

ALEXANDER AND THE OATHBREAKERS:
*IG II/III*² 1, 318 AND THE PUNISHMENT OF GREEK
MERCENARY SERVICE*

by

JULIAN DEGEN

ABSTRACT: This paper provides new insights into Alexander's attitude towards the Greek mercenaries he met on his campaign against the Achaemenid Empire. It is argued that Alexander punished the Greeks fighting for the Great King as oathbreakers based on the League of Corinth's constitution to which its members swore an oath, being under divine protection. The argumentation focuses on the last line of the oath *IG II/III*² 1, 318, in which the clause οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψω prohibits desertion from the League of Corinth, which is devoid of context. The argumentation is based on restoring the clause's original context, which is achieved by its contextualisation against the backdrop of Greek legal thinking and the Macedonian execution of hegemony. The result is that, while Alexander may have used the constitutional framework set by his father as a moral argument to punish Greek mercenaries, he also took the liberty to modify it to create a non-negotiable military atmosphere of allegiance that suited his campaign needs.

Over seventy years ago, W.W. TARN penned the famous words about the motives of Alexander III for campaigning in Asia: "the primary reason why Alexander invaded Persia was, no doubt, that he never thought of *not* doing it; it was his inheritance"¹. Modern commentators do not doubt that his father, Philip II, played the role of architect for Alexander's campaign. However, the extent of his role remains a much-debated question, as the young conqueror insisted on his father's political legacy as being the basis of his political decision-making².

* My research is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG 449943696). I own my deepest gratitude to my colleagues from the University of Innsbruck Prof. Dr. Robert ROLLINGER, Dr. Irene MADREITER, Hendrik STANWAY, Clemens STEINWENDER as well as Prof. Dr. Krzysztof NAWOTKA (Wrocław), Prof. Dr. Hilmar KLINKOTT (Kiel), Prof. Dr. Kaja HARTER-UIBOPUU (Hamburg), Dr. Marissa STEVENS (UCLA) and the anonymous reviewers for their critical remarks. All remaining errors are, of course, my own. Unless noted otherwise, all translations are by the author.

¹ TARN 1948: 8 (original italics).

² The most recent treatments of this topic are MÜLLER 2014: 201; WORTHINGTON 2008: 152–171; NAWOTKA 2012; BLOEDOW 2003; BROSIUS 2003; FLOWER 2000: 102. The exhaustive treatment of the different historiographical sources in AUSTIN (1993) is still important, where it is argued that the extant sources disagree on the objectives of Alexander.