

The Outbreak of the Rebellion of Cyrus the Younger

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IN THE *ANABASIS*, Xenophon asserts that the Persian prince Cyrus the Younger was falsely accused of plotting a coup d'état against King Artaxerxes II shortly after his accession to the throne in 404 BCE. Spared from execution by the Queen Mother Parysatis, Cyrus returned to Lydia determined to seize the throne for himself. He secretly prepared his rebellion by securing access to thousands of Greek hoplites, winning over Persian officials and most of the Greek cities of Ionia, and continuing to send tribute and assurances of his loyalty to the unsuspecting King (1.1).¹ In Xenophon's timeline, the rebellion was not official until sometime between the muster of his army at Sardis in spring 401, which spurred his rival Tissaphernes to warn Artaxerxes (1.2.4–5), and his arrival several months later at Thapsacus on the Euphrates, where Cyrus first openly announced his true intentions (1.4.11).

Questioning the “strange blindness” of Artaxerxes in light of Cyrus' seemingly obvious preparations for revolt, Pierre Briant proposed an alternative timeline placing the outbreak of the rebellion almost immediately after Cyrus' return to Sardis in late 404 or early 403.² In his reconstruction, the King allowed Cyrus

¹ See also Ctesias *FGrHist* 688 F 16.59, Diod. 14.19, Plut. *Artax.* 3–4.

² Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* (Winona Lake 2002) 617–620. J. K. Anderson, *Xenophon* (New York 1974) 80, expresses a similar skepticism. Briant concludes his discussion by stating that the rebellion officially (Briant does not define “official,” but I take it to mean when either the King or Cyrus declared it publicly) began in 401 with the muster of Cyrus' army at Sardis, but it is nonetheless appropriate to characterize Briant's position as dating the official outbreak of the revolt to 404/3. He argues that Artaxerxes

to leave court in spite of the accusations of Tissaphernes as a favor to Parysatis, but maintained a close watch on him. Citing a report that the satrap Pharnabazus warned him of Cyrus' plans for rebellion shortly after the return to Lydia (Diod. 14.11.1–4), Briant suggested that the King ordered local officials to make war on his brother at this early stage. While Tissaphernes fought him for control of Miletus (*An.* 1.1.7), an otherwise obscure official named Orontas seized the citadel at Sardis and then waged a guerilla campaign from nearby Mysia (1.6.6–7).³

Briant's argument against the King's ignorance of the threat posed by Cyrus is compelling in many respects, and his reconstruction of the rebellion has gained acceptance.⁴ Yet the notion that Xenophon misdated the outbreak of so public and so significant a revolt by over two years is problematic. The secrecy of Cyrus' preparations for the revolt is a critical element of the opening chapters of the *Anabasis*, and many of the events Xenophon records make little sense if Cyrus was already openly recognized as a rebel and at war with loyalist officials.⁵ It is

ordered local officials to wage open war against Cyrus at this early date, and it is difficult to see how royally sanctioned war against a recognized rebel can be characterized as anything other than the suppression of an official rebellion.

³ For background on Orontas see Sean Manning, "A Prosopography of the Followers of Cyrus the Younger," *AHB* 32 (2018) 6–7.

⁴ Robin Waterfield, *Xenophon's Retreat: Greece, Persia and the End of the Golden Age* (London 2006) 66–67; John Hyland, "Pharnabazos, Cyrus' Rebellion, and the Spartan War of 399," *ARTA* (2008) 4–5, and *Persian Interventions: The Achaemenid Empire, Athens, and Sparta, 450–386 BCE* (Baltimore 2018) 124–125; Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire* (Cambridge 2014) 177–178. Others continue to follow Xenophon's dating, such as Stephen Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West: Egypt and the Persian Empire* (New York 2012) 38–39; John W. I. Lee, "Cyrus the Younger and Artaxerxes II, 401 BC: An Achaemenid Civil War Reconsidered," in J. Collins et al. (eds.), *Revolt and Resistance in the Ancient Classical World and the Near East* (Leiden 2016) 103–104.

⁵ Cyrus continues to receive visitors from the King and to send both tribute and messages to court, and he recruits his Greek forces in secret (1.1). He also gives false pretexts for the expedition, claiming it is against the Pisidians

difficult to believe that Xenophon presented an obviously inaccurate chronology of the revolt to a contemporary audience, and even harder to understand why other fourth-century writers such as Ephorus did not correct his error.⁶ Recent scholarship on Xenophon's historical method has demonstrated that he was more than capable of framing or rewriting historical events to suit his own thematic and literary ends without telling outright, easily provable falsehoods like this.⁷

This article aims to reconcile Briant's reasonable skepticism of the ignorance of Artaxerxes with Xenophon's chronology of the revolt. Analysis of key episodes from the trial of Cyrus at the Persian court to the Battle of Cunaxa reveals little firm evidence to support the view that the rebellion officially began before 401. While Xenophon misconstrues or obscures the significance of Cyrus' interactions with other Persian officials based in western Anatolia, his chronology of the revolt is accurate. At the same time, aspects of Briant's argument remain insightful. Despite Xenophon's assertion to the contrary, Artaxerxes was suspicious of Cyrus' loyalty from an early stage, and he did attempt to use regional officials like Tissaphernes, Pharnabazus, and Orontas

(1.2.1), against Abrocomas (1.3.20), and makes several other misleading statements about its aims (1.1.11, 1.4.7, 1.4.11–12).

⁶ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 618, takes Diodorus' report from Ephorus that Pharnabazus warned the King as the evidence for his revised chronology (14.11.1–4), but Diodorus' narrative of the rebellion itself largely confirms Xenophon's chronology (14.19). See discussion of this episode below. Ctesias' *Persica* was published before the *Anabasis* (Xenophon cites him at 1.8.26) and, since the work survives only in fragments, it is not known whether he offered an alternative chronology or even addressed this specific episode in detail.

⁷ Sherylee Bassett, "The Enigma of Clearchus the Spartan," *AHB* 15 (2001) 1, argues that Xenophon was "careful in his choice of language and the details he includes and omits in the *Anabasis*." See also Michael Flower, *Xenophon's Anabasis, or The Expedition of Cyrus* (New York 2012); Jonas Grethlein, "Xenophon's *Anabasis* from Character to Narrator," *JHS* (2012) 35–37; John Shanahan, "Two Notes on the Battle of Cunaxa," *AHB* 28 (2014) 62–68. See also Christopher Tuplin, *The Failings of Empire: A Reading of Xenophon Hellenica 2.3.11–7.5.27* (Stuttgart 1993) 1–43; John Dillery, *Xenophon and the History of his Times* (London 1995); Vivienne Gray, "Interventions and Citations in Xenophon, *Hellenica* and *Anabasis*," *CQ* 53 (2003) 111–123.

to restrain his brother's ambitions. The King also began his own precautionary counter-preparations before Cyrus declared his intentions at Thapsacus, and as a result his forces overwhelmed the rebel army when it reached Cunaxa.

The trial and acquittal of Cyrus

The argument that Artaxerxes had foreknowledge of Cyrus' intentions relies almost entirely on circumstantial evidence interpreted in light of the fact that Cyrus did revolt. Yet our awareness in hindsight that Cyrus moved against his brother does not necessarily mean that his plans were obvious to everyone involved before the act. The evidence for his royal ambitions available before his revolt is rather slim. Essentially, it consists of Xenophon's comment that Cyrus executed two members of the royal family for not treating him as King before the death of Darius II (*Hell.* 2.1.8–9), and of Tissaphernes' accusations against Cyrus to Artaxerxes II shortly after his accession (1.1.3).

It is not clear whether Tissaphernes had any grounds for his accusations beyond these executions. Xenophon characterizes his charges as slanderous (*διαβάλλει*), and Ctesias adds that Cyrus was eventually cleared of guilt (F 16.59). While Cyrus' ambitions for the throne were likely not a secret, Tissaphernes himself also had obvious motives for fabricating or exaggerating evidence against Cyrus. He and his fellow satrap Pharnabazus had been demoted as a direct result of Cyrus' appointment in 407 to *karanos*, or supreme military commander of Persian forces in western Anatolia (*An.* 1.9.7, *Hell.* 1.4.3),⁸ and Tissaphernes stood to benefit from his elimination. Indeed, he received a significant promotion after Cyrus' defeat at Cunaxa (*Hell.* 3.1.3; Diod. 14.35.2).

Contrary to Xenophon and Ctesias, Plutarch relays several traditions that suggest Cyrus was in fact guilty as charged. One states that Cyrus was planning to assassinate Artaxerxes during

⁸ For a brief summary (with references) of the possible arrangements between Tissaphernes and Cyrus during 407–405 see Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 200 n.65. For a recent treatment of the office of *karanos* see Eduard Rung, "Some Notes on *Karanos* in the Achaemenid Empire," *IA* 50 (2015) 333–356.

his accession ceremony, and another that he was actually caught in the act. Plutarch further reports that Cyrus was on the verge of being executed when Parysatis embraced him and successfully pled for mercy (*Artax.* 3–4). Some scholars have suggested that these stories are better viewed as royal propaganda disseminated in the aftermath of Cyrus' rebellion.⁹ Ultimately, the strongest evidence that Tissaphernes' accusations against Cyrus were not proven is that Cyrus was sent back to Sardis as satrap. The King had little reason to pardon his brother if he were indisputably guilty, let alone to allow him to return to an official political position.¹⁰

Despite the assertion or insinuation in many of these accounts that Cyrus was saved by the dramatic intervention of Parysatis, the reality is likely far more mundane. Comparative evidence reveals that high-ranking Persian officials accused of treason were usually granted an opportunity to defend themselves in a formal hearing. The trial of Orontas by Cyrus (*An.* 1.6) and the trial of Orontes several decades later (Diod. 15.10–11) offer two of the most detailed accounts of these proceedings. Both were formally charged before a panel of judges and allowed an opportunity to defend themselves. In each case, the testimony and verdict were based not only on the immediate charges of treason, but also on the defendants' earlier relationship to and actions on

⁹ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 616; Waterfield, *Xenophon's Retreat* 63–64; Waters, *Ancient Persia* 177. Anderson, *Xenophon* 74: "Ctesias may be inventing an oriental romance for his Greek readers."

¹⁰ Stephen Ruzicka, "Cyrus and Tissaphernes, 407–401 B.C.," *CJ* 80 (1985) 205, suggested that Cyrus escaped and returned to Lydia on his own. Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 204 n.1, responds, "bureaucratic oversight of the royal roads should have impeded a fugitive's escape if the king desired his recapture." Following Pierre Debord, *L'Asie mineure au IV^e siècle* (Paris 1999) 124 n.73, Hyland (124) proposes that Cyrus may have returned to Lydia in a reduced capacity, but seized and held Sardis contrary to the King's orders. Neither of these scenarios, however, explains why the King would have pardoned his treasonous brother, let alone sent him back to his power base in western Anatolia.

behalf of the (would-be) King.¹¹

Cyrus was almost certainly granted an opportunity to defend himself in a similar fashion against Tissaphernes' self-serving accusations. Again, the only known evidence against him was the execution of royal family members prior to the death of Darius II, and it is worth acknowledging that at least one scholar has interpreted Xenophon's report on this point as a later interpolation.¹² Even if Xenophon's report is genuine, moreover, the action took place while Darius II was still alive and does not necessarily prove an intent to revolt against Artaxerxes II.¹³

In Cyrus' favor was testimony regarding his character from

¹¹ For discussion of Persian judicial trials see Arthur Keaveney, "The Trial of Orontas: Xenophon, *Anabasis* I, 6," *AntCl* 81 (2012) 33–34; Jeffrey Rop, "The Assassination of Tissaphernes: Royal Responses to Military Defeat in the Achaemenid Empire," in J. Clark et al. (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Military Defeat in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Leiden 2018) 60–63.

¹² For the possibility that *Hell.* 2.1.8 is an interpolation, D. M. Lewis, *Sparta and Persia* (Leiden 1977) 104 n.83. Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 114, suggests that the episode may be a post-rebellion invention by royal propagandists.

¹³ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 615–616, 986, accepts this report as the likely reason for Cyrus' summons to court, but notes that Cyrus had struck a series of coins depicting himself without a beard and not wearing the royal *kidaris*, noting "this definitely is not coinage of revolution." The association of these coins with Cyrus the Younger is not secure, however. Additional finds have complicated their original dating to the fifth century, and from the available evidence it is possible only to say that they were probably produced somewhere in Asia Minor or the Levant at some time in the fourth century. See Peter van Alfen, "Mechanisms for the Imitation of Athenian Coinage: Dekeleia and Mercenaries Reconsidered," *RBN* 147 (2011) 75–76; Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 203 n.118. In general, the conventional view that Persian satraps minted imitation Athenian coins in order to pay Greek soldiers has also received serious criticism in recent years. For broader discussion with relevance to the supposed Cyrean coins see Cynthia Harrison, "Numismatic Problems in the Achaemenid West: The Undue Modern Influence of 'Tissaphernes'," in V. Gorman et al. (eds.), *Oikistes: Studies in Constitutions, Colonies, and Military Power in the Ancient World, Offered in Honor of A. J. Graham* (Leiden 2011) 301–319. For a similar view with respect to Egypt, Henry Colburn, "The Role of Coinage in the Political Economy of Egypt," in P. McKechnie et al. (eds.), *Ptolemy I and the Transformation of Egypt* (Leiden 2018) 91–94.

the Queen Mother Parysatis, whose appeal to Artaxerxes probably came in this formal setting rather than the sensationalized manner relayed by Plutarch. Also relevant was his service in Anatolia in 407–405. As *karanos*, his close collaboration with Lysander of Sparta led to the destruction of the Delian League and the restoration of Persian control over the eastern Aegean coast. Sparta continued to be an important ally to the Empire at the time of the trial, and Cyrus' connections in the Greek world made him a valuable resource to the King. Since he remained a useful subordinate, it made little sense to execute him or even prevent his return to Anatolia without incontrovertible evidence of treachery.¹⁴

The King decided upon what must have seemed a perfect resolution to the accusations against Cyrus. He sent his brother back to Sardis as a satrap, where he would continue to be useful as a liaison with Sparta. At the same time, he reduced Cyrus' financial allowance, stripped him of the title of *karanos*, and transferred control of Ionia to Tissaphernes (*An.* 1.1.6).¹⁵ The conclusion of the war against Athens meant that there was no longer need for a supreme military commander in the region, and supplied an unobjectionable rationale for the imposition of budgetary restrictions and the reduction of his political authority. Although suspicious of his brother's ambitions, Artaxerxes reasonably did not consider him much of a threat in this limited capacity. No western official had ever before attempted to march against the imperial center, and the few who resisted royal authority had been suppressed in relatively short order.¹⁶

¹⁴ Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 127: "Cyrus had the potential to complete the extension of Achaemenid influence over Greece." This comment is in the context of his successful overthrow of Artaxerxes, but applies in a hypothetical scenario in which Cyrus remained a loyal satrap of the King.

¹⁵ Ruzicka, *CJ* 80 (1985) 205, 208–209; Antony Keen, "Persian Policy in the Aegean, 412–386 BC," *JAC* 13 (1998) 104; Waterfield, *Xenophon's Retreat* 65–66; Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 124–125. Cf. Simon Hornblower, "Persia," *CAH*² VI (1994) 52–53.

¹⁶ See for instance the rebellions of Oroetes, Pissuthnes, and Amorges:

Moreover, two newly re-empowered rival satraps now ruled beside Cyrus in Anatolia, Tissaphernes to the south in Caria and Pharnabazus to the north in Hellespontine Phrygia. The King also retained the loyalty of numerous local officials such as Orontas, the commander of the garrison at Sardis itself.¹⁷

Cyrus' return to western Anatolia

After his arrest, trial, and acquittal at court, Cyrus returned to Sardis in late 404 or early 403.¹⁸ He almost immediately clashed with Tissaphernes over control of the Greek cities of Ionia, which had been granted to Tissaphernes by the King. Yet Cyrus' Spartan allies had seized control of most of these cities in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War. Together with Cyrus' own Greek forces, they were able to prevent Tissaphernes from taking over and to exile or kill his supporters. The lone exception was Miletus, where Tissaphernes managed to place his own loyalists in power and drive out their rivals. With military, naval, and financial support from Cyrus, these Milesian exiles were laying siege to the city at the time of the rebel muster at Sardis in 401 (*An.* 1.1.6–2.2).¹⁹

Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 122, 591–593; Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 42–60.

¹⁷ Manning, *AHB* 32 (2018) 16, notes the absence of Lydian and Phrygian courtiers from Cyrus' entourage.

¹⁸ 404 is favored by Ruzicka, *CJ* 80 (1985) 209; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 615–620. For 403, Jean-François Bommelaer, *Lysandre de Sparte: Histoire et traditions* (Paris 1981) 123–124; M. A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire* (Leiden 1989) 274; Debord, *L'Asie mineure* 123–124; Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 123. Antony Andrewes, "Two Notes on Lysander," *Phoenix* 25 (1971) 214–215, observes that Darius II died in the spring of 404, meaning that, depending on the length of Cyrus' detention at court, it is possible he returned as early as summer of 404 and as late as 403. I see no way of further narrowing this window with certainty, but the formal trial of Cyrus proposed here favors the later date. The earlier chronology would be preferred if Pharnabazus really did assassinate Alcibiades in order to prevent him from informing the King of Cyrus' plans, a problematic position upon which Briant's argument depends (see below).

¹⁹ The struggle for control of Ionia as it relates to Lysander's *decarchies*

Briant cites the conflict over Ionia and Miletus in particular as evidence that the rebellion began before 401, but rivalries between loyalist satraps did at times spill into open fighting.²⁰ Xenophon himself obviously did not view Cyrus' proxy war against Tissaphernes as an act of treason, since he mentions it while maintaining that Artaxerxes was at the same time unaware of Cyrus' plans. The clash could not have been unexpected given the animosity between Tissaphernes and Cyrus after the former's accusation at court. Xenophon was hardly in a position to know the King's feelings on the matter, but his claim that Artaxerxes was satisfied by the satraps' preoccupation with one another and by the double payments of tribute for Ionia that he received from them is sensible (*An.* 1.1.8).²¹

In comparison with his proxy campaign against Tissaphernes, Cyrus' clashes with Orontas at Sardis and in Mysia appear to be stronger evidence for dating the official outbreak of the rebellion earlier than 401. Xenophon does not state precisely when either of these clashes took place, but the specific timing of the siege of the citadel at Sardis is most important (1.6.6). An attack against his capital city's fortress on the King's orders after the return of

remains controversial, but for my purposes here the key (uncontroversial) point is that the Spartans and Cyrus worked with local partisans to prevent or dispossess Tissaphernes of all the cities save Miletus. Andrewes, *Phoenix* 25 (1971) 209–215; Bommelaer, *Lysandre de Sparte* 121–124; Ruzicka, *CJ* 80 (1985) 209–210; Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 123–127.

²⁰ In his discussion of the problems of the Great Satraps' Revolt of the 360s, Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 656–675, makes the very point that it is difficult to distinguish between satrapal squabbling and actual revolt. See also Michael Weiskopf, *The So-Called "Great Satraps" Revolt, 366–360 B.C.: Concerning Local Instability in the Achaemenid Far West* (Wiesbaden 1989) 16–19; Robert Moyses, "Diodoros, the Satraps, and the Decline of the Persian Empire," *AHB* 5 (1991) 116; Keen, *JAC* 13 (1998) 96–97; Debord, *L'Asie mineure* 44–45. While most of this evidence post-dates the revolt of Cyrus, I see no reason to think that something fundamental changed in this respect ca. 401, in other words, that before this year satrapal infighting was considered equivalent to rebellion at court, but that subsequently it was not.

²¹ Ruzicka, *CJ* 80 (1985) 210.

Cyrus to Anatolia would have been tantamount to a declaration war against the satrap, and could leave no doubt to anyone that the King considered Cyrus a rebel.²² Once again, however, the emphasis that Xenophon and other sources place on the secrecy of Cyrus' preparations—and Cyrus' later interactions with Orontas (discussed below)—renders this scenario unlikely.

Another possibility is that Orontas, who seems to have been originally dispatched to Lydia by King Darius II (1.6.6),²³ was already serving as the garrison commander at Sardis before Cyrus' return from court in 403. He may have held this position already under Darius, or Artaxerxes could have appointed him to command of the citadel and the city's garrison after his own accession in 404, perhaps even as a means of keeping watch on his brother. The idea of separating the political administration from the military command of a satrapy is not well attested in practice in Achaemenid history, but Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia* (8.6.1–14) and *Oeconomicus* (4.5–7) writes that the Persians employed it.²⁴ Alexander during his conquest of the Achaemenid Empire seventy years later similarly placed Macedonians and Greeks in military posts in regions where he appointed or allowed Persian governors to continue in their former political roles.²⁵

In this scenario, the struggle between Cyrus and Orontas over the citadel at Sardis was not a matter of rebellion, but of the extent of a satrap's authority over the military forces in his

²² Waterfield, *Xenophon's Retreat* 66.

²³ Manning, *AHB* 32 (2018) 7, notes that Orontas may have already been present in Anatolia prior to Cyrus' appointment, and so was 'given' to Cyrus simply by his appointment as *karanos*.

²⁴ Christopher Tuplin, "Xenophon and the Garrisons of the Achaemenid Empire," *AMIran* 20 (1987) 167–245, demonstrates that this theory does not withstand close scrutiny of the historical and archaeological evidence. See also Hornblower, *CAH²* VI (1994) 55–57; Debord, *L'Asie mineure* 167–169; Elspeth Dusinberre, *Empire, Authority, and Autonomy in Achaemenid Anatolia* (Cambridge 2013) 85–93.

²⁵ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 849–850; Carol King, *Ancient Macedonia* (New York 2018) 160.

province.²⁶ Cyrus quite understandably wanted his own rather than the King's man in charge of the garrison at Sardis, especially if he was already planning to rebel. The citadel there was the most defensible part of the city, and it probably housed the satrap's treasury.²⁷ The preparation for the rebellion was an expensive undertaking involving the payment of thousands of Greek soldiers abroad, and it would have been all the more difficult to keep these payments hidden with a royalist overseeing access to Cyrus' funds. Incidentally, the individual whom Cyrus chose to replace Orontas was probably Xenias of Arcadia. He had previously led the three hundred Greek bodyguards who accompanied Cyrus to court in 405 (*An.* 1.1.2), and was the commander of the garrisons in all of his cities by 401 (1.2.1).

Thus Cyrus ordered Orontas to relinquish control of the garrison and citadel immediately upon his return from court. The commander initially refused to comply because Artaxerxes himself had appointed him to his position, but quickly realized that he could not stand against Cyrus alone in an open conflict. Help from the imperial center was far from guaranteed and in any event could not arrive in time to relieve a siege. The King was unlikely to order Tissaphernes or Pharnabazus to move against his brother—effectively creating a major rebellion—over a relatively minor dispute about a garrison commander. Notably, Xenophon writes that Orontas made war (ἐπολέμησεν) against Cyrus, but nowhere in his account does he mention any specific

²⁶ Tuplin, *AMIran* 20 (1987) 232, offers relevant concluding remarks on the discord between Orontas and Cyrus: “Mere insistence upon royal appointment of commanders could not be expected to do much more than stop satrapal patronage guaranteeing that local opposition to acts of revolt was impossible ... the garrison is after all simply part of a satrapy's military establishment: it is there to help execute one of the satrap's functions (protection of inhabitants) and it must be possible for the satrap [to] make use of its assistance as he sees fit.”

²⁷ Arr. *Anab.* 1.17.3 reports that the garrison commander of Sardis delivered the citadel and the treasury to Alexander in 334. My thanks to John W. I. Lee for this helpful observation.

instances of bloodshed or actual fighting. This so-called war may have consisted of little more than a brief standoff, after which Orontas surrendered to Cyrus and swore to him an oath of friendship.²⁸

Conflict in Mysia and the trial of Orontas

According to Xenophon, Cyrus' charges against Orontas included the accusation that "deserting to Mysians, you did as much damage to my land as you could."²⁹ This is a potentially serious charge. Harming Persian territory was considered an act of war according to the King's treaties with Sparta during the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 8.37.5, 8.58.4), and Athenian raids in the fourth century provoked royal responses of varying severity.³⁰ Rebels, including Cyrus himself, went out of their way to destroy satrapal estates and gardens as symbols of royal power.³¹ However, the charge also comes without any supporting details. What territories did Orontas damage, and how badly? What was the frequency and the duration of his depredations? Was there

²⁸ For debate over the precise meaning of this oath and the obligations it entailed see Thierry Petit, "Xénophon et la vassalité Achéménide," in C. Tuplin et al. (eds.), *Xenophon and his World* (Stuttgart 2004) 175–199; C. Tuplin, "All the King's Men," in J. Curtis et al. (eds.), *The World of Achaemenid Persia* (London 2010) 51–62; Keaveney, *AntCl* 81 (2012) 32–33.

²⁹ *An.* 1.6.7, ἀποστὰς εἰς Μυσσοὺς κακῶς ἐποίησας τὴν ἐμὴν χώραν ὃ τι ἐδύνα.

³⁰ The attacks of Thrasybulus on royal territory in the late 390s led to the return of Tiribazus to western Anatolia and, eventually, to the King's Peace of 387/6, while the plundering expedition of Chares spurred the King to threaten royal intervention against Athens in the Social War of 357–355, forcing Athens to withdraw from the conflict on unfavorable terms. For the former affair see Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West* 71–72, 77–82; Luca Asmonti, *Conon the Athenian: Warfare and Politics in the Aegean, 414–386 BC* (Stuttgart 2015) 175–178. For the latter, Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 681–682; Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West* 156–157. The details and significance of these episodes are also discussed in further detail in Jeffrey Rop, *Greek Military Service in the Ancient Near East, 401–330 BCE* (Cambridge forthcoming).

³¹ Discussed below. Note the complaints of Pharnabazus to Agesilaus about the plundering of his territory during the Spartan-Persian war that followed the rebellion of Cyrus (Xen. *Ages.* 12, *Hell.* 4.1.33).

any fighting or resistance? If so, was it carried out by local forces or by soldiers dispatched by Cyrus? And which Mysians, exactly, did he join?

For this last question, it is important to note that Mysia was a contested region lacking any sort of unitary political oversight. The satraps of Hellespontine Phrygia and Lydia each could claim the loyalty of some groups of Mysians; others refused to acknowledge Achaemenid authority altogether and were subjected to occasional satrapal expeditions, including by both Cyrus (*An.* 1.9.14) and Pharnabazus (*Hell.* 3.1.13).³² The Persian military presence in the region was heavy, and Briant characterizes it as a place that was “populated with military colonists and garrisons, and bristled with small forts.”³³ As part of his official appointment in western Anatolia under Darius II, Orontas may have been granted territory in Mysia (*An.* 1.6.6).³⁴ In this role, he would have been responsible for local defense, paying tribute, and levying troops upon command.³⁵

The lack of details in Xenophon’s statement means that a wide range of possible scenarios fit his described actions in Mysia. The maximalist interpretation adopted by Briant and others is that, after fleeing Sardis, Orontas joined a group of independent Mysians and together with them waged war against Cyrus.

³² Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 641–643, 730; John Ma, “Mysians on the Çan Sarcophagus? Ethnicity and Domination in Achaemenid Military Art,” *Historia* 57 (2008) 249.

³³ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 643; cf. Debord, *L’Asie mineure* 75, 149–152; Christopher Tuplin, “The Persian Empire,” in R. Lane Fox (ed.), *The Long March: Xenophon and the Ten Thousand* (New Haven 2004) 179–180; Dusinberre, *Empire* 89.

³⁴ Xenophon’s report that Orontas was accompanied by kinsmen and that many in Cyrus’ army continued to demonstrate their fidelity to him after his conviction is an indication that he had actually settled in the region (1.6.10).

³⁵ On the granting of military estates and the responsibilities of military colonists see Debord, *L’Asie mineure* 193–198; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 500–502; Dusinberre, *Empire* 88–89. Tuplin, *AMIran* 20 (1987) 167–245, focuses on Anatolia. For Lydia, Nicholas Sekunda, “Achaemenid Colonization in Lydia,” *REA* 87 (1987) 7–30, argues that land was granted as a reward for completed military service, without further military obligations.

However, this scenario does not fit with the reading of Orontas' first clash with Cyrus as brief and nonviolent proposed above or, more importantly, with a more expansive reading of it. If the earlier struggle over the citadel had been bloody, why would Cyrus have allowed Orontas to leave Sardis at all? And instead of fleeing to fellow loyalist satraps nearby, why would Orontas have joined a group of Mysians who refused to acknowledge the King's authority? It seems more likely that independent-minded Mysians would have been allied with Cyrus rather than opposed to him, were he already in open revolt.

The minimalist reading of the statement favored here is that, after their standoff at Sardis had been resolved, Cyrus allowed Orontas to return to his estates in Mysia, where he "did damage" to Cyrus' land in a marginally destructive fashion: by launching raids against rebellious Mysians in territory nominally claimed by Cyrus, perhaps, or even by simply choosing to render the revenues and military levies of his estates to Pharnabazus rather than to Cyrus. Even such relatively minor actions could nonetheless have been interpreted by Cyrus as insubordinate, particularly in light of Orontas' pledge of friendship at Sardis. Importantly, Xenophon offers no specific motivation for Orontas' defection from Cyrus in Mysia. He may have done so simply out of spite for his humiliating removal at Sardis. Alternatively, he could have switched sides because of a pre-existing friendship with Pharnabazus or in response to military or political pressure from the satrap. Pharnabazus may have even seized control of Orontas' estates during Cyrus' relatively long absence at court, a scenario which would have made Orontas' position at Sardis all the more intolerable to Cyrus.

In any case, Xenophon's notice that Orontas defected "to Mysians" does not necessarily mean that he rebelled, refusing entirely to pay tribute or perform military service for the Empire. For a staunch loyalist to the King such as Orontas, it is far more reasonable to think that the Mysians he joined were partisans of Pharnabazus rather than anti-Persian insurgents. Much as he would later cover his rebellious march with the claim of punishing recalcitrant Pisidians, it may be that Cyrus' ostensible goal was to subdue groups of independent Mysians, but that his

actual purpose was to detach territory and clients like Orontas from Pharnabazus, as a few of Xenophon's comments imply (*An.* 1.6.7, 1.9.14).

The minimalist interpretation of the clashes between Cyrus and Orontas in Mysia and at Sardis better matches the subsequent interactions reported between these two individuals. Why would Cyrus not only have pardoned Orontas after he seized the citadel at Sardis on the King's orders, but also again after he made open war against Cyrus and plundered his territory in Mysia? Why would he have ever considered granting such a man command of 1000 cavalry on the march to Cunaxa, and why would Orontas have been so bold as to request such a responsibility after he had twice made war on Cyrus (1.6.1–2)? By contrast, each of these decisions becomes much more sensible if we view their first two interactions as bloodless, brief confrontations over whether Cyrus could rescind Orontas' royal appointment at Sardis, and whether his estates in Mysia fell under the jurisdiction of Pharnabazus or Cyrus.³⁶

Finally, this interpretation also explains why Xenophon's account of their two clashes is so sparse. The testimony of Cyrus himself at the trial of Orontas was the ultimate source about

³⁶ Keaveney, *AntCl* 81 (2012) 31–32, offers three possible but ultimately unpersuasive explanations for Cyrus' earlier merciful treatment of Orontas. The first is that Cyrus "was of kingly disposition and magnanimous," and the second that it was "engrained in Cyrus' *psyche* as an Iranian" to be merciful, and that "even the King himself could not put someone to death for one offence." Thomas Braun, "Xenophon's Dangerous Liaisons," in *The Long March* 107–130, demonstrates that Cyrus was far from magnanimous, and also points out that Cyrus executed two of his cousins for the lone offense of not treating him as King (*Hell.* 2.1.8). Note also the execution of Megaphernes (*An.* 1.2.20). The third reason is that "Cyrus' forbearance may have been rooted in cool calculation ... Orontas was far too powerful a man and too useful to be lightly discarded." To execute a subordinate for engaging in treasonous war—twice!—can hardly be described as light treatment and still does not explain why Cyrus would have thought to grant him command of 1000 cavalry. The mercy he shows Orontas is a far better match for the minimalist interpretation of their clashes proposed here.

these events (1.6.4–5). Since the purpose of the trial was to convict Orontas of treason and justify the execution of one of his popular subordinates,³⁷ it was in Cyrus' best interest at that moment to characterize Orontas' previous interactions with him in as devious a light as possible. The Spartan exile Clearchus was also present at the trial, and relayed its proceedings to Xenophon and the rest of the Greeks. As a friend and client of Cyrus he had little reason to downplay Orontas' actions, diminishing the rationale behind the conviction that he himself had recommended. He did have reason to highlight his own importance in the matter, and so it is little surprise that Xenophon's account includes the notice that Clearchus was the first judge to cast a vote.³⁸

For Xenophon, Orontas' attempted betrayal was an anomaly that demanded explanation. A key theme in his generally positive depiction of Cyrus the Younger in the *Anabasis* is his generosity and the loyalty he inspired in his followers, and another theme is that many deserted to Cyrus but few deserted to the King.³⁹ Xenophon wrote the account to highlight Orontas' perfidy in spite of Cyrus' previous good will (1.6.6–7),⁴⁰ insisting that Orontas acknowledged that he had no grounds for his treachery

³⁷ Orontas continued to receive obeisance from his former followers even after his conviction (1.6.10). Keaveney, *AntCl* 81 (2012) 37–40, notes that the show trial was conducted to confirm Cyrus' authority and strike terror into the disaffected in his army.

³⁸ Keaveney, *AntCl* 81 (2012) 35–37, makes a similar point, and notes that Clearchus' embellishments likely did not obscure the basic outline of the proceedings recorded by Xenophon. Joseph Roisman, "Klearchos in Xenophon's *Anabasis*," *SCI* 8–9 (1985) 40–41, suggests that Cyrus chose Clearchus to pass judgment first, "in order to leave no doubt about the verdict and to make the task of anyone who might have wished to defend the Persian difficult, if not impossible." Keaveney also observes that "at the trial Cyrus' role is akin to that of a public prosecutor" (37), but does not take into account how this might have caused him to be less than objective when recounting Orontas' past betrayals.

³⁹ For example, the majority of Xenophon's obituary of Cyrus (1.9.7–31) is devoted to these themes.

⁴⁰ Indeed, Anderson, *Xenophon* 96, cites his treatment of Orontas as an example of Cyrus' magnanimous character.

(1.6.8), that the judges' decision to convict Orontas was unanimous (1.6.9–10), and that the messenger in whom Orontas confided his plot was in reality more faithful to Cyrus (1.6.3). Given that both Cyrus and Xenophon had reason to emphasize rather than minimize the misdeeds of Orontas, the absence from his account of any specific, incontrovertible instances of violence between Orontas and Cyrus weighs heavily against the maximalist position.

Ultimately, there is no sound reason to view the interaction between Cyrus and Orontas in Mysia as a violent conflict or as evidence of an ongoing, open rebellion. Like many satraps before and after him, Cyrus led a campaign against rebellious groups on the fringes of his satrapy, and used the opportunity to establish his own followers in positions of authority throughout the region. Orontas was unable or unwilling to resist the incursion on his own, and military support from Pharnabazus was not forthcoming for reasons discussed below. When confronted with Cyrus' expeditionary force, Orontas took refuge at a nearby altar of Artemis and appealed a second time for mercy from him.⁴¹ Cyrus accepted his pledge of loyalty, allowed him to retain his position, and in 401 summoned him to the rebel muster at Sardis.

Pharnabazus, Cyrus, and the assassination of Alcibiades

Diodorus begins his account of the assassination of Alcibiades by stating that Pharnabazus ordered the deed on behalf of the Spartans, and then relates an alternative tradition derived from Ephorus (14.11.1–4). According to Ephorus, Alcibiades knew of Cyrus' plans and asked Pharnabazus for permission to travel to warn the King; Pharnabazus denied him this permission, and

⁴¹ Sekunda, *REA* 87 (1987) 17, Tuplin, *The Long March* 169–170, Dusinberre, *Empire* 226, all suggest that the altar at which Orontas made this pledge was at Sardis, but Xenophon's language seems to indicate that Orontas sought sanctuary at an altar of Artemis of his own accord. It seems far more likely that this appeal took place at a local sanctuary in Mysia during Cyrus' campaign into the region.

sent men to the King himself. When he heard that Alcibiades was attempting to go to court anyway, he had him killed in order to ensure that he alone would receive credit for warning the King. This is the only ancient source that reports that the King was aware of Cyrus' intentions at this early stage, and so it is essential evidence for dating the official outbreak of the revolt to 403.⁴²

There are several problems with accepting Ephorus' account as evidence against Xenophon's chronology of the revolt. Scholars continue to debate its validity,⁴³ and Diodorus himself appears to include it merely as an interesting alternative.⁴⁴ Other sources largely agree that the satrap's actual motive was to appease Sparta, not to prevent word of Cyrus' plot from reaching the King. Isocrates names Lysander as critical to the conspiracy (16.40), and Plutarch and Nepos also report that he persuaded Pharnabazus to carry out the act on the orders of the Spartan government, adding that his assassination pleased Critias of Athens and King Agis of Sparta (*Alc.* 38–39, *Nep.* 7.10). Plutarch also mentions another tradition in which Pharnabazus had nothing to do with the death of Alcibiades, who instead was murdered by the brothers of a woman with whom he had had intimate relations.

For the purposes of this article, it is most important that the version offered by Ephorus makes little sense. It is odd that Pharnabazus killed Alcibiades rather than simply detain him; he could have taken credit simply by escorting the Athenian to

⁴² *Nep.* 7.9 writes that Alcibiades was aware of Cyrus' plans, but not that he told Pharnabazus or that Pharnabazus killed Alcibiades so that he could pass along this information to the King.

⁴³ E.g. Bommelaer, *Lysandre de Sparte* 129–132; Ruzicka, *CJ* 80 (1985) 211 n.22; P. J. Rhodes, *Alcibiades* (Barnsely 2011) 101–104; Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 124 (with additional references).

⁴⁴ Hyland, *ARTA* (2008) 7; Rhodes, *Alcibiades* 101; Christopher Tuplin, "Ephorus on Post-Herodotean Persian History," in P. de Fidio et al. (eds.), *Eforo di Cuma nella storia della storiografia greca* (Naples 2013) 651. It should be acknowledged that Diodorus later appears to accept Ephorus' version (14.22.1).

court and presenting him as a witness.⁴⁵ Moreover, Ephorus does not provide a precise timeline for when Pharnabazus actually sent word to the King.⁴⁶ He seems to imply at first that the satrap warned the King immediately upon learning of the plot, while at the same time denying Alcibiades an escort along the royal road. However, he then claims that Pharnabazus killed the Athenian out of fear that he would reach the King before his own couriers. Had they actually been dispatched right away, the satrap's own men surely could have reached court well before a foreigner who lacked official permission to travel along imperial roads.⁴⁷

The logic of the Ephorean account may not be fully coherent, but it seems fairly obvious that its purpose was to defend Pharnabazus from accusations that his assassination of Alcibiades was part of Cyrus' plot against the King.⁴⁸ In the aftermath of the rebellion, the satrap's decision to prevent the Athenian from traveling to the King must have appeared suspicious. Making matters worse was his behavior at the outset of the conflict, particularly because his peer and rival Tissaphernes had rushed to warn the King about Cyrus' preparations in 401 and then fought in the royal army at Cunaxa. By contrast, Pharnabazus had probably supplied Cyrus' army with 1000 Paphlagonian cavalry,

⁴⁵ Hyland, *ARTA* (2008) 7; Rhodes, *Alcibiades* 104. Cf. Waterfield, *Xenophon's Retreat* 66.

⁴⁶ Some—e.g., Ruzicka, *CJ* 80 (1985) 211 n.22; Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 124—believe that Pharnabazus killed Alcibiades before Cyrus' return from court. This would eliminate Briant's timeline as a possibility and render this section unnecessary. For the sake of argument, here I proceed under the assumption that Cyrus did return to Sardis before Alcibiades was assassinated.

⁴⁷ Achaemenid authorities exercised tight control over the imperial road network: Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 364–371.

⁴⁸ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 618, suggests that the different versions of the death of Alcibiades may come from Dascylium and Sardis, respectively. Notably, Briant mistakenly suggests that Pharnabazus did grant Alcibiades authorization to travel to the King, and does not distinguish Diodorus' own explanation from Ephorus', which Diodorus merely relates. This is understandable since Diodorus later adopts Ephorus' position (see n.44 above).

and granted permission to the Spartan exile Clearchus to march with 2000 soldiers through his satrapy on the way to the rebel muster at Sardis.⁴⁹

Pharnabazus' actions may have looked in hindsight like those of a co-conspirator, but at the time he had good and not at all treasonous reasons for each of them.⁵⁰ The King had very recently acquitted Cyrus of treason when Alcibiades asked for permission to travel to court in order to accuse him of plotting a rebellion with the aid of the Spartans. Alcibiades was an opportunist and hardly had a reputation for honesty, and his motives were obviously self-serving. He wished to smear Cyrus as a traitor and to implicate the Spartans in the plot. In doing so, he would win the King's favor, convince him to break his alliance with Sparta, and return to Athens a hero (Nep. 7.9).⁵¹ He had attempted something similar in 407 with the grudging support of Pharnabazus, but was stymied by the appointment of Cyrus as *karanos* (Xen. *Hell.* 1.3.8–1.4.7).

Ephorus does not identify Alcibiades' sources or explain how he had become aware of the plot. He could not have learned of it directly from Cyrus himself, since at the time he was living in Phrygia on an estate granted to him by Pharnabazus (Plut. *Alc.* 39.1, Nep. 7.9). In the account of Nepos he simply knows of the plot, and Ephorus/Diodorus state only that he learned it "from certain individuals" (διὰ τινῶν) who are never named (Diod. 14.11.2). What is certain is that Alcibiades did not have any indisputable proof of the revolt at this time. Ephorus claims that

⁴⁹ Hyland, *ARTA* (2008) 8–13.

⁵⁰ John Hyland, "The Prince and the Pancratiast: Persian-Thessalian Relations in the Late Fifth Century B.C.," *GRBS* 55 (2015) 326–328, observes that the Thessalian party of Aristippus made a similar attempt to reinterpret the purpose and significance of an embassy to the King once their friendship with Cyrus led to a loss of royal favor in the aftermath of his rebellion.

⁵¹ Mark Munn, *The School of History: Athens in the Age of Socrates* (Berkeley 2000) 234: "it was clearly Alcibiades' intent to use this taint of collusion to advance the cause of friendship between Artaxerxes and the Athenians, or the Athenians in exile."

he knew the details of the plan, but even in this case it would amount to nothing more than unconfirmed hearsay.⁵²

Pharnabazus was presented with accusations of rebellion against the King's recently exonerated, still powerful brother. This supposed plot also implicated his own friends and allies in Sparta, and came from an obviously biased and hardly trustworthy individual who claimed knowledge from second-hand sources. It is incredible to think that the satrap forwarded these charges to the King, let alone was eager to claim credit for them himself. Had Pharnabazus nonetheless passed on such a tenuously sourced warning, it is even more difficult to believe that the King ordered local officials to engage in open war against Cyrus based on it. Pharnabazus sensibly denied the request and probably did not mention it to Artaxerxes. At best, he may have advised Alcibiades to wait for convincing evidence to emerge.⁵³

Upon learning that Alcibiades would instead seek authorization in Paphlagonia, Pharnabazus ordered his execution. He did this for three reasons unrelated to any treasonous plot. First, Alcibiades was traveling or at least intended to travel through his satrapy without permission on a mission that he had forbidden.⁵⁴ Second, Paphlagonia was a dependency of Pharnabazus, and requesting permission from its client "satrap" would have been an insulting act of insubordination.⁵⁵ Third, killing Alcibiades pleased his friends in Sparta who, along with their ally Critias in

⁵² Rhodes, *Alcibiades* 104: it is not credible that "Alcibiades had information about Cyrus which Pharnabazus could not otherwise have had."

⁵³ Munn, *The School of History* 232–233.

⁵⁴ Ephorus places Alcibiades' death on the road en route to Paphlagonia (Diod. 14.11.4), while others suggest that he was at his estate in Phrygia (Plut. *Alc.* 39, *Nep.* 7.9). Diodorus implicitly appears to support the latter position (14.11.1).

⁵⁵ Although the account from Ephorus via Diodorus identifies Alcibiades' plan to visit a "satrap" of Paphlagonia, Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 642–643, 698, notes that Diodorus' use of satrap and other technical terms is inconsistent, and that the various chieftains of Paphlagonia were the responsibility of the satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia. See also Tuplin, *The Long March* 177–178; Hyland, *ARTA* (2008) 8.

Athens, may have already been agitating for his death or exile. Importantly, Sparta was also an ally of the King before Cyrus' rebellion.

The decision to execute Alcibiades may have also gratified Cyrus, but this does not necessarily mean that Pharnabazus was his enthusiastic supporter or ally. The two satraps were officially equal in rank after Cyrus' demotion in 403, but in practice Pharnabazus could hardly hope to equal him in influence in the region. Cyrus was a prince, even if one recently humiliated by his brother. He commanded a wealthier satrapy in Lydia and maintained a far stronger relationship with the Spartans, who in large part owed him for their defeat of the Athenian Empire in 404 and subsequent hegemony over Greece and the Aegean.

Upon his return to Sardis, Cyrus moved aggressively to re-establish his former dominance. His seizure of control over most of Ionia at the expense of Tissaphernes has already been discussed. In Greece, he patronized new clients outside of Sparta, most notably Aristippus in Thessaly and the party of Proxenus in Boeotia (*An.* 1.1.10–11).⁵⁶ In the north Aegean, he installed the Spartan exile Clearchus as tyrant of the Thracian Chersonese (1.1.9), a territory immediately adjacent to the province of Pharnabazus. His campaign into Mysia was a part of this broader initiative. Again, Xenophon notes that it was aimed at placing his own clients in control of the region or, as in the case of Orontas, forcing those already present to submit to him (1.9.14).

Neither Tissaphernes nor Pharnabazus chose to confront Cyrus' efforts militarily. Tissaphernes did intervene to deny Cyrus' clients control of Miletus, but is not said to have dispatched his own forces to defend the city from its subsequent siege (1.1.7). Likewise, it seems that Pharnabazus shied away from openly resisting Cyrus' expedition into Mysia. It is likely that both sent complaints to Artaxerxes concerning his brother's aggression, much as Xenophon claims that Cyrus sent letters to

⁵⁶ Hyland, *GRBS* (2015) 326–328, offers a detailed examination of Cyrus' efforts in Thessaly.

the King justifying his ambitions in Ionia (1.1.8).⁵⁷ The King may have viewed Pharnabazus' struggle with Cyrus in the same light that he did Tissaphernes', especially if, as in Ionia, both satraps continued to send him tribute from the contested territories of Mysia. He certainly did not consider minor border disputes to be a cause for a military intervention that risked pushing Cyrus into rebellion and losing the Empire's alliance with Sparta.

Without royal support against his more powerful rival, Pharnabazus did not contest Cyrus' incursion into Mysia, a decision that, incidentally, left Orontas at his mercy once again. When Cyrus announced his plans for an invasion of Pisidia in 401 (1.2.1), Pharnabazus provided him with cavalry from his clients in Paphlagonia and granted Clearchus permission to travel to Sardis. It is possible that he already suspected the true purpose of the campaign, but it is also plausible that he did not. Cyrus had conducted a similar operation into Pisidia during his time as *karanos*,⁵⁸ and a return to the region was a logical next step after his Mysian campaign. Much as the former stripped territory and clients from Pharnabazus, this one would have been aimed at Tissaphernes, whose satrapy of Caria bordered Lydia and Pisidia. Given his own past rivalry with Tissaphernes, Pharnabazus may have even relished helping Cyrus in this particular endeavor.

By the time it became clear that the campaign was not actually against the Pisidians (see below), it was too late for Pharnabazus

⁵⁷ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 369–371, 376–377, notes that the Persians maintained an elaborate postal service, allowing the King to be in regular contact with satraps throughout the Empire.

⁵⁸ Undated, and mentioned alongside an operation against the Mysians (1.9.14). This Pisidian campaign may be the same as the one he claimed to be undertaking in 401, but more likely he waged it before his recall to court in 405, per Hyland, *Persian Interventions* 114. Another Mysian campaign could have been carried out during his period as *karanos*, meaning that he commanded two expeditions into the region (the second being aimed in part against Orontas in 403–401).

to dispatch troops or to join the King himself.⁵⁹ His harassment of Xenophon and the Ten Thousand on their return from Cunaxa might be viewed as a belated attempt to demonstrate loyalty to the King, but it would not have been difficult for rivals to cite his unwitting contributions to Cyrus' campaign as evidence of his support for the rebellion. Worse still, they probably recast the assassination of Alcibiades as an act of treasonous suppression that implicated him even more deeply in the conspiracy against Artaxerxes.⁶⁰

The story attributed to Ephorus incorporates elements of Pharnabazus' response to this last allegation. He could not deny his role in Alcibiades' death or prove that Alcibiades had not informed him of the plot. Whatever the actual contents of their conversation, Alcibiades quite obviously harbored anti-Spartan and anti-Cyrene sentiments and a desire to share these with the King. Pharnabazus therefore characterized the assassination as a selfish act to gain personal favor, but one with the ultimately loyal purpose of warning Artaxerxes. The account normalizes this by attributing the exact same motive to Alcibiades, "for he wanted to report the plot to the King first" (βούλεσθαι γὰρ ἐμφανίσαι πρῶτον τὴν ἐπιβουλὴν τῷ βασιλεῖ).

Thus Pharnabazus did not forward to the King the charges made by Alcibiades, and almost certainly did not do so immediately after hearing them. As mentioned above, satraps were in constant communication with the King, and Pharnabazus probably had sent complaints to him about Cyrus' campaign into Mysia. The vague and seemingly inconsistent chronology in Ephorus' account is the product of an intentional effort to connect these two otherwise unrelated events—the meeting with Alcibiades and the warning about Cyrus' behavior in Mysia—in

⁵⁹ Remaining neutral and pledging loyalty to the victor was probably the politically wise choice for Pharnabazus. Lee, *Revolt and Resistance* 112–121, observes that several other leading officials made a similar decision.

⁶⁰ The failure to report or act on information, no matter how incredible, about a conspiracy against an autocrat was dangerous and could later be used as grounds for severe punishment, e.g. the execution of Philotas son of Parmenion by Alexander (Arr. *Anab.* 3.26).

order to insinuate that the latter took place immediately after the former, implying that the concerns Pharnabazus' messengers conveyed to the King were the same ones raised by Alcibiades.

Conclusion: Artaxerxes and the official outbreak of the rebellion

The evidence that Briant cites for dating the official outbreak of the rebellion of Cyrus the Younger to 403 does not withstand scrutiny. Artaxerxes did not receive detailed information on Cyrus' plans from Pharnabazus after the assassination of Alcibiades. Accordingly, he did not order his subordinates in western Anatolia to make war on his brother. The proxy war between Tissaphernes and Cyrus in Ionia was a contest between two satraps who were both loyal at the time. Cyrus' clashes with Orontas at Sardis and in Mysia were brief and bloodless affairs, their significance later exaggerated at the trial of Orontas after his failed attempt to defect to the King.

At what point, then, was the fact of Cyrus' revolt incontestable to all involved parties? According to Xenophon, Cyrus' intentions were clear to Tissaphernes from the moment his army began to muster at Sardis in March of 401 despite his claimed intention to suppress rebellious groups in Pisidia (*An.* 1.2.4). It may be tempting to believe that this was a ruse obvious to all parties at the time, and that the King accepted Tissaphernes' testimony straight away. However, the precedent of Cyrus' previous expeditions into Mysia and Pisidia, as well as his plundering of territory hostile to the crown in Lycaonia as he approached Cilicia (1.2.19),⁶¹ indicates that it may not have been so transparent as it seems in hindsight.⁶² Given Tissaphernes' open rivalry with Cyrus and his earlier uncorroborated accusations against him, it seems unwise to assume that Artaxerxes uncritically believed his accusations on this occasion. Notably, Xenophon reports that the King "made counter-preparations" (*ἀντιπαρεσκευάζετο*) when he learned of the muster from Tissaphernes, but does not state that he also declared

⁶¹ Notably, Diod. 14.19.3 suggests that Cyrus had announced his intention to attack rebels in Cilicia.

⁶² On the timing of these expeditions see n.58 above.

Cyrus a rebel at the same time (1.2.5).

The likelihood that Cyrus was marching against the King increased as his army progressed farther and farther east, but the possibility that he would eventually turn against the Pisidians could not be entirely ruled out until he exited Cilicia and entered Syria. Xenophon next reports that Cyrus ordered the burning of the satrapal palace and gardens of Belesys of Syria (1.4.10). While many in his army had already suspected Cyrus' purpose and a select few knew at the outset of the march, it was not until the destruction of these symbols of royal authority that he was definitively in rebellion.⁶³ Not coincidentally, Xenophon reports that Cyrus announced the true objective of his campaign to the Greek generals when they next made camp near Thapsacus on the banks of the Euphrates (1.4.11).⁶⁴

The devastation of the palace and paradise of Belesys appears to have been the moment when the King determined Cyrus to be a rebel, for it is also at Thapsacus that Xenophon first mentions unambiguous resistance to Cyrus from royal forces. His

⁶³ For paradises in Achaemenid royal ideology see Christopher Tuplin, *Achaemenid Studies* (Stuttgart 1996) 118–119. The paradise of the satrap at Sidon was among the first targets for destruction during the Sidonian rebellion against Artaxerxes III in 351: Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West* 167; Josef Wiesehöfer, “Fourth Century Revolts against Persia: The Test Case of Sidon,” in T. Howe et al. (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Insurgency and Terrorism in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Leiden 2015) 104.

⁶⁴ While the first attack on a Persian satrapy took place at Tarsus in Cilicia (1.2.25–27), it is notable that this was carried out by Menon's troops who had arrived in the city several days before Cyrus. Xenophon reports that the violence was done not on the orders of Cyrus but in response to the loss of two *lochoi* (about 100) of Menon's men during their escort of Epyaxa. After meeting with Syennesis, the ruler of Cilicia, and receiving a large sum of money from him, Cyrus reportedly promised that no more harm would come to his satrapy and that any slaves who had been seized by the Greeks would be returned if found. This behavior does not quite rise to the level of unequivocal rebellion against the King because, unlike the burning of the palace of Belesys, the plundering of the palace and city of Tarsus was not carried out openly and formally on his orders, and was followed by a peaceful resolution, albeit under duress, between Cyrus and the satrap.

soldiers were forced to swim and wade across the Euphrates because Abrocomas, a loyalist general, had burned the city's fleet of riverboats before their arrival (1.4.16–18).⁶⁵ Soon after, royal cavalry began conducting a scorched earth campaign in an effort to prevent the rebel army from supplying itself off the land, and it was in order to stop this harassment that Orontas attempted to secure 1000 cavalry from Cyrus in his plot to defect (1.6.1–4).

The swift response to the destruction of the palace of Belesys is one indication that the King had already ordered that his brother's activity be monitored closely. Another is the numerical superiority—or, at the very least, equality—the King's army enjoyed at Cunaxa.⁶⁶ Cyrus reached the battlefield 55 days after his departure from Myriandros, so Artaxerxes must have already begun a preliminary muster of forces much earlier. A final indication of the King's counter-preparations is the presence of a large trench a few days' march from the battlefield at Cunaxa. The purpose of such a defensive implement is to prevent a larger army from utilizing its numerical superiority, and indicates that the King was not initially confident that his army would be able to match the rebels. Ultimately, Cyrus' slow advance—the journey from Sardis to Cunaxa took 185 days in total, with many stops of unnecessarily long duration—allowed Artaxerxes plenty of time to muster his army and rendered the emergency trench

⁶⁵ Lee, *Revolt and Resistance* 112–117, argues that Abrocomas had been sent against Cyrus, rather than against Egypt as is often believed (e.g. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 619; Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West* 38–40). Perhaps he was present more to observe Cyrus than to block his access through the Syrian Gates. Although Xenophon states that Cyrus feared that Abrocomas would block the passes out of southern Cilicia (1.4.4–5), intelligence reports actually placed him at the Euphrates itself (1.3.20).

⁶⁶ On the relative sizes of the two armies at Cunaxa, J. W. Hewitt, "The Disobedience of Clearchus at Cunaxa," *CJ* 14 (1919) 245–247; Joan Bigwood, "The Ancient Accounts of the Battle of Cunaxa," *AJP* 104 (1983) 342; Michael Whitby, "Xenophon's Ten Thousand as a Fighting Force," in *The Long March* 227–228; George Cawkwell, *The Greek Wars: The Failure of Persia* (New York 2005) 248; Waterfield, *Xenophon's Retreat* 15; Shannahan, *AHB* 28 (2014) 68–70.

unnecessary.⁶⁷

On this evidence, Xenophon's timeline is technically correct. Artaxerxes did not immediately declare Cyrus to be a rebel upon receiving the report from Tissaphernes of Cyrus' preparations at Sardis. There was no need to take such a drastic, irrevocable step so long as even the slightest possibility remained that Cyrus was in fact marching against the Pisidians. Artaxerxes did, however, begin to levy some forces and ordered the construction of a defensive trench near Babylon as a precautionary response. He also ordered officials like Abrocomas to carefully observe his brother's progress, so that they were in position to respond accordingly the moment his rebellious intentions became unmistakable. This occurred when Cyrus exited Cilicia and burned the palace of Belesys.

Xenophon is also narrowly correct that Artaxerxes was ignorant of Cyrus' plans to march against him during 403–401, probably because the notion itself was unprecedented and unthinkable. No individual satrap in the history of the Achaemenid Empire had ever seriously let alone successfully threatened to overthrow the King, and none would in the seventy years that followed.⁶⁸ Even the Macedonian conquest under Alexander was hardly foreseeable to contemporary observers on the eve of the invasion.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ The timeline for the march is taken from Graham Wylie, "Cunaxa and Xenophon," *AntCl* 61 (1992) 121–122; see also John W. I. Lee, *A Greek Army on the March* (Cambridge 2007) 18–26. On the slowness of Cyrus' progress, Anderson, *Xenophon* 85–86; Roisman, *SCI* 8–9 (1985) 34–35. On the purpose of the trench, Hewitt, *CJ* 14 (1919) 245–246.

⁶⁸ The greatest threat posed during this period from the western regions of the Empire was the Satraps' Revolt of the 360s, but few would agree today that the King himself was in danger even during this event. See Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 656–675, and Waters, *Ancient Persia* 191–192. For earlier rebellions in western Anatolia see n.16 above.

⁶⁹ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 823–824, argues that the actual threat posed by Macedon was not truly appreciable until the fall of Sardis. See also Keen, *JAC* 13 (1998) 94; Maria Brosius, "Why Persia Became the Enemy of Macedon," in W. Henkelman et al. (eds.), *A Persian Perspective: Essays in Memory*

The conclusion that the King recognized Cyrus as a rebel by 403 and ordered local resistance to him does not withstand close scrutiny, but several key arguments made by Briant nonetheless remain insightful. The King was indeed suspicious of Cyrus' loyalties during this period, and accordingly he stripped him of his authority as *karanos* and reduced the funds available to him. He also had good reason to think that Cyrus' rivalries with Pharnabazus and Tissaphernes and the presence of loyal officials like Orontas would act as a constraint on his ambitions. When Cyrus nonetheless marched east with an army in 401, Artaxerxes immediately prepared for the possibility that he himself was the target by constructing an emergency defensive trench, levying precautionary forces, and carefully observing his progress. Upon confirmation, he marshaled a large army on short notice and decisively defeated Cyrus in battle.⁷⁰

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of *Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg* (Wiesbaden 2003) 234–237; Cawkwell, *The Greek Wars* 201–210.

⁷⁰ An early, abbreviated version of this article was presented at the 2018 annual meeting of the Association of Ancient Historians in Williamsburg, Virginia. I am grateful to the organizers of this conference and the hosts at the College of William and Mary, and for the helpful comments and fruitful discussion offered by those in attendance. Special thanks are owed to John W. I. Lee and Rhyné King, as well as the chair of the session on Achaemenid history, John Hyland, and my fellow panelists Melissa Benson, Chiara Matrese, and Eduard Rung.