
For many years Xenophon’s works, especially the Anabasis, have mainly been used to introduce grammar-school pupils into reading Greek. Luckily there has been a revival of interest in his opera during the last decade or so, reflected in the publication of various translations, studies, and conferences discussing the world of Xenophon. It was only natural that also some commentaries on (parts of) the Anabasis would be published, as the present commentary written by Lendle (henceforth: L). L was well qualified for this task as he published already on ancient poliorcetics and Greek historiography ¹).

Describing the nature of this commentary L states that it “wendet ... sich nicht nur, vielleicht nicht einmal in erster Linie, an die Gelehrten und Spezialisten, sondern vielmehr an alle diejenigen, die sich der «Anabasis» aus unbefangenem Interesse für ihren Inhalt zuwenden” (p. 5). Therefore, grammatical explanations and textcritical questions play only a minor part (p. 1). L wants to achieve his goal by different methods. First, he presents numerous maps and plans of the route of the mercenaries hired by Cyrus the Younger (p. 1, 2), frequently reacting on Manfredi ²). In the second place he focuses on the ethnographical and historical questions posed by the Anabasis (p. 2). Thirdly, attention is paid to the military aspects of the story, both in the text and in its context (p. 3-4).

L’s introduction is very summary: in my opinion too much so. It disregards some more or less important questions. Although there has been some discussion concerning the date and composition of the Anabasis and Xenophon’s sources (cf., inter alia, Stronk ³) 9-10), L ignores this, not only in the introduction but also at 5.3.5 sqq., where some comment would have been in place, and briefly qualifies Xenophon as a “Tagebuchschreiber” (p. 3 and passim) without indicating other (possible) sources he may have used. Also in the text L frequently refers to Xenophon’s diary: we never learn where and how he kept it, let alone L’s arguments for the existence of a diary (as a matter of fact: Breitenbach ⁴), 1649-1650, convincingly argued that Xenophon actually kept one).

L does not mention which edition(s) he used as the basis for his commentary. The extant manuscripts of the Anabasis may be divided into two main groups, called the meliores and the deteriores
(though fragments on papyrus show that many readings of the so-called deteriores are to be preferred above those of the so-called meliores). Some editions, like Marchant’s OCT\(^5\), largely rely on the readings of the so-called meliores, others, like Hude’s Teubner\(^6\), mainly follow the readings of the so-called deteriores. At places where the readings of the two classes of manuscripts considerably differ, L does pay attention to both readings, making the commentary profitable for his readers. Nevertheless, I think L should have provided more information on this point beforehand. His remarks on p. 345, about the counting of number of pages of text, suggest that he mainly used the Oxford text.

Perhaps L considered such information superfluous, supposing the historically interested reader not being in need of such special knowledge. However, pursuing this line of thought, I think readers who are not keen on detailed knowledge will not consult a commentary, either. Or does L believe that the interested reader has sufficient general background knowledge about Xenophon, the Persian Empire etc. to fully appreciate the details provided in the Anabasis? I believe here lies a fundamental problem that L has not solved in a satisfactory way: the precise definition of his group of readers. As it is, all groups of readers are bereaved of useful, interesting, or even essential information.

As an illustration I may refer to L’s treatment of 1.1.1 (p. 7). L states: “In äußerster Kürze informiert Xenophon seine Leser über die Hintergründe des Kyroszuges.” Next, L summarises in eight lines the reign of Darius II and his succession to the throne by killing his brother, the fact that this brother had, in his turn, killed the legitimate heir of Artaxerxes I, Xerxes II (who ruled only shortly), and Darius’ marriage to his stepsister Parysatis. I think that L ought to have provided more information, not only for the benefit of the interested reader, but probably for some scholars, too. After all, the history of the Achaemenids is not necessarily daily routine to all classical historians or philologists\(^7\).

Another fundamental problem that L has not solved is how to comment on a text without presenting it in a standard text in Greek or in translation. Though L separates different passages of a paragraph from each other by an asterisk, it is sometimes rather tiresome to find the piece of commentary one is looking for. A basic text, completely or partly quoted in the commentary, would have greatly facilitated the use of the book. Moreover, it would have prevented L from too much paraphrasing Xenophon’s text,