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## Xenophon's *Cyrus*, Alexander φιλόκυρος. How carefully did Alexander the Great study the *Cyropaedia*?

It is well known that for Alexander the Great the Persian dynast Cyrus (559–530 BC) was an object of imitation; there was a tradition in antiquity that Alexander was “fond of Cyrus” (φιλόκυρος; *philokyros*). The purpose of this paper is to examine what kind of imitation it actually was, and how serious Alexander's following of the Persian ruler was: did the famous *Cyropaedia* (*The Education of Cyrus*), a Greek tale of the Achaemenid king, play an important role as a source in Alexander's calculations and actions or in his notions of how his own kingdom would look? It is argued that in this case the influence of Xenophon's major work must have been intense, but that one should not seek it everywhere when examining Alexander's expedition, or to understand such influence too literally, though there were a few cases where Alexander seems to have purposefully and publicly emphasised his close connection to Cyrus.

**Key words:** Alexander the Great, Cyrus, the *Cyropaedia*, imitation, acculturation

As every Alexander the Great reader knows well, the problem of the Macedonian king's “motivation and ideas” in his *Blitzkrieg* against the Achaemenid empire<sup>2</sup>, is among the most unclear and difficult of issues. To date, much ink has been poured on this problem, but without any hope for a satisfactory solution. The flood of speculations occasionally results in the desperate conviction that it may be better to abandon such a theme entirely as – some historians and archaeologists suggest – essentially unanswerable, unless one intends to settle the matter based on mere

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<sup>2</sup> The term in the inverted commas is borrowed from the title of Bodil Due's contribution *Alexander's Inspiration and Ideas* in the highly valuable collection of articles *Alexander the Great. Reality and Myth* (Bodil 1993: 53–60); see also the fragments about “a genuine philhellene, a lover of Greek culture” and the king's “orientalism” in: (Worthington 2014: 185ff., cf. 214ff.).

guess-work. However, this lack of clear guidance increases our interest, rather than to diminish it. Accordingly, “what were the real motives of the king?” is one of the most frequently asked questions in Alexander studies. Should we accept the explanations which ancient sources offer in this respect, or ought we dismiss this data as essentially unreliable and unbelievable? Of course, to a great degree the two positions represent two extremes: whatever attempt is made, one should be careful to either avoid both the Scylla of naivety in accepting at face value all that is found in the ancient literary tradition, or to adopt the Charybdis of hypercriticism by rejecting this tradition as such. Perhaps the situation is not as bad as it appears at first glance and, ultimately, there are some valuable hints that we have at our disposal.

From among the many enigmas concerning Alexander's underlying “philosophy” in embarking on the expedition and conquest of the vast Achaemenid territory, two principle problems usually arise: the first pertains to the purposes of the invasion itself; the second is connected with Alexander's own ideas and visions of the proper exercise of royal authority, of the notion of his kingship, and lastly – of the maintaining of the empire won by the spear. In point of fact, the first problem does not concern us so much in this paper as does the second dilemma, which we plan to deal with here, paying a special attention to Alexander's unusual reverence or admiration (literally: “love”) for the founder of the Achaemenid empire – Cyrus the Great (559–530<sup>3</sup>) (cf. Kuhrt 2003: 648; 2007: 46–103; Liverani 2014: 568–570; Knauth, Nadjmabadi 1975). It was so striking for Alexander's contemporaries and posterity that the young warrior was remembered, so the geographer Strabo tells us, as *philocyros*<sup>4</sup> (Strabo; cf. Schachermeyr 1973: 315; Dye 1981: 68; Briant 2002: 852; Brosius 2003: 174; Olbrycht 2004: 72ff.; 2011: 357; Fowler, Hekster 2005: 22; Heckel 2007: 274; Romm 2010: 380–387; Burliga 2012: 39).

As regards the first problem briefly, then, suffice it to say that Alexander believed in what was already officially claimed by Philip – namely that the war against Darius III was a kind of vengeance, although postponed for 150 years<sup>5</sup> (cf. Gehrke 2009: 26). Was this only propaganda? Of course, judged by the modern, sociological (objective, in theory) standards by which we evaluate the events, it was a perfect example of “rhetoric” and propaganda. But if we ask whether it

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all dates refer to BC.

<sup>4</sup> In Strabo's *Geography* 11. 11. 4 we can read: “Be this as it may, they say that Alexander founded eight cities in Bactriana and Sogdiana, and that he raised certain cities to the ground, among which was Carriatae in Bactriana, in which Callisthenes was seized and imprisoned, and Maracanda and Cyra in Sogdiana, Cyra being the last city founded by Cyrus and being situated on the Iaxartes River, which was the boundary of the Persian empire; and that although this settlement was fond of Cyrus, he razed it to the ground because of its frequent revolts” (Φασί δ' οὖν ὀκτώ πόλεις τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ἔν τε τῇ Βακτριανῇ καὶ τῇ Σογδιανῇ κτίσαι, τινὰς δὲ κατασκάψαι, ὧν Καριάτας μὲν τῆς ακτριανῆς, ἐν ἣ Καλλισθένης συνελήφθη καὶ παρεδόθη φυλακῇ, Μαρακάνδα δὲ τῆς Σογδιανῆς καὶ τὰ Κύρα, ἔσχατον δὲ τὸ Κύρου κτίσμα ἐπὶ τῷ Ἰαξάρτῃ ποταμῷ κείμενον, ὅπερ ἦν ὄριον τῆς Περσῶν ἀρχῆς· κατασκάψαι δὲ τὸ κτίσμα τοῦτο καίπερ ὄντα φιλόκυρον διὰ τὰς πυκνάς ἀποστάσεις); note, however, that in this rendering Jones erroneously takes *philokyron* as referring to *ktisma*.

<sup>5</sup> That's, of course, for the Persian acts of sacrilege.

was a pretext only, a pretty excuse, the answer seems to be less obvious<sup>6</sup>. Recent studies rightly pay attention to the fact that we must take ancient mentions of vengeance as seriously as possible: albeit frequently concealed by rhetoric, vengeance can be (regrettably) a very rational reason for engaging in quarrels, upheavals and wars. What Heinz Bellen called “Rachgedanke”, deserves thus to be treated with due attention (Bellen 1974: 43–67; also Gehrke 1987: 121–149; cf. Lendon 2000: 1–30; Seibert 1998: 5–58<sup>7</sup>). Here is an example: Arrian of Nicomedia records that after Gaugamela, when entering Susa, the famous Greek monument to Harmodius and Aristogeiton (“the Tyrannicides”), taken away by Xerxes in 480–479, had been sent to Athens by Alexander (Arrian personally saw it residing in Athens: *Anab.* 3. 16. 8 and 7. 19. 2, on “bronze statues” χαλκαῖ εἰκόνες). How could one guess today if it was only an act of propaganda on Alexander’s part<sup>8</sup>? Even if we grant that Alexander always acted pragmatically<sup>9</sup>, the “pragmatic” explanation does not exclude the other, let us say, “idealistic” (but, let us observe, “idealistic” from our point of view<sup>10</sup>) motivation, so deeply rooted in Alexander’s way of thinking about and understanding his own endeavours<sup>11</sup>. Here another observation of

<sup>6</sup> Although, it must be reminded that for the pragmatically oriented Polybius (following, as it seems, both the tradition of Thucydides as his line of thought when dealing with *prophasis* – a pretext), Philip’s explanation of the invasion Persia presented a typical example of the use a pretext (Polybius 1957: 306–308; cf. Austin 1993: 197–223). If it was really only a pretext, it was given to Philip by the Greeks themselves, with such powerful argument as the Isocratean “letter” to Philippus was (*or.* 5, delivered about 346; see especially the paragraphs 90ff., 120). But in his notes to Polybius’s books Walbank is right in claiming that “neither he [Philip – B.B.] nor Alexander is likely to have been directly influenced by it [that’s, by Isocrates’s propaganda – B.B.]” – undoubtedly, the crucial word here is: “directly”.

<sup>7</sup> Who minimizes “Rache” as a real motif.

<sup>8</sup> The same is true in the case of sending back to Athens three hundred Persian panoplies (Arrian, *Anab.* 1. 16. 7), to be dedicated to Athena, in the Acropolis.

<sup>9</sup> The “realists”, like the Italian scholar Roberto Andreotti once in an excellent paper (Andreotti 1957: 120–166), prefer to explain the Macedonian king’s motives by economic necessities and pure pragmatics: it held that the young ruler must have continued the anti-Persian “crusade” because of the needs of the Philip’s army which situation (it is worth observing for Polish historians) reminded – curiously – the modern case of the predatory Swedish army of both Gustavi (Adolphus and Carolus), involved first in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) and then in the onslaught on the Polish kingdom – the so called “Swedish deluge” (1655–1660).

<sup>10</sup> What seems to be on first look an exposition of idealistic sentiments may be equally treated as a part of a broader “realistic” attitude.

<sup>11</sup> The case of the burning of Persepolis is meaningful here: the ancients knew that Alexander himself argued that it was the act of vengeance for the arson of the Greek temples (Arrian, *Anab.* 3. 18. 1; see especially *Anab.* 2. 14 – a famous letter of Alexander sent to the Great King Darius III). This may be true but it does not contradict other news that the king did it in a drunken frenzy, incited by the courtesan Thais (Diodorus, 17. 72, relying here on Clitarchus of Alexandria, FGtH 137). On a more general level, one cannot simply reject the possibility that in Alexander’s logic there was no inconsistency to see himself as an avenger of the Greeks and (at the same time) to show – on so many occasions (one may add) – a complete distrust towards the Greeks (both in those in Greece as the Greek troops in his army). I recall this event as it is quite similar to the case of his admiring Cyrus: Alexander’s high esteem for Xenophon’s hero was not – again, in the Macedonian conqueror’s

how power “operates” may be useful: it is difficult to separate “pure” authority from its manifestations, as expressed, for instance, in ideology. The latter is also an indirect, but influential way of wielding control<sup>12</sup>. Finally, wars are fought in the defence (or propagation and realization) of some values in which those who wage them believe: depending on the adopted perspective, one may interpret the proclamation of such values as a kind of manipulation, yet most often for their adherents they represent something “real” which is worth fighting for<sup>13</sup>. By any calculation, this is most probably the case for Alexander.

Now we may continue to the second problem but – when one is dealing with a similar approach toward Alexander’s “symbolic” acts – strictly in relation to the first – viz. Alexander’s exercising authority during the march of triumph to Iran, as it is the same field where the “realities” of everyday life and “ideology” meet.

It was once rightly stated that Alexander did not possess a clear vision of how his conquest should look. If he had some idea at the very beginning of the war, little or nothing of it is left to us. Professor Badian seems to be near to the truth when he eloquently puts it thus: “We must not think of this boy [Alexander – B.B.] of less than twenty in terms of the great leader he turned out to be” (Badian 1962: 81). A similar sentiment appears in another of his thoughtful papers: “When Alexander invaded Asia, he almost certainly had no idea how far he would go or what the end would be” (Badian 1965: 166). This is true insofar as nobody can provide for what will result from their actions, especially so in an enterprise such as that of Alexander. This being so, it remains nonetheless to assert something trivial,

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logic – at variance with the presentation of himself as a Persian conqueror. Maria Brosius (Brosius 2003: 174, see note 3, supra) sees here Alexander’s “ambiguity towards the Persians”, but I seriously doubt if Alexander was conscious that his attitude has anything common with “ambiguity” (cf. also Bloedow 2003: 261–274).

<sup>12</sup> The two chapters in *Brill’s Companion to Alexander the Great*, by Brosius (Brosius 2003) and by I. Worthington (*Alexander, Philip, and the Macedonian Background*; Worthington 2003: 69–98) raise the same question of why the war against Persia at all. The question is the more acute the more becomes evident that Philip imitated the functioning of the Persian royal court (Kienast 1971: 251ff., followed by Badian and Olbrycht; cf. Müller 2011: 105–133; Badian 1996: 16 (*contra*: Lane Fox 2007: 267ff.; cf. also Cohen 2010: 89). A few factors are given here, of which the most important seems to be economical: Alexander must have to do something with the army left by Philip (cf. Hammond, Walbank 1988: 66–72). So, as a war was the necessary way to gain spoils and money, the proverbially rich, opulent Persia became a natural object for the aggression. One may argue that the economic factors came the first, but it would be unwise to downplay the importance of “ideology” to that following the expedition. And again, one may add that this anti-Persian ideology did not conflict with the fact that among several factors it was also the Persian ideas of royalty that influenced the Macedonian dynasts.

<sup>13</sup> I am convinced that this is an underlying problem in Xenophon’s *The Education of Cyrus*: his Cyrus is the representative of an ideal ruler, yet occasionally his actions and undertakings are put into doubt, if not implicitly criticized, by the author. First and foremost, however, an underlying problem of *Cyropaedia* is whether ruling others and managing an empire (which always presupposes the use of authority and power, if not coercion and compulsion) can be just at all (on the margin, I believe that a distant echo of the careful lecture of the Xenophonic novel may be found later in Cicero’s philosophical writings, considering the problem of the Roman rule).

namely that on his “D-day” at Dardanelles the brave conqueror was already an educated young man (which does not mean that he was a philosopher), a student, *inter alia*, of the famous Aristotle. As a result of the education he had received, he must have been familiar with certain ideas and been equipped with some notions of how his kingdom would take form. Accordingly, given that for some scholars the real problem was whether it is possible to “see” these ideas (including Alexander’s studies of the *Cyropaedia*) in action, or in particular decision-making. But this question is badly stated and my answer is “no”, if one seeks to detect tracks of any direct imitation, although during Alexander’s reign there were exceptions to this rule. Ideas always influence us, in this or that way, as they did the ancients, but this working is rather rarely straightforwardly visible. On the same note, however, the answer might be “yes” granted that one tries to find influences in a different manner to the way in which “hard” facts are detected. When dealing with literature and literary influences, one does better to talk of “inspiration” which is of course a vague, imprecise and loose term but which may be the best option that one can adopt under the circumstances.

Let us look briefly at Alexander’s education in his youth and the supposed place the *Cyropaedia* occupied in it. There is (as usual) little agreement among experts in this respect. Some modern authorities assume Alexander’s formative years under Philip’s guidance left no trace in his later behaviour and manner; to some extent this is true but to push this argument too far is mistaken as such an expectation means to go, as I have said, in a misleading direction. There can be little doubt that Alexander was, judged by modern standards, an idealist which is most clear at the outset of the expedition, in such episodes as the sacrifice at the grave of Protesilaus in Elaeus and the visit in Troy; in the latter case he took a few “dedicated arms” that remembered the Trojan war (Arrian, *Anab.* 1. 11. 7). As the Bithynian philosopher reports (*Anab.* 1. 12. 1), “some say” that Alexander crowned the tomb of Achilles, while Hephaestion, others say, placed a wreath on Patroclus’s “tomb”.

The vital dilemma still remains of how to evaluate such (and like) information? Brunt, in Appendix IV to his Loeb edition of the *Anabasis Alexandrou*, leaves no doubt that the modern reader must treat such and similar episodes as seriously as possible. “In general – he concludes – the Greek world did not distinguish legend from history” (Hölscher 2009: 60–61). The more difficult matter is with Alexander’s education (cf. Hammond 1989: 271; cf. Bosworth 1988a: 20–21; Cartledge 2004: 51–52) – difficult since the “inspiration” derived from books is not easy to recognize in practice and real life. Should we interpret Alexander’s reverence for Cyrus in the same way?

The Macedonian court of Philip was “cosmopolitan”, we sometimes read. Greek intellectuals visited it and contact with the Macedonian elite must have been intense. There is a story that the young king read the three tragedians; Euripides was his preferred author (Arrian, *Anab.* 7. 16. 6). Above all, Alexander was raised on Homer, with his ideals of courage and bravery. As every Alexander-



historian knows, the king carried the Homeric Iliad (Strabo, Geogr. 13. 1. 27; Plutarch, Alex. 8. 2 and 26. 1–2; cf. also Athenaeus, 12. 537d; Hamilton 1969: 20–21; Pliny, NH 7. 108 and Dio Chrysostomus, or. 2; cf. Lane Fox 1978: 43–67); he knew Xenophon's Anabasis (Arrian, Anab. 2. 7. 8; see below). Badian argues that this literary “course” was the result of the efforts undertaken by the most famous disciple of Plato, coming to Mieza in about 343 (Badian 1982: 39), although it remains true that, as Professor Badian claims, “what Aristotle taught Alexander, we do not know and probably never shall”. Nevertheless, this learned Harvard authority speculates that “they must have read classics, like Herodotus and Xenophon”, if we are to follow Lane Fox's (not entirely happy) comparison, that the famous teacher became “Alexander's Vizier” (Fox 1978: 58), but this statement certainly remains an exaggeration.

So the intriguing question appears to be more acute: what about Xenophon's peculiar place in this Macedonian “school curriculum” at Mieza? Professor Badian's conviction that Xenophon must have been consulted was based, probably, on the remarkable passage from Arrian's Anabasis, 2. 7. 8–9, narrating (in *oratio obliqua*) Alexander's speech before the battle of Issus (Bosworth 1980a: 8, 206<sup>14</sup>; Olbrycht 2004: 72). Here the “new Achilles” (cf. Stewart 1993: 78ff.) is reported to have confessed what follows:

λέγεται δὲ καὶ Ξενοφώντος καὶ τῶν ἅμα Ξενοφώντι μυρίων ἐς μνήμην ἐλθεῖν, ὡς οὐδὲν τι οὔτε κατὰ πλῆθος οὔτε κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ἀξίωσιν σφίσις ἐπεικότες, οὐδὲ ἰπέων αὐτοῖς παρόντων Θεσσαλῶν, οὐδὲ Βοιωτῶν ἢ Πελοποννησίων, οὐδὲ Μακεδόνων ἢ Θρακῶν, οὐδὲ ὅση ἄλλη σφίσις ἵππος ξυντέτακται, οὐδὲ τοξοτῶν ἢ σφενδονητῶν, ὅτι μὴ Κρητῶν ἢ Ῥοδίων ὀλίγων, καὶ τούτων ἐν τῷ κινδύνῳ ὑπὸ Ξενοφώντος ὑποσχεδιασθέντων, οἳ δὲ βασιλέα τε ξὺν πάσῃ τῇ δυνάμει πρὸς Βαβυλῶνι αὐτῇ ἐτρέψαντο καὶ ἔθνη ὅσα κατιόντων ἐς τὸν Εὐξείνιον πόντον καθ' ὁδὸν σφίσις ἐπεγένετο νικῶντες ἐπήλθον (“He is also said to have recalled that Xenophon and his Ten Thousand, though they were not to be compared to themselves in number and other qualities, with no cavalry, Thessalian, Boeotian, Peloponnesian, Macedonian or Thracian, nor such other horse as they now had in their own ranks, no archers or slingers, save a few Cretans and Rhodians, and those hastily scraped together by Xenophon in the crisis. Yet the Ten Thousand routed the Great King with his whole power near Babylon itself, and victoriously attacked the various other tribes which barred their way as they descended to the Black Sea” (Flavius Arrianus, 1967))<sup>15</sup>.

I quote this passage in full as it was recently suggested that we should be aware that this is a speech *written* by Arrian, the man who himself was an imitator of Xenophon, so, accordingly, one ought to be exceptionally careful as to avoid any confusion and ultimately not to take the writer's personal sentiments as belonging

<sup>14</sup> He is not quite convinced that the arguments are not forgery.

<sup>15</sup> Brunt, claiming for “Vulgate” as source, argues for Alexander's knowledge of Xenophon (Brunt 1976: 147); but cf.: (Due 1993: 54).

to the historical Alexander<sup>16</sup>. This is a salutary approach towards the Alexander tradition which is late, not wholly clear and (unfortunately) unequivocal<sup>17</sup>. Yet, on the other hand there is something misdirected in the assumption that to hold the view of Alexander's lecture of the *Cyropaedia*, if not clearly attested in the source material is an unjustified claim and argue therefore to the contrary: that the silence of the ancient sources does not permit for such a conjecture that that he *really* read it. Rather than arguing along such white and black lines, another procedure would be preferable. So, Badian is right in my view in supposing that Xenophon's "mirror of princes" was naturally, so to speak, an adequate lecture for the young prince as the subject of study in Mieza: it was, as he observes (Badian 1982: 48, n. 42) "a required reading"<sup>18</sup>. Perhaps, one may add, the ancient writers took some things for granted and did not need to mention everything. There is additional evidence that the Cynic philosopher Onesicritus of Astypalaea (*FGrH* 134) wrote a treatise on the deeds of Alexander<sup>19</sup>. The work was modelled on the Xenophontic *Cyropaedia* which, in itself, may be an indirect indication that Alexander was under the allure of Xenophon's *opus magnum*, and that there was a common knowledge of this fact during the expedition. I am also sure that we cannot easily dismiss the late information (fourth century AD), though exaggerated as it stands, that without the acquaintance with Xenophon's works, Alexander could not have been called "the Great" – ὁ γοῦν μέγας Ἀλέξανδρος οὐκ ἂν ἐγένετο μέγας, εἰ μὴ Ξενοφῶν. This curious reference has been preserved by Eunapius in his *Vitae sophistarum* 1. 1. 2 (Eunapius 1956): even if one cannot explore its origins, its long maintenance remains meaningful, as it proves the duration of the firmly grounded tradition in which there was a strict connection of Alexander with Xenophon's works. Similarly, in the above mentioned "speech" Plutarch (*Fort. & virt. Alex.* 1. 12 = *Mor.* 343a) repeats another interesting piece of information, according to which Alexander had the noble character of the Persian ruler, "the high spirit of Cyrus" (*phronima tou Kyrou*). Again, both passages indicate a well-grounded tradition, so one must respond to the question: was it a later invention or ought we look for

<sup>16</sup> Cf. McGroarty (McGroarty 2006: 105–124). A similar example is reminded by P. Briant (Briant 2010: 73): he thinks the sentiments expressed in Arrian, *Anab.* 6. 27. 4, are Arrian's own reflection on the methods Cyrus the Great exercised his rule over the satraps, as found in *Cyr.* 1. 1–6. Briant is right to state that it was Arrian's interpretation of Alexander's preventive steps in his management of the satrapies but it is difficult to imagine that such an interpretation was the Bithynian writer's plausible invention; on the contrary, it is very reasonable to argue that the original idea went to Alexander himself, maybe after his realizing in the Xenophontic novel how Cyrus proceeded; see F.W. Walbank (Walbank 2003: 33–34).

<sup>17</sup> As J. Davidson stressed out in his notorious pamphlet *Bonkers about Boys* (Davidson 2001), formally a review of *Alexander the Great in fact and fiction* (Bosworth, Baynham 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Let us not forget that in antiquity the *Cyropaedia* was a rich source of information about the Achaemenid Persia. It still is, although opinions nowadays vary how "free" was Xenophon in composing the narrative; cf. S.W. Hirsch and A. Kuhrt (Hirsch 1985: 61–96; Kuhrt 2003: 648).

<sup>19</sup> Diogenes Laertius, 6. 84; cf. L. Pearson (Pearson 1960: 87–90), also see the new commentary by M. Whitby (Whitby 2014).

its beginning in the times of Alexander himself? The latter possibility seems to be more probable.

Now, we may pass to the, perhaps most spectacular, instance which points to Alexander's identification with the Persian dynast. The testimony which, this time, is certainly true, is by the same a perfect case that is, however, not easy to judge if one tries to maintain a sharp divide between "ideology" and "realism" in Alexander's motivation. The case in question is Alexander's concern for the restoration of Cyrus's devastated tomb at Pasargadae (Arrian, *Anab.* 6. 29. 4–11)<sup>20</sup>, based on the reliable account of Aristobulus who was ordered by the king himself to restore the ruined monument<sup>21</sup>. Despite the above doubts and caveats, the narration shows one thing; it may indicate Alexander's increasing sense of "spiritual" proximity with the deceased monarch. This may serve, to some extent, as further proof of Alexander's previous interest in Cyrus, which we might assume began earlier, as the words ascribed to Callisthenes the historian may prove (Arrian, *Anab.* 4. 11. 9)<sup>22</sup>, who criticized the king for introducing his divine cult and reminded him – not without a cause – of the deplorable fate of Cyrus. Remarkably, the Persian "was the first of men to receive obeisance" but whose end was cruel. Regarding Cyrus the Great, the Pasargadae episode may prove the view advanced by M. Olbrycht who, relying on Curtius Rufus's moralizing passage (6. 5. 24–32), thinks that there was a profound (and abrupt) change in the attitude and politics Alexander showed toward the Iranians<sup>23</sup>. It took place in Partiene in 330 (Bosworth 2012: 57). From then, a new conception of empire, adopting new, Oriental, ceremonial rites (including *proskynesis*), had begun to be realized: Alexander had begun to create his own monarchy, the "kingdom of Asia" (cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 31. 1; Arrian, *Anab.* 2. 14. 8; cf. Fredricksmeyer 2000: 137). Supposedly it was then when the importance of the figure of Cyrus the Great may have been observed. Its culmination constitutes a well-known episode in Arrian, narrated from the Stoic perspective. It may be possible that this was a period when Alexander became a true "lover of reading" (Plutarch, *Alex.* 8. 2: *philanagnostes*), this time about the art of government.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Brosius's, *Alexander and the Persians* (Brosius 2003: 174–175). I think she is right in arguing that the Alexander's seizing of Babylon might have recalled, to some extent, that of Cyrus (in 539) as described in the Nabonidus Chronicle. Whether Alexander was inspired by Xenophon's description in the *Cyropaedia*, 8. 3. 1–8. 4. 36, remains to be explored.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. A.B. Bosworth and P.A. Stadter (Bosworth 1988b: 46–55; Stadter 1980: 86). The passage may be a proof against McGroarty's efforts to look always for "hard evidence" (McGroarty 2006: 105ff.); yet if we reverse the question, we may ask generally: where was Alexander's knowledge of Cyrus taken from? I believe this would be a rhetorical question. Additionally, Alexander might have had at disposal another treatise on the Persian ruler: *Cyrus or On Monarchy* by the Cynic philosopher Anthistenes (a disciple of Socrates); cf. D.L. Gera (Gera 1993: 8).

<sup>22</sup> In the same way Arrian summarizes his account by asserting (*Anab.* 7. 29. 1) that Alexander "was led on to adopt barbarian practices involving too much pretension".

<sup>23</sup> This is the "Vulgate" tradition, different from the version delivered by Arrian; cf.: (Olbrycht 2004: 26) and a fundamental paper by A.B. Bosworth, *Alexander and the Iranians* (Bosworth 1980b: 1–21), also E. Badian's *Alexander in Iran* (Badian 1985: 445ff.).



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In sum, in the above I have tried to show that despite the lack of any “hard” indications that Alexander was led by Xenophon’s writings, the king’s frequent reliance on Xenophon may be safely assumed as certain. Such “imitation” cannot be, nonetheless, taken at face value as proof of the Macedonian ruler’s high idealism or a mark of his “romantic” nature, especially if it would lead to a false (idealized and by the same distorted) vision of a man walking with his head in the clouds, a mythomaniac imitating not only historical personalities but pursuing the shadows of Heracles and playing the rival of Achilles and Dionysus. Being neither the only literary pattern in Alexander’s “classical” education under Aristotle in Mieza, nor merely an example used by the royal Macedonian staff’s “propaganda”, the *Cyropedia* with its highly idealized portrayal of Cyrus should be understood in its proper terms: it was perhaps the most important lecture to Alexander during his march into history, useful at times, yet by necessity a work whose “reading” undoubtedly had its limits. It must have had such limits, as is the fate of every literary work. In his actions and their realization Alexander was always a pragmatist and ruthless realist (as too was Xenophon’s Cyrus, even if only seen through the Xenophontic lenses: e.g. *Cyr.* 3. 1. 11; 8. 7. 6; cf. Xenophon 1869: 86; Breitenbach 1966: cols. 1738ff.; Due 1989; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2011<sup>24</sup>) which encompasses the possibility that in such a proceeding he remained under the profound allure of the Xenophontic vision not only as to how an *iustum imperium* (“just empire”<sup>25</sup>) should look, but also as to the proper demeanour of a just autocrat. That Alexander ultimately failed to be an ideal ruler is understandable too: he was only a man, as the Stoic Arrian perceptively states (*Anab.* 4. 9. 6: *anthropon ge onta*).

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<sup>24</sup> She assumes Alexander’s knowledge of the work, as was in the case of Scipio Africanus and Augustus Caesar.

<sup>25</sup> According Cicero’s famous characterization of what kind of literature the *Cyropaedia* is it was called by him *effigies iusti imperii* (*Epist. ad Q. fr.* 1. 1. 23); cf.: (Stoneman 1992: 15; Schulte 2001; Gray 2011).

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