

V. ON CAMPAIGN

From the *Iliad* onwards, Greek writers treated military camps as analogues of political communities, with their hierarchical structures and mass assemblies, places where generals shared plans with their troops and occasionally faced their criticism. Xenophon's exploration of order and leadership finds the military context a fruitful one.

His narratives of military campaigns feature his most vivid and lively writing, and some of his most personal reflections. His own experience enlivens the narrative of the *Anabasis*, the failed expedition to place Cyrus the Younger on the Achaemenid throne, in which he participated (401 BCE), and sharpens his analysis of episodes in the *Hellenica* such as the Spartan campaigns led by Agesilaus in Asia Minor (396–394) and on the Greek mainland (394 onwards). Xenophon's accounts of these events are shaped to provide exemplary narratives of leadership; Shane Brennan notes that in the *Anabasis* Xenophon himself appears 'more like an exemplar than a historical figure'.¹ The *Anabasis* is both a 'microhistory' of a specific campaign (Flower), and a patterned exemplary narrative which is 'part military handbook, part ethnography, part retrospective self-justification' (Lee).²

For Xenophon, the army is a location in which leadership skill and the capacity to create order can be demonstrated. Both the *Anabasis* and the more idealized *Cyropaedia*, with its account of Cyrus the Great's rise to power through conquest, contain theorizing about spatial organization, as applicable to the city as the camp.³ The army is also a kind of *polis* on the move; given that cities' armies were still made up, for the most part, of their citizens, and military leaders often had political clout, this was self-evident and demonstrated in the similarity between assemblies of troops and those of citizens. The camp and the *polis* become interchangeable.

Just as with the city, Xenophon is focused on the challenges facing the elite, generals and those who wish to be generals. His Socratic works are perhaps surprisingly concerned with Athenian military leadership (*Mem.* 3.1–5), but his most detailed account of a programme of military training and organization in the field is delivered in the

¹ Brennan 2022: 2.

² Lee 2008: 4; Flower 2012: 47–8.

³ On expeditionary forces as *polis*-like entities, see Hornblower 2004.

Cyropaedia. He is clear that the aim of good military leadership is the same as that of civic leadership, as Socrates says:

Why do you think Homer called Agamemnon ‘shepherd of the people’? Is it because the shepherd must see to it that his sheep are safe and have what they need, so that the purpose for which they are kept is achieved? And in the same way must the general see to it that his troops are safe and have what they need, so that the purpose for which they campaign is achieved – that purpose being to win a happier life by defeating the enemy? (Mem. 3.2.1)

The goals of warfare are aligned with the wider need for management. Military leaders should pursue the well-being of both their forces and those they protect. Xenophon emphasizes the importance of the former, detailing arrangements for quartering, feeding, and training forces, and treating logistics as a core leadership skill. However, his accounts of campaigns are not simply programmatic or patterned, but full of incidental detail. As well as set-piece battle narratives, he reports interactions between Greek forces and the peoples they encounter, schemes to train and improve troops, and dissent and disagreement among forces. Above all, the army represents an ordered community.

Xenophon’s interest in orderliness and ordering, seen in his account of the household (Chapter 3), applies to armies on and off the battlefield. Although his Socrates insists that this is only a small part of leadership, Xenophon acknowledges its importance; as his Ischomachus says, ‘an orderly army is the finest sight for its friends’ (*Oec.* 8.6). Xenophon is particularly concerned with *taxis*, the make-up and arrangement of forces, whether on the battlefield, in transit, or in camp. This preoccupies him as the Cyreans try to find a practical arrangement for their large group and appropriate protection for their journey across hostile terrain (*An.* 3.3.15–19, 3.4.19–23, 4.4.28–9).⁴ Xenophon expands on this in the *Cyropaedia*, showing the earlier Cyrus encouraging innovative arrangements and rewarding those who trained their men to deploy them (*Cyr.* 2.3.21–2); his own innovations and willingness to send out cavalry scouts from the main column had not always been well received. Cavalry as well as infantry forces benefit from good arrangement, both in battle and as sources of civic spectacle (*Hipp.* 2.2–9, 3.3–13).

A well-organized military camp already instantiates civic communal activity, such as messes and physical training. On occasion, an army

⁴ Lee 2008: 141–7.

and its city can become the same entity. When the small Peloponnesian city of Phlius is besieged, Xenophon praises its leading citizens' commitment to their alliance with Sparta as they see off a challenge from democratic exiles (*Hell.* 7.2).⁵ The character of the leading citizens is attributed to the city as a collective.

Xenophon regards the Cyreans as a community with the potential to settle and to realize itself as a *polis* (*An.* 5.6.15), and even identifies their camp at Calpe as a good location for this transformation, close to the sea (6.4.8). John Dillery traces the narrative arc of the *Anabasis* as the sudden restructuring of this potential community, through a brief period of social coherence, on to its gradual disintegration.⁶ Discord in the camp echoes stasis within a *polis*, and Xenophon's plans did not find favour. In the same way, friendship and erotic relationships between men on campaign echo those they might have pursued at home.

The *Cyropaedia* provides Xenophon with a space in which his ideals can be realized, albeit in fiction. The elder Cyrus' changes to the Persian army and his ideas on the organization and management of armies can also be read as comment on the structure and leadership of political communities. Cyrus himself created the best order in his camps in his progress around his empire (*Cyr.* 8.5.1–15); again, these create an ordered community within which the leader is protected from potential harm, and where quick mobilization is possible.

Battle scenes and their rhetoric

Leaders face critical moments in preparing for battle, mustering and ordering their troops, and maintaining control on the battlefield. Xenophon's battle narratives, however, are not attempts to document the action – many battles were far too diffuse and confused for that to be possible – but opportunities for a range of rhetorical flourishes which contribute to the building of character portraits.

His account of the battle of Cunaxa, in which Cyrus the Younger was killed, exemplifies the incompleteness of his narratives, which has frustrated modern historians; it 'simply will not do', according to Cawkwell.⁷ Battle narratives typically begin with a list of forces and

⁵ Dillery 1995: 130–8.

⁶ Dillery 1995: 77–90.

⁷ Warner and Cawkwell 1972: 19.

their planned arrangement. Xenophon details the sizes of the forces (*An.* 1.7.10–13), but his numbers for the Persians, led by Cyrus' older full brother Artaxerxes II, are implausibly large.⁸ His account of the key manoeuvres of the opposing forces contains inconsistencies, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the difficulty of securing an accurate overview of complex events taking place across a large area, but it does provide a vivid account of the charge and fighting which led to Cyrus' death (1.8.24–7). Here Xenophon admits that he draws on another account, that of Artaxerxes' Greek doctor Ctesias (1.8.26), to provide details of events on the battlefield that he could not see for himself.⁹ Even the moment of Cyrus' death marks the otherness of the Persians; whether by his own hand or in defence of his master's body, Cyrus' sceptre-bearer lies dead beside his master (1.8.28–9), evoking an orientalist trope which reappears in the story of the Asian queen Pantheia (see Chapter 6).¹⁰

Xenophon uses commanders' addresses to their troops to convey his own analysis and to provide enjoyable and inspiring examples of rhetoric.¹¹ Cyrus' address to his Greek troops before Cunaxa emphasizes recurring Xenophonic themes:

I have taken you on for this reason, that I believe you to be better and stronger than many barbarians. See to it, therefore, that you are worthy of the freedom (*eleutherias*) which you hold, on account of which I consider you to be happy. Be assured that I would choose freedom in place of all that I have and many multiples of it.

(*An.* 1.7.3)

Battle speeches, whether to the whole army or to the commanding officers, also feature heavily in the *Cyropaedia*; even the earlier Cyrus' first speech, to the small force of 1,000 men he takes from Persia to support the Medes against the Assyrians, runs through familiar points about the virtues of practice and self-discipline, respect for the gods, and the justice of their cause (*Cyr.* 1.5.7–14).¹² But as Cyrus observes, such speeches must activate the qualities already present in their audience; they cannot improve forces which lack training, discipline, or a framework of laws to follow (*Cyr.* 3.3.49–55).

⁸ Compare Herodotus on the Persians, Hdt. 7.60.

⁹ Ctesias F20 = Plut. *Vit. Artax.* 11–13. See Anderson 1974: 98–112; Bigwood 1983.

¹⁰ Degen 2020.

¹¹ Rood 2004a; Tuplin 2014.

¹² See also *Cyr.* 3.3.34–9, 41–2; 6.2.14–20; 7.5.20–24; for addresses to officers, see *Cyr.* 2.4.22–9, 4.1.2–6.

Xenophon's account of the Athenian naval battle at Arginusae (*Hell.* 1.6.26–35; see Chapter 4) has led to speculation that he participated in it, perhaps as a marine, but the description is shaped to his own narrative needs.¹³ Although Xenophon details the political and military manoeuvres which preceded the battle, including the Athenian dispatch of additional triremes to the scene, his account of the conflict itself is perfunctory, with only one short section narrating the events of the lengthy battle (1.6.33). His interest lies in the disaster after the battle, when both confusion and a storm prevented the Athenians from rescuing sailors from sinking ships – necessary background information to his subsequent account of the trial.

Another important battle narrative is that of Coronea (394 BCE), in which Agesilaus' Spartan forces, along with allies from Phocis and Orchomenos, confronted a broad alliance of Greek forces from Thebes, Athens, Argos, Corinth, and beyond (*Ages.* 2.6). For once, Xenophon's account of this battle does not resort to exaggerated numbers, as the balance in number and capability between the forces is key. Instead, he shows how perceptions of the battle differed: Agesilaus' mercenaries thought it was over, but a late charge by the Thebans broke through another part of the battle line. Agesilaus was wounded in a courageous counter-charge requiring a skilled turnaround of his forces (2.10–11) – 'brave, but not very safe', Xenophon notes – which eventually secured victory. Xenophon suggests the brutality of the combat with a terse series of verbs: 'they thrust their shields out and were pushing, fighting, killing, dying' (2.12). His description of the bloody aftermath of this battle between Greek cities is haunting, a string of perfect-tense participles emphasizing the permanence of the destruction:

When the battle had ceased, it was possible to observe a spectacle (*theasasthai*), where men had fallen with each other to the earth reddened with blood (*pephurmenēn*), corpses of friends and enemies lying together, shields crushed (*diatethrunmenas*), spears broken into pieces (*sunthrausmena*), knives bare of their sheaths, some on the ground, some in bodies, and others still in their hands. (*Ages.* 2.14)

As Rosie Harman observes, Xenophon's description 'is not focalised from any one position' and does not take sides.¹⁴ Even in a work praising the Spartan king with whom he had served, Xenophon holds

¹³ See Chapter 2.

¹⁴ Harman 2008: 440–1.

back from exulting in a scene in which fellow Greeks – and possibly Athenians – were among the dead and suffering. If Coronea was the occasion which confirmed his exile from Athens, his reticence is understandable.

Xenophon as a soldier and leader

While some readings of the *Anabasis* have emphasized narrative and adventure, two quite different recent readings, by Shane Brennan and Eric Buzzetti, explore it as a case study in ‘Socratic’ leadership.¹⁵ Xenophon may exaggerate his own role in the expedition; some have suggested that he responds to other, now lost, accounts, but the fragmentary evidence makes it hard to ascertain the realities.¹⁶ Given the patterning of Xenophon’s work more broadly, no aspect can be treated as a straightforward narrative. His description of his role plays out aspects of his idealization of leadership.¹⁷ Xenophon uses the critical battle in which Cyrus the Younger was killed, the battle of Cunaxa (*An.* 1.8.1–1.10.19), to introduce himself as a character into his own narrative with a pious action suggestive of courage (1.8.15).

The experience of the mixed mercenary forces who made up the Cyreans on the Persian campaign gave Xenophon insight into different leadership styles and approaches to battlefield tactics, as well as the broader management of an army in hostile territory. He presents the restructuring of the Cyreans after the loss of Cyrus and their generals through a series of speeches which Xenophon himself gives to progressively larger groups of different status, starting with his motivational speech to himself in which he expresses his determination to survive (3.1.11–14).¹⁸ The speeches of Xenophon and others are punctuated by divine signs: the dream which first inspires Xenophon to take action; and a sneeze just after two of the remaining leaders have spoken to the assembled Greek soldiers (3.2.9), when Xenophon is about to persuade the men that it is possible to return, and to set out his plan for doing so.

¹⁵ Buzzetti 2014; Brennan 2022.

¹⁶ The story that Xenophon was responding to a written account by Sophænetus, ‘the oldest of the generals’ (6.5.13), is an ancient one, though rejected by Brennan (2022: 4). Other accounts include DS 14.25–31 (summarizing Ephorus’ lost account), Plut. *Vit. Artax.* 6–14, Ctesias’ fragmentary *Persica*, and DL 2.49–51; see Brennan and Thomas 2021: 420–52.

¹⁷ Due 1989: 203–6.

¹⁸ Atack 2022.

As a speaker, Xenophon develops a distinctive rhetoric for the different audience, developing and amplifying details in each iteration.

A low point of Xenophon's own military experience was a court-martial for *hubris*, inappropriate violence toward subordinates (*An.* 5.8.2), after one of the Cyreans accused him of assault during the group's struggle to progress through snow, when Xenophon lost his temper with the stragglers (4.5.16). While many aspects of Xenophon's account of his adventures with the Cyreans are idealized and shaped as exemplars, and he generally puts a positive spin on his own contributions, his own failings as a leader and his difficulties in communicating with and managing troops eventually emerge from the narrative. In many ways, he exhibits the same failings as he attributes to his friend Proxenus. He struggles to persuade the group to accept his relentless stream of good ideas, and his relationship with the forces deteriorates as the journey continues. Episodes where the troops are distrustful of his motivation and critical of his actions culminate in his being put on trial. Michael Flower notes that these episodes structure the narrative, creating sections (corresponding to book divisions) in which Xenophon faces a new danger.¹⁹ Another recurring theme is Xenophon's reluctance to take on a formal leadership role, even when it is offered to him; he finds evidence from the gods, via sacrifice, that he should not become the group's formal leader (6.1.31).

Xenophon's practicality is seen most clearly in his concern with the provisioning of troops and their animals, expressed in his initial plan to bring them home (3.2.34) and continuing throughout the journey. His works on training emphasize the importance of maintaining men and animals in good health; there is a mean between uncontrolled appetite and starvation which ensures peak physical performance (*LP* 2.5–7).²⁰

The Cyreans must balance their need for food and supplies with the difficulties of transporting and storing bulky goods. One of Xenophon's first suggestions is that they minimize what they take with them. As he outlines the risks of their forthcoming journey, he urges them to destroy surplus possessions so that they are not held up by a baggage train (*An.* 3.2.27–8). However, the need to forage on the journey provokes conflict with the peoples whose territory they cross, and demonstrates the difficult trade-off that Xenophon had attempted to negotiate.

¹⁹ Flower 2012: 141.

²⁰ Humble 2022: 105.

Xenophon's assessment of other military leaders

Xenophon's self-portrait in the *Anabasis* is accompanied by other exemplary portraits of leadership, which he delivers through his narrative, through speeches which act as manifestos (such as his own addresses to the surviving Cyrean captains and troops, *An.* 3.2), and through authorial comment. Diphridas the Spartan, for example, 'was no less charming (*eucharis*) than Thibron' (his colleague) but 'a more organized and enterprising general', who set aside bodily pleasures and got on with his job (*Hell.* 4.8.22). The Spartan naval leader Teleutias supports his half-brother Agesilaus in a raid on Corinth (4.4.19), and then drives the Athenians away from Aegina (5.1.1–3). While none of his actions are of great strategic significance, Xenophon finds him noteworthy because of the way he inspires and motivates his troops (5.1.4). Jason, the tyrant of Pherae, appears as an exemplar in a speech given by Polydamas of Pharsalus (also in Thessaly) as he appeals for Spartan support (6.1.4–19). Polydamas attests to Jason's own personal physical excellence and concern for training his forces, and reports the skilled speech with which Jason attempted to persuade the Pharsalians to support him. With Jason presented as an exemplary leader in both speech and action, Xenophon returns to him a couple of chapters later, by which time he has come to dominate Thessaly (6.4.28). But he is assassinated while preparing for a festival, a final pious act that secures Xenophon's approval.

After the critical juncture of the younger Cyrus' death on the battlefield of Cunaxa near Babylon (*An.* 1.8), and the subsequent capture and execution of the Greek generals Clearchus, Proxenus, and Meno (2.5.27–31, 2.6.1), Xenophon pays tribute to each, providing a gallery of leadership types similar to the presentation of Athenian politicians in *Hellenica* 2. As Michael Flower noted, the obituaries also 'offer a sort of benchmark by which to measure Xenophon himself after he becomes one of the new generals'.²¹ He sympathizes with the complex situations which led the generals to abandon service to their own cities, but criticizes their distinctive failings even as he points out their admirable qualities, shaping his portraits carefully.

²¹ Flower 2012: 103.

The Spartan general Clearchus (*An.* 2.6.1–15) loved warfare (*philopolemos*) to the extent that it unbalanced his decision-making. Xenophon fails to mention that the Spartans exiled him after he refused to end a campaign.²² Clearchus comes across as a disturbingly violent man, who is quick to administer corporal punishment to weaker soldiers; he beats one of Meno's soldiers, provoking a violent dispute within the Greek forces (*An.* 1.5.11–17). Xenophon admires Clearchus' ability to secure obedience, reporting his brusque, stereotypically Spartan, addresses to his troops (1.3.7–9). Some scholars have thought him critical of Clearchus' harshness; others that he is more sympathetic to a character who displays signs of what might now be identified as a combatant's post-traumatic stress disorder.²³ Clearchus' ready brutality prepares the reader for similar behaviour from his successor, Cheirisophus (4.6.1–3).

Proxenus of Boeotia, the guest-friend (*xenos*) who recruited Xenophon to the expedition, fails to connect with his troops, despite his personal excellence and assiduous study of rhetoric (*An.* 2.6.16–20). His encouragement through praise produces positive results only with men of good character, *kaloï kagathoi*; he cannot motivate or secure good behaviour from the mass of troops. Xenophon closes his short assessment of Proxenus with the note that he was thirty years old when he was killed – likely little older than Xenophon himself at the time (2.6.20). When Xenophon effectively takes over Proxenus' role as leader of the Greek contingent among the Cyreans, he demonstrates similar failings.

Xenophon is severely critical of Meno of Thessaly, contrasting his bad character with that of Proxenus (*An.* 2.6.21–9).²⁴ While Proxenus had most influence over the virtuous, Meno leads by appealing to the worst of his men and using 'oath-breaking, lying and deception' in pursuit of his goals of wealth, power, and honour. Meno laughs at the honest and regards them as 'uneducated' (*apaidētōn*, 2.6.26), lacking the sophistication that an elite education might bring. Xenophon suggests that he acquired his leadership role through favouritism, and adds further hints of sexual impropriety in same-sex relationships which fell beyond the accepted bounds and

²² Laforse 2000.

²³ Critical, Roisman 1989; empathetic, Tittle 2004: 326–9.

²⁴ The presence of Meno, Socrates' interlocutor in Plato's *Meno*, and that of Socrates, connect the *Anabasis* to Platonic dialogue: see Nails 2002: 204–5.

suggested uncontrolled appetites (2.6.28).²⁵ Meno had demonstrated his lack of commitment to process and collaborative decision-making when the Greeks were discussing whether to support Cyrus' campaign. He took his contingent across the river to join Cyrus while the other Greeks were still debating what to do, perhaps seeking to secure special personal favour as the first to join the expedition (1.4.17).

These disparate portraits of leadership separate the two halves of the story of the expedition and provide a framework for understanding how the new leaders, including Xenophon himself, perform as the surviving Cyreans attempt to escape to safety, travelling from Babylon over the mountains to the Black Sea coast.

Xenophon opens the *Cyropaedia* with an assessment of Cyrus the Great's own capacity as a leader (*Cyr.* 1.1.3–6), using the subsequent narrative to show those qualities developing. He depicts the young Cyrus pushing against the boundaries as he seeks to move from hunting expeditions contained within the royal park (1.4.5–6), to hunting in wilder country (1.4.14–15), to fighting human enemies encroaching on prime hunting land, and demonstrating his courage and military skill for the first time (1.4.16–24).²⁶ Cyrus' first initiatives are quick responses to opportunities which place him and his companions in unacceptable danger. As his forces grow and the stakes are increased, picking the right moment to pursue enemies or to engage in battle becomes more important. Recognizing such moments is a matter of grasping the *kairos*, a skill Xenophon values highly; Cyrus' supreme ability in this respect sets him apart from the other military leaders Xenophon depicts, including himself.²⁷

Xenophon's most detailed, if perhaps least critical, assessment of a contemporary figure is of the Spartan king Agesilaus. The central section of the *Hellenica* narrates Agesilaus' campaign in Asia Minor, in which Xenophon himself participated, and his later campaign on the Greek mainland. Xenophon also revisits Agesilaus' career in his short obituary, the *Agesilaus*. The *Hellenica* account shares themes with the *Anabasis*: portraits of military leaders at key moments, and the conflict between Spartan and other cultures and values. But the *Agesilaus* provides an idealized portrait of its subject, often described vividly, as

²⁵ Dover 2016: 87. See also Chapter 3, pp. 41–5, on homosociality.

²⁶ Cf. Vidal-Naquet 1968.

²⁷ Atack 2018b; Trédé 1992.

the king's piety and management of an appropriate relationship with the gods are in one scene from his camp at Ephesus:

Anyone would have been encouraged by seeing first Agesilaus and then all the other soldiers when then came back from their exercise wearing garlands, and dedicated the garlands to Artemis. For where men show due honour to the gods, train in the skills of war, and take care to develop their obedience to command (*peitharchian*), is it not reasonable in these circumstances for everything to be full of good hopes?

(*Ages.* 1.27)

This recalls Xenophon's own portrait of sacrifices to Artemis at the estate in Scillous on which he settled after this campaign (*An.* 5.3.7–13; see Chapter 3).

Xenophon reports with approval the many occasions on which leaders sacrifice to discover the will of the gods before taking important actions, especially crossing borders and rivers. The leaders of the Ten Thousand perform sacrifices before setting off on their return journey, to ensure that they do so at the right time (*hōras*, *An.* 3.5.18), and at difficult moments along the way. When they are struggling to find a way to ford the river Centrites, favourable sacrifices confirm the omens that Xenophon has experienced in a dream (4.3.8). Soon afterwards, Xenophon is told of a crossing place by two of the soldiers; he takes care to pour libations to the gods in thanks, and to perform further sacrifices to confirm that it is the right time to cross (4.3.17).

Xenophon's emphasis on the use of sacrifice and divination is not just an expression of piety. Leaders' ability to engage with the divine enables them both to gather information not accessible by other means and also to demonstrate to their followers that they have the support of the gods.²⁸ For Agesilaus and Cyrus, the ability to acquire and use information from the gods demonstrates their royal authority (see Chapter 6). But other leaders too, notably Xenophon himself, use religious practice as a key resource for information gathering and determining when and how to act.

Military training in Sparta, Athens, and Persia

Xenophon's philosophy of self-management, extending to taking care of the development of self and others, is a natural fit for – and may

²⁸ Durnerin 2022.

even have originated in – his experiences on campaign, interpreted through the lens of his Socratic education. Training and discipline are the keys to success. These ideas are voiced by Socrates as Xenophon depicts him discussing preparation for leadership with ambitious young Athenians. When one of his associates considers studying generalship with a visiting expert, Dionysodorus, Socrates approves:²⁹

That's because in the dangers of war the whole city is dependent on the general, and great good or great harm can come from his success or failure. So wouldn't it be right to penalize someone who puts himself up for election without bothering to learn how to do the job? (*Mem.* 3.1.3)

The nature and content of training is important. Socrates insists that tactics, the focus of Dionysodorus' lessons, are only a small part of generalship:

A general must also be able to procure the resources for war and arrange for the provisioning of his troops; he must be inventive, energetic, focused, hardy, and quick-witted; capable of being both benign and brutal, both frank and devious, both watchman and thief, both lavish and grasping, both generous and greedy, equally good at defence and attack – and there are many other qualities, either natural or taught, which are needed by someone who wants to be a successful general. (*Mem.* 3.1.6)

Socrates goes on to consider how one might determine which are the stronger and weaker parts of an army, a dimension crucial to planning deployment on the battlefield.³⁰ This discussion offers a practical instance of the problem of the nature of excellence, central to the Socratic dialogue.

Xenophon returns to specific points in the subsequent conversations. Pericles' son wants to become a politician and general and to make his mark on the city, but lacks experience (*Mem.* 3.5).³¹ After discussing the city's changing situation and the attitudes of its citizens to leaders, Socrates suggests a specific tactical intervention, using youths as light-armed troops to raid the mountainous border with Boeotia (3.5.25–7). This detail might seem like the record of a real conversation, but this location, and style of campaign, fit the time of Xenophon's

²⁹ It is unclear whether this Dionysodorus is the twin sophist of Plato's *Euthydemus*, or simply named to evoke him; see Nails 2002: 136–7.

³⁰ Xenophon reprises this theme at *Cyr.* 1.6.12–15.

³¹ McNamara 2009.

writing (possibly the 360s or 350s) rather than the dramatic date (before 406, when Pericles was one of the generals at Arginusae).

The views which Xenophon gives to Socrates suggest his approval of collectively organized military training. Again, this was a concern of Athens in Xenophon's time, not Socrates'. The Spartan education regime offered one model in which all learning was oriented towards this goal; Xenophon describes these arrangements with approval (*LP* 2.7).

Cavalry

Xenophon's military advice often reflects his interest and experience in the cavalry. He even depicts Socrates, known to have served as a hoplite, giving out advice on the management of horses and their riders to a newly elected cavalry commander (*Mem.* 3.3). Socrates' advice starts from the general principle that the role of the commander is to leave his forces 'in better condition after your tenure' (3.3.2), and concludes with the broadly applicable points that the commander must inspire those he leads with his own excellence (3.3.8–9), and be able to speak to them persuasively (3.3.10). He insists that the commander is responsible for both the riders and their mounts, rather than each soldier's being responsible for his own horses (3.3.3–4). Socrates' advice, though applied to this specific context, is no different from Xenophon's usual framework of good leadership activities.

Xenophon offers further specific advice to the Athenians in the *Hipparchicus*, a short instructional work intended to help a cavalry officer perform well, and which exemplifies his belief in the importance of public service. Here he does cover highly specific and technical ground, while reiterating familiar points; Paul Cartledge notes that Xenophon's interest in the cavalry at the likely composition date may have been intensified by his son's service.³² The work is the clearest statement of Xenophon's views on military leadership. Although he starts by advising that the commander should begin by sacrificing and asking the advice of the gods (*Hipp.* 1.1), he moves quickly to the practical question of recruitment (1.2). In the end, he recommends enlisting foreign riders to keep the cavalry forces up to strength, along

³² Cartledge and Waterfield 1997: 66.

with wealthy resident aliens (9.3–7), a need which might point to the difficulties of Athens in this area in the mid-fourth century.³³

Xenophon prioritizes the care of the horses and the need to ensure adequate nutrition for all, and the logistics this involves on campaign. His suggestions for the organization of hierarchies of command and battlefield formation (*Hipp.* 2.1–9), and for training exercises reinforced by prizes and rewards (1.26), echo the more idealized training plans of Cyrus. In the context of Athens, these structures feed into the agonistic culture of the elite, where leading citizens might compete for rewards in producing the best-trained horsemen under their command, just as they did for choruses. That is not the only similarity drawn with the production of choruses: Xenophon acknowledges (3.1–14) that cavalry commanders were also responsible for contributing teams of riders to processions and festivals (as seen on the Parthenon frieze). He is particularly keen that they should be able to demonstrate skills in galloping and charging in such public displays. As Ben Keim notes, the treatise is oriented towards a culture in which personal honour is highly valued.

Cyrus the Great and the organization of training

Xenophon creates an idealized training regime in his depiction of the older Cyrus working relentlessly to improve his forces, instigating training, setting up prizes to reward skill, and redirecting whole groups to gain new skills to expand the overall capacity and capability of the Persians. Some of these interventions had radical implications for Persian society, as commentators have noted. Xenophon's Persia, like the Greek *polis*, features the close association of military role with class status: the division between the elite 'peers' of the leisure class and the ordinary Persians who must work for a living.³⁴ While the narrative describes Cyrus' reorganization of his forces, it also offers a case study in ideas about equitable distribution among a diverse citizen body, a central concern of Greek political thinking.³⁵

The first reorganization eliminates a key status distinction in the army.³⁶ At the beginning of Cyrus' campaign, the distinction between

³³ Keim 2018.

³⁴ Nadon 2001: 39–40.

³⁵ See Harvey 1965; other accounts include Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 5.3.1131a10–b24; Pl. *Leg.* 6.757b–c; Isoc. *Areopagiticus* 21–2.

³⁶ Gray 2011b: 283–8.

peers and commoners echoes that of Athenian forces, with poorer citizens and non-citizen troops fighting with lighter weaponry and distance weapons such as bows and slingshots, and the wealthier citizen hoplite elite wearing body armour and bearing bladed weapons. Xenophon has already shown how Persian society divides those of citizen status between those who undergo the state education and become a leisure class of ‘peers’, and those whose families cannot afford this and who must work for a living (see pp. 58–9). Cyrus collapses this division in his forces by equipping the commoners with armour and bladed weapons, so that they can participate in hand-to-hand combat (*Cyr.* 2.1.9). His uncle Cyaxares has explained the size of the enemy force approaching the Medians and their allies; Cyrus appears to find it difficult to report the low number of Persian peers on their way to join the camp, and suggests this change as a means of expanding the battlefield capabilities of the combined forces. The move also resembles a policy that Xenophon attributes to the Spartans (*LP* 11.3), of giving all their forces a uniform and shield so that the whole force looks the same, and skill or status distinctions become invisible.³⁷

This remarkable change is analysed through the subsequent narrative and debates.³⁸ By redistributing weaponry, Cyrus has disrupted the status hierarchy in Persian society. The commoners and the ‘peers’ become equal in some respects. Cyrus explains to the peers that their role is as exemplars to those taking up arms for the first time, and stresses that they will display their own excellence by taking responsibility for those they lead (*Cyr.* 2.1.11). In this way, he leaves some room for them to maintain a superior position in the hierarchy as commanders.

Meanwhile, Cyrus emphasizes to the commoners that they differ from the peers only in their need to earn a living, that they are not lesser in body or worse in soul (2.1.14). In taking up weapons for close-range fighting, they will take on the same risks, as well as potential rewards. They will be ‘considered worthy of the same as us’ and provided with an income, or at least the necessities of life, in return for their new role (2.1.14). The assembled commoners all accept the offer and begin their training with their new weapons (2.1.19–20).

Parallel changes in Athenian democracy – the opening up of political office to all citizen classes – were criticized by other fourth-century political theorists, such as Aristotle, whose discussions in his *Politics*

³⁷ Humble 2022: 165–8.

³⁸ Nadon 2001: 61–76; Gray 2011b: 283–5.

cover very similar terrain to Xenophon's.³⁹ Xenophon acknowledges that the lack of leisure time to devote to self-development, the key complaint about poorer citizens, has affected the light-armed troops' ability to train. Cyrus aims to provide them with the time and resources for this. However, Xenophon interleaves his description of Cyrus' arrangements for organizing the new troops, training them, and motivating them to do well (2.1.22–4) with comic episodes which explore the tension created by the change of status of the commoners. First, the ineptitude of some of the commoners in training is exemplified by comic misunderstanding of instructions, as they struggle to understand what is required of them (2.2.6–9). Second, although Cyrus' Persian friend Chrysantas has led the peers in agreeing to this change, a Persian captain, the 'rather austere' and 'most serious' (*spoudaiotaton*) Aglaitadas, objects to the levity of the anecdote and declines to believe that it is true (2.2.11, 16).⁴⁰ He tries to argue that lessons are better learned through weeping than through laughter, and that the joking stories are examples of charlatanry rather than wit.

After this exchange, Chrysantas notes that, as a consequence of the change in troop types, they must re-examine the equitable distribution of rewards and spoils; it would be wrong for rewards to be distributed equally among the expanded forces, when clearly some will contribute more than others. Xenophon nods again to Athens by having Cyrus propose a debate in the camp to decide the issue (2.2.18).⁴¹ While his peers argue that Cyrus' decision should be final, Cyrus insists that the time is right (*kairos*) to discuss the matter openly, and the peers vote for the mass meeting. The two main speakers in the debate are Chrysantas for the peers and Pheraulas for the commoners. The latter, whom Xenophon describes as 'resembling a not ignoble man in body and soul', sums up the transition:

I recognize that we are all now beginning from the same place in our contest for excellence (*aretēs*). I see that we all exercise our bodies with the same nourishment, we are all considered worthy of being in the same company, and that the same goals lie in front of us all. (Cyr. 2.3.8)

He goes on to suggest that skill in fighting with a sword and defending oneself in armed combat is natural (2.3.9–10); with the new training

³⁹ Arist. *Pol.* 4.6.1292b41–93a10, criticizing the volatility of law after the rise of the decree.

⁴⁰ I thank Luuk Huitink for discussion of this passage and its Platonic intertexts.

⁴¹ Nadon 2001: 67–8, noting Aristotle's discussion (*Pol.* 3.9.1280a9–13).

regime, the commoners will quickly awaken latent skills, under the careful instruction of the peers and with a reward system instigated by Cyrus.⁴²

Pheraulas, the virtuous commoner raised to great wealth through Cyrus' favour, appears again at the end of the work. When a Sacian, a warrior from the furthest region of Scythia, wins the horse race, he offers to exchange his horse with an honest man, and meets Pheraulas (*Cyr.* 8.3.25–32). The latter, unfulfilled by life in Cyrus' new regime, exchanges his new wealth and status with the outsider.⁴³

A second change to the Persian forces restores the social hierarchy. Cyrus' time with his mother's family had given him the chance to learn to ride and develop skills in horsemanship, then largely unknown to the Persians, who did not keep horses (1.3.3). He proposes to his Persian peers that they also learn this skill and retrain as cavalry, to improve their capabilities in battle (4.3.3–23). But the change has implications for social status too, which would have been clear to Athenian readers. Now that all the commoners have become hoplites, the Persian elite can distinguish itself again by becoming cavalry, and in Athenian terms moving up in military and class status. Again, it is the Persian peer Chrysantas who expresses the benefits of the transition, in terms of ontological difference: mounted on horseback the Persian elite will become centaurs, or rather something better than a centaur, combining the best qualities of man and beast but capable of being separated (4.3.15–21).⁴⁴ Yet centaurs are semi-divine, and this transformation is suggestive of superiority. It restates the status divide between the elite and the commoners, undermined by Cyrus' retraining of the latter. Cyrus decrees that the elite should never be seen to go by foot, codifying the differentiation, and Xenophon notes this as a practice which continues to this day (*eti kai nun*, 4.3.23).

Spartan training: strengths and weaknesses

At its best, Spartan training delivered an unparalleled military machine. Xenophon's account of Agesilaus' provisions for training in his camps resembles his depiction of Cyrus' plans (*Cyr.* 2.2.6–9, and see above). He describes an ideal scene of careful preparation:

⁴² Gray 2011b: 286; see also Plato's theory of recollection (*Meno*).

⁴³ Henderson 2012.

⁴⁴ Johnson 2005a.

As spring arrived, he gathered his whole army at Ephesus. Since he wanted it to train, he offered prizes for the cavalry companies, for whichever showed the best horsemanship, and for the hoplite companies, for whichever kept their bodies in the best condition. He also offered prizes for the companies of light-armed troops and archers, for whichever were best at the relevant skills. As a result, one could see the gymnasia full of men exercising, the horse-track of horses being trained, and spear-throwers and archers aiming at the target. Indeed he made the whole city in which they were camped worthy of seeing. For the marketplace was full of every kind of weapons and horses for sale, and the coppersmiths and carpenters and workers in iron and leather and painters were all making weapons of war; so that you might have thought that the city was a workshop of war (*polemou ergastērion*). (Agesilaus 1.25–6)

This picture improves on the separate free and commercial marketplaces of Xenophon's Persia (*Cyr.* 1.2.3–4) by transforming commercial activity into preparation for war.

A belief in Sparta's superior capability on the battlefield was central to Athenian Laconophilia.⁴⁵ Xenophon appears to have assimilated his account of Persian training to his experience of Spartan training and the advantage that skill and practice conferred in combat. *The Constitution of the Spartans* asserts both the advantages of training on the field (*LP* 11.6–10) and also the requirement that Spartiates maintained their fitness while at home (12.5), although Xenophon does not go into details of Spartan training there.

The particular advantages that training conferred on the Spartans were resilience in formation and the ability to circle and re-form on the field, an ability Xenophon explores and idealizes in his battle narratives.⁴⁶ However, not all Spartan forces or leaders performed at the ideal level. Xenophon makes a negative exemplar of a campaign led by Mnasippus in 373 (*Hell.* 6.2.4–23).⁴⁷ After the Spartans suspected the Athenians of breaching a new peace treaty, they sent Mnasippus to guard the wealthy and strategically important island city of Corcyra. Mnasippus effectively besieged the *polis*, deploying well-located camps which cut the Corcyreans off from their farms, and preventing ships from reaching the port. However, his men, a mixture of Spartans and mercenaries, supplied themselves from the stores and cellars of wealthy Corcyrean estates, and lived luxuriously. When

⁴⁵ Ollier 1943.

⁴⁶ Konijnendijk 2018: 39–71 on the limits of training and Xenophon's emphasis on its necessity.

⁴⁷ Cawkwell 1979: 309 notes that Diodorus Siculus names other generals, suggesting that Mnasippus was not solely responsible for the campaign (DS 15.45.4, 15.46.2).

Corcyreans attempted to leave the city, Mnasippus whipped them and left them to die. His behaviour was reminiscent of the violence that Clearchus had demonstrated in the treatment of his own troops.⁴⁸ Lulled into a false sense of security by Corcyreans attempting to leave the city, Mnasippus stopped paying his mercenaries, and they left his service. Morale among the remaining Spartans was low, and not improved by Mnasippus beating a captain with a stick. The Corcyreans took advantage of the diminished Spartan strength and attacked his camp. Mnasippus did not have a large enough force to manoeuvre effectively on the battlefield, and was killed as the Spartans were defeated.

Xenophon contrasts Mnasippus with the Athenian general Iphicrates, who was sent out to rescue the Corcyreans. Iphicrates had recruited well for his campaign, equipped his fleet properly (*Hell.* 6.2.14), and trained his men well, making them row rather than rely on sail-power on their voyage around the Peloponnese, and even race each other (6.2.27–8), so that they arrived at full fitness and prepared to fight. En route he easily captured the Syracusan reinforcements sent to help Mnasippus' forces, and on arrival he took control of Corcyra. Xenophon praises both Iphicrates' military skill and the political acumen which led him to take political rivals on campaign with him (6.2.39). The unfortunate Mnasippus, in contrast, conformed to the stereotype of Spartan leadership that Xenophon established in his obituary of Clearchus.

Encountering other peoples

'On every page of the *Anabasis* the contrast between Greek and barbarian is sharply drawn', George Cawkwell noted.⁴⁹ Emily Baragwanath observes that it is 'a sustained reflection on the theme of Greeks in relation to barbarians'.⁵⁰ The Cyreans' encounters with different peoples add an ethnographic focus to the *Anabasis*.⁵¹ Xenophon creates and explores oppositions between Greeks and Greeks from different communities, Persians, and non-Greek others such as the indigenous

⁴⁸ Hornblower 2000.

⁴⁹ Warner and Cawkwell 1972: 9.

⁵⁰ Baragwanath 2022: 131.

⁵¹ Cf. Homer's *Odyssey*; Baragwanath 2022: 134; Lee 2008: 68–74.

peoples the Cyreans meet. Yet he also shows how a unified community can be constructed from diverse elements.

Xenophon sometimes gives differences between Greeks and others a moralizing tone, mapping them on to other oppositions. When Agesilaus campaigns in Persia, he orders that captured enemies (*barbarous*) be put up for sale naked, so that the sight of their soft white flesh would remind the Greek forces that they were fighting an enemy with feminine attributes (*Hell.* 3.4.19), lacking strength from a sedentary lifestyle. In the *Anabasis*, the enforcement of ethnic boundaries in the Greek camp marks a collective anxiety about the cohesion of the group. When one Apollonides disputes Xenophon's plans, his Boeotian accent does not prevent him from being identified as a non-Greek Lydian infiltrator and expelled (3.1.26–30).⁵² But the episode may tell more of the strains of the construction of the community than of the lived experiences of actual individuals with complex intersecting identities at the margins of the Greek world.

The Ten Thousand's experience of the many different peoples they then encounter on their march is conditioned by adverse circumstances and their own aggression and defensiveness. They raid villages and farmland for provisions and plunder (*An.* 5.4.27, 5.5.6), and destroy communities, burning them down (5.2.27). It is hardly surprising that they encounter hostility. Xenophon critiques their behaviour as unjust and impious, arguing that the Greeks' mistreatment of the communities they pass through is counter-productive. The murder of the Cerasuntian ambassadors (5.7.19), for example, means that the Greeks will not be trusted and cannot expect hospitality or diplomacy in return for their wickedness (5.7.26–8). Subsequently, they encounter the Paphlagonians, poised between the Greek and barbarian worlds (6.1.26–8). This time, the Greeks receive the ambassadors correctly, entertaining them at a dinner which ends with displays of dancing; through his description, Xenophon shows the Paphlagonian bewilderment at the Greek dances in armour, and their shock at the stage-fighting and apparent wounding of a dancer. This reversal of perspective contrasts with the earlier depiction of the Mossynoecians as alien, from their obese and tattooed leaders to their taste for sex in public (5.4.30–4); their customs are opposite to those of the

⁵² Huitink and Rood 2019: 90–1; Vlassopoulos 2013: 140–2.

Greeks.⁵³ The dance displays by different Greeks also emphasize the Panhellenic make-up of the Cyreans.⁵⁴

Conclusion

Xenophon's stories of campaigns and battles represent some of his best-known writing. Because they are often shaped as exemplary narratives, they have frustrated more recent historians seeking accurate details of the events. But Xenophon's shaping of events shows how his ideals for both leaders and their communities take shape in a military context, supporting his repeated claim that leadership across home, city, army, and empire is the same activity. By focusing on the details which develop his analysis, he makes his case studies more effective. These contain some of his most powerful and vivid writing, drawing on his own experiences to formidable effect.

⁵³ Compare Herodotus' account of Egyptian customs; see Harrison 2003.

⁵⁴ Dillery 1995: 59.