

Cyrus the Younger and his Persians: The Dynamics of Power

Piotr Głogowski

IT IS NOTEWORTHY how little we know about Cyrus the Younger's faction and those among Persians who supported him in his attempt to wrest the kingship. The sources, Greek literary narratives, provide us with almost no information.¹ They tend to focus on the Greek mercenary corps, and they rarely say anything about the Persian background of Cyrus. It is not surprising, then, that the topic has not received much scholarly attention. Despite great progress in our understanding of the Achaemenid empire over the last decades, the expedition of Cyrus is still treated as a campaign of Cyrus and his Greek mercenaries rather than a war between two Achaemenids and their Persian supporters. Recently, the Persian followers of Cyrus were the subject of Sean Manning's study, but his prosopography by its nature dealt with individuals rather than a collective body in motion and a group facing particular circumstances—thus it addressed only a very narrow aspect of the problem.²

Without knowledge regarding Cyrus' faction, it is difficult to assess properly what his status among the Persians was and how strong his position was during the rebellion. The evidence very often allows us to reach quite divergent conclusions. In his

¹ Translations of Classical texts quoted in the paper come from the Loeb editions when possible, while others are my own.

² Sean Manning, "A Prosopography of the Followers of Cyrus the Younger," *AHB* 32 (2018) 1–24.

interpretation of the position of Cyrus, Pierre Briant concludes that Cyrus failed to win wider support of the Persian nobility for his cause.³ This view was recently challenged by John W. I. Lee who judges that in fact Cyrus seriously threatened Artaxerxes' rule and that a number of high-ranking Persian nobles were involved in more or less discreet collaboration with the usurper.⁴ Another issue is the question of when the rebellion of Cyrus officially began. The chronology of the events is of paramount importance, as it allows us to understand in what circumstances the position of Cyrus among his Persians developed. According to Briant, the conflict began almost immediately after Cyrus' return to Sardis.⁵ This has been questioned by Jeffrey Rop who argues that Cyrus was officially recognized as a rebel shortly before announcing at Thapsacus the true aim of the expedition.⁶ These criticisms of Briant's reconstruction invite further consideration of these problems.

Thus the aim of this study is to discuss several aspects of the Persian faction of Cyrus the Younger and his position among the Persian nobility. Although the evidence is, indeed, very limited and dispersed, it cannot be ignored. Every case, when the sources record Cyrus' dealings with the Persians, deserves a close look and comprehensive examination. On a number of occasions Xenophon mentions events that can provide insight into the relations between Cyrus and the Persians. By adopting this perspective, it should be possible to shed some light on the position of Cyrus and the nature of his rebellion. The present paper focuses on three issues. First, we assess Lee's argument concerning Abrocomas in order to examine the attitude of the highest-ranking Persian officials toward Cyrus. Second, we ad-

³ Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* (Winona Lake 2002) 612–634.

⁴ 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) 103–121.

⁵ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 616–620.

⁶ Jeffrey Rop, "The Outbreak of the Rebellion of Cyrus the Younger," *GRBS* 59 (2019) 57–85.

dress two events that help us understand what the position of Cyrus was among the Persians throughout the expedition: the conspiracy at Dana and the plot of Orontas. Third, we consider Rop's interpretation regarding the early outbreak of the rebellion.

Cyrus and the Persian nobility: the case of Abrocomas

One of the main points of Lee's argument is the case of Abrocomas, one of four generals of Artaxerxes' forces. Having heard about Cyrus being in Cilicia, Abrocomas set off from Phoenicia with an army in order to join the king. In the meantime, the Greek mercenaries of Cyrus, suspecting that the campaign was aimed at the king, refused to follow him farther east. In response, Cyrus told them that, in fact, he was leading the army against Abrocomas, an enemy of his, who was supposed to be at the Euphrates. The Greeks agreed to move forward, but the confrontation with Abrocomas never took place. In fact, Xenophon states that Abrocomas arrived five days after the battle at Cunaxa (*An.* 1.7.12). It is difficult to tell what his position was: scholars usually agree that he was not a satrap but rather a general appointed to fulfill a particular task. That he was gathering forces in Phoenicia indicates that he was about to conduct a campaign to reclaim Egypt. This assumption explains fairly well "the strange blindness" of Artaxerxes in the face of the rebellion of Cyrus: preoccupied with the preparations for a campaign to Egypt, the king may simply not have been able to pay enough attention to Cyrus and deal with him at once.⁷

Recently this interpretation was questioned and rejected by Lee, whose views can be summarized as follows: Abrocomas was not appointed for a campaign to Egypt, but for the war against Cyrus. In summer, on hearing that Cyrus was in Cilicia, Abrocomas was not so far away, namely in northern

⁷ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 619; cf. Stephen Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West. Egypt and the Persian Empire, 525–332 BCE* (New York 2012) 38–39, 244 n.9.

Phoenicia, which, Lee believes, included the city of Myriandos. Keeping in mind that the flood season of the Nile, which runs from July to November, makes crossing the river highly difficult, a campaign to Egypt as Abrocomas' primary objective is out of question: staying so far in the north, he simply did not have enough time to make it happen. Therefore, according to Lee, Abrocomas, because of his proximity, could easily confront Cyrus or at least join Artaxerxes on the battlefield at Cunaxa in time. The attested presence of Abrocomas' forces near Cyrus' army implies that he was able to take the mountain passes and prevent Cyrus from crossing the Euphrates. That he did not do any of that indicates, Lee suspects, that Abrocomas was either secretly negotiating with Cyrus or was simply awaiting the further course of events.⁸ However, these conclusions demand serious reassessment. We need to determine where exactly Abrocomas was.

When asked by the delegation of the Greek mercenaries at Tarsus about the aim of the expedition, Cyrus "replied that he had heard that Abrocomas, a foe of his, was at the Euphrates river, twelve stages distant. It was against him, therefore, he said, that he desired to march. And if he were there, he wished to inflict due punishment upon him; 'but if he has fled', he continued, 'we will deliberate about the matter then and there'" (*An.* 1.3.20). How trustworthy are these words? By saying "and if he were there" Cyrus gives the impression that in fact he is not sure where Abrocomas was, and what he intended was only to move the Greeks forward while postponing further arrangements with them. It is true that the army of Cyrus encountered some signs of Abrocomas' presence nearby. First, a unit of four hundred Greek mercenaries in Abrocomas' service joined Cyrus at Issus (1.4.3). Second, Abrocomas is said to burn boats that could be used in crossing the Euphrates (1.4.18).

However, Abrocomas and his army did not have to be near Cyrus for both of these events to take place. We do not know

⁸ Lee, in *Revolt and Resistance* 112–116.

how the four hundred mercenaries reached Cyrus at Issus, which could have happened in a variety of ways. For instance, they could come there by sea having seized a couple of ships somewhere in the south. They could also be just soldiers of some local garrisons that Abrocomas could leave behind. On the other hand, the boats on the Euphrates could have been burned even by an inconsiderable force of horsemen, and Xenophon's designation "Abrocomas" could be only an unfortunately misleading metonym or simply a mistake. According to Ruzicka, Xenophon did not know where Abrocomas was, and confused an action of the king's men with the advance of Abrocomas.⁹ What Cyrus did say to the Greeks could be merely deceitful half-truths based on more or less false rumors. It was in Cyrus' interest to convince the Greeks that the goal of the campaign was at hand. By leading them from point to point, presenting one pretext after another and each time promising them to raise their pay, he could, step by step, drive them wherever he wanted—Xenophon seems to be well aware of this. We can see, then, that there is no clear indication why the army of Abrocomas as a whole should be located in proximity to Cyrus and his men on their way through Syria and Mesopotamia.

Perhaps then we should look for Abrocomas somewhere else. Xenophon locates him in Phoenicia (*An.* 1.4.5, 1.7.12). Where was that? The term is problematic because of the difficulty in establishing what constitutes Phoenicia.¹⁰ In fact, Phoenicia is diversely understood by scholars, who often assign it different geographical extents. However, because Phoenicia (Φοινίκη) seems to be a purely Greek concept,¹¹ it is necessary to focus on

⁹ Stephen Ruzicka, "Cyrus and Tissaphernes, 407–401 B.C.," *CJ* 80 (1985) 210 n.21.

¹⁰ Cf. Erik Van Dongen, "'Phoenicia': Naming and Defining a Region in Syria-Palestine," in R. Rollinger et al. (eds.), *Interkulturalität in der Alten Welt: Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten und die vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontakts* (Wiesbaden 2010) 471–488.

¹¹ For discussion of the concept of Phoenicia and the Phoenicians as a

its meaning only as attested in the evidence for a particular period. Thus the study of the geography of Phoenicia in the Persian period by Josette Elayi is hardly applicable in this case, as it juxtaposes different and hardly compatible kinds of evidence while neglecting the diachronic aspect of the notion.¹² Defining Phoenicia demands a clear indication of what it is, and only the Greek sources are in fact able to provide it. But as Xenophon never gives a clear statement of how he understands Phoenicia, we should assess it in broader perspective by taking into account how it was understood by the Greeks in the Classical period.

According to Herodotus the northern boundary of Phoenicia was somewhere around the Gulf of Myriandos (Μυριανδικὸς κόλπος), which is “near Phoenicia” (4.38, πρὸς Φοινίκη). Most probably then, the boundary should be located southwards from the gulf and not directly at it. Myriandos itself cannot be considered to be part of Phoenicia: Herodotus explicitly refers to the gulf, not to the city itself. Although both Xenophon and Pseudo-Scylax state that Myriandos was inhabited by Phoenicians,¹³ the city itself is not a city “in Phoenicia.” Xenophon clearly identifies Myriandos as a city of Syria: describing the route of Cyrus the Younger, he states that at this point the army was marching “through Syria” (διὰ Συρίας).¹⁴ Xenophon’s account was understood in this way by Stephanus of Byzantium, who, directly referring to the *Anabasis*, associated the city with Syria as well.¹⁵ In Pseudo-Scylax (102), Myriandos appears in the section devoted to Cilicia, and the first city

Greek invention see Josephine C. Quinn, *In Search of the Phoenicians* (Princeton 2018), esp. 25–62.

¹² Josette Elayi, “Studies in Phoenician Geography during the Persian Period,” *JNES* 41 (1982) 83–110.

¹³ Xen. *An.* 1.4.6, Μυριάνδος, πόλις οἰκουμένη ὑπὸ Φοινίκων; Ps.-Scyl. 102, λιμὴν Μυριάνδος Φοινίκων.

¹⁴ Xen. *An.* 1.4.6, 9–10, 19.

¹⁵ Steph. Byz. s.v. Μυριάνδρος: πόλις Συρίας πρὸς τῇ Φοινίῃ. Ξενοφῶν ἐν ἁ Ἀναβάσει.

under the label of Syria and Phoenicia is Tripolis “of the Phoenicians,” north of Arados (104). By describing Myriandos as a harbour “of the Phoenicians,” Pseudo-Scylax has nothing else in mind than the ethnicity of its inhabitants, as in the case of the Lepethis on Cyprus, which is also said to be a city “of the Phoenicians” (103, Λήπηθις Φοινίκων). Therefore, although populated by Phoenicians, Myriandos remains a city that geographically was not considered part of Phoenicia itself. In fact, the northernmost city of Phoenicia we hear of at that time is Gabala, which is described as such (πόλις Φοινίκης) by Hecataeus.¹⁶

Herodotus states that, in the south, Phoenicia borders on the land of Palestinian Syrians; this land extends no further south than the city of Kadytis (3.5), which perhaps should be identified as Gaza.¹⁷ Pseudo-Scylax indicates that the Phoenician sphere of influence spread as far as Ascalon of the Tyrians (104). The identification of Ascalon as a city in Phoenicia in the Classical period may perhaps be supported by epigraphic evidence: a funerary stela from Athens bears a bilingual Greco-Phoenician epitaph and a Greek funerary epigram, dating to the late Classical or the early Hellenistic period. The deceased is an Ascalonite said to come from Phoenicia (Φοινίκην δ’ ἔλιπον).¹⁸ All of this allows us to suppose, then, that in the Classical period the notion of Phoenicia included the coastland extending approximately from south of the Gulf of Myriandos—perhaps from Gabala—in the north to at least Ascalon in the south.

It is possible to conclude that the statement “Abrocomas was marching from Phoenicia” locates him in a very wide range of the Mediterranean coast. Thus nothing prevents us from assuming that his army could have been gathering for an expe-

¹⁶ *FGrHist* 1 F 273, ap. Steph. Byz. s.v. Γάββαλα.

¹⁷ David Asheri, A. Lloyd, and A. Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I–IV* (Oxford 2007) 401–402.

¹⁸ *IG* II² 8388 = *KAI* 54 = *CEG* II 596.

dition to Egypt in hopes of crossing the Nile before the flood season. As there is no particular reason to place Abrocomas in northern Phoenicia, it is possible to suppose that his tardiness at Cunaxa was caused by the considerable distance he had to cover—if Abrocomas intended to reach Egypt on time, he was most probably somewhere in the deep south (perhaps around Akko, a usual gathering point for the Persians in their campaigns against Egypt,¹⁹ or even Ascalon), when he heard about Cyrus in Cilicia. It is unlikely then that Abrocomas could have outrun Cyrus not only in encountering Artaxerxes in Babylonia but even in crossing the Euphrates. Even assuming that the word about Cyrus in Cilicia reached Abrocomas quite early, the distances were still too great.²⁰ Thus, Abrocomas' arrival five days after the battle cannot be used as a proof of a hostile attitude or unsteady allegiance to Artaxerxes.

The conspiracy at Dana

Xenophon's narrative of the events at Dana is very short and concise: Cyrus and his men remained there three days "and during that time Cyrus put to death a Persian named Megaphernes, who was a royal *phoinikistes*, and another man, a certain *dynast* among *hyparchs*, on the charge that they were plotting against him" (translation modified).²¹ In fact, we know almost nothing about this conspiracy. Xenophon does not provide us with enough information to say with certainty who the conspirators were, what their plan was, and when and how it was discovered. Nevertheless, despite this lack of information, this event cannot be ignored: the very fact that it is set in a purely Persian background makes it of distinctive importance

¹⁹ Strab. 16.2.25; cf. Ruzicka, *Trouble in the West* 67.

²⁰ For a discussion regarding the road pattern of the Achaemenid Levant, which could perhaps allow one to reconstruct a supposed route of Abrocomas, see David F. Graf, "The Persian Royal Road System in Syria-Palestine," *Transeuphratène* 6 (1993) 149–168.

²¹ Xen. *An.* 1.2.20: ἐνταῦθα ἔμειναν ἡμέρας τρεῖς· ἐν ᾧ Κῦρος ἀπέκτεινεν ἄνδρα Πέρσην Μεγαφέρνην, φοινικιστὴν βασιλείων, καὶ ἕτερόν τινα τῶν ὑπάρχων δυνάστην, αἰτιασάμενος ἐπιβουλεύειν αὐτῷ.

that deserves consideration. To interpret the passage properly, it is necessary to examine its wording. By analyzing the terminology, we can try to determine who the conspirators were and what they were accused of.

The first mentioned is Megaphernes the Persian, who is said to be φοινικιστής βασιλείος. It is not certain what the intended meaning of φοινικιστής is: in the authors it occurs only a few times and in rather obscure contexts. Apart from the passage in Xenophon, the word is sometimes found in association with comedy, reflecting an ethnic slur ascribing to Phoenicians some perverse practices.²² Although invoked from works of the Classical period, the word is attested in this meaning only in later scholia, which makes it highly doubtful that this allows us to explain the term as used by Xenophon.

The word seems to have been problematic also for later lexicographers, which may suggest that in late antiquity it was already long out of use. Hesychius (6th cent. CE) does not define the term but simply quotes the passage of Xenophon.²³ On the other hand, Ps.-Zonaras (13th cent.) explains it as a *purple-dyer*,²⁴ but it is impossible to tell whether this definition is merely a self-made etymological assumption of a Byzantine scholar or is indeed a meaning genuinely attested in reliable evidence still available to the lexicographer. The word occurs also in scholia to MS. F of Xenophon's *Anabasis* (*Vat.gr.* 1335): the scholiast states that a φοινικιστής is "either 'an interpreter of Phoenicians' or 'a scribe' because letters were called 'red signs'; for the ancients wrote not in black but using ruddle. However, some read here 'moneymaker'."²⁵ The fact that the

²² Schol. Ar. *Pax* 885b; Eubulus fr.140 K.-A. ap. *Ety.Magn.* s.v. γλωττοκομείον.

²³ Hsch. s.v. φοινικιστής: παρὰ Ξενοφῶντι ἐν πρώτῳ ἀναβάσεως· "ἀπέκτεινεν ἄνδρα Πέρσην, Μεγαφέρην, φοινικιστὴν βασιλείου."

²⁴ Ps.-Zonar. s.v. φοινικιστής: ὁ βαφεύς.

²⁵ Schol. *An.* 1.2.20: ἡ τῶν Φοινίκων ἐρμηνεία ἢ αὐτολόγιον· φοινίκια γὰρ ἐκαλοῦντο τὰ γράμματα, ἐπειδὴ οἱ παλαιοὶ οὐ μέλανι ἔγραφον, ἀλλὰ σμίλτῳ· τίνες δὲ ἀνέγνωσαν χρηματιστήν. See Vilhelm Lundström, "Scho-

scholiast provides two alternative meanings and even states that other scholars see a need to emend the text, shows how awkward he felt with the term. Thus, the value of his account is difficult to assess. Considering its rarity and the doubtful value of the definitions offered by our sources, we have to recognize how obscure and problematic the word φοινικιστής is. This divergence between its comic meaning and the way the word is used by Xenophon and other sources indicates that it was indeed quite rare and ambiguous.

Many different interpretations of φοινικιστής have been proposed. Some simply follow one of the sources, while others try to establish the meaning via etymology from φοῖνιξ and one of its many meanings. The older definitions were already listed by Sturz:²⁶ a) *a dyer of purple or an officer in charge of the royal dyehouses (tinctor purpurae),*²⁷ b) *a standard-bearer,*²⁸ c) *a wearer of Phoenician dress,*²⁹ d) *clad in the purple (purpuratus).*³⁰ Recently, other meanings have been proposed: e) *a royal musician;*³¹ f) *a scribe, secretary,* based on one of the definitions provided by the scholiast of MS. F.

This last interpretation has received some considerable support from the epigraphic evidence: an archaic inscription at Lyttos on Crete attests a term ποινικαστάς, which is taken to

lierna till Xenophons Anabasis i Cod. Vat. Gr. 1335,” *Eranos* 13 (1913) 165–188.

²⁶ F. G. Sturz, *Lexicon Xenophonticum* IV (Leipzig 1804) 483 s.v. φοινικιστής a–d.

²⁷ I. Leunclavius and A. Portus, *Xenophontis, Philosophi et Imperatoris clarissimi, quae extant opera* I (Frankfurt 1595) 266.

²⁸ M. Larcher, *L'Expédition de Cyrus dans l'Asie Supérieure et la Retraite des Dix Mille* (Paris 1778) 23 n.36.

²⁹ I. Brodaeus, *In omnia Xenophontis opera tam graece quam latine* (Basel 1559) 16.

³⁰ Th. Hutchinson, *Xenophontis De Expeditione Cyri Minoris Commentarii* (Leipzig 1775), index s.v. φοινικιστής.

³¹ Martin L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford 1992) 52 n.50.

designate a *scribe* or *secretary*.³² These two instances of the usage, the *scholion* and the inscription, led David Lewis to conclude that φοινικιστής could be identified with ποινικαστάς, and considered as an equivalent of the office of γραμματιστής βασιλῆιος, an official in the satrapal service attested elsewhere:³³ according to Herodotus, every Persian governor had a royal secretary at his court (3.128.3). It is difficult to say what the full duties of γραμματιστής βασιλῆιος were, as Herodotus mentions only announcing royal decrees. However, one may suppose that the official had generally to deal with the correspondence between king and governor. Some have thought that the φοινικιστής could be identified with the Akkadian *bēl tēmi* and *sep̄ru* used as designations for a *chancellor*, *scribe*, or *secretary*,³⁴ and we can presume that it designates a high-ranking chancellor at the satrapal court. Perhaps it is possible to associate this official with the high-ranking secretary attested in Ezra—the letter sent to Artaxerxes to warn the king that the Jews are about to rebuild the Temple was composed not only by a governor but also a secretary (*spr*’);³⁵ the LXX renders this as γραμματεύς.³⁶ So one may suspect that besides activities strictly connected with royal correspondence, a secretary of this sort might exer-

³² L. H. Jeffery and A. Morpurgo-Davies, “Ποινικαστάς and ποινικάζεν. BM 1969, 4-2,1, A New Archaic Inscription from Crete,” *Kadmos* 9 (1970) 118–154 [*SEG* XXVII 631]; G. P. Edwards and R. B. Edwards, “The Meaning and Etymology of ποινικαστάς,” *Kadmos* 16 (1977) 131–140.

³³ David Lewis, *Sparta and Persia* (Leiden 1977) 25 n.143.

³⁴ Christopher Tuplin, “Administration of the Achaemenid Empire,” in I. Carradice (ed.), *Coinage and Administration in the Athenian and Persian Empires* (Oxford 1987) 117–118; Matthew W. Stolper, “The Governor of Babylon and Across-the-River in 486 B.C.,” *JNES* 48 (1989) 302–303; Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia* (London 2001) 62; Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia. A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire* (Cambridge 2014) 179 (“royal scribe”). Inconsistent in Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 447 (“royal scribe”), 625 (“wearer of the royal purple”); cf. Manning, *AHB* 32 (2018) 15 n.70, who associates the term with “wearer of the purple.”

³⁵ Ezra 4:8–9, 17, 23.

³⁶ LXX 1 Esr 2:12, 13, 19, 25; 2 Esr 4:8–9, 17, 23.

cise a discrete surveillance over a designated area.

The word is rare, and it is confusing that Xenophon decided to use such an unusual term for the office held by Megaphernes.³⁷ In fact, he tends to use other words to denote secretaries and scribes: the attendant at Artaxerxes' court who translated the words of the Athenian envoys for the king is called γραμματεύς (*Hell.* 7.1.37).³⁸ Christopher Tuplin suspects that Xenophon uses such a rare term for Megaphernes because the information about the plot was provided to him by Greeks from Asia, where the word φοινικιστής could be more common.³⁹ This seems persuasive, and, if true, it suggests that at this point Xenophon relied on some other account rather than his own experience. That he mentions the plot only very briefly may indicate that the information provided to him was very limited.

The second conspirator remains anonymous, described only as τις τῶν ὑπάρχων δυνάστης. The range of δυνάστης and ὑπαρχος is very general and we cannot be sure whether they designate any particular sociopolitical institution. In Xenophon's writings, δυνάστης occurs three times in total, applied to a man of a distinctive status, and can be rendered simply as "ruler" (*Cyr.* 3.1.16, 4.5.40, 8.8.20). The term ὑπαρχος is far more problematic, as its application is very inconsistent. In the context of Greek terminology for Persian institutions, it is sometimes a synonym for σατράπης. But both words can designate not only a governor of a province but also a governor or dignitary of some lesser rank.⁴⁰ The word ὑπαρχος appears five

³⁷ Christopher Tuplin, "A Foreigner's Perspective: Xenophon in Anatolia," in I. Delemen (ed.), *The Achaemenid Impact on Local Populations and Cultures in Anatolia* (Istanbul 2007) 12, calls the description of the conspirators at Dana "tantalizingly half-specific."

³⁸ Scribes and secretaries etc. in Xenophon's writings: *Hell.* 1.1.23, 2.1.7, 4.8.11, 5.1.5–6: ἐπιστολεύς; 5.4.2: γραμματεύειν; 6.2.25: ἐπιστολιαφόρος.

³⁹ Christopher Tuplin, "The Persian Empire," in R. Lane Fox (ed.), *The Long March—Xenophon and the Ten Thousand* (New Haven 2004) 158.

⁴⁰ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 63–64; Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia* 59–62;

times in Xenophon, who applies it to high-ranking Persian officials (*An.* 1.8.5 Ariaeus; 4.4.4 Tiribazus; *Hell.* 3.1.12 local governors subordinate to Pharnabazus) and other subordinate rulers (*Hell.* 6.1.7 Alcetas the king of Epirus, subordinate to Jason of Pherae; *Cyr.* 7.4.10 governors, subjects of Croesus). Thus, despite its obscurity, Xenophon's wording strongly implies that the individual was indeed prominent as a member of local elites, who had acquired the status of regional governor.

The fact that only Megaphernes is named may imply that he was the leader of the conspiracy or had a more important role in it than the *dynastes*, who remains anonymous. We know nothing about the conspiracy itself and cannot tell what the plan of the conspirators was. We do not even know if they were subjects of Cyrus in the first place. Both dignitaries were accused of plotting against Cyrus (ἐπιβουλεύειν), but this word has only a very general meaning: *to plot, to lay snares for something or someone, to form designs upon, to aim at something or someone* (LSJ). However, the execution of such distinguished officials did not meet with any noticeable response from either the Persian or the Greek followers of Cyrus, or any further comment by Xenophon: one may wonder that putting to death a high-ranking secretary responsible for official correspondence with the king apparently did not arouse any suspicions or consternation concerning the true aim of Cyrus' campaign.

Since the execution of the conspirators took place at Dana in Cappadocia, it is highly probable that they both were associated with this very satrapy and its ruling class—Megaphernes by his office, the *dynastes* by his office and status. Xenophon mentions some unrest that took place in Lycaonia (*An.* 1.2.19). As is attested in the closing remarks to the *Anabasis*, Lycaonia and Cappadocia were at that time one administrative unit governed by a certain Mithradates (7.8.25). Despite some difficulties associated with this passage, it is still likely that it could reflect accurately the administrative pattern of Achaemenid

Waters, *Ancient Persia* 100–101.

rule in the western Asia. One can suspect then that these two events, the unrest in Lycaonia and the executions at Dana, were somehow related.⁴¹ Furthermore, if we compare the account of Diodorus, he does not mention Cappadocia among the provinces governed by Cyrus. This apparent absence of Cappadocia is attested twice. First, before departing from Sardis, Cyrus appointed governors of Phrygia, Lydia, Ionia, and Aeolis. Second, the left wing of Cyrus' army at Cunaxa was formed by men from Phrygia and Lydia (Diod. 14.19.6, 14.22.5). In both cases, there is no information concerning Cappadocia. Since the remark of Xenophon, who defines the position of Cyrus as *karanos* and satrap of Lydia, Greater Phrygia, and Cappadocia (*Hell.* 1.4.1–7, *An.* 1.9.7), refers to the time when Cyrus was appointed to this position by Darius, it is impossible to tell if this still defined his authority after Artaxerxes became the king. As was argued by Stephen Ruzicka, the power of Cyrus in the Asia Minor was most probably severely reduced and he lost control over some of his domains. Perhaps this included Cappadocia.⁴² It is possible to suppose then that in Cappadocia Cyrus had something more to do than simply pass through—he could take an opportunity to reclaim his former authority.

The plot of Orontas

Some time after the suppression of the conspiracy at Dana and after arriving to Thapsacus on the Euphrates, Cyrus gathered his men and officially announced that he was going to lead the army against Artaxerxes. His words caused great confusion and outrage among the Greek mercenaries, but after receiving promises of raised pay they calmed down and crossed the river (Xen. *An.* 1.4.11–17, Diod. 14.21.5–6). But we are not told anything about how Cyrus' words were received by his Persians. Nevertheless, two later incidents may provide some insight. When turmoil among the Greek mercenaries arose and

⁴¹ Cf. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 943.

⁴² Ruzicka, *CJ* 80 (1985) 209 n.17.

the soldiers of Clearchus and Menon were about to fight each other, Cyrus intervened. In his speech he revealed something that may be crucial about his position at that time: “For as certainly as you come to fighting with one another, you may be sure that on this very day I shall be instantly cut to pieces and yourselves not long after me; for once let ill fortune overtake us, and all these barbarians whom you see will be more hostile to us than are those who stand with the King” (*An.* 1.5.16). This statement is of considerable importance, for it seems to contradict everything Xenophon tells us about the esteem and faithfulness that Cyrus inspired in his Persians.⁴³

It is noteworthy that immediately after this warning, Xenophon introduces Orontas, a high-ranking Persian in Cyrus’ army. He is said to be a relative of the king (γένει προσήκων βασιλεῖ) and a distinguished warrior. As we learn, Orontas was a subject of Cyrus given to him by Darius. But when Artaxerxes became the king, he ordered Orontas to wage war against Cyrus. The two soon reconciled, but the peace did not last long. Orontas soon joined the Mysians, with whom he ravaged Cyrus’ domain. He was defeated, but Cyrus forgave him again. During the campaign and after crossing the Euphrates, Orontas offered Cyrus that he would cut down or capture the enemies who were burning the fodder ahead of the advancing army. In order to do that, he asked for one thousand horsemen. When Cyrus agreed, Orontas secretly wrote to Artaxerxes promising to join him with as many horsemen as he would be able to get. But the messenger to whom the letter had been entrusted betrayed Orontas and brought the message to Cyrus. When the plot of Orontas was discovered, Cyrus not only appointed judges among the most noble Persians in order to condemn the traitor in the name of the entire community, but also used his Greeks: he invited Clearchus to the trial and

⁴³ For a discussion of the complexity of the portrayal of Cyrus in the *Anabasis* see Michael A. Flower, *Xenophon’s Anabasis or The Expedition of Cyrus* (New York 2012) 188–194.

ordered the mercenary commanders to deploy three thousand Greek hoplites under arms around the tent where the trial was held. Even these measures did not prevent Persians from publicly displaying their respect for Orontas (*An.* 1.6.1–11). Although a traitor to Cyrus' cause, Orontas keeps the esteem and admiration of his fellow Persians.⁴⁴

The story of Orontas has been widely discussed. However, scholars tend to focus on the topic of the sovereign-subject relationship in the Achaemenid empire rather than on the conspiracy itself.⁴⁵ For the purpose of this study, we need to consider the plot in the context of the expedition of Cyrus. We need to recall first what Orontas actually wanted to do. He planned to leave, leading away one thousand horsemen to join Artaxerxes. According to Xenophon, Orontas was firmly convinced of the devotion of these horsemen: the fact that at one point he was mistaken about the allegiance to himself of the messenger does not indicate that he was wrong in the case of the horsemen. He had to take into consideration their possible response in the field. It seems rather unlikely that he devised a deceit comparable to that of Siraces. Siraces was a Scythian who, pretending to be a traitor to his people, guided Darius the Great in the campaign against his fellow Scythians. He cunningly led the Persians into a wilderness and to their doom, sacrificing his own life (Polyaen. 7.12). One may suspect, then, that in his plan Orontas assumed willing participation of at least some of his men. With this in mind, we can suppose that in the army of Cyrus there was a significant group of people of indeed uncertain allegiance, who were likely to switch sides and join Artaxerxes. The sequence of these two facts—Cyrus' bitter assessment of his own position and, not long after, the plot of

⁴⁴ Cf. Arthur Keaveney, "The Trial of Orontas: Xenophon, *Anabasis* I, 6," *AntCl* 81 (2012) 31–41.

⁴⁵ Thierry Petit, "Xénophon et la vassalité achéménide," in C. Tuplin (ed.), *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: History, Art and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East* (London 2010) 51–61.

Orontas—seems hardly coincidental. Accordingly, we should perhaps reconsider this conspiracy: it could be perceived not as a single act of individual treason but rather as a manifestation of a collective dissent among Persian followers of Cyrus and a growing resistance to his ambitions.

For a proper contextualization of the case of Orontas, we should compare the conspiracy at Dana. But first, the question to be posed is: are these two events comparable? When juxtaposing them, scholars sometimes point out the unequal status of the conspirators: Orontas is believed to be far more important than Megaphernes and the *dynastes*.⁴⁶ But was this so? Although Xenophon states that Orontas was a relative of the king and a distinguished warrior (*An.* 1.6.1), he is nonetheless an obscure figure. We cannot tell what his exact status was. Appointed by Artaxerxes as a commander of the stronghold at Sardis, Orontas was certainly a high-ranking official. But we do not know anything about him that would indicate that he was more distinguished or powerful than any other Persian official characterized as a *dynastes* or a *hyparchos*. We do see that in the army of Cyrus Orontas did not have any considerable forces of his own, which perhaps should keep us from overestimating his importance. It is also not certain what was the nature of his kinship with the king. Therefore, one may think that what leads scholars to consider Orontas of greater importance than Megaphernes is only the fact that Xenophon writes a little bit more about him. But what we know for certain is only that in the cases of both Megaphernes and Orontas, Cyrus put a high-ranking Persian official to death. We can see how differently these two events are presented by Xenophon: while the plot at Dana is mentioned in very few words (1.2.20), the narrative of the treason of Orontas is extensive and with abundant detail (1.6.1–11). Why is this so?

⁴⁶ Tuplin, *Achaemenid Impact* 16: “Orontas is too important simply to eliminate”; Keaveney, *AntCl* 81 (2012) 32: Orontas “was not a man to be made away with almost casually as Megaphernes had been when he was discovered in a plot.”

We should consider both the brevity and the incidental nature of the pieces of information provided in the case of Dana. Xenophon says hardly anything about this conspiracy. He fails to name the *dynastes* while recording only the name of Megaphernes. Furthermore, the use of a rare word φοινικιστής may indicate his reliance on some intermediary and in fact not very informative account. All of this can suggest that Xenophon's knowledge on the conspiracy was incomplete and he knew very little about it. On the other hand, with Clearchus at the trial and three thousand hoplites surrounding the tent where the trial of Orontas was held, the Greeks were deeply engaged in the course of action. They would have been well informed about the entirety of the events, and this is clearly reflected in Xenophon's narrative. Therefore, one may think that the Greeks did not know much about the events at Dana because they were not involved—presumably, at Dana, Cyrus simply did not need their assistance in suppressing the conspiracy and in executing its participants. Putting to death two distinguished members of the Persian elite did not meet with any noticeable sign of protest that would force Cyrus to pursue any precautionary measures. On the other hand, the fact that later, in the face of the treason of Orontas, Cyrus had to take advantage of his foreign soldiers while dealing with the Persians may indicate that in the course of the campaign his authority over his faction declined. The consequence of this was his growing reliance on the mercenary force. In fact, as Rop states, those whom Cyrus seems to trust more were the Greek mercenaries, not his Persians.⁴⁷

Cyrus the renegade and the outbreak of the rebellion

According to Pierre Briant, the war between Cyrus and Artaxerxes began almost immediately after Cyrus returned to Lydia. We learn that Pharnabazus warned Artaxerxes that Cyrus was secretly gathering his forces. In response, the king

⁴⁷ Jeffrey Rop, *Greek Military Service in the Ancient Near East, 401–330 BCE* (Cambridge 2019) 65–70.

made his loyal satraps turn against the rebel and that is why we hear of Tissaphernes fighting with Cyrus over the Ionian cities and Orontas holding the fortress of Sardis and ravaging Cyrus' land with the Mysians. The king was not able to deal with Cyrus in person, because he was preoccupied with his own preparations to reclaim Egypt, which had rebelled some time earlier.⁴⁸ This interpretation has been reconsidered by Jeffrey Rop, who, while accepting some of Briant's observations, rejects the main conclusion concerning the early outbreak of the rebellion. According to Rop, Cyrus could be officially recognized as a rebel only after burning the estate of Belesys in Syria. Before that, Artaxerxes "maintained a close watch" on him and ordered his men "to carefully observe" his progress."⁴⁹

What leads Rop to reject the main point of Briant's reconstruction is his attempt to answer an important question: if the war began earlier, why did Cyrus keep his preparations for war secret and why did he receive envoys from the king, maintain the correspondence with him, and send him the tribute from the Ionian cities (*An.* 1.1.5, 1.1.8; *Plut. Artax.* 4.3)? Rop's explanation is that, first, the war between Cyrus and Tissaphernes over the Ionian cities was a minor clash between satraps that was not sanctioned by Artaxerxes. Second, the conflict between Cyrus and Orontas was just a bloodless dispute over jurisdiction, which also had nothing to do with the king. Third, the claim that Pharnabazus warned the king about Cyrus' preparations at such an early stage was a later invention and cannot be taken into account in reconstructing the events.⁵⁰ This interpretation calls for examination.

Rop holds that Briant's reconstruction violates the timeline of the events provided by the sources. But is this true? In fact, the evidence tells us very little about the circumstances of what Rop calls an "official outbreak of the revolt." We are provided

⁴⁸ Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* 616–620.

⁴⁹ Rop, *GRBS* 59 (2019) 58, 84.

⁵⁰ Rop, *GRBS* 59 (2019) 57–85.

with too few facts to reconstruct the events fully.⁵¹ What the sources do tell us is not when Cyrus was officially declared a rebel, but when his true intentions were revealed. In other words, Artaxerxes was informed that “Cyrus is coming,” not that “Cyrus has rebelled”—and this need not be the same thing. The sources state that the king learns about “an expedition” or “a march,” not about “a rebellion” (Xen. *An.* 1.2.5 στόλος; 1.7.16 Κύρος προσελεύων; Diod. 14.22.1 ἀνάβασις). This literal reading of the evidence means that no source states explicitly when the war between Cyrus and Artaxerxes began. Thus Briant’s interpretation, although it neglects certain circumstances, could be reconciled with the evidence.

The only source that tells us about Pharnabazus warning Artaxerxes is Diodorus, who relies on the account of Ephorus (*FGrHist* 70 F 70 ap. Diod. 14.11.1–4). Rop rejects this account because the story, which deals mainly with the circumstances of Alcibiades’ death, makes little sense. He considers it a later invention forged in order to clear Pharnabazus’ name of suspicion of collaboration with Cyrus. The value of the account of Ephorus is indeed difficult to assess. However, although Diodorus transmits the story only as a peculiar version of the events, later, despite his own reservations about Ephorus’ account, he accepts the information about Pharnabazus’ warning (14.22.1). Perhaps we should trust Diodorus’ judgment here, since he knew the sources in full. Rop’s criticism evokes a notion formulated by John Hyland, that Pharnabazus needed to excuse his conduct at the time of Cyrus’ rebellion.⁵² This assumption is, however, hardly proved.

Cyrus’ conflicts with Tissaphernes and Orontas are a further issue. Here we know only very little, and the interpretations of

⁵¹ Pharnabazus warns the king (Diod. 14.11.1–4, 14.22.1); Tissaphernes sets off to the king to warn him (Xen. *An.* 1.2.4–5); word of Cyrus’ march reaches the king (Plut. *Artax.* 6.4); Cyrus reveals the goal of the campaign at Thapsacus (Xen. *An.* 1.4.11–18, Diod. 14.21.6).

⁵² John Hyland, “Pharnabazos, Cyrus’ Rebellion, and the Spartan War of 399,” *ARTA* 3 (2008) 1–27.

Briant and Rop only show how divergent readings can be applied. However, there are several reasons to dispute Rop's argument. As he considers Orontas an official of little importance, he concludes that the conflict between Cyrus and Orontas was only a bloodless jurisdictional dispute and had nothing to do with Artaxerxes. It seems, however, that the importance of Orontas himself is hardly relevant here. Yet, Rop misses a crucial aspect of Orontas' case. At the trial, Cyrus states that ἐπεὶ δὲ ταχθείς, ὡς ἔφη αὐτός, ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐμοῦ ἀδελφοῦ οὗτος ἐπολέμησεν ἐμοὶ ἔχων τὴν ἐν Σάρδεσιν ἀκρόπολιν (Xen. *An.* 1.6.6). Rop on the word ταχθείς takes τάττω simply as "to appoint,"⁵³ but the context implies a different meaning, "to order" (LSJ s.v. III.2). Thus, the sentence seems to indicate that the duty assigned to Orontas by the king was primarily to make war against Cyrus, while holding the fortress of Sardis was a circumstance of rather secondary importance or a way to execute the royal order—one should read "Orontas was ordered to make war while holding the fortress" rather than "Orontas was appointed to hold a fortress and he waged war." In fact, this interpretation is suggested by a number of English translations of the *Anabasis*.⁵⁴ Thus, the passage explicitly indicates that the conflict between Cyrus and Orontas was inspired by the king himself, and thus supports Briant's reconstruction.

Cyrus' conflicts with Tissaphernes and Orontas should be considered in the context of Cyrus' relations with the high-ranking officials of the Achaemenid empire. Cyrus displays

⁵³ Rop, *GRBS* 59 (2019) 65–68.

⁵⁴ Xenophon, *The Persian Expedition*, transl. R. Werner (Harmondsworth 1972) 80: "Then, on the instructions, as he says, of my brother, he held the citadel of Sardis and made war on me;" Xenophon, *Anabasis*, transl. C. L. Brownson, rev. J. Dillery (Cambridge [Mass.]/London 2001) 103: "then, at the bidding, as he himself said, of my brother, this man levied war upon me, holding the citadel of Sardis"; Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*, transl. R. Waterfield (Oxford 2005) 19: "Later, acting, he claims, on my brother's orders, he occupied the acropolis of Sardis and made war on me."

hostility not only toward Orontas and Tissaphernes, but also toward other satraps as well. He is allegedly leading the army against Abrocomas, an enemy of his (ἐχθρὸν ἄνδρα), and destroys the estate of Belesys in Syria (Xen. *An.* 1.3.20, 1.4.10). Perhaps another case are the officials put to death at Dana. All these acts of hostility take place before the announcement of the true aim of the expedition at Thapsacus, while Cyrus is trying to persuade his men that he is not marching against Artaxerxes. In fact, none of these acts seem to arouse suspicion among Cyrus' followers concerning the aim of the campaign. For instance, at Tarsus, when the Greek mercenaries refused to march farther inland because of their suspicion that they were being driven against the king, Cyrus declared that he was going to lead them against Abrocomas, and that was enough to calm them. This readiness to fight satraps loyal to the king seems hardly a coincidence and fits quite well with the picture drawn by Briant.

Rop does not offer a compelling reason to prefer his reading of the evidence: discounting the importance of Cyrus' conflicts with Tissaphernes and Orontas lacks a convincing justification. He advocates the "minimalist" reading, but this is only one among many possible interpretations. His reconstruction relies on the fact that Cyrus is said to send correspondence and tribute to Artaxerxes, receive envoys from the king, and keep secret his preparations to the war. As these acts imply peaceful relations between Artaxerxes and Cyrus before his departure from Sardis, they are difficult to reconcile with Cyrus' struggles with other satraps at the same time. But Rop's interpretation does not solve this problem.

According to Justin, after the return to his satrapies Cyrus prepared for war openly (5.11.5). This statement may seem surprising, given that all our other sources clearly state that Cyrus was gathering the mercenaries in secret. That Justin refers to a "war" and not to a single campaign may mean that he does not contradict other sources, which speak of an "ex-

pedition” and not “rebellion” or “war.”⁵⁵ Perhaps we should differentiate between these two things, and consider that there is no divergence between Justin and other sources, as they may refer simply to different aspects of the hostility between Cyrus and Artaxerxes. The account of Justin would then provide clear evidence that the outbreak of the hostility between the Achaemenids took place before Cyrus’ departure from Sardis and the announcement of the true aim of the campaign at Thapsacus. That would mean that the correspondence between Cyrus and Artaxerxes, Cyrus’ requests, and the payment of tribute were taking place while they were considered enemies. To better understand this, one should once again take into account Cyrus’ Persians as a significant political factor.

First, the secrecy of Cyrus’ preparations: his mercenaries are said to have been gathered abroad by his Greek friends in order to conceal his intentions. And while assembling his army and leading it inland, he announced a number of pretexts excusing him for doing this.⁵⁶ Whom did Cyrus intend to deceive by these excuses? It is true that he wanted to surprise Artaxerxes with the magnitude of his forces and the swiftness of his advance (*An.* 1.1.6, 1.5.9). Xenophon states that the king “failed to perceive the plot against himself” (1.1.8), but one should not misinterpret this. Although the king did not know Cyrus’ intentions, this does not mean that the relations between the brothers were good. We also do not have any explicit statement that the excuses were formulated in order to deceive Artaxerxes. The mere word delivered by Tissaphernes, about Cyrus’ gathering a huge army at Sardis, was enough to assure

⁵⁵ The word πόλεμος appears three times in Plutarch (*Artax.* 6.4–5) when he describes the commotion at the royal court caused by the report brought by Tissaphernes about Cyrus’ advance; but the context in which this word appears is rather obscure and prevents us from any decisive conclusions.

⁵⁶ The aims of the expedition according to Cyrus: against Tissaphernes (*Xen. An.* 1.1.6, 1.1.11.); against Pisidians (1.1.11, 1.2.1, 3.1.9; *Diod.* 14.19.6); against “Cilician tyrants” (*Diod.* 14.19.3, 6); against “a certain satrap of Syria” (*Diod.* 14.20.5); against Abrocomas (*Xen. An.* 1.3.20).

the king that Cyrus decided to go to a war (Plut. *Artax.* 6.4). But even then Cyrus continued to announce one excuse after another, which implies that Artaxerxes was not the intended recipient of these messages. The Greek mercenaries are an obvious alternative, but we should consider Cyrus' Persians as well. Although it is stated that the rank, or at least Cyrus' inner circle, knew the true aim of the campaign (Diod. 14.19.6), the file was most probably kept in the dark as the Greeks were. Otherwise, despite difficulties in communication between the barbarians and the Greeks, it would be difficult to maintain secrecy. As we know, the Greeks were afraid to march against the king and were outraged when they learned the truth. We do not know the reaction of the barbarians, but it is highly probable that not all of them received the announcement at Thapsacus with enthusiasm. It is likely then that Cyrus had to deceive his barbarians as well as the Greeks. Perhaps the conciliatory gestures toward Artaxerxes should be understood as just another deceit of Cyrus aimed at his Persian followers in order to make them serve his cause.

Hence, it is possible to propose the following reconstruction. We do not know exactly what happened at the royal court. We do know that Cyrus was released and sent back to his domain, then severely reduced. Relations between the Achaemenids seem to be very bad, characterized by mutual hostility and mistrust. Insulted and humiliated, Cyrus almost immediately began gathering forces in order to restore his former position in Asia Minor. This drove him to fight other Persian satraps, who received orders from the king to oppose him. It is likely that in this struggle Cyrus could count on his Persian subjects: demoting Cyrus could be considered by them as highly unjust, especially if they were convinced of his innocence. So it is possible that, out of loyalty toward Cyrus, they were ready to support him in restoring his former authority. As long as Cyrus could assure his Persians that he was only reclaiming his former position in Asia Minor—by fighting those among Artaxerxes' men who challenged his authority—he enjoyed their support.

However, marching to Babylon against the king himself was obviously something different. One may presume that the brothers could be considered enemies, but so long as there were no further moves leading to a direct confrontation, it was thought that there was still a possibility of reconciliation. By maintaining the correspondence and paying the tribute, Cyrus was able to assure his subjects that in principle he recognized the supreme authority of the king and that the dispute between them can still be solved peacefully. When Cyrus finally decided to set out against the king himself, he concealed his intentions and led his men as far east as he could, allegedly to secure his position in Asia Minor and its immediate rear in Cilicia and northern Syria. But for Artaxerxes and his satraps, Cyrus' departure with an army of such magnitude was a clear indication that their conflict was turning into a full-scale war. On reaching the Euphrates, Cyrus could finally reveal his true intentions and, together with his most faithful followers, force the rest to comply. What at the beginning was a war between satraps now becomes a war between a usurper and the legitimate king.

Perhaps some distant analogies can be drawn from the story of the rebellion of Achaeus, a relative of Antiochus III and governor of Asia Minor, who rebelled and proclaimed himself king. By this official statement, Achaeus openly challenged Antiochus' authority and no one could have any doubt about it. But when Achaeus tried to take advantage of Antiochus' pre-occupation in the East and set off with an army to Syria, his men opposed him. According to Polybius (5.57), Achaeus

was nearly in Lycaonia when his troops mutinied, the cause of their dissatisfaction being that, as it now appeared, the expedition was against their original and natural king. Achaeus, therefore, when he was aware of their disaffection, abandoned his present enterprise and wishing to persuade the soldiers that from the outset he had had no intention of invading Syria, turned back and began to plunder Pisidia, and having thus provided his soldiers with plenty of booty and gained the goodwill and confidence of them all, returned to his own province.

What Achaeus tried to conceal was not the fact that he was an enemy of the legitimate king but that he was leading an army against him. Polybius points to loyalty as a reason for the mutiny in the army. At first glance this may seem peculiar: although Achaeus' men are fully aware that they serve a rebel, a usurper and enemy of the king, at the same time they claim their allegiance toward the legitimate ruler and refuse to proceed against him. This shows how complex the problem could be, and on this point the rebellion of Cyrus can be thought to be not too different.

Conclusions

Contrary to Lee's view, the position of Cyrus and the support he acquired should not be overestimated. There is no firm evidence for allegedly devoted support by the most distinguished Persian dignitaries. Abrocomas probably should not be blamed for his delay in arriving at the battlefield and joining the king. The assumption that his primary goal was to reclaim Egypt seems highly plausible. Thus it is likely that, when he heard of Cyrus in Cilicia, Abrocomas was gathering his forces in southern Phoenicia—the distance he faced in order to join Artaxerxes was considerable enough to excuse his tardiness. There is no compelling evidence then that he was, at any point, involved in negotiations with Cyrus or that he was acting in the usurper's favor. Furthermore, Xenophon's accounts of the conspiracy at Dana and the plot of Orontas, taken together, most probably reflect growing opposition of the Persian followers of Cyrus to their commander. One may suspect that crossing the Euphrates was for some of them a breaking point and catalyst for their discontent. This leads us to another question, the start of the rebellion of Cyrus and the nature of his conflict with Artaxerxes.

Several items indicate that the conflict began almost immediately after Cyrus' return to Sardis and well before the announcement at Thapsacus of the true aim of the campaign. It is notable that Cyrus wages war against other satraps openly, while still claiming allegiance to the king. But we can think of this as a deceit aimed at the Persian followers of Cyrus. The

conflict between Cyrus and Artaxerxes was evolving: at the beginning, Cyrus fights Persian satraps in order to restore his former authority. In this he apparently received full support from his subjects, who counted on the possibility of reconciliation between the brothers. However, Cyrus had something else in mind, and to make his men follow him to Babylon he had to deceive them. Although he was successful in that, many of his men were strongly disaffected by the current situation. One can think that after Cyrus' death at Cunaxa, his followers received royal pardon so easily because—although motivated by loyalty to Cyrus—it was known how unwillingly they were marching against their legitimate king.

Thus criticism of the reconstruction proposed by Pierre Briant does not seem justified, and it is possible to press some of his observations even further. Some features of the rebellion of Cyrus the Younger appear understandable when considered as a dynamic process—the political position of the usurper should be interpreted in terms of these dynamics.⁵⁷

January, 2020

University of Wrocław, Poland
piotr.glogowski@uwr.edu.pl

⁵⁷ This research was made possible by a grant from the Polish National Science Centre (UMO-2014/14/A/HS3/00132). I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Bogdan Burliga (University of Gdańsk) for his numerous comments that allowed me to improve the paper. I am also indebted to Katarzyna Koźma, who read the text and corrected the language. But first of all, I owe my thanks to Professor Krzysztof Nawotka (University of Wrocław) for his constant encouragement and much helpful advice.