ‘clears the way’ so that events up to Jerusalem’s fall are subsumed under the impact of one event.”\textsuperscript{428} For this reason, Mark does not name Titus directly, instead adopting 1 Maccabees’ and Daniel’s phrasing. In so doing, Mark frames Titus’ import in terms of a pre-determined course of events over which the Markan author has no influence, but a prophecy that they have an opportunity to act upon. Titus’ actions thus have a cosmic significance, but are devoid of any personality; Titus’

\textsuperscript{427} Kloppenborg 2005.
\textsuperscript{428} Such 1999: 170.
The军事是被理解为战争机器，但值得注意的是，《马可福音》中没有特别感兴趣的军事或更广泛地罗马对冲突的毁灭，甚至没有命名他们作为从犹太逃亡的原因。犹太战争被反复描述为无代理的，从而复杂化了普通假定，即军队的主要职业是战争，或者被理解为由巴勒斯坦居民的战争。耶稣和彼拉多——《马可福音》15:1-15

军事也活跃，如果只是隐晦地，在与彼拉多的场景中。与约翰施洗者的执行一样，军事的指挥官被证明对士兵的运作负责任：耶稣被交给彼拉多（15:2），彼拉多释放了巴拉巴，鞭打耶稣，并将他交由钉十字架（5:15）。所有这些行为都是由犹太辅助军执行的，值得注意的是，马可将他们的责任归诸彼拉多。前两个是不特别令人惊讶的，因为耶稣被带入彼拉多的监护下，巴拉巴和耶稣随后被释放出来。鞭打是不寻常的，因为彼拉多的责任超出了执行处罚的命令，事实上，彼拉多自己似乎是矛盾的：一方面，他负责耶稣的处罚，尽管他试图释放耶稣，并意识到首席祭司的阴谋。事实上，彼拉多似乎对马可来说是一个相当积极的人物，一个卷入一个不受他控制的争议的人物，必须屈从于不可阻挡的混乱中的人群。

约瑟夫和以色列王——15:2, 15:9, 15:12, 15:18, 15:26, 15:32

429 Incigneri 2003: 133; emphasis in original.
Jesus is called the “king of the Jews” five times during the passion narrative and “king of Israel” once. It is often noted that only Gentiles – Pilate and soldiers – refer to Jesus as the king of the Jews, whereas Jews call him the king of Israel. It is strange that the title ascribed to Jesus is most often an ethnic designation: he is king of the Jews (or Judaeans) and not king of a given territory. This peculiarity becomes clearer upon comparison with inscriptions of the Herodian dynasty: there is no evidence that they ever referred to themselves as king over the Jewish *ethnos*, even though Josephus twice refers to Herod the Great as ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.\(^{430}\) Nor were the Herodian kings ever referred to as kings of Israel – a long-defunct kingdom. The closest one encounters is ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῆς Ἰουδαίας, used by Herod the Great (40-4 BCE) and Agrippa I (41-44 CE), and is similar to Archelaus’ reign as ὁ ἐθνάρχης τῆς Ἰουδαίας (4 BCE–6 CE). Thus, while Mark’s phrase ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων obviously relates to provincial politics, it does not directly appropriate any titles that the Herodians themselves used, at least as far as present data indicates. The extent to which it was in popular use is not entirely clear, as Josephus is our only evidence in its favour.

But before assessing the significance of Mark’s wording, it is important to note that Jesus never makes these claims about himself and it is not immediately obvious that either of these titles adequately apply to Jesus for Mark. Robert Gundry notes that other passages where one might expect allusions to Jesus’ kingship (e.g., the request of James and John, the Triumphal Entry) never suggest his role as king; Gundry also points out that the kingdom parables consistently imagine God as the king, never Jesus.\(^{431}\)

Mark’s christology of Jesus as son of David (and thus lineage with royal associations) is similarly complex. Jesus is hailed as son of David by Bartimaeus (10:46-48) and during the Triumphal Entry the crowd takes Jesus’ presence as a sign of a coming Davidic kingdom (11:10). However, when Jesus discusses David, he declares that the messiah will not be of Davidic lineage (12:35-37) and Jesus’ attitude toward the title “king of the Jews” is more ambiguous than it is toward the “Messiah.” Mark seems to regard the title as inadequate, given

\(^{430}\) Josephus A.J. 15.409; J.W. 1.282. See the helpful and nearly complete collection of relevant inscriptions in Richardson 1996: 203-213. Richardson is critical of those who read the Masada amphorae as anything other than *regi herodi iudaico* (Mas 795-796, 800-801, 804-818, 821-826, 850, 946-950).

\(^{431}\) Gundry 1993: 877 contrasts Mark with various passages from the Gospels of Matthew and John. Pace Collins 2007: 747-748, who asserts without marshalling evidence that Mark understood “king” to be an unproblematized title for the Markan Jesus.
the different reaction attributed to Jesus when the high priest interrogates him about whether he is the Messiah (14:61-62) and when Pilate inquires whether he is the King of the Jews (15:2); the former Jesus unequivocally affirms and the latter Jesus deflects. Mark obscures christological titles and repeatedly emphasizes people’s misuse of various christological terms, a matter that only reduces one’s confidence that a clear meaning can be extracted from “the son of David.” Markan christology occurs primarily through acts of cancellation and can in some sense be characterized as apophatic. Markan christology is an ineffective and insufficient basis for discerning Mark’s politics, as sense can only be made from it with frequent reference to other parts of the Gospel.

Do Not Lord over Each Other as the Gentiles – 10:42-45

Adam Winn has recently argued that Jesus’ teaching about leadership through servility ought to be understood as a critique of imperial rhetoric and modes of power. Winn contends that Mark advances a radicalized notion of *re cusatio*, an anti-tyrannical rhetoric popular in the Roman Republic and early Principate. The saying about not lording over one another contends that Rome fails by its own political ideals. Winn helpfully highlights the relevance of the Roman Imperial context of the verse, but his interpretation depends on the assumption that rhetoric of *re cusatio* was significant for Mark. Winn defends this assumption by locating Mark’s composition in Rome and thus proximate to high-brow imperial polemic. It was argued at length in Chapter Two that Mark was composed in Palestine, possibly Capernaum in particular, but problems emerge even if Mark had been composed in the context Winn suggests. Namely, all of Winn’s examples of *re cusatio* rhetoric derive from high-level elite texts. This is unsurprising since these individuals participated in overlapping fields of power within which such rhetoric had tangible outcomes. By contrast, it is difficult to imagine a situation in which a commoner would find rhetoric of the emperor’s *re cusatio* interesting. In short, *re cusatio* appears to be the wealthy criticizing things the wealthy would be expected to criticize; it does not obviously fit into anti-Roman or even populist discourse. It is therefore unlikely Mark was participating in such discourse.

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432 Winn 2014.
Regardless, Winn pointing in the direction of the Emperor is helpful, as Mark 10:42 seems to be aimed directly at state leaders. Notable is the fact that it is *Gentiles* who are perceived as lording over others, phrasing that would seem to exclude Herodian kings and princes. This omission might be understood in light of the post-War context wherein their waning influence entered its final stage. The act of “lording over” was certainly a meaningful understanding of the situation after the Judaean War, a context marked by tighter administration and the influx of legionaries – nearly all of whom were Gentile.

*The Roman Army as God’s Scourge*

It is sometimes suggested that the Roman army in Mark acts as God’s scourge, following the tradition of deuteronomistic theologians, who understood the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests as evidence of divine punishment for the chosen people’s unfaithfulness.\(^{433}\) Such interpreters understand the temple’s eventual fall as a result of its unfruitfulness, its leaders’ role in Jesus execution, or the treatment of Jesus by denizens of Jerusalem more broadly. This interpretation is rarely elaborated upon due to the fact that it is plainly false when stated unequivocally – Jesus himself is executed by Roman auxiliaries and John the Baptist by Antipas’ soldiers, and there is every reason to believe these were *not* acts of divine punishment for Mark. If the military was a divine scourge in Mark, it was only partially so. In this way, Markan deuteronomistic theology – evinced in the Lord’s abandonment of the temple upon Jesus’ death – differs little from Roman notions of *pax deorum*.

*Sweep Three: Rarely Discussed Material*

*Protection of Tax-Collectors – 2:13-17*

The Gospels contain numerous traditions linking Jesus with tax collectors – Zacchaeus, Levi, Matthew, and numerous sayings establish some sort of connection. By contrast, it is commonly noted that tax collectors were widely despised in antiquity, including Jewish literature, and that Jesus’ fraternization with them should be understood as a kind, even generous practice. Contrary to this schema, I would like to suggest that the Gospel of Mark is the earliest surviving Christian

\(^{433}\) E.g., Leander 2013: 266; Moore 2006: 35.
text to associate Jesus positively with tax collectors, a connection that should be understood in light of the Judaean War.

Tax collectors are absent from most Christian writings that might have preceded Mark’s composition: the Signs Gospel, the Didache, fragmentary Gospels, and epistolary literature never mention them at all. Only two possibly pre-Markan sources do so: the Gospel of Thomas and the Sayings Gospel Q. Gos. Thom. 100 – the Thomasine version of the question on taxation – alludes to tax collectors indirectly, insofar as they are employees of Caesar. Jesus never interacts with them nor mentions them explicitly, though they are presumed to exist.

The depiction of tax collectors in Q is more complex. Tax collectors are mentioned in the International Q Project reconstruction at 6:32, 7:29, and 7:34, the text of Q that is adopted here. The reconstruction of 7:29 is uncertain due to significant deviations between the Matthean and Lukan texts, but both refer to tax collectors’ positive reception of John. This should probably be understood in light of John’s call to repentance (Q 3:8): tax collectors were interested in John and upon repentance no longer continued that occupation. One cannot make too much of the verse, but its reference to John and not Jesus is sufficient to indicate its irrelevance to Jesus’ treatment of tax collectors. More instructive are the other two passages, both of which treat tax collectors as a shaming device, similar to Q’s treatment of Gentiles: these groups function as ciphers against which others are unfavourably compared. In one instance they shame Jesus’ opponents (6:32) and the other they are part of outsiders’ polemic against Jesus (7:34). While the latter alleges Jesus’ association with tax collectors, its hyperbole is obvious: Jesus is a disgrace because of his unseemly activities and compatriots. The charge only makes sense if there was some reputation among the Q group for engaging in activities that might be exaggerated thus: drinking alcohol and consorting with persons of ill repute. That said, the charge is placed on the mouth of imaginary opponents and the structure of the passage itself is suggestive of exaggeration; Jesus’ drinking is correlated with drunkenness and eating corresponds to friendship with tax collectors and sinners, John’s failure to eat or drink are taken as indices of demonic possession. Surely the author regarded neither John as possessed, nor Jesus as a drunkard. The exact practices that these characterizations exaggerated are lost, but the text

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435 On Q’s depiction of Gentiles, see Arnal 2007.
of Q appears to assume the charges are overstated as articulated, and thus false: “the terms ‘tax collectors’ and ‘sinners’ functioned from the outset symbolically as terms of slander versus attesting the existence of ‘tax collectors’ in the early Christian community.” Consistent across all three passages in Q is that tax collectors are little more than ciphers for poor reputations.

Mark thus appears to be the earliest Gospel to associate Jesus with tax collectors. In Mark 2:13-17, Jesus approaches the tax collector Levi, who is working at his booth near the shore at Capernaum. As discussed in Chapter Four, Capernaum seems as likely a place for a toll booth as one would expect to encounter in rural Galilee – it was on regional roads connecting the Phoenician coast to Galilee, Batanaea, and the Decapolis, not to mention that Capernaum was the border village nearest the Galilee-Batanaea political border. All of this made it a prime location to collect tolls or tariffs. A variety of data indicates that duties and taxes were collected at many borders in the Levant, so there is no reason to dispute this aspect of Mark’s story.

The military history of Galilee (and thus Capernaum) is described in Database Three; there seems sufficient reason to suppose a centurion was stationed in the village during the Herodian period (cf. Q 7:1-10). One of the most important reasons to suspect some modest military presence in Herodian Capernaum was precisely the presence of tax collectors and administrators (Signs Gospel at John 4) to ensure some kind of protection, as is evidenced in the Nabataean kingdom, Roman Egypt, Syria, and later in Syria Palaestina. However, the combination of Batanaea’s revised borders in 55 CE and the post-War policy of concentrating military presence in urban centres most likely entailed their temporary abandonment of the village until sometime late in Hadrian’s reign (§M19). This seems borne out by Mark’s post-War understanding of the Levant, in which the military is associated exclusively with major urban sites: Gerasa, the unnamed palace where John was executed, and especially Jerusalem. By contrast, the Sayings Gospel Q – probably approaching its final form between 50 and 66 CE, and thus before the War – depicts the military primarily as a village (7:1-10) and rural (Q at Matt 5:41) phenomenon. Capernaum remained on or near an “international” border from 4 BCE until 97 CE, with the exception of the period 39-53 CE (see note 245). Its proximity to the border of Galilee/Judaea and Batanaea/Syria, combined with its position on a road important for regional

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437 See the discussion in note 44.
trade, meant Capernaum had continued importance for toll and customs purposes, even if direct military support for tax collectors diminished.

Markan depiction of tax collectors should be understood in this context. Though Mark narrates the life of Jesus as occurring during the reign of Herod Antipas, the social world Mark imagines for Jesus is often more reflective of the author’s own. In this case, Capernaum is represented as free of soldiers and housing a customs booth, a combination that I have suggested is probably more typical of Mark’s context than Jesus’.

Perhaps the most significant difference between Q and Mark on this point is that the latter does not regard the charge of dining with tax collectors and sinners as a slanderous or exaggerated charge. That is, the Markan Jesus does dine with tax collectors and sinners, likely at his own house in Capernaum.438 The absence of the military from the landscape of Capernaum and rural life more generally figures into this difference. Whereas tax collectors were once among powerful and contemptible sinners (so Q), in Mark they are a despised but somewhat vulnerable population. Unlike Q, Mark’s Jesus deems such tax collectors in need of a physician, a metaphor that not only implies the need to be made right, but explicitly evokes weakness and thus vulnerability. Without the protection of the military, tax collectors moved from the mighty to the defenceless, a shift that prompted a different stance from that of Q and presumably a new set of practices to go along with it. That is, presence of narration cannot be simply taken as an index of practice, but the sheer exemplarity of Levi is suggestive of some positive praxis toward tax collectors. Notably, there is no indication that Levi gave up this line of work in Mark. The limited data in Mark prohibits an even cursory description, but as I have argued, whatever that may have been, it was informed in part by the shift of the military from rural areas and villages to a concentrated urban presence, a presence that greatly reduced the protection they proffered tax collectors.

Coinage – 6:37, 12:15, 12:42, 14:5

Coinage of the early Roman Empire consisted of two primary types: Roman imperial issues and Roman provincial issues. This distinction refers foremost the issuing authority, but also to denominations in use. Provincial issues often continued currency units from the preceding

438 See discussion in note 120.
Hellenistic period, as was the case in Judaea, Galilee, and Batanaea. It was noted in Chapter Two that the money of Mark’s Gospel is Roman imperial coinage: the cost of feeding 5000 people is estimated at 200 denarii, Jesus discusses the denarius as it relates to taxation, a widow contributes the equivalent of a quadrans to the temple, and the value of the woman’s ointment is estimated at 300 denarii. Even more important is an instance when provincial coinage is explained with reference to Roman coinage: the widow donates two (Judaean) lepta to the temple, which the narrator explains is equal to one (Roman) quadrans.

Mark’s depiction of coinage in Jesus’ day is significant in part because of its anachronisms. It was noted in Chapter Two that evidence suggests imperial coinage was rarely used in pre-War Palestine. This leads one to wonder why if lepta were more commonly used than quadrans in Jesus’ context, the author of Mark assumes his reader would more easily understand a reference to the latter; in a similar vein, references to the denarius go unexplained, despite the fact that the coin rarely circulated in pre-War Palestine. Only a few denarii from the Julio-Claudian period have been discovered in Judaean territory.

I suggested in Chapter Two that Mark’s understanding of coinage should be understood in light of the influx of Roman imperial coinage after the Judaean War, when Judaean provincial coinage was no longer produced; indeed, even Agrippa II minted some coins in Roman denominations, despite being the Batanaean client king. Thus, the prutah and denominations based on it were no longer produced in Judaean proper; this would include the lepton (12:42), which was valued in relation to the prutah. Though the lepton ceased production in the Hasmonaean era, the coins circulated through the end of the Second Temple Period. With the Temple’s fall, however, Judaean provincial coinage became obsolete in favour of Roman imperial coinage. This explains why Mark, writing after the War’s conclusion, treats imperial coinage as more familiar than provincial coinage.

One might go a step farther and suggest that Mark’s understanding of coinage is informed by the military’s part in the social landscape. That is, the military was one of the primary vehicles – if not the primary vehicle – for the introduction of imperial coinage into the province: legionaries

\[439\] Meshorer 1982: 92-93. That is, the Latin coins of Agrippa II correspond to Roman monetary units and his Greek coins constitute a provincial Batanaean currency. Numismatic research is subject to new discoveries with some regularity, but I am unaware of any new finds that would contradict Meshorer’s claim.
and the foreign auxiliaries required pay in imperial coinage, whereas the Sebastene auxiliaries before were presumably content with provincial coinage. The impact of the military on the monetization of the Palestinian economy was discussed above in Chapter Four and does not need to be rehearsed here. This data suggests that Mark’s understanding of coinage was heavily dependent upon the military’s role in Palestine, even if Mark does not directly comment on that relationship.

*Latinisms*

Similar to Mark’s depiction of imperial coinage, the use of Latinisms in the Gospel of Mark should be understood in relation to the military. The matter was discussed at length in Chapter Two. At several points Mark transliterates Latin words into Greek characters; while these Latinisms are sometimes taken to indicate Markan provenience in the city of Rome, I have argued that the words Mark transliterates are the words that one would expect to be transliterated where the Roman army was an occupying force. That is, the Latin words Mark transliterates tend to be military, legal, monetary, and administrative terms. I have shown that these Latin words were commonly transliterated into Greek or Semitic languages. These terms were marked as Roman, and thus their reference in Latin is entirely predictable.

The increased use of Roman measurements, coinage, and so on was experienced concomitantly with the Judaean War and the upgrade of Judaea to a consular province. It was suggested in Chapter Two that the adoption of such terms into the Greek lexicon in the Roman East was directly attributable to the use of such terms by military personnel and the provincial administration. *legio, speculator, flagello, and centurio* are all directly related to the military; Roman measurements, Roman monetary denominations, and legal-administrative terms such as *Caesar, census, and praetorium* are associated with the Roman army somewhat less directly, but nevertheless maintain a clear connection. The only words lacking Roman overtones are *pugnus*, which William Arnal has argued is part of an interpolation into Mark, and *grabatus*, which actually derives from Macedonian.\(^{440}\) In this way, Mark is representative of the latinization of Palestine that came with the War’s end and further accelerated after the Bar Kokhba War. As was the case with coinage, the effects of the military on Mark are felt more than they are seen.

\(^{440}\) Arnal 2008: 65-66 n. 18. See the discussion in Chapter One.
Spiritual Warfare

Mark, as is common among texts making use of apocalyptic discourse, occasionally communicates his cosmology in imagery of spiritual warfare. This was discussed above in the context of the Gerasene Demoniac; in sum, the son of man acts as the Lord’s worldly delegate, under whom he has placed the authority of the angelic army (8:38, 13:24-27).\textsuperscript{441} On the basis of these and other data, John Kloppenborg concludes that “Mark represents Jesus as a military commander, defeating and dispatching demons, and as a strongman, able to overpower other men of violence.”\textsuperscript{442} Moreover, Satan rules over a demonic kingdom, perhaps with Ba‘al as his delegate (3:22-27).\textsuperscript{443} This language is probably only indirectly indebted to the military context, given the use of similar metaphors to describe the Lord’s relationship with the angels (e.g., Lord of hosts) in earlier Jewish literature – there are no traditions linking the kingdom of God with military imagery.

The notions of spiritual warfare are not specifically Roman or Herodian, but the tendency to depict the military as the operation of power-by-proxy and as a force in competition for disparate peoples coheres with a Hellenistic and Roman milieu. Spiritual warfare in Mark – and most of the New Testament – depicts God’s role as commander of the heavenly army. Despite the author’s clear conception of spiritual warfare, it is presented as non-obvious to the characters in the story, as is evident in the confusion of people witnessing demonic possession and Jesus’ exorcisms. The non-obvious nature of these stories prompted Mark’s readers to reflect on the significance of these practices and inquire about their meaning.\textsuperscript{444} The Lord’s command of the angelic army exists primarily as a threat that will be substantiated in a fantastical event at some point in the future, an event that will validate Markan practices. The angelic army will gather the elect, but those who treated Jesus shamefully will be similarly scorned at the holy parade’s arrival. God’s adversaries also work in non-obvious ways: demons possess humans and unsuccessfully engage Christ in battle. The struggle for power of the terrestrial realm seems to be

\textsuperscript{441} Compare also the demon’s fear that the Jesus will destroy him in Mark 1:24, which may be further evidence of a spiritual battle.

\textsuperscript{442} Kloppenborg 2011: 351.

\textsuperscript{443} See Humphries 1999: 13-22 for criticism of the supposition that Ba‘al was commonly known as the “prince of demons” in Second Temple Judaism. Humphries assumes that Ba‘al is another name for Satan in Mark, which does not seem obvious to me, as the Pharisees may be suggesting that Jesus serves a Syrian deity.

\textsuperscript{444} Arnal and McCutcheon 2013: 134-170.
the central conflict between the two otherworldly powers. Despite the fact that heavenly and unholy armies practice combat in the presence of humans, Mark indicates that this is a limited manifestation of a much larger conflict that precedes the events depicted in the Gospel itself: the demons already know Jesus’ identity and often cower at his presence. The conflict emerging in Jesus’ exorcisms is thus one among other planes on which Jesus and the demons have already encountered one another; the warfare between them is literally *spiritual.*

The spiritual warfare of the Hebrew Bible, by contrast, appears overly interested in the Lord’s own participation in military conquest with straightforward victory expected, all of which is consistent with the Babylonian-Achaemenid context from which these traditions emerged, a context marked by a number of national warrior gods who aided their people in battle. This archetype was no longer in widespread use during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but the military inflection of the Jewish deity remained significant. Judaism edged from a henotheistic toward a more monotheistic cosmology (with an attendant dualism), so its warrior god no longer battled deities of neighboring states, but an unholy kingdom ruled by Satan. For Mark, the Lord sits at a considerable distance from the terrestrial realm of his subjects, where his delegate Jesus battles until an appointed time. This resembles the modes of power and authority that prevailed in the Roman period, where the emperor remained mostly inaccessible, but was experienced by means of his proxies and subordinates. Moreover, the goal of divine conquest shifted from territorial expansion to absolute terrestrial authority: no longer were Edom, Canaan, and Philistia the desired dominions of the Lord, but the inhabited world as a whole. As Luther Martin has shown, this is typical of Hellenistic cosmologies in general and may be attributed toward a shift in conceptions of political and military power concomitant with the rise of imperial administrative formations.445

There are few explicit indicators that the Roman army impacted Mark’s cosmology – indeed, the demon’s name Legion may be the only such index. Nevertheless, the Roman army had considerable role in shaping Mark’s concept of spiritual warfare, evident through comparison with earlier Jewish traditions about the Lord as a warrior deity that were similarly reflective of their own martial context. Not only does the Mark make use of military imagery in its depiction of spiritual warfare, it takes up the notion of territorial expansion concomitant as well, thereby

replicating the logic of imperial conquest. In these ways, the military plays a role in Mark’s cosmic landscape, and thus the imagination of the kingdom of God.
Chapter 7

Politics of the Military in Mark and New Testament Scholarship

It is difficult to concisely characterize Mark’s attitude toward the military, as ambiguous and ambivalent as it is. At a few crucial points, military personnel are responsible for horrors and devastations, including the executions of John and Jesus. Conversely, the centurion at the cross comes as close as anyone to the kingdom of God – even closer than the twelve – and is the only human to name Jesus’ divine sonship. Mark’s attitude might be characterized as apathy, since Mark is often indifferent to the military: the soldiers in the execution of John the Baptist are mostly perfunctory as agency is mostly ascribed to Herod, likewise Jesus’ execution is mostly attributed to Pilate, and the Olivet Discourse expresses neither praise nor blame for those wreaking havoc upon Palestine. Thus, an effort to determine a unified stance within Mark toward the military is likely in vain, as conflicting and even contradictory stances are apparent over the course of Mark’s narrative. The problem lies with the absence of any cohesive notion of “the military” or even “Rome” throughout Mark. Mark has no categorical terminology relating to these semantic domains. Thus, it is difficult to sustain the assumption that “the military” and “Rome” were salient features in Mark’s Gospel – topics that the author addressed with intent.

While Mark has some polemic against Judaean and Galilean administrators, the nonexistence of a consistent depiction of the military suggests that the author did not operate with “empire” or “Roman army” as salient categories when composing the Gospel.

This should not surprise us since, as Simon James demonstrates in a series of brilliant articles, the notion of a singular “Roman army” is a modern construct that is entirely anachronistic to the Roman Principate. James contends that the notion of “the Roman army” is problematic because it retrojects modern notions of the “war machine” into antiquity and purports a unified military structure that did not exist in the Roman Empire. James notes that there was not even a word that communicated the notion of a single, monolithic military in the early Common Era:

‘Army’ (exercitus), singular, was used for a particular grouping of forces, such as the standing army of a province or a corps specially assembled for a particular campaign. When generalising about the military, they employed plurals, writing of ‘the armies’

(exercitus), ‘the legions’ (legiones), ‘the regiments’ (numeri), etc., and not least of ‘the soldiers’ (milites), denoting a socio-political category.\textsuperscript{447}

The same can be said of Greek. στρατιά and στρατόπεδον were used in a manner similar to exercitus and generalizations about military units are consistently pluralized, such as στρατάρχαι, τέλοι, λόχαι, and στρατιώται, rather than operating with a unified and categorical referent. This operated not only on a linguistic level, but a social one as well: soldiers understood themselves to be clients of their specific general and individual generals likewise understood themselves to be patrons of their soldiers; the significance of these social relations were abundantly evident under the triumvirates and during the Year of the Four Emperors, not to mention soldiers claiming to be the son of their general in military diplomas. It was simply not feasible for emperors to act as effective patron over the entire army, thereby limiting any overarching unity among their ranks. Thus, if Mark were to operate with a concept of a monolithic “Roman army,” Mark would be exceptional among literature of the Principate.

The alien nature of “the Roman army” to Mark does not prohibit analysis of the Gospel’s politics. Rather than directing our efforts to determine Markan attitude toward “the military” as a whole, we might more productively assess Markan politics of the military and how they figure into broader constellations of Markan investments. This move would avoid a problematic attribution (or even conflation) of our scholarly interest in Mark’s stance toward the Roman Empire with Mark’s own literary goals. Markan politics might be assessed along two axes: one horizontal and the other vertical. The horizontal axis entails analysis of Mark’s assessment of different armies that were almost entirely autonomous of one another: cohortes Sebastenorum, ἡ στρατιά τοῦ Ἡρῴδου, and legiones Syriacae. Scholars often lump together these distinct armed forces in an unjustified manner – conflating significant differences that were salient to denizens of Palestine (and thus presumably also to Mark). Analysis of the vertical axis, by contrast, entails examination of the hierarchical politics within these armies: how a χιλίαρχος fares in comparison with a κεντυρίων, a στρατιώτης, etc. This vertical axis can be coordinated with other Markan politics of status and wealth, allowing us to assess the extent to which Markan conceptions of the military were continuous with other related hierarchical politics. We will see this vertical axis is

\textsuperscript{447} James 1999: 14.
far more salient to the Markan imaginary – and far more interesting with regards to the values Mark propounds – than the horizontal axis.

The present chapter will therefore attempt to assess Mark’s politics on a variety of registers related to the Roman Empire. This assessment will synthesize the disparate findings of Chapter Six as well as the theoretical suggestions of Chapter Five. I will suggest that the theoretical discussion permits us to reassess state violence in the Gospel of Mark – both its narrative world and the normative vision of Christianity and Judaism that Mark advances. This in turn will allow us to offer a provisional answer to the question posed at the outset of this dissertation: How are we to explain Mark’s ambivalent portrait of soldiers as being both cruel executioners and the only one with the insight to acknowledge Jesus’ divine sonship?

**Markan Politics of the Herodian Principality**

Mark has relatively little to say about the tetrarchy under Herod Antipas. Mark’s material is largely concentrated in the execution of John the Baptist, though one catches subtle glimpses in the Olivet Discourse ("you will stand before governors and kings,” “kingdom [will rise] against kingdom”) and the Passion Narrative ("king of the Jews,” “king of Israel”). The bulk of the attention is directed toward Herod Antipas himself, with soldiers and officers playing a secondary role. Mark’s characterization of the Herodian tetrarchy is less preoccupied with its military than its viability as a Jewish kingdom. Mark repeatedly (and anachronistically) refers to Antipas as βασιλεύς, which has the dual effect of drawing connections with the post-War monarch who actually held the title “king,” Agrippa II, but more importantly Mark’s polemic about authentic Judaism and its rightful king.

Mark’s brief depiction of Antipas paints him as a weak-willed, if nevertheless pious and honourable, ruler. Should Antipas refuse to grant his step-daughter’s request, his honour would diminish significantly; he ultimately follows through on his poorly conceived promise at the

448 In suggesting Mark participates in “authenticity politics” I am not suggesting Mark operates with notions of “authenticity” specific to the North Atlantic under late capitalism (an intellectual genealogy that owes much to existentialist philosophers, e.g., Sartre). Rather, I refer to a means of contesting and asserting social boundaries that relies upon the imputation of a “pure” essence of a social group that distinguishes deviations in that social formation by rhetorical recourse to this essence. One thinks, e.g., of assertions that terrorists are not really Muslim because authentic Islam teaches peace, or that Donald Trump is not really a Republican because authentic conservatism is marked by features x, y, and z. Such practices are evident in early Roman Judaism as well: Josephus’ polemic against Samaritans as fake Jews is a particularly clear instance of the phenomenon.
expense of his own piety, duped by the machinations of his own wife. The flawed masculinity of this king is placed in contrast with the boldness and authority the Markan Jesus displays at every opportunity, with a riposte prepared for nearly every challenge. This conflict between Jesus and Herod extends in two further directions. First is the involvement of Herodians in controversies with Jesus (3:6, 12:13). The identity of the Herodians is famously opaque and their reason for involvement in these particular controversies even more so. Second is Jesus’ explicit caution against “the yeast of Herod” (8:15), whatever that means. This reference seems to imply Mark does not regard Herod as an innocent perpetrator, but as someone who might be understood as a dangerous figure – or at least who has dangerous people acting in his name, such as the Herodians.

Mark also depicts Jesus and Antipas as contenders for the titles “king of the Jews” and “king of Israel.” Philip, Antipas’ brother and tetrarch of Batanaea, no longer survives in Mark’s imagined chronology and Pilate has no interest in the titles, leaving Jesus and Antipas alone to vie for them. Mark also opts for the peculiar move of simply describing Antipas as “Herod,” which allows him to stand in for the dynasty as a whole. Mark implies a connection between kingship and commander-in-chief, especially when Antipas is credited with the capture, imprisonment, and execution of John: ὁ Ἡρῴδης ἔλεγεν, ὁν ἐγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην, οὗτος ἠγέρθη (6:16; cf. 6:17). Jesus himself is attributed a position bearing similarities to military command, with authority over a multitude of angels (8:38, 13:24-27) and the ability to disperse a demonic legion (5:1-20). This military office, however, is never stated explicitly for either Jesus or Antipas, so one assumes it is of secondary importance to Mark’s competition between them. Of course, Jesus never claims titles of kingship for himself and rejects assertions of his royal heritage when they are attributed to him.

The Herodian military carries out violence against the Elijah preceding the son of man (9:12-13). Confusingly, Jesus at this point attributes John’s execution neither to the speculator who personally carried out the beheading nor to Herod under whose command the speculator acted, but to an ambiguously non-specific “them” (ἐποίησαν, ἠθέλον), with the most likely antecedent being γραμματέας (cf. 9:11). There is however no indication in Mark’s Gospel that scribes ever encountered John, complicating this already bizarre issue. If nothing else, this mishmash of responsibility for John’s execution indicates the extent to which Mark conflates the Jewish
leadership: Herodians, Pharisees, priests, and scribes are all jealous of Jesus and conspire against him so much that the actions of one can be attributed to any others. This contradiction may be partially alleviated if Herod’s army is understood to be Herodian partisans – something for which there is no direct evidence, but is plausible enough, given Mark’s representation of group partisanship. If so, the Herodian army may bear as much responsibility for John’s death and the conspiracy against Jesus as do other partisan groups.

**Markan Politics of cohortes Sebastenorum**

The Judaean auxiliaries figure prominently in Mark’s passion narrative. As discussed in Chapter Six, they flog, mock, and crucify Jesus, but also recognize him as a god’s son. Mark goes out of his way to place responsibility at the feet of the Jewish crowd, who fall prey to the demagogues among the chief priests (15:10-11). This has the effect of reducing responsibility that might otherwise be attributed to Pilate. While this might appear to ease blame against the military for Jesus’ death, their mockery of Jesus occurs fully on their own accord and renders their cruelty a product of their own design. It was not an isolated “bad apple” or two, but the whole cohort of the Jerusalem garrison partakes in Jesus’ humiliation (15:16). The exceptional figure, rather, is the centurion who hails Jesus as a god’s son. He is unique among the cohort in that he reflects on and acknowledges Jesus’ cosmic or political significance.

There is a strange discontinuity between the attitude of Pilate and that of the army (his partisans). Mark goes out of its way to absolve Pilate of blame in a way that recalls Mark’s insistence upon Herod’s innocence. Neither of these men wish harm upon Jesus, they recognize the jealousy of those who desire to see him dead, and go out of their way to prevent it from happening – only a desire to maintain their own honour in a situation of trickery results in the man’s execution. Even so, neither Pilate nor Herod evinces remorse over his actions, both instead retrospectively discussing the executions matter-of-factly (6:16, 15:43-45). Whatever hesitancy such leaders may have had before they ordered capital punishment, they fully committed to their decisions.

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449 Mark often imagines groups/parties not led by Jesus to operate with a structure that is tripartite: an honourable leader who has a name (e.g., Pilate, Herod, John), a loyal group of supporters in regular conflict with Jesus as partisans of party honour (e.g., Herodians, Sadducees, Pharisees, scribes, chief priests, John’s disciples, Herodian soldiers, elders, auxiliaries), and generic crowds that are fickle and fall prey to both self-interest and demagoguery. Most groups do not have a clear leader, though.

Note that while Mark conflates Jewish groups, he observes their distinction more attentively than other canonical evangelists.
and their partisans defended their honour accordingly. Likewise, when the centurion identifies Jesus as a god’s son, this is not a transformative moment, evidenced by his matter-of-fact behaviour toward Jesus’ cadaver later. Pilate and Herod may display weakness, but they and their partisans operate within standard group dynamics for Mark.

Considerably less polemic is directed against cohortes Sebastenorum and its commanders than Herod – the Sebastene soldiers never appear until the passion narrative, Jesus never singles them out for criticism, their crimes against Jesus are part of a litany that seems to include nearly the whole city of Jerusalem, and its leader is not in any meaningful competition with Jesus. The Judaean auxiliaries receive less blame than most other partisan groups, but are certainly not innocent. Their role is largely perfunctory; even if death at the hands of Gentiles (10:33-34) is a humiliating way to die, it is also necessary for the Markan Heilsgeschichte.

**Markan Politics of legiones Syriacae**

Mark spends little time discussing the Syrian legions and even then it is mostly indirectly. 1) The demon “Legion” alludes in a convoluted way to such military forces, 2) the Syrian legions were responsible along with other military forces for the calamities reported in the Olivet Discourse, and 3) Mark’s depiction of social life reflects a number of anachronisms corresponding to the social role of the Syrian legions (e.g., military as urban phenomenon, the Latinism κεντυρίων instead of ἐκατόνταρχος, introduction of Roman coinage, language, and measurements). Of the three armies depicted in Mark’s gospel, the legiones Syriacae are thus the most difficult to assess, especially because it is not clear the extent to which Mark was intentional with these allusions. It was argued in the previous chapter that the first and third of these should not be understood as intentional allusions, but as generated at a pre-reflective level of intellection. The first and third do not reveal particularly much about Markan politics of the military, aside from the hierarchy of Satan’s army and perhaps the son of man’s heavenly army as well.

The Olivet Discourse, on the other hand, identifies the Syrian legions as God’s scourge in a deuteronomistic manner. They destroy the temple to punish the Jewish leaders’ wickedness, corresponding with the Lord’s abandonment of both the leaders and their city. Lacking the
Lord’s protection, the city is vulnerable to assault, which the Lord permits as punishment.\textsuperscript{450} In the same way that deuteronomistic theology did not entail divine authorization of the Assyrian and Babylonian armies, this does not imply divine favour for the Syrian legions. Indeed, Mark seems entirely unconcerned with the motivations of the legions (unlike the Herodian army and the Judaean auxiliaries), interested only in their destructive activity.

\textbf{Markan Politics of Military Hierarchy}

Insofar as one can speak on the topic, we have seen that Mark adopts different stances toward the various military forces so that they should not be conflated into a unified “Roman Army,” lest one obscure important distinctions in Mark’s depictions. The Herodian army seems to partially function as a means of contrasting Jesus’ and Herod’s roles as “king of the Jews,” a matter completely unrelated to Markan conceptions of both the Sebastene cohorts and the Syrian legions. It is not particularly surprising that the role of the Herodian and Sebastene forces – operating in Palestine since around the Common Era’s turn – are more fully processed in their significance than the recent arriving Syrian legions. If we consider Mark’s politics of military hierarchy, we will see that there are important points of commonality across all three forces. We will begin from the lowest ranking groups and proceed upwards in authority for this discussion. While this may initially appear to contradict the preceding points about Mark’s differing politics and attitudes toward these armies, we will see that there is good reason to do so.

Chapter Six argued that Mark presents the generic mob of (auxiliary) soldiers who flog, mock, and crucify Jesus as the common stereotype of soldiers as bullies. They have no personalities of their own (typical of Markan partisans), but engage in collective action against Jesus. Their decadence further signifies their immorality, though their sadism renders it apparent on its own. Somewhat higher ranking are the Herodian soldiers responsible for John’s execution – the speculator responsible for beheading John and those imprisoning him. These characters are even less important for Mark, leaving soldiers the perfunctory roles of imprisoning and beheading John at Antipas’ request. Even so, Antipas is credited with the capture, imprisonment, and execution of John: ὁ Ἡρῴδης ἔλεγεν, ὅν ἔγὼ ἀπεκεφάλισα Ἰωάννην, σὸς ἦγερθη (6:16; cf. 6:17). The responsibility for the act explicitly lies with Antipas, reducing the executioner to

\textsuperscript{450} See again Kloppenborg 2005 on divine abandonment in the Olivet Discourse and the legions’ destruction of the temple.
mechanical doer of the deed (6:27-28). These low-ranking soldiers act entirely in the interest of their leader and enact his requests with enthusiasm.

Some notion of agency emerges with high ranks, evidenced by the centurion who breaks free of the stereotypical behaviour of others in his cohort. He is the lowest ranked man to express his thoughts, or even have dialogue. The centurion is also given speech at a pivotal moment and is positioned as a potential sympathizer to Jesus; he nearly – but not quite – acknowledges what no one else has when he names Jesus the son of a god. Even though he remains entirely subject to Pilate’s orders, some semblance of an individual emerges. But even this is telling: Pilate is not attributed the actions of the centurion the way Herod and the scribes are attributed the actions of the *speculator* – the centurion remains an individual who follows orders.

Considerably different are the Herodian chiliarchs. They are listed among the eminent of Galilee and Antipas’ honour is contingent upon its performance in their midst. Should Antipas refuse to his grant his step-daughter’s request, his honour in their eyes would diminish significantly. The chiliarchs thus operate with an implied agency insofar as Herod understands himself as accountable to promises made in their presence (6:26). Their presence also seems to evoke a luxurious (perhaps even hedonistic) tone for Antipas’ birthday party, a tone that is not altogether innocent.

Finally, the commanders-in-chief Herod and Pilate are given a wide range of activity and even personality. They are even responsible for the actions of their subordinates and partisans. However, when they order their subordinates to carry out physical violence, they do so as a last resort and the decision is made with dispassion.

Mark’s politics of military hierarchy might be termed “middlebrow.” Lowest ranking soldiers are largely mindless: they fall whim to base sadistic impulses, are incapable of thinking outside their group-interest, and perform orders in a manner mechanical enough that it bears resemblance to animal livestock. However, wealthier does not simply mean “better” for Markan military figures, since chiliarchs and the Herodian family are emblematic of Mark’s critique of wealth. Implied debauchery and manipulation are present only in their presence. The figure around which these polar conceptions pivot is the centurion. He acts with a degree of agency corresponding to the higher levels, but is alone in recognizing Jesus as a figure of divine sonship. As Roman military
historian Christopher Fuhrmann notes, “It is noteworthy that the earliest Christians seem to have had a negative view of ordinary soldiers but a fairly positive view of their officers.” This attitude is evidenced in many ancient documents, but it is especially pronounced in the Gospels on account of their narrative nature.

It is here we might return to the theoretical discussion from Chapter Five. It is predictable that a centurion would be a positive figure in each of the three theories of violence discussed therein. The theory of objective-structural violence put forth by Slavoj Žižek offers a helpful first stage for considering the matter. Military policy in Palestine involved a great deal of appeasing locals through large-scale projects, even as the strategies for doing so differed significantly in the pre- and post-War periods. The apparent generosity of such gestures did much to cultivate sympathy and cooperation not just among elite beneficiaries, but also among the general populace. Nearby roads, even if they made tax exaction easier, nevertheless fostered travel to nearby markets to offer one’s goods or services.

More useful, though, is Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of symbolic violence, which provides a useful way for considering Mark’s tempered sympathy for the centurion. Social stratification is maintained in large part because it is misperceived as a natural occurrence. Chapter Five discussed how this occurred in the Roman Army, which was a major competitor with the old aristocracy of the Principate and Late Republic. In short, elites depicted soldiers and their officers as the embodiment of various vices that needed to be checked by aristocratic disciplinary measures. The military as experienced by most villagers reflected these biases: centurions, the highest rank a villager was likely to encounter in most circumstances, were imbued with considerably more agency and individual morality than their subordinates. Whereas lower-ranked soldiers were seen as little more than the sum of their impulses and orders, the papyrological, literary, and epigraphic records all indicate centurions were understood as capable of making important decisions and decisions that would vary based on the centurion making them. Of course, soldiers’ own writings paint a very different picture of their own agency, but the Roman army was modeled in such a way so as to minimize the individuality of low-ranking soldiers in their encounters with civilians: a well-behaved soldier was invisible and a poorly behaved soldier was either following his orders or promptly punished for not doing so.

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451 Fuhrmann 2012: 231.
But even among villagers, the experience of centurions was hardly uniform. It was noted earlier that among the surviving petitions to centurions and decurions, over half were written by a civilian claiming some sort of special status.\textsuperscript{452} This number is of course disproportionate to the general populace and the fact that those who did not claim special status often tried to evoke sentiments of pity – especially widows and others at the margin – indicates differing relations to such centurions, as well as what might be expected of them.

This observation assumes the third theory discussed in Chapter Five, namely the process of subjectivation – particularly the author of Mark being hailed as a legal and civilian subject. John Kloppenborg has provided a careful study of forensic subjectivity vis-à-vis the divine judge in the Sayings Gospel Q; though it is not possible to replicate such a study with reference to the military here, some provisional comments might be offered.\textsuperscript{453} Civilian subjectivity, implicitly contrasting with a soldierly subjectivity, is presumed throughout Mark and even produced at a few others. At points, this is obvious: civilian subjectivity is a central element of the Olivet Discourse, which proffers warnings of wars, recommendation to flee, and presumes the reader is not a combatant. The use of Latinisms is a subtler device that hails the Markan readers as civilian subjects. Mark uses several words relating directly to the military (\textit{legio, centurio, speculator, flagello, praetorium}) and several that indirectly relate to it (\textit{denarius, census, Caesar, Roman coins and measures}). Mark does not opt to use more familiar Greek terms, but instead these terms that signify components of an increasingly Romanized daily life. Mark uses several of these terms egregiously and confusingly: \textit{legio, census, and modius} are eccentric in their meaning, and nearly all his Latin terms have Greek equivalents available (some of which Mark actually makes use of: \textit{praetorium/σύλη, quadrans/λεπτόν δόο, legio/πολλοί}). The centurion – no longer \textit{λοχαγός or ἑκατόνταρχος, but now κεντυρίων} – relates to Jesus as a civilian subject, one on whom he inflicts capital punishment, even if he is nevertheless astonished at the power exhibited at his death.

Mark’s expectations of the centurion might appear modest – he recognizes Jesus’ divine sonship, as Herod does John’s righteousness and Pilate does Jesus’ innocence – but his behaviour contrasts starkly with that of his subordinates. As suggested in the previous chapter, Mark’s

\textsuperscript{452} Alston 1995: 91-92. See also the discussion in Chapter Four above.

\textsuperscript{453} Kloppenborg 2014.
ideology of the military seems to be a non-elite restatement of the prevailing aristocratic ideology, though we might here refine that to a more middlebrow ideology Mark evinces elsewhere. One useful point of comparison is William Arnal’s analysis of the Parable of the Tenants. Arnal compares the parable in Mark 12:1-12 with its parallel in Gos. Thom. 65, finding Mark an allegorical narrative that sympathizes with the landowner and Thomas to be a realistic narrative sympathizing with the tenants. Thus, where Thomas sustains a populist antagonism between wealthy owners and the peasantry, the same parable as redacted by Mark requires the reader to identify with the wealthy over the peasantry. Regardless of the ways Mark’s Jesus extends his hand first to the ill and hungry and even as he upholds them as most welcome in God’s kingdom, the Markan Jesus nevertheless operates with a frame of reference identifying with the locally wealthy.

Mark’s own understanding of violence (though never named as such) is relatively similar to liberal hermeneutics of the spectacular, which was earlier characterized as violence whose enactors are pathological, whose excess is beyond doubt, which interrupts innocent lives, and is maximally visible. Mark, however, deviates from this modern framework in a few important ways. First, collaboration with the state is of little interest to Mark, even if it has been important in contemplations of violence since the Holocaust. As noted above, it is telling that tax collectors are suitors for a patron-client relationship rather than contempt for Mark. This contrasts with some iterations of the liberal hermeneutics of the spectacular, which has recently extended the notion of violence to those who directly enable spectacular violence (one thinks of Eichmann). Second, and more interestingly, Mark’s understanding of “bad” violence seems to imagine violence as a violation of power structures, whereas recent liberal notions of spectacular violence often view power structures as the product of violence. Conversely, “good” violence for Mark is the act of rectifying the social order to its proper place. John Kloppenborg demonstrates this to be the case in the parable of the tenants (12:1-12), where the tenants rebel against the power of the landowner. Not only does Mark sympathize with the landowner over the tenants, but it assumes his violence was justified, even though ample data suggests that the landowner’s

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454 Arnal 2000.
455 One can observe similar identifications with wealth in 13:32-37 (God as slave owner) and 14:3-9 (Jesus’ defense of ointment use).
violence would have been criminal under Greek, Roman, and Graeco-Egyptian law!\textsuperscript{456} Mark frames other instances of violence as the result of temporary deviations in the power order: Herod executes John not because Herod is supposed to be powerful, but because the eschatological “righting” of the social order that would render John above Herod has yet to occur (and Jesus above Pilate, the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, Herodians, etc.). Thus, for Mark good violence occurs because the proper social ordering of power is not in place at the moment – the first is presently last and the last is presently first (10:31; cf. 10:43-44). Markan violence is always physical, always represses, and if it contravenes proper power structures then it is always bad. This coheres relatively well with Latin notions of \textit{vilo}, the basis for the word \textit{violens}, itself the root for the English word “violence.” Per the \textit{Oxford Latin Dictionary}: “1.a. To disturb the sanctity of, violate, profane (temples and other sacred or quasi-sacred things). b. to violate, treat without respect (boundaries); to fail to respect the ownership of (land).”\textsuperscript{457} The executions of John and Jesus are thus violent because they violate the sanctity of God’s prophet and son. One could conceivably push the matter further and claim that “good” violence is not really violence at all for Mark. Jesus’ exorcisms and healings involve physical “violence” not because Jesus contravenes the proper social order, but because he meets resistance when trying to restore proper boundaries between God and humanity, between God’s and Satan’s kingdoms. Tellingly, human armies are not wholly on one side or on the other in Mark: they indeed violate proper social hierarchies at times (e.g., executing John and Jesus), but also restore some social hierarchies – notably by bringing a violent end to the supposed hegemony of those who conspire against Jesus and the city that harbours them several decades after Jesus’ death.

Mark has little criticism of “complicity” and none of that critique relates to the Roman Empire; Jesus’ normative defense of tax collectors and advocacy of paying taxes instead suggest a politics of acquiescence – or at a politics least alien to the normative values of liberal democracies. This can only be explained on the assumption that Mark does not imagine the military to function primarily as an institution of repressive violence and is more interested in the people and social types than the institution itself. For as much as scholarly discussion revolves

\textsuperscript{456} Kloppenborg 2011: 332-336.

\textsuperscript{457} Quoted and discussed in Vaage 2012: 123. To be sure, the Greek term βιαζω has different associations, relating primarily to βιαζ, the semantic domain of which relates to strength.
around the Roman war machine, one might be surprised at how little armed combat figures into Mark’s understanding of the military.

**Complicity and Rome**

It would seem problematic to claim the Gospel of Mark “resists” Rome or its imperialism. Though Mark is certainly positioned critically against Herodians and displays hostility to low-ranking soldiers, this does not translate into a larger anti-Roman project at any point in the Gospel. Indeed, anti-Roman politics are difficult to reconcile what we have observed: protection for Roman collaborators (i.e., τελῶναι), allowance of paying the *fiscus Iudaicus*, and a relatively positive depiction of a centurion are the most obvious examples. At several other points, Mark takes up Roman language and ideas for his own purposes (e.g., Jesus as son of god, son of man as military commander), reinscribing Roman social hierarchies in the process. A particularly potent example is the mock imperial parade, which bears resemblance to Roman triumphs, even though it seems to be a counter-triumph – no one would mistake a humble donkey for a mighty steed. Even here, we should be suspicious, with Warren Carter noting the Synoptic tradition’s complex relationship with Roman military might:

> The Gospel envisions salvation at the end of this sinful world, the defeat of Rome, and the establishment of a new heaven and earth under God’s sovereignty. But the irony must be noted. This bold vision of the completion of God’s salvation and overthrow of Roman imperial power co-opts and imitates the very imperial worldview that it resists! For Rome and God, the goal is supreme sovereignty of the most powerful. For both, the scope or extent of their sovereignty is the cosmos. Both appeal to the divine will for legitimation. Both understand the establishment of their sovereignty to be through a chosen age and by means of the violent overthrow of all resistance. Both offer totalizing perspectives. Both demand compliance. Both destroy enemies without room for the different or noncompliant. Both recognize that those who welcome its sovereignty benefit from it. The Gospel depicts God’s salvation, the triumph of God’s empire over all things, including Rome, with the language and symbols of imperial rule. … In the end, it seems,
the Gospel cannot imagine a world without imperial power. It cannot find an alternative to this sovereignty model of power.\textsuperscript{458}

A similar relationship is evident in the military-civilian interactions of Palestine in the Hellenistic and Roman periods more generally, even when holding a combative stance toward the ruling empires: there would have been little Jewish presence in Galilee had it not been for the settler colonialism and imperializing efforts of the Maccabees, and the excursions of the rebels during the Judaean War into the Decapolis indicate similarly imperial framework for territorial expansion. There is no reason to think that Mark, writing in Galilee after the War, would have a wildly different conceptual framework for how God’s kingdom would expand on earth. Stated simply, if Mark were attempting to write an anti-Roman document, it would be difficult to characterize his effort as a clear success.

One could follow the route of Hector Avalos and use this data as an ironic indictment of Mark or Jesus as a self-serving collaborator with the powers that be.\textsuperscript{459} The absence of a robust anti-imperial message indicates the Gospel of Mark is a political failure by this standard: Mark creates ample space for Roman violence and critiques it only indirectly. Such reasoning seeks to dispute the \textit{sui generis} origins of Christianity and its theological uniqueness: if Jesus’ message is not pure, then even less so its current iterations. This type of criticism, whatever its utility, is not of interest here, as its claims are foremost theological rather than literary or historical.\textsuperscript{460} To rephrase, I am not trying to indicate that Mark’s Jesus is a “bad Jesus,” but that Mark is the product of mundane human social interests. The purpose of this dissertation is not to engage the truth-claims of insider discourse on Christianity, nor to single out Mark as a particularly guilty collaborator with state violence.

\textsuperscript{458} Carter 2001: 89-90, writing about the Gospel of Matthew, though his statement also applies to Mark. Cf. Liew 1999: 148-149: “Mark’s politics of parousia, by promising the utter destruction of both Jewish and Roman authorities upon Jesus’ resurrected return, is one that mimics or duplicates the authoritarian, exclusionary, and coercive politics of his colonizers.”

\textsuperscript{459} Avalos 2015: 151-178.

\textsuperscript{460} To be clear, I do not say this with an explicit or implicit endorsement of settler colonialism, imperial formations, or state violence. I take these to be self-evidently repugnant (cf. excursus in Chapter Four). In the words of Bruce Lincoln (1991: 112): it is important “to view as immoral any discourse or practice that systematically operates to benefit the already privileged members of society at the expense of others, and I reserve the same judgment for any society that tolerates or encourages such discourses and practices.” Rather, the point I am trying to make above is that the regulatory normative value of Jesus’ (or “biblical,” or “early Christian,” or something similar) ethics is extraneous to the present dissertation.
Instead, I hope to have shown how thoroughly predictable Mark’s politics were in the context of first century Palestine and contemporaneous Jewish writings. The interests and investments one encounters in Mark were widespread in the Roman Near East, even if there is still a propensity to understand collaboration as an exceptional phenomenon. As Dean Pinter observes about Philo of Alexandria,

> He can simultaneously refer to God as “benefactor of all,” the “savior of Israel,” “the father and king of all” as well as referring to individual emperors as “master,” “lord,” “benefactor,” and “savior.” In other words, the relationship between the two holders of the same title need not be antagonistic. … In other words, overlap in terminology—even between divine and human possessors of the same title—need not signal a competitive relationship.461

Many of Mark’s ostensibly anti-imperial rhetorical manoeuvres are not necessarily so, and can be more plausibly read in continuity with prevailing discourse on the Roman Empire. While Mark may initially sound exceptional in this posturing (friendliness between Jew and Rome, as well as Christian and Rome), this was manifestly not the case. To explain this common perception, one might reframe the discussion by interrogating the interpretive grid that classifies it as anomalous. There are many common interpretive grids that would see the proposed understanding of Mark’s politics as something surprising, some of which I have attempted to address in this dissertation: interpretive grids of Christian exceptionalism, folk definitions of violence, hermeneutics of the spectacular, liberal theories of religion as a sphere separate from politics, or privileging the intentional stance. These hermeneutic frames have appeal and are generally consistent with the dominant liberal imaginary of late capitalism, thereby allowing them to fit well with prevailing notions of common sense and their ethical norms.

Over the course of this dissertation, I have attempted to advance other possible understandings of “violence” that are in some ways counterintuitive, though I believe that it is precisely their counterintuitive nature that renders them instructive. I have suggested that we operate with theories of violence that do not require any of the aforementioned interpretive manoeuvres and instead foreground the coercive nature of labour, the role of practices, and processes of subjectivation, thereby priming us to understand Mark very differently. To take each of these

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461 Pinter (2013: 110) relates this to Philo’s Embassy to Gaius, wherein Philo uses such language while simultaneously presenting himself as a chief opponent of Gaius’ self-deification.
points in turn, it would mean that we would presume that practices of collaboration require no recourse to theories of intentionality, rhetorics of resistance need not correspond to practices of resistance, and the relationship between subject-formation and the state is not one of repression but cultivation. Arthur Droge concisely encapsulates all three as they relate to the study of the early Roman Empire: “Whatever else the pax Augusta may have been, and it was many things, it could not and did not endure by force (or the threat of force) alone. It required a willingness on the part of the inhabitants of the empire to collude in their own subordination.” There is little reason a priori to think Mark would exist outside of this framework and I have attempted to show that this suspicion is borne out upon careful analysis of the Gospel.

**The Meaning of Resistance Today**

Academic discussion of state violence and early Christianity largely tends toward a romanticized and often naïve representation of biblical politics of resistance. This dissertation has attempted to show that this position is indefensible historically, as it overlooks the politics of complicity common in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. What strikes me as equally problematic is how such politics, despite their often explicitly stated purpose to the contrary, perform pernicious ideological work in service of state violence. By way of conclusion, I would like to suggest that anti-imperial biblical scholarship often inadvertently functions to normalize Christian politics of accommodation.

Few scholars in recent years would deny that Jesus or Gospel politics somehow subvert Roman values. Fernando Bermejo-Rubio provides a brief but excellent overview of the phenomenon. One might start with the relatively old example of Otto Betz and his study of holy warfare in the Gospels. Betz contends that language of warfare in the Gospels is not directed against Romans, but against demonic forces. While Jesus did not advocate violence against Rome, he nevertheless concludes that Jesus “mehr war als ein Theudas.” Here, Betz determines that Jesus’ battle against Belial and other supernatural forces was more revolutionary than the leader of an armed revolt. Lest one think the example of Betz is exceptional or outdated, Richard Horsley contends that Jesus’ refusal to take up arms constitutes “a more serious revolt” than those who

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462 Droge 2011: 341.
464 Betz 1957.
did, Mark E. Moore suggests that Jesus offers a subversive politics of self-abnegation, N. T. Wright claims that “nothing could have been more subversive than the apocalyptic message of the kingdom which Jesus articulated,” or John Howard Yoder after discussing revolutionary politics contrasts Jesus’ vision by arguing that “it belongs to the nature of the new order that, though it condemns and displaces the old, it does not do so with the arms of the old.” In the words of Bermejo-Rubio, scholars are prone to reconstruct the historical Jesus as a man who was “revolutionary, but not that revolutionary.”

The point here is not an historical one. I do not mean to suggest or even imply that Jesus or the Gospels really advocate violence. Rather, these examples draw attention to three matters of importance. First is the obvious normative element in these statements. Whether implicit or explicit, there is little doubt that the scholars imagine Jesus’ political praxis as worthy of emulation. Second, this normative element operates with an ethical supersessionism that imagines the politics of Jesus and early Christians as singular to their context – even as they are informed by their contemporaries. Finally, I wish to suggest that these hermeneutic frameworks are ultimately self-serving for biblical scholars.

It is worth noting how these politics imagine Jesus’ “real” revolution to occur in the realm of ideas or activities that do not disrupt business as usual. Consequently, the critique early Christians supposedly offered the Rome Empire often seems toothless. How is paying taxes an act of resistance?

Or how is naming a demon “Legion” particularly subversive? The emphasis on discourse as the primary means of effective resistance to political powers-that-be strikes me as a self-serving manoeuvre, particularly when articulated by biblical scholars, members of a professionalized class who are not only invested in the interpretation of literary and spoken artefacts, but producing such artefacts as well. That is, discursive meditations – whether via the production of texts or the act of teaching – are understood to be the primary method of meaningful engagement with one’s political context. This corresponds perhaps too neatly to the loss of social and economic capital among the humanities in recent decades, but especially the subsequent efforts to re-establish the study of texts as a meaningful activity in light of the loss of social and economic capital among the humanities in recent decades, but especially the subsequent efforts to re-establish the study of texts as a meaningful activity in light of the loss of social and economic capital among the humanities in recent decades, but especially the subsequent efforts to re-establish the study of texts as a meaningful activity in light of the loss of social and economic capital among the humanities in recent decades, but especially the subsequent efforts to re-establish the study of texts as a meaningful activity in light of the loss of social and economic capital among the humanities in recent decades, but especially the subsequent efforts to re-establish the study of texts as a meaningful activity in light of the loss of social and economic capital among the humanities in recent decades, but especially the subsequent efforts to re-establish the study of texts as a meaningful activity in light of the loss of social and economic capital among the humanities in recent decades, but especially the subsequent efforts to re-establish the study of texts as a meaningful activity in light

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465 Horsley 1993: 321; Moore 2013; Wright 1997: 316; Yoder 1994: 43. Horsley is generally more careful in his wording than this, but the quote is noteworthy.
467 Carter 1999.
468 This perspective is common, but see, e.g., Wright 2001: 54-56.
of this decline in cultural largesse – professional study of the humanities no longer generates the various forms of capital (financial, cultural, social) that it once did. Jesus’ emphasis on discourse or ideas is upheld at the expense of contemporaneous activities (e.g., Zealots, sicarii). The model of ideal resistance ends up looking particularly amenable to the interests of early 21st century academics who trade in the medium of ideas and are thus interested in establishing their political import as such – especially insofar as it coheres with the longstanding idealist explanatory theories undergirding much of the study of religion and flatters the liberal Protestant theology of supersessionism that tends to underlie it. This bias is pervasive in discourse on early Christian politics; the opinion of Pontius Pilate in the film adaptation of *The Last Temptation of Christ* makes explicit sentiments commonly found in scholarly monographs: “You’re more dangerous than the Zealots, did you know that? … It’s one thing to change the way that people live, but you want to change how they think, how they feel.”

The activities that the ostensibly-revolutionary Jesus engages in seem largely inconsequential in terms of effecting change, but continue to be ascribed singular importance by biblical scholars. These textual performances of the Gospels would seem to fit much closer to a politics of acquiescence than resistance, as they consistently involve the enactment of practices mandated by the Roman state. Though the author of Matthew may not have liked what his taxes paid for, he advocated resistance by paying them anyway. Rome’s military occupation was an oppressive force, so Jesus put them in their place by accepting their presence and implying they were like demons. It is difficult to understand how these activities would have disrupted Roman state violence in the least.

Moreover, this framework relegates meaningful dissent to the realm of discourse: writing about one’s frustrations or musing upon the cosmic significance of one’s actions is taken to be the highest form of revolt imaginable. By such a standard, an angry letter to the local newspaper about the president’s policies constitutes a meaningful “act of resistance.” The allegedly anti-imperial activities in early Christianity are thus reminiscent of the futile words of Miguel de Unamuno to his Francoist opponents: “You will win because you have enough brute force, but you will not convince!” Indeed, it is not clear how Roman ideology would be undermined if it failed to convince; the goals of Rome were accomplished regardless of its subjects’ assent. This digression applies *mutatis mutandis* to the normative stance toward modern state violence:
begrudging cooperation is ostensibly more dangerous to the status quo than anything that might be termed “sedition.” To this effect, Leif Vaage argues that the scholarly reception of a given depiction of the historical Jesus is often tied to the capacity of such a Jesus to act in compliance with the expectations of the contemporary nation-state.\textsuperscript{469} Though some imagine radical politics to occur outside the established political system – Horsley and Crossan write of healings and feedings as alternate social practices outside of the hegemonic system, for instance – even these activities do little to interrupt the business as usual that they supposedly contest. As Craig Martin and others have noted, empires ancient and modern function not despite but because of their ability to tolerate ideological diversity.\textsuperscript{470}

All of this suggests that biblical scholarship often functions to normalize and even valorize of accommodationist stances toward state violence. Such scholarship often seems at least as preoccupied with delimiting the parameters of acceptable dissent as it does in textual interpretation or historiography, doing so in a manner that locates the reader in the place of Jesus or early Christians against a variety of political opponents (e.g., Romans, zealots, Pharisees, Sadducees) against which they might identify themselves vis-à-vis contemporary analogues (e.g., religious right, the radical left). In some ways, this is typical of discourse on religion under late capitalism more broadly. William Arnal and Russell McCutcheon write,

To some degree, this is an intrinsic function of those forms of social activity that are normally denominated “religious.” Modernity’s creation of the category “religion” was not necessary for those actual behaviors designated as “religious” to serve, as Marx said, as a “fantastic realization of the human essence,” as a “sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world.” Any projection of utopian desires onto a fantastic, imaginary, or otherwise segregated reality—including the individual, or home life, or romantic “love,” or personal hobbies, or other restricted spheres of this sort—not only serves a compensatory function vis-à-vis grim reality, but also serves the specific ideological function of implying that all utopian resolutions are to be sought precisely in such segregated space and thus not in real social existence. The sociopolitical effect is ultimately conservative: There is no point in trying to change this world; such hopes and

\textsuperscript{469} Vaage 2009a.
\textsuperscript{470} Martin 2014: 105.
dreams are not proper to it; they belong in a misty realm that affects nothing and has legitimate claims on no one.\(^{471}\)

It is therefore not surprising that many scholars find utopia within the realm of discourse or projects that exist as a seamless component of the prevailing political system, discourses and social systems presumed within contemporary discourse on religion.

I would suggest that it is not desirable for New Testament scholarship to hold ideological water for hegemonic regimes, functioning as a component of the “military-industrial-academic” complex that integrates dissent against practices of state violence into a prevailing form of apathy. What is perhaps most troubling is that the most visible element of political dissent within biblical scholarship – namely, North Atlantic “anti-imperial” scholarship – does so as well, even if it is unintentional. I would further suggest, alongside Itumeleng Mosala and others, that the problem partially lies in the scholarly identification with the authors of the biblical text. Mosala is particularly critical of readings that make “the deliberate ideological choice [to] simply collude with the text without much ado.”\(^{472}\) The failure to interrogate the bible’s often-accommodationist politics or – more problematically – treat them as though they were revolutionary, serves to limit the scope of acceptable dissent to that of discourse or imagination of an otherworldly utopia.

\(^{471}\) Arnal and McCutcheon 2013: 62, some emphasis removed.  
\(^{472}\) Mosala (1989) writes for the context of South African apartheid. From a different perspective, Russell McCutcheon has been highly critical of the scholarly tendency to blur insider-outsider distinctions in the study of religion (2001; 2005: 45-63).


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