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North Anatolian Rivers and the Chronology of Xenophon's *Anabasis*: A Note on An. 5.6

ABSTRACT: The dating of the expedition of the Ten Thousand to Persia and their long march home to Greece described in the *Anabasis* of Xenophon has been debated for over a century. Some researchers now favour a late departure from Sardis over the early date preferred by earlier commentators. One further argument for a late chronology which has failed to attract scholarly attention can be found in the description of four north Anatolian rivers offered by the Sinopean ambassador Hecatonymus in book five of the *Anabasis*. Had this speech been given in May or June, as according to the early chronology, the rivers would have been at their lowest level by the time the Greek army reached them. If, on the other hand, the speech was held in August or September with the autumn rains approaching, the rivers were likely to swell and present an obstacle to further progress overland through Paphlagonia.

KEYWORDS: Xenophon, *Anabasis*, Black Sea, rivers, climate.

Introduction

The first book of Xenophon's *Anabasis* describes the journey of a Greek mercenary army raised by prince Cyrus, the pretender to the Persian throne, through Asia Minor to Kunaxa in Mesopotamia. Here, the Greeks suffered defeat at the hands of Cyrus' older brother, king Artaxerxes, and shortly afterwards their leaders were killed by the king's devious satrap Tissaphernes. Books three to seven describe how the remnants of the Greek army marched north through eastern Anatolia to reach the sea near Trapezous/Trabzon, then continued along the Black Sea coast to Byzantium/Istanbul.

The date at which the *Anabasis* was composed is not known. It may have been written shortly after Xenophon's return to Greece in 399 BC, or at a much later date during his sojourn at Scillus in the Peloponnese, perhaps in the 360s BC.¹ The work contains a good deal of factual and numerical information, such as the number of days spent marching from one place to the next, which could not have been memorized by Xenophon but must derive from a written source, perhaps a road-book kept by one of the participants, if not an actual 'war diary'.²

Xenophon may also have sourced information from other accounts of the expedition, assuming that such accounts existed and were available to him. In his *Lexicon*, Stephanus of Byzantium several times refers to an *Anabasis of Cyrus* written by Sophanetus, one of the senior generals in the Greek army.³ That Sophanetus was a real person, there can be no doubt – he is mentioned several times by Xenophon⁴ – but scholarly opinion is divided on the authenticity of the *Anabasis* attributed to him.⁵ Even more uncertainty surrounds another narrative of Cyrus' expedition to which Xenophon refers once, briefly, in his

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¹ Flower 2012, 29–30.

² Flower 2012, 61.

³ Jacoby FGrH 109, F 1-4.

⁴ An. 2.5.37; 4.4.19; 5.3.1; 5.8.1; 6.5.13.

⁵ Paradeisopoulos 2013, 650–651.

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Kuzey Anadolu Nehirleri ve Ksenophon'un Anabasis'inin Kronolojisi: An. 5.6'ya Bir Not

ÖZ: On Binlerin Persia seferinin ve Hellas'a Ksenophon'un *Anabasis*'inde anlatılan uzun yürüyüşünün tarihi bir yüzyıldan uzun bir süredir tartışılmaktadır. Bazı araştırmacılar, Sardeis'ten ayrılış için daha önceki yorumcuların tercih ettiğinden daha geç bir tarihi yeğlemektedir. Daha geç bir kronoloji yönünde bilim dünyasının dikkatinden kaçan bir başka delil, Kuzey Anadolu'daki dört nehrin Sinope elçisi Hekatonymos tarafından *Anabasis*'in beşinci kitabında verilen tarifinde bulunabilir. Erken kronolojinin önerdiği gibi Hekatonymos'un konuşması Mayıs veya Haziran aylarında yapılmış olsaydı, Yunan ordusu onlara ulaştığında bu nehirler en düşük su seviyesinde olacaklardı. Öte yandan, konuşma daha geç kronolojiye uygun olarak sonbahar yağmurlarının yaklaştığı Ağustos veya Eylül aylarında yapılmış olursa, nehirlerdeki su seviyesinin artması ve Paphlagonia üzerinden karayoluyla ilerlemeye engel olmaları beklenebilir.

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Received: 16.12.2021 | Accepted: 05.02.2022

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