

THE DANUBIAN LANDS BETWEEN THE BLACK, AEGEAN AND ADRIATIC SEAS

(7TH CENTURY BC – 10TH CENTURY AD)

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL
CONGRESS ON BLACK SEA ANTIQUITIES
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edited by

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The Black Sea area in Xenophon's *Anabasis*

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It is well known that a substantial part of the expedition of the Ten Thousand, narrated by Xenophon in the *Anabasis*, from the moment they approached the sea near Trapezus (4. 7. 21) until they reached Chrysopolis (6. 6. 38), took place along the southern coast of the Black Sea. A very long section of the work (the last chapters of Book 4 and the whole of Books 5 and 6) is devoted precisely to the story of this phase of the adventure (the so-called *parabasis*), which is no less eventful than the previous one, not just for the dangers coming from the barbarian people, but also for the difficult and sometimes stormy relationships between the mercenaries and the Greek cities of the region. Hence, this section of the *Anabasis* is very interesting for the study of the Black Sea region, especially because it concerns an area that is less well known than the others of the region.¹

Obviously, it is not possible to examine in detail all the items of interest that Xenophon's report offers to scholars of the Pontic region. I will focus on some select elements concerning the Greek presence in the region and the relationships with the neighbouring local peoples.²

The mercenaries arrived on the Pontic coast in proximity to Trapezus, and this is therefore the first Greek *polis* with which they make contact and which greets them in a friendly manner (4. 8. 22-23). There is just a little information on Trapezus, defined as a colony of Sinope in the *chora* of the Colchians.³ However, I detect some interesting references in Xenophon's account. The mercenaries, it is said (4. 8. 22-23), are accommodated in the villages of the Colchians, who were driven from their houses to let them in, and in Colchis they conducted raids to provide themselves with food.⁴ Later, however, the inhabitants of Trapezus preferred not to guide them in the lands of their *philoï* (which are clearly the same Colchians), but in the rough territories of the warlike Drilians (probably the valley of Sogutlu), by whom they were harassed (5. 2. 2). The Ten Thousand were therefore forced to fight hard to lay in supplies of food. What can we deduce? First of all, that Trapezus had a quite small *chora*, unable to produce an adequate surplus: the newcomers, in fact, were placed

in the villages of the Colchians and, although the city had opened its market to them, they had to use the usual predatory systems to procure food.⁵ Secondly, the Pontic *polis* appears to have been a real Greek outpost among the barbarians: with some of them it had relations of peaceful co-existence (the Colchians, but also the Mossynoeci: in fact, we know later that a citizen of Trapezus was their *proxenos*: 5. 4. 2),⁶ while there were others (the Drilians) representing, apparently, a constant threat.⁷

The references of Xenophon to the fact that the roads in the region were not easily traversed (5. 1. 13) and to the passage of cargo ships along the coast (5. 1. 11) are a confirmation that Trapezus was a real Greek enclave, one projected mainly to the sea rather than inwards. It is therefore clear that the presence of a large army was a heavy burden for this small outpost, as it could damage the precarious balance in its relationship with the indigenous people and it was therefore necessary to throw off this burden as quickly as possible; as a matter of fact, the Trapezuntines, unable to provide sufficient ships (only two: 5. 11. 15-16), ensured that the roads of their territory were passable.

From Trapezus the mercenaries arrived at Cerasus (5. 3. 2), the other Sinopean colony located in the territory of the Colchians and clearly not far distant considering the three days' journey necessary to reach it (a fact, it has been noted, that is difficult to reconcile with the usual location of the *polis* at modern Giresun, which is more than 140 km from Trapezus).⁸ There is even less information on Cerasus, since Xenophon, after having described the *exetasis* of soldiers, stops his narrative and prefers to start the well-known *excursus* on his stay in Scillus (5. 3. 7-13). However, it is possible to draw some conclusions from a flashback that occurs later in a speech to the soldiers (5. 7. 13-15). We know, among other things, that even at that time the source of supply for the mercenaries (or at least some of them) was predatory activities (exercised,

⁵ On the opening of the *agora* to foreigners, see Descat 1995, 106.

⁶ The statement seems really significant because it contradicts the opinion, according to which, until the 4th century, proxeny was limited only to Greek communities. See also 5. 6. 11 (Hecatonymus from Sinope is *proxenos* of Corila, dynast of the Paphlagonians).

⁷ On the Drilians, see the information provided by Xenophon in 5. 2. 3-20, in particular on their metropolis.

⁸ In this regard, see Boucher 1918, 259, who placed Cerasus at Vafki Keber, stating that 'les Grecs lui ont conservé le nom de Cérason, qu'il ne faut pas confondre avec celui de la ville de Kiresun qui est placée à plus de 75 kilomètres à l'ouest'. More recently, see also Manfredi 1986, 231; and Cohen 1999, 388. Among the authors who place Cerasus at Giresun are Doonan 2004, 71; and Erciyas 2007, 1196-97.

¹ In this regard, see Barat, 2012, 217-18.

² For an overview on the local people of the southern Black Sea Southern, see Tsetschladze 2007, 180-81.

³ On Trapezus, see Avram, Hind and Tsetschladze 2004, 964 (where is suggested a convincing link between the tradition on an Arkadian foundation recurring in Pausanias 8. 27. 6, and the stay of the Cyreans, among whom were numerous Arkadians). For a less convincing attempt to give historical value to this tradition, see Huxley 1960, 20-21.

⁴ On the role that marauding activity had for the Ten Thousand, see Tripodi 2012, who underlines that this activity intensified considerably in the Pontic part of the expedition.

it is worth noting, against barbarians who were *philoí* of Cerasus). Thus, it is probable that Cerasus, too, was a settlement with a small *chora*, and this can be confirmed by the fact that the Ten Thousand, when they left Cerasus after ten days, arrived soon at the borders of the land of the Mossynoeci, with whom they adopted a system of exploiting the internal divisions and rivalries between one tribe and another. This was probably the same system that the Greek cities of the region used for survival.

More interesting are the indications obtained on the third Sinopean colony, Cotyora (near modern Ordu), which Xenophon asserts is located in the *chora* of the Tibarenians (5. 5. 3).⁹ It seems pretty clear that this *polis*, too, had a limited agricultural hinterland: in fact, access to the city market (which was clearly insufficient for the needs of such a large group) was denied the mercenaries, so they had to raid the lands not only of the Cotyorites, but also those of the neighbouring Paphlagonians (this practice, it should be pointed out, did not stop even after the city market had finally been made available, causing conflicts with the local people: 6. 1. 1). Equally clear is the situation of dependence between the *polis* and Sinope (which was in the vanguard of a little ‘empire’), since the Cotyorites asked for its help against the newcomers, and we also know that they were subject to a tribute (*dasmós*), like the Cerasuntians and Trapezuntines (5. 5. 10), and that they accepted the authority of a Sinopean *harmost* who seems to have been based permanently in the town (5. 5. 19-20).¹⁰

In short, thanks to the testimony of Xenophon, we can understand that all of these centres were ‘dependent *poleis*’, quite different from traditional settlements with an agricultural vocation (which helps to explain their lack of hosting capacity), and probably functional to the trading interests of the motherland. This can be suggested, in addition to the references to the cargo ships along the coast of Trapezus, by the reference (in 5. 6. 19) to the presence of Sinopean *emporoi* in Cotyora – and we know well that Sinopean trade with the eastern Black Sea is widely documented by the archaeological evidence, especially from a subsequent period.¹¹

After 45 days the mercenaries were able to put an end to their long and turbulent stop at Cotyora and have a smoother journey by sea thanks to the ships procured through contacts with the *emporoi* of Heraclea. (It is worth remembering that John Hind clearly underlined the role of traders as unofficial go-betweens in the Black Sea region.)¹² We learn

⁹ Among the authors who place Cotyora at modern Ordu are Manfredi 1986, 235; and Erciyas 2007, 1196. On the Tibarenians, see the sources mentioned by Counillon 204, 103. On the relations with the Cyreans, who, only after the sacrifices gave a negative outcome, decided not to attack, accepting their gifts, see 5. 5. 2-3.

¹⁰ For the definition of ‘empire of Sinope’, see Austin and Vidal Naquet 1982, 315. Rough is the statement by Lee (2007, 37), according to which the payment of a tribute would be attested just for Cotyora.

¹¹ In this regard, see Tsetsckhladze 2009, 234.

¹² Hind 1995. On the agreement between Sinope and Heraclea, which is already attested during the adventure of the Cyreans and which represents a recurring element in the history of this region, see Barat 2012, 225-28.

nothing of another Greek city located along this stretch of coast, Amisos:¹³ the next step is in fact Sinope, which is reached after only one day’s sailing (6. 1. 14). Because of the very short duration of the stay there, no information is supplied on this important *polis* either:¹⁴ the mercenaries stopped for five days (and probably were forced to do so) not in the town, but in the harbour of Armene (located, as we learn from Strabo 12. 3. 10, at a distance of 50 stadia).¹⁵ However, we are able to understand that this was a richer and more receptive framework, as is evident from the fact that the Sinopeans sent a generous gift, 3000 measures of barley meal and 1500 amphorae of wine (6. 1. 15).¹⁶ As for relations with the natives, it seems pretty evident that the interest of the Sinopeans was not to alter the balance in their relationships with their neighbours, the powerful Paphlagonians, since they strongly discouraged the mercenaries from going through Paphlagonian territory (of which, as has been noted, they give a description probably dramatised and distorted¹⁷); moreover, they are clearly alarmed by the prospect, dangled in a threatening manner by Xenophon, that the Paphlagonians, with the help of the Cyreans, might realise their ambitions on the possessions of the city (5. 5. 23).

After two days sailing, they reached Heraclea, but here too they were kept far from the city, moored to the Acherusian Chersonese (6. 2. 2). On this *polis*, yet again, the information provided is sparse, because the strong disagreements that erupted amongst the mercenaries (who finally split up into three groups) absorb almost the entirety of Xenophon’s report.¹⁸ The importance of the Megarian colony, which in this period was probably one of the most powerful and prosperous cities of the Pontic region, is still evident: in fact, we know about the huge number of ships that it is able to handle (5. 6. 10)¹⁹ and, in this case too, the rich welcoming gifts are sent to the newcomers – 3000 measures of barley meal,²⁰ 2000 amphorae of wine,

For a significant testimony in this regard see, for example. *I.Sinope* 1, with Barat 2012, 227-28.

¹³ It should be underlined that Amisos is never mentioned in the *Anabasis*, not even in the description that Hecatomysus makes with regard to the itinerary between Cotyora and Sinope (5. 6. 7-10). However, this does not seem to be due to the supposed philopertian stance of this *polis* (for this opinion, see Descat 1990, 544). With regard to the Persian presence on the southern coast of the Black Sea, see Tuplin 2004, 177-80, who defines it as ‘elusive’.

¹⁴ Thus, the opinion by Ferrarese (1973, 12) seems unfounded. Trying to deny the historical authenticity of Pericles’ expedition in Pontus, attested by Plutarch *Pericles*, 20. 1-2, he advances on purpose Xenophon’s silence on the Periclean *epoikia* in Sinope: actually, the author does not say much about this *polis*, so this opinion lacks value. On the Periclean expedition, see Gallo 2013, 159-60.

¹⁵ With regard to Armene’s harbour, which, apparently, was quite small before the Hellenistic period, see Doonan 2004, 72.

¹⁶ On this amount of cereals, see Lee 2007, 38 (according to which they would have been sufficient to feed an army of 8000 for more than a month).

¹⁷ Manfredi 1986, 237.

¹⁸ On the stop at Heraclea and on the related tensions, see Burstein 1974, 40.

¹⁹ On the availability of a remarkable navy by Heraclea, see also Aristotle *Politics* 7, 1327b, 11-16; Memnon *FGH* III B 434 F 8,5.

²⁰ For a comparable amount of cereals from Heraclea, see *IG* II² 363. 1. 10 (Athenian decree in honour of the tyrant Dionysus of 324/23 BC). Other significant provisions (flour, wine and animals to sacrifice) would be provided later on by the Heracleotes: see 6. 5. 1.

20 head of oxen and 100 sheep – which could suggest a very different productive framework from that of the small Sinopean colonies. The *polis*, indeed, had a quite extensive *chora*, at least along the coast: this is suggested by the fact that, when the group of Xenophon reached the boundary between Thrace and the Heracleian *chora*, it was not far from the site of Calpe (halfway between Byzantium and Heraclea), made clear from a speech by Xenophon to the soldiers in which he emphasises the long road that now separates them from Heraclea (6. 3. 16).²¹

The last stage, which is worth focusing on, is Calpe, where the three groups met. This place, which was not yet the *emporion* about which some late itineraries speak, is described in detail by Xenophon (6. 4. 1-6), who sees it as a particularly suitable site for the project he already had in mind of a colonial foundation in the Black Sea.²²

I shall not dwell on this well-known story, which has been discussed several times and has many items of interest for the study of Greek colonisation (for example, I think about the environmental characteristics – the harbour, the availability of water and wood, the fertility of land – which catch Xenophon's attention and are typical of a colonial settlement).²³ I will just point out one particular: in addition to the attractions of the site, from the report of Xenophon the reasons why it was free from colonial enterprises are clear enough: the sojourn of the mercenaries in this charming place was, in fact, not very pleasant on account of the difficulties in food supply caused by the hostility of the neighbouring Thracian Bithynians, who, since the arrival of the first group of Greeks on the site, were not friendly and hospitable (in fact, they are often called simply *oi polemioi* by Xenophon), and kept attacking them also after their departure. Only when they realised that they had to deal with a large army of highly trained soldiers, did they change their attitude and resign themselves to a possible *philia* (6. 6. 4).²⁴

In short, from this brief survey it is clear enough that Xenophon's account is of great interest for understanding the phenomenon of the Greek presence on the southern coast of the Black Sea. The term 'wild West' is perfectly appropriate for this region:²⁵ unlike other areas of the Pontus (I think particularly of the northern and western coasts), at the end of the 5th century, the Greek presence here was not conspicuous. There were just a few centres, only two of which had an adequate territorial and productive framework. All of them had established with neighbours and reluctant barbarians (whose divisions they exploited) a balance that was continually subject to

fissures. It is clear that it was in the interest of all the cities where the mercenaries stopped to get rid of their bulky visitors as rapidly as possible.

If the Black Sea for the Greeks had long become *euxeinos*, welcoming, this did not yet apply to the region in which the troubled trip back of the Cyreans took place.

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²¹ On the boundaries of Heraclea's *chora*, see Avram, Hind and Tsetskhladze 2004, 955; Counillon 2004, 132-33.

²² On Xenophon's plan, which is explained in 5. 6. 15-16, see Waterfield 2006, 165-66. On the presence of an *emporion* in Calpe in the following periods, see the sources mentioned by Hind 1995, 115.

²³ In this regard, see, for example, Malkin 1987, 102-03. With regard to the exactitude of the description provided by Xenophon, see Manfredi 1986, 243-44.

²⁴ In this regard, see Højte 2008, 158.

²⁵ For this definition, but especially with regard to the whole Black Sea region, see Waterfield 2006, 162.

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