

CIROPÉDIA DE XENOFONTE. TRAD. DE LUCIA SANO. SÃO PAULO: EDITORA FÓSFORO, 2021, 400P. ISBN: 978-65-89733-24-9.

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Over the last twenty years, several studies by researchers of the classical Greek period analyzing the historical figure of Xenophon (420 B.C. - 355 B.C.) have been published, as well as translations of some of his works into different modern languages (Gray, 2010; 2011; Jenofonte, 2017; Tuplin, 2004; Xenophon, 2021).

The great interest in studies taking the Athenian author as their documentary basis did not come about by chance, nor was it part of the dilettantism of modern researchers interested in the ancient world.

On the contrary, among the classical authors, Xenophon has a vast body of work that is in direct dialogue with contemporary society, both because of the themes he deals with and because of the concepts brought up in each line of his writing.

Public administration and political instability, themes cherished by the author, have always aroused passionate discussions as to which is the best system of government. Themes that were as pertinent in the past as they are in our society today.

The interest in Xenophon thus fits perfectly with the growing questioning that the contemporary democratic system is undergoing on all continents. Especially in this last decade, when riots have taken the streets in large cities and autocratic governors have dictated the rules.

Xenophon trajectory allowed him to have an accurate look at the details of political survival in a context of social conflict. From the very beginning

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of his journey, we can verify this: he learned from Socrates, took part in Cyrus' expedition (as described in *Anabasis*), led Ten Thousand Greeks with skillful military strategy, served King Agesilaus, fought alongside the Spartans at the Battle of Coronae (394 BC), acting as a mercenary, which led to his exile from Athens and the confiscation of his property.

From this life experience, power is one of the topics that currently attracts the most public interest in his work. This interest is not only found in academia, or in research centers, but also in political parties, governments, or even in members of the armed forces, who see in him a model to be followed. Managers, military personnel, politicians and the like seek in him a source of inspiration.

Much of what we know today about Xenophon derives from his own writings: the *Constitution of the Spartans*, *Memorables*, *Economics*, *The Banquet*, *Apology of Socrates*, and *Anabasis*. Works endowed with high literary quality, written by an Athenian educated in philosophy and rhetoric, but who at the same time possessed the austerity of a pro-Laconian *hippeis*. The mixture between historical interpretation and the account of his own experiences permeates his writing.

The first complete biography of Xenophon dates from antiquity, in the third century before Christ, when *Diogenes Laertius* compiled a collection of accounts called *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. What strikes us is that, while Xenophon is better known today as a historian and a soldier, at the time he was treated as a philosopher (Gray, 2010; 2011; Tuplin, 2004).

We note that it is difficult to framing Xenophon's literary style. The writer moved between several genres throughout his life: biography, history, historical fiction, technical treatise, travel guide, and philosophical dialogue.

Of all his works, the *Cyropaedia* (from the Greek *Κύρου παιδεία*; a *paidea* or Education of Cyrus) is the one that more broadly covers part of the themes listed above, starting from the theme of power (Brennan in *Anabasis*, 2021).

Recently translated into Portuguese by the classical scholar Lucia Sano, the work presents a thorough manual on how to conquer and maintain political power.

Written between -370 B.C. and -360 B.C., the work details important passages in the life of Cyrus the Great (c. -600 B.C./-530 B.C.), the emperor of Persia who founded the Achaemenid dynasty.

As also happened when he dealt with his master in the Apology of Socrates, his life experience inspires and shapes his accounts, conferring a tone of truthfulness and foundation to the reported facts.

Even so, despite presenting a plethora of historical data, the work itself cannot be characterized as an "unofficial" biography of an ancient ruler, perhaps not even as a biography. This is because the historical facts and characters therein are modified all the time, adjusting to the didactic designs of the author, who wanted above all to demonstrate examples of good governance.

Therefore, throughout the work, Cyrus assumes a role as a model to be followed by those who wish to be statesmen, governors or generals.

And this is because Xenophon strongly believed in the power of example to positively (or negatively) affect human behavior. Even when, in the *Cyropaedia*, he comments on the moral downfall of the peoples of Asia, and this belief gains strength:

all the inhabitants of Asia have been turned to wickedness and wrong-doing. For, whatever the character of the rulers is, such also that of the people under them for the most part becomes. In this respect they are now even more unprincipled than before (*Cyropaedia* 8.8.5)

This style of writing fits into the "princes' mirror," i.e., a guide for rulers. A style that would continue to be employed throughout the centuries as in Machiavelli's masterpiece, *The Prince*. In France, for example, Xenophon had notorious admirers as Fénelon (*Telemachus*, 1699) and Montaigne (*Essays*, 16th century).

The new Portuguese translation is distributed in a single volume organized by Fósforo publishing company. Over its 394 pages, the book is divided into an Introduction; Notes on the Edition and Translation of the Original Greek; the eight books; and Notes on the Introduction and Suggestions for Further Reading.

This edition includes an introduction that brings together the most recent studies on Xenophon, as well as a detailed historical contextualization of the work produced in that time and an accurate assessment of its reception in the contemporary world.

To facilitate the reading of the work, the English scholar Walter Miller (Miller in Xenophon, 1914), proposed the following division for the eight books of the *Cyropaedia*, which I believe will be of great value to the Brazilian reader:

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- I. The boyhood of Cyrus
- II. The reorganization of the army
- III. The conquest of Armenia and Scythia
- IV. The capture of the first and second camps of Assyrians
- V. Gobryas and Gadatas
- VI. On the eve of the great battle.
- VII. The great battle.
- VIII. The organization of the empire.

The various notes prepared by the translator serve as a valuable tool for those interested in a more detailed understanding of the mythology, history, religion, and society of the time. All this without losing the cadence of the reading.

It is worth noting that for a long time Xenophon's writing was the most widely used by beginners in the study of ancient Greek. This in no way reflects a simplicity of writing, or a lack of literary quality.

By mixing personal accounts and literary talent, the narrative gains vivacity. Content based on the reflections of a historical character who experienced what his own account, without losing perspective and critical reflection.

The translation has thus kept Xenophon's elegant, descriptive and paused language, keeping the relatively 'simple' expressiveness of the text and allowing a pleasant reading of the account.

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