



Newsletter No. 6, December 2024

Welcome to the sixth issue of the MLHWG newsletter! In this issue you can find out what some of our members have been up to over the past year, join some new projects, and meet a new member.

European Labour History Network (ELHN) Conferences 2024 and 2026

We had a very successful 5th [ELHN conference](#) in Uppsala, Sweden, held from 11 to 13 June 2024. We had four [Working Group panels](#): Visual Sources, Material Artefacts and Military Labour; Military Labour in the Early Modern Era; Nations, States and Empires: Military Labour, Gender, Race and Identity I; and Recruitment and Refusal in Military Labour: Gender, Race and Identity II. We also had a joint panel with the Maritime Labour History Working Group on Military and Maritime Recruitment. While most presentations were in person, we also accommodated several online papers. This was our strongest presence in terms of numbers at an ELHN conference, and we were very proud of all the presentations, including how well everyone kept to time, and these were followed by some robust discussions. Thank you to everyone who participated and made this such a great conference!

We also had our Working Group meeting in Uppsala, where the current team of Jeongmin, Olli, Alex and Christine were re-elected as coordinators for the next two years. We discussed **some exciting new projects** led by WG members, which you **can read about in this newsletter**. We hope you think about becoming involved in one or more!

At the Uppsala conference, it was announced that the **next conference will be at the University of Barcelona in Spain from 16 to 19 June 2026**. The conference organisers are the Research group “Trell, Institucions i Gènere” (TIG) (Labour, Institucions and Gender) of the University of Barcelona (<http://www.ub.edu/tig/qui-som>), in collaboration with the “Red Española de Historia del Trabajo” (REHT) (Spanish Labour History Network) (<https://www.um.es/reht/>), and with the support of the Department of History and Archaeology, the Faculty of Geography and History, and the University of Barcelona.

Watch out for calls for WG panel ideas and calls for papers in **2025!**

Pratyay, Jaakko, Otto, Piotr, Martin, Esbjörn, Olli, Christine, Bettina and Jorge in Uppsala, 2024





2024 MLHWG Workshops and Edited Book Update

Our edited volume on imagery and visuality in military labour history is on its way to publication!



September 2024 Workshop with Cody, Jeongmin, Pratyay, Teresa, Jaako, Christine, Alex, Hannah, Bettina and Gülay

The editorial team (Bettina Blum, Jeongmin Kim, Christine de Matos, Olli Siitonen and Alex Touloumtzidis) are happy to report that the edited volume is making good progress. In addition to the initial members of the team, we welcomed two new contributors, Pratyay Nath and Teresa Peláez-Domínguez (both working group members – meet Teresa at the end of this newsletter) after the ELHN conference in Uppsala. We are excited about how the project is shaping up and expanding to include early modern history. We held a number of online presentations by contributors over the course of the year, and at the last workshop meeting in September, Pratyay and Teresa presented their work-in-progress (see the screenshot above). Pratyay is working on the artworks of the Indian Mughal empire at the intersections of the literary and visual imaginations of labour mobilization and Teresa is contributing a chapter on the visualization of slave labour in medieval Italian ports. We also really appreciated the attendance of other WG members at these workshops, who generously shared their feedback with contributors. Finally, we are happy to share the latest news that the volume will be published by Palgrave Macmillan with the tentative title *Military Labour History from the Early Modern Period to the Twentieth Century – Imagery and Visuality*, which we hope to launch at the ELHN conference in Barcelona in 2026!



New Working Group Project: What is Military Labour?

led by Pratyay Nath

Ten years back, Erik-Jan Zürcher brought out a collection of essays (*Fighting for a Living*, 2014) that made a strong case for viewing the work of soldiers as military labour. The current project aligns with the ideas presented in that volume and takes the inquiry forward in several new directions. It investigates the notion of military labour across time periods and world regions in the form of an edited volume. It will bring together essays that discuss the meanings of this kind of labour in various societies, especially in terms of the nature, representations, and contradictions of the work.

We invite the contributors to revisit the notion of the work of soldiers as military labour, in terms of themes like their skill, recruitment, wages, and identity. Alongside this, we invite the contributors to ask how we should think of the workers who have historically performed myriad logistical tasks for campaigning armies. Can they be included within the same bracket of military labour alongside soldiers? What about the various others who laboured at the home front within families, in offices, and on estates in various capacities to support the war effort of states? Finally, we ask if the category of military labour can be stretched beyond humans. How do we conceptualise the labour of the range of nonhumans who have historically rendered labour to help their human masters fulfill their military objectives? What are the academic and political implications of including or excluding some of these forms of labour and labourers from the ambit of the category of military history?

These are some of the questions the essays of the volume could delve into. In doing so, it breaks new historiographical ground in three main ways. Firstly, it takes the discussion of



military labour beyond the realm of soldiers to also include in the conversation various other actors who have historically participated in the processes of war-making. Secondly, it goes beyond describing and analysing various forms military labour to investigate the meanings of the category itself in various historical contexts. Finally, it pushes the limits of the existing literature by discussing the possibilities of extending the notion of military labour to include various nonhuman participants of war. Overall, the aim is to produce a conceptually interconnected set of research essays on different time periods and world regions in order to contribute to the field of military labour both at both an empirical and a conceptual level.

Look out for more in 2025.

Interested? Want to know more? Want to become involved? If so please contact Pratyay Nath, either by pratyay.nath@ashoka.edu.in or militarylabourhistory@gmail.com.

Member Research Reports

New publications

Anders Ahlbäck, Fia Sundevall & Johanna Hjertquist (2024). "A Nordic Model of Gender and Military Work? Labour Demand, Gender Equality and Women's Integration in the Armed Forces of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden", *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 72:1, 49–66.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03585522.2022.2142661>

Christine de Matos (2024). "[The Home as a Space of Re-education: Imperialism, Military Occupation and Housekeeping Manuals](#)", special issue on "Civilization,

Military Labor and US Empire Group

From WG member Holger Droessler

Reminder and Invitation: I am a historian of the United States in global perspective at [Worcester Polytechnic Institute](#) in Massachusetts, USA. After publishing [my first book on workers in Samoa](#) in 2022, I am currently at work on my second book, *War Workers*, which will tell the global story of foreigners working for the US military in non-combat roles from the Civil War to Iraq. So far, I have done research on Solomon Islanders during the Battle of Guadalcanal in WWII, on sex workers during the Vietnam War, and on security workers from Sierra Leone in US-occupied Iraq. As part of my research, I have recently co-founded, together with Ruth Lawlor (Cornell), a virtual working group on Military Labor and US Empire. Since the summer, we have been meeting once a month to workshop works-in-progress and read recent articles in our shared field of research. We're also using the group to network and plan collaborative projects, such as conference panels and publications. If MLHWG members are interested, we'd be happy to organise a meeting to get to know each other and share our research across the Atlantic. **Contact:** hdroessler@wpi.edu



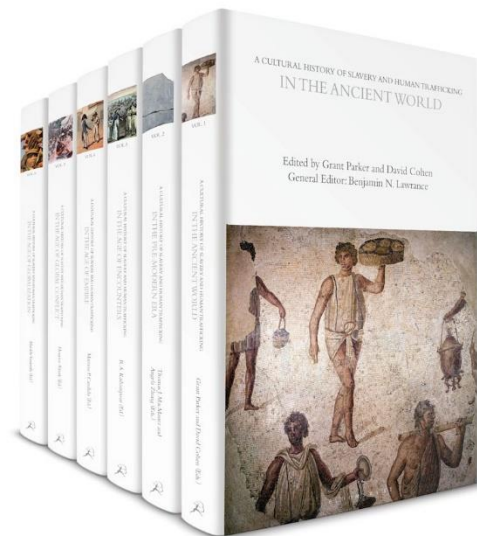
Democratization, Containment: Strategies of Re-Education in Imperial Settings and Beyond”, *The International History Review* 46:3: 291-311. **Co-runner-up [Elizabeth Eisenstein Essay Prize 2024](#).**

Christine de Matos (2024). “[Visualising the Modern Housewife: US Occupier Women and the Home in the Allied Occupation of Germany, 1945–1949](#)”, *Histories* 4:1, 1-23.

Sanna Strand & Fia Cottrell-Sundevall (2024/online first), “Selling Soldiering: Marketisation, Gender Complementarity and the Promise of Military Femininity in 1990s Sweden,” *Gender & History* <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12811>.

Gülay Yılmaz, “Age, Enslavement, and Trafficking” in *A Cultural History of Slavery and Human Trafficking in the Age of Encounters (1450 - 1700)*, vol 3 in [6 vol series](#). London: Bloomsbury, 2024.

Gülay Yılmaz has contributed to a volume in a six-volume series, with each adopting the same thematic structure, covering the following: definitions and ideologies of slavery and trafficking; slavery, trafficking, and the law; political cultures; coercive labouring economies; social organisation, culture, and ritual; gender, enslavement, and trafficking; age, enslavement, and trafficking; and anti-slavery, anti-trafficking, and abolition outcomes. As the publisher states, “this model supports readers in tracing one theme throughout history, as well as providing them with a thorough overview of each individual period.” Yılmaz’s chapter concentrates on the history of children in slavery and the role of age categories in enslavement. The chapter explores the history of the *devşirme* system and children in slavery and bring it into dialogue with that of scholars working in contemporary chronological periods, but in different geographical settings.



New Funding

Alexandros Touloumtzidis and the team of the University of Patras have secured a research grant from the Creative Europe Fund, supported by the European Commission, for a project



focused on preserving the Cultural Heritage of the First World War in the Balkans. As part of this initiative, a digital museum will be created, featuring four thematic rooms: cinema, music, objects, and memory sites.

Regarding the history of military labour, the digital museum will showcase objects and stories that highlight the contributions of civilians from the Balkans who supported the Macedonian Front on both sides of the conflict. Additionally, in conjunction with the edited volume that will be published by the Military Labour History Working Group, the museum will display short films documenting labour activities and songs that reflect the role of labour during the war.

The total grant awarded for the project is €200,000, and the following teams are involved:

- Joist Innovation Park (Project Coordinator and developer of the digital museum platform).
- University of Patras - History and Archaeology Department (Responsible for research on the cinema exhibition room).
- University of Belgrade - Faculty of Philosophy (Responsible for research on the music exhibition room).
- Bulgarian Academy of Sciences - Institute of Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum (Responsible for research on the memory sites exhibition room).
- Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje - Department of History (Responsible for research on the objects exhibition room).



Congratulations to all our members for their research achievements in 2024! We look forward to hearing about more from you all in 2025.





New Working Group Project: Formation of the Military Labour History Syllabus Development Committee

led by Leslie-William T. Robinson

We are excited to announce the establishment of a committee to **develop a syllabus on military labour history**. Above all, we hope that the initiative provides the opportunity for an open conversation about our subfield and how we might teach it, as well as a valuable resource for our community. We invite your help.

In collectively constructing a program of study we expect to identify and engage with the key questions and scholarship that currently shapes the study of military labour. The goal is to produce a final syllabus that is replete with innovative pedagogical approaches and dedicated to exploring historical trends across a broad temporal spectrum and from diverse geographic regions around the globe.

With good fortune the syllabus will serve as a template and a resource, one that enables scholars in our community to adapt and expand upon according to their academic needs and contexts. A successful outcome aims to enhance and extend the reach and impact of military labour history studies.

Our first meeting is tentatively scheduled for late January, with subsequent meetings as members' schedules allow (about every six weeks or so). Meeting times will be amenable to global participation, and we hope to complete the syllabus by mid-year.

Please join us! Your participation will be crucial to the success of this endeavour, one we hope can contribute to a vibrant future for the study and teaching of military labour history.

For more information and to join the effort, please email Les at lrobinson@fas.harvard.edu.



Call for Member Project Leader EOIs: Early Modern Military Labour History Project

At the Working Group meeting in Uppsala this year, we decided to move ahead with a special project on early modern military labour history. However, there is just one problem: it is currently leaderless!

This is a call for **Expressions of Interest from Members** to lead this project. We already have several interested members ready to contribute, but we need someone to take on overall coordination. Early Modern was identified as an area needing more attention at our Vienna conference, and the enthusiasm for, and exciting research in, this space was confirmed in Uppsala – this panel received the most proposals in our call for papers. We envisage a special journal issue or similar. The WG coordinators will of course provide the project leader with lots of support. If you are interested or just want to know a bit more about it, please contact the coordinators on militarylabourhistory@gmail.com as soon as possible! Or at least by **10 January 2025**.

Getting to know our new Working Group members

We asked one of our newest members, who we met in Uppsala, to introduce themselves and share something about their research. We are always happy to introduce new members, both in here and on our Facebook page. Get in touch militarylabourhistory@gmail.com if you would like to share your research story.



Teresa Peláez-Domínguez, Universitat de València (PhD candidate)



My name is Teresa Peláez-Domínguez, and I am a PhD candidate at the Universitat de València in Spain. My interest in early modern history, particularly in the history of slavery, began during my undergraduate studies. In my final year, as part of my bachelor's degree in History, I conducted my first research project on Mediterranean slavery in the Early Modern Period.

During my Master's studies in the History of the Western Mediterranean at the same university, I engaged in a research project analysing the autobiographies of former slaves from the Iberian Peninsula. The sources were the texts that some

individuals of the Hispanic monarchy who were captured and enslaved in Islamic territories wrote about their captivity experiences upon returning home after escaping or being ransomed. During this research, I explored how these former slaves represented their experiences of slavery, particularly in relation to the depiction of Otherness, the Islamic world, and the encounters with the Other within the context of the Catholic Hispanic monarchy during the early modern period. This work has resulted in several publications such as "Autobiografías de cautivos: la esclavitud mediterránea a través de sus escritos" (in *Estudis: Revista de Historia Moderna*, 2022), "La (re)construcción de la experiencia transimperial del cautiverio y la esclavitud mediterránea en las autobiografías de excautivos (siglos XVI y XVII)" (in *Los caminos de la Historia Moderna*, 2023) and, more recently and in English, "Describing Otherness in Captives' Autobiographies in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries" (in *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 2024).

After completing my Master's studies, I began my PhD project focusing on slavery in the galleys of the Hispanic monarchy during the 16th century. This research is funded by the Ministry of Science of the Spanish government and is being conducted under the supervision of Professors Rafael Benítez-Sánchez-Blanco and Manuel Lomas-Cortés.

A key aspect of my research is that the enslaved rowers in these royal navies were the property of the Crown. Additionally, slave labour coexisted alongside other forms of coerced labour, such as convict labour and even wage labour. Consequently, my research has expanded to take a



broader historical view of coerced labour in the navies of the 16th century, exploring how the Hispanic monarchy relied on various forms of forced labour to support its Mediterranean imperial project. Thus, I am interested in the mechanisms of forced labour in the service to the king, which included not only slavery and punishment but also wages –as the salaries in the galleys were often linked to perpetuating forced labour rather than free labour. My research tries to analyse the relationships between different types of labour across different periods and geopolitical contexts and how the crown managed all these forced labourers in the navy’s service. For this reason, I have worked in several Spanish archives that keep the navy’s administrative documents, mainly the Archivo General de Simancas (Valladolid), but also the Archivo de la Nobleza (Toledo) and the Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid). I am still working on my PhD, but some publications have already been published with some initial results, such as the book chapter “La población esclava en la Galera Real (1595-1602)” (in *El Desarrollo del tráfico esclavista en la modernidad, siglos XV-XIX*, 2024).

Welcome Teresa!

Mailing List and Facebook Group

We would like to remind everyone receiving this newsletter that the Working Group has a mailing list and a Facebook group for communication. Please feel free to use these channels of communication, for example distributing calls for papers for workshops and conferences within the field of military labour history or letting us know about your research achievements.

To be added to the mailing list, please e-mail: militarylabourhistory@gmail.com.

To join the Facebook group, make a request here:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/militarylabour/>.

Working Group email

Please feel free to contact the coordinators at any time if you have any questions:
militarylabourhistory@gmail.com

Current Coordinators:

Christine de Matos (The University of Notre Dame Australia)

Jeongmin Kim (University of Manitoba)

Olli Siitonen (University of Helsinki)

Alexandros Touloumtzidis (University of Patras)