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XENOPHON'S PARASANGS

TIM ROOD
*St Hugh's College, Oxford**

Abstract: This paper analyses one aspect of Xenophon's representation of space, focusing on the famous stages-and-parasangs formula employed by Xenophon in the *Anabasis*. It starts by discussing the meaning of his terms, and then explores patterns of repetition and variation in his account of the march, split into three sections (the marches upcountry, to the sea and along the coast). Rather than explaining Xenophon's usage in terms of sources, it suggests that variations in the marching formula elaborate the successive stages of the Greeks' encounter with the spaces of the Achaemenid Empire.

> From there Cyrus progresses two stages, ten parasangs, to the river Psarus, which was three plethra in breadth. From there he progresses one stage, five parasangs, to the river Pyramus, which was a stade in breadth. From there he progresses two stages, 15 parasangs, to Issi, the last city of Cilicia, settled on the sea, large and prosperous. There they remained three days.
>
> (Xenophon, *Anabasis*)

> I have done my best with the orthography of this place, though it is not important, consisting of one house, and that only a farsakh from Maragha. The farsakh (Xenophon's parasang) will be of interest to us now. It has been 'stabilized' at four miles, but in common parlance varies from three to seven.
>
> (Robert Byron, Tasr Kand, 17 October 1933)[1]

* * *

Xenophon's parasangs have not been of much interest to most readers of the *Anabasis* – no matter whether they have read it in the Penguin translation of Rex Warner (who explains that he has 'got rid of the "parasang", so familiar to beginners in Greek, and turned it, rather inaccurately, into miles') or progressed through the Greek text at school.[2] Parasangs have even inspired a certain hostility: historians moan about the 'too recurrent parasang', while the editor of one of the standard 19th-century school editions asked 'whether, in its absolute lack of interest, a parallel could be found for the above extract [1.4.1] in the writings of any other historian, ancient or modern'. Hence the suggestion that teachers could 'revive interest in classical Greek' by 'pass[ing] over those stages and parasangs' and teaching the 'more exciting parts of the *Anabasis*'.[3]

The hostility that Xenophon's parasangs have aroused is just one reason why they are of interest. They are also worth studying in their own right, as a unit of measurement. Determining their length is vital to all attempts to fix the routes taken upcountry by Cyrus and by the Ten Thousand in their retreat. Are they fixed or variable? And if fixed, did Xenophon view their

* timothy.rood@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk. I am most grateful to Christopher Tuplin, Stephanie West and the referees for their comments. This paper was first written in 2001; I have added further references to modern scholarship, but the interesting discussion of the parasang in Purves (2010) 169–78 appeared too late to be taken into account.

[1] Quotations: Xen. *An.* 1.4.1; Byron (1981) 63. All references from Xenophon are to the *Anabasis* unless otherwise stated.

[2] Warner (1972) 49.

[3] Recurrent: Grundy (1926) 423. Lack of interest: Pretor (1880) 19 (though he was put in mind of some sections of the Old Testament). Reviving interest: Stronk (1995) 304. *Cf.* Havell (1910) 6 on how Xenophon deserves better than to be 'forgotten after a few months' familiarity with "that blessed word" parasang'; and the complaints of Byl (1980) about the inclusion of 'parasang' in a word list for beginners.

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'stabilization' with Robert Byron's scepticism? Even on as basic an issue as this, there has been much disagreement, and all because Xenophon fails to explain what he means by a parasang. That failure is itself of interest, especially as it raises questions about Xenophon's relationship with earlier writers who had used parasangs, and above all with Herodotus. And there remains a more fundamental question: why use parasangs at all, rather than, say, the Greek stade?

Parasangs can also, it has often been claimed, help us to understand both how and why Xenophon wrote the *Anabasis*. The wealth of detail about stages and parasangs Xenophon supplies has encouraged speculation that he kept a diary during the expedition. Or should we rather think in terms of his recycling information found in earlier authors? Ctesias is known to have given an account of 'the number of stages, days, and parasangs from Ephesus to Bactria and India' (*FGH* 688 F 33), and it has been suggested that Ctesias, or some similar written source, was behind all those parasangs. If Xenophon did record the distances himself, there is still the question how he calculated the parasangs during the different parts of the journey. And whatever the origin of the parasangs, why did he keep the detailed framework of stages and parasangs in his final version? A practical purpose has been suggested: perhaps all those distances were meant somehow to guide future invaders of Persia.[4] Or is it that earlier readers have failed to appreciate the aesthetics of Xenophon's monotony?

Parasangs are also of interest for the variations in the way Xenophon uses them in the *Anabasis*. At times, the way Xenophon describes marches by stages and parasangs can indeed seem repetitive. But he is capable of variation, and analysis of both the monotony and the variety of his parasangs will reveal much about his encounter with the great spaces of the Achaemenid Empire.

The aim of this paper is to analyse Xenophon's detailed description of his march and show how his stages and parasangs contribute to the story he is telling. At stake will be Xenophon's presentation and conception of the vast spaces of Asia that he and his comrades traversed. I will analyse the march in three stages: first, the march upcountry from Sardis to Cunaxa; then the march to the sea; and finally the march along the Black Sea coast. The advantage of a sequential reading like this is that it can show how Xenophon's account at each stage gains from the way it contrasts with, or resumes, earlier techniques. At each stage, I will explore not just those stages and parasangs, but also the vocabulary used for the marching itself. But first, what are those stages and parasangs?

I. Stages and parasangs

'Stages' (σταθμοί), in Greek as in English, are stations on the road where travellers rest and horses are changed, and also the distances travelled between staging-posts. For the Greeks, such stations were one of the hallmarks of the Persian Empire (*cf.* Hdt. 5.52), and so 'stages' tended to be used only in Eastern contexts, to indicate an ordinary day's march, a distance that would be exceeded only when speed, or glory, was essential (as when Arrian, historian of Alexander's *Anabasis*, says that Ptolemy, on whose history he was doubtless drawing, 'traversed in four days ten stages', 3.29.7).[5] Xenophon, however, always uses stages to denote a single day's march.[6] So

[4] Cousin (1905) xxxix; Luccioni (1948) 39, n.60.

[5] *Cf.* Diod. 19.80.2; Jos. *AJ* 16.283; in a non-eastern context, 'the soldier Xenophon notes' (Burn (1977) 94) how Agesilaus 'covered in one day two days' march for an army' (*Hell.* 5.4.49). 'Stages' was the title used for the works published by Alexander's bematists (surveyors) such as Baeton and Amyntas (*FGH* 119, 122); this suggests that their works would have included day-by-day measurements of distances along important roads. Only longer measurements, however, are attested in the ancient citations of these works by Strabo and Pliny. Strabo mentions these works only for their use by Eratosthenes, and perhaps it was Eratosthenes who synthesized the more detailed itineraries of the bematists. But even Alexander's bematists may not have been so strict. The shorter *Stathmi Parthici* of Isidorus of Charax (*FGH* 781) includes measurements between places by *schoeni*, but not day-by-day measurements.

[6] This is clear from many passages, for example 3.4.13, 3.4.16, 4.6.4 ('seven stages at a rate of five parasangs a day'), 4.8.1, 4.8.8 (first three stages, then three days); also, the eight stages at 5.5.1 are eight days at Diod. 14.30.7.

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when stages have epithets such as 'hard' (4.5.3) or 'deserted' (1.5.1, 1.5.5, 2.4.27, 2.4.28, 4.5.2) applied to them, those epithets describe the terrain through which a day's march led, not the type of billet it led to. Only once, however, is a word suggesting distance applied to stages (2.2.12, a proposal that the Greeks march 'the longest possible stages'). It is parasangs that express how long they march.

How long is a parasang? At three places in the *Anabasis*, summaries of the number of parasangs covered by the army are offered, with a calculation in stades at a rate of 30 stades to the parasang (2.2.6, 5.5.4, 7.8.26). But these summaries are generally regarded as interpolations. And even if they are not, Xenophon's failure to define parasangs at their first appearance would still be odd. That is what Herodotus does with parasangs (2.6.3), what modern travellers like Sir Robert Ker Porter and Robert Byron do with farsakhs (Porter (1821–1822) 1.255; Byron (1981) 63, quoted above) and what Xenophon himself does with Persian units of capacity and money (1.5.6).

Xenophon's failure to explain parasangs could be explained by his expectation that his readers would be familiar with Herodotus (and in particular with Herodotus' account of the Royal Road from Sardis to Susa).[7] Such an explanation raises the question of the sort of intertextual knowledge presupposed by Xenophon's text. With regard to parasangs, we can at least observe that Herodotus' view of the length of a parasang was disputed. Strabo says that people have made the parasang 30, 40 or 60 stades (11.11.5); a later source records Posidonius as saying that some made it even more than 60 stades (Edelstein and Kidd (1972–1999) F 203); and Agathias, writing in the sixth century AD, notes that Herodotus and Xenophon make the parasang 30 stades, but adds that the Iberians, Persians and Lazi make it 21 (2.21.7–8).[8] These are admittedly much later writers. But Herodotus' strange insistence in the second passage where he uses parasangs ('if a parasang is equal to 30 stades (which it is)', 5.53) suggests that that statement was already disputed in his own time. So even if Xenophon did presuppose knowledge of Herodotus, the failure to explain parasangs would still be odd. And that failure would be all the more odd if his parasangs are (as has often been thought) unstable. It is not that the parasang could not be stabilized: its use in Persian Imperial administration, and Herodotus' own experience of the Persian Empire, suggest that it could (Hdt. 6.42). But many have noted that transferring to Xenophon the Herodotean idea of a fixed parasang seems to yield distances which are (in Edward Gibbon's phrase) 'often larger than either a soldier or a geographer will allow' ((1994) 1.923, n.47). One attractive way to get round the geographical problems posed by the fixed parasang is to suppose that Xenophon's parasangs were a measure of the distance covered in a certain time (one hour) – and so varied with changes in terrain.[9]

[7] 5.52, a passage Lendle (1995) 5 calls 'ein der Sache angemessenes Vorbild für die Grundanlage der "Anabasis"'; though note Tuplin (1999) 341–42, 355 on Xenophon's failure to relate Cyrus' route to the Royal Road or to note that it was in any way abnormal.

[8] Agathias evidently took the interpolated summaries as authentic; so too the fifth- or sixth-century AD metrological table of Julian of Ascalon (Geiger (1992) 39–40, 43), which is also the source for the Posidonius fragment, which is not without problems (*cf.* Edelstein and Kidd (1972–1999) 2.729–31, with speculation that some of the larger measurements result from confusion with the *schoenus*).

[9] This was argued by, for example, Mitford (1808–1818) 3.136, n.10 (on the analogy of the system used 'as now in many parts of Europe'); Chesney (1850) 2.207–08; Layard (1853) 59–60; more recently, Rory Stewart (who walked across Iran and Afghanistan in 2001–2002) uses the 'farsang' (another form of the parasang's modern equivalent) of the distance covered in a day ((2004) 77, 119). Chesney estimated the length of a parasang as 2.608 geographic miles between Sardis and Thapsacus, 1.98 between Thapsacus and Cunaxa, and even less on the retreat (perhaps only one mile in the snows of Armenia, 2.230); generally, Xenophon's parasang is thought rather shorter than the modern farsakh, and shorter too than Herodotus' 30 stades (though the regional variability of the Greek stade makes working from that figure problematic).

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If we do take Xenophon's parasangs as variable, this raises still more questions about the sort of knowledge he presupposes. We do find earlier historians stating distances in terms of the time a journey takes, and sometimes using conventional figures for the lengths of a day's journey; or else using conventional figures to calculate distances (Hdt. 4.85–86, 101.2–3; Thuc. 2.97.1–2, with Gomme *ad loc.*, 6.1.2). But the Greeks did not have a regular, and fairly small, unit such as the parasang to offer a detailed breakdown of a journey, and they measured time not by hours, but in terms of mealtimes, the time when the market was full or the passage of the sun. It may be more plausible after all to assume that Xenophon was working with Herodotus' parasang unit: Christopher Tuplin has powerfully argued that the unstable local measure is more likely to derive from a fixed centralized unit, and scholars have also raised the possibility of distance markers along Persian roads.[10]

The bafflement caused by Xenophon's parasangs could have been avoided if he had used stades. This was scarcely unthinkable. Herodotus was happy to use stades in his accounts of the sites of the Persian Empire and in his Eastern narratives. To judge from Eratosthenes' citations, as reported by Strabo, Alexander's bematists, the authors of *Stathmi*, used stades rather than parasangs in their geographical coverage of the Persian Empire. And Xenophon himself used stades exclusively after the Greeks' arrival at the sea (see below), and already earlier for presenting (or implying) the words or thoughts of Greeks, for small measurements and also for a few larger measurements where consistency would have dictated parasangs.[11]

Why, then, did Xenophon use parasangs at all? Like some of those stades, some uses of parasangs reflect the point of view of speakers within the text (for example, 4.5.10, some Armenian women speaking to an interpreter) or else Xenophon's reliance on local sources for distances that he did not cover himself (the lengths of a ditch and of the Median Wall, the peripheries of the ruined cities Larisa and Mespila, 1.7.15, 2.4.12, 3.4.7, 3.4.11). And even for the distances of the march upcountry Xenophon may have relied on Cyrus' officers. But while 'etiquette might render it necessary' to use parasangs 'in a journal kept in the camp of the Persians',[12] Xenophon could easily have translated those figures into stades when writing his final account. But it is not surprising that he did not. The use by a Greek author of a Persian word in a Persian context is easy to parallel. One of Athenaeus' speakers noted that 'even in the ancient poets and historians, those who wrote the purest Greek, one may find Persian words adopted because of their common use in the spoken language, such as "parasangs", "astandai", "angari", and "schoenus"' (3.121f–122a). Later grammarians report that Euripides used 'parasang' in his *Scyrii* and Sophocles in his *Andromache* and *Poimenes* – all plays with an Eastern setting.[13] And some later geographers and historians who wrote about the East followed Xenophon's path and used parasangs (for example, Patrocles, governor and explorer of lands around the Caspian under the Seleucids, *FGH* 712 F 6 = Strabo 11.11.5). Xenophon's use of the parasang can only properly be explained, however, after a fuller investigation of the different sections of his account.

[10] The Greeks had learnt from the Babylonians the habit of splitting up the day into 12 parts (Hdt. 2.109.3), so that 'the length of an hour varied according to the latitude and the season', but 'the sense of "hour" is only attested in the second half of the fourth century BC' (Bickerman (1980) 15). Later in antiquity, we find explanations of the Egyptian measure *schoenus* as the distance that one team would tow a boat on the Nile (see Lloyd (1975–1988) 2.43–44) and the claim that the Lazi called parasangs 'rests' (ἀνάπαυλαι) because it was the distance covered by porters between rests (Agathias 2.21.8); Williams (1996) 285 takes Xenophon's parasang as the distance covered between rests. Fixed: Tuplin (1997) 404–09 (a full and important discussion, including references to possible milestones).

[11] Small measurements (fewer than 30 stades): used for some short journeys (3.3.11, 4.5.19, 4.5.22), for the breadths of rivers (1.4.1, 1.4.11, 5.6.9) and for distances between points (1.4.4, 1.8.17, 2.4.13, 3.4.3, 4.3.1, 4.4.7, 4.6.21). Greek point of view: for example, 3.1.2, 3.2.34, 4.3.1, 4.6.11. Larger measurements: 3.4.37 (march of 60 stades) and for the distance of the Greeks from the enemy (1.10.4, 3.4.34, 4.6.6, contrast parasangs at 2.4.10).

[12] Rennell (1800) 332, arguing that Xenophon translated distances given to him by Clearchus in stades.

[13] The grammarians say that the tragedians used the word in the sense of 'messenger'; Pearson (1917) 2.161

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II. The march upcountry

To describe the march from Sardis, where he joined Cyrus, to the battlefield Xenophon uses the formula found in the passage quoted at the start of this paper (measurements in stages and parasangs with the intransitive historic present ἐξελαύνει, 'progresses') 24 times, in each case with Cyrus (explicitly or implicitly) as subject.[14] Such variety as Xenophon's account has comes from his recounting incidents that happen during the march (hunting in the desert) or at stopping points (the trial of Orontas), and from geographical and mythical information (Marsyas' skin at Celaenae). But the pull of the basic marching formula is so strong that, even after some quite considerable digressions, Xenophon fails to mark Cyrus as subject of the verb 'progresses' (for example, 1.4.6, 1.5.5, 1.7.1).

The monotony of this portion of the *Anabasis* is unparalleled in earlier epic or historical narratives such as Odysseus' account of his travels at the Phaeacian court, Herodotus' telling of Xerxes' invasion of Greece or Thucydides' description of the Athenian retreat from Syracuse. While these narratives do repeat some phrases (for example, 'from there we sailed forward distressed in our hearts' at *Od.* 9.62, 9.105, 9.565, 10.77, 10.133) and pay some attention to distances or time, they do not keep on using the same words time and time again.[15] Nor are there parallels in the accounts of great expeditions in the East found in Xenophon's own *Cyropaedia*, in the Alexander historians or in Diodorus' reworkings of the fictionalized history of Ctesias and of the story of the Ten Thousand.[16] But Xenophon's monotony is matched in geographical authors. Writers of the type of coastal description known as the *periplus* move along a coast naming places, peoples and rivers, introducing successive names with phrases such as 'and after' or 'and from', and using equally repetitive formulae for the distances between locations.[17]

What is the point of this type of monotonous writing? It can be loosely described as iconic. It is not that the textual space traversed by the reader is proportional to the space traversed by characters. But there is some sort of relation between textual and narrative space. The successive steps of the geographical account match the successive steps of the journey. As readers progress through the early, unvarying stages of Cyrus' march, they are in a sense travellers and they may still share J.B. Bury's feeling that Xenophon's account has the 'charm of actuality' (Bury and Meiggs (1956) 518). And some readers who have not appreciated that charm have at least felt the sense of actuality.[18]

(note on Soph. fr. 520) is sceptical (though it is still intriguing that there is a Persian envoy called Parasanges in one recension of the *Alexander Romance* (Ps.-Callisth. a.2.15)). And, as one of my referees notes, a root meaning of 'indicator' has sometimes been posited for parasang. Note that *Andromache* has been emended to *Andromeda*, another play with an Eastern setting (Nauck[1], Lloyd-Jones) or taken as a mistaken citation of a character for the play (the *Poimenes*: Welcker, Nauck[2], Pearson). For foreign vocabulary used in foreign contexts, *cf.* also ὀροσάγγαι at Soph. frs 183, 634; Hall (1989) 120–21; confusion with this word may explain the grammarian's note on the parasang.

[14] I read, with Hude, ἐξελαύνει at 1.2.13; Marchant surprisingly prints the uncompounded form ἐλαύνει, even though the regular ἐξελαύνει is attested in some manuscripts.

[15] The Catalogue of Ships in *Il.* 2 is perhaps the best parallel for monotonous repetition, but it is not strictly a voyage narrative, but a summary of multiple voyages; the blend between fixed elements and variety in Homeric catalogues (on which see Beye (1964); Edwards (1980)) would be closer to Xenophon's marching formula if I took account of the geographical details on the successive places of arrival, but my concern here is with the marching formula itself.

[16] *Cf.* Stadter (1991) 473–80; Due (1989) 42–52 on the handling of time and space in the *Cyropaedia.* Parasangs are used once in the narrative and three times in speeches (2.4.21, 3.3.28, 4.2.20, 6.3.10), in each case of a separation distance.

[17] A few examples will suffice: *cf.*, for example, μετὰ δέ ('and after') at Hecat. *FGH* 1 FF 48, 106 (twice in each fragment), Ps.-Scyl. 36–42; ἀπό X εἰς Y n στάδιοι ('from X to Y n stades') in the very summary *Stadiasmus Maris Magni* (*GGM* 1.427–514) or at Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 13; ἐνθένδε ('from there') used, for instance, by Arrian 74 times in his shorter geographical works (*Indica*, *Peripl. M. Eux.*), but only once in his *Anabasis*; or the middle form of ἔχεσθαι ('be next'), used five times at Hdt. 5.49.5–7.

[18] *Cf.* Rood (2004a) 48–49; add, for example, Erbse on how schoolchildren had to 'cover' Cyrus' route 'parasang-wise' ((1966) 485: '"parasangen-weise" zurücklegen').

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Xenophon's technique of leading the reader through parasang after parasang has other advantages. It is especially dramatic because of the tension between the perspectives of the reader, who is informed of Cyrus' intention, and of the Greek mercenaries, who have been told that they are going to fight the Pisidians. The procession of parasangs on the way out recreates how the Greeks follow Cyrus deeper and deeper into Asia, until finally they reach Tarsus, where they realise that they have gone too far for an expedition against the Pisidians and come close to mutiny. And from Tarsus they continue on to the Euphrates, where finally they are told that they are marching against the king. 'They do not know where they are really going until they have gone too many stathmoi and parasangs to turn back. Geography has mastered them.'[19]

The sense of participation also allows the reader to evaluate claims made in the course of the journey. During the disturbance at Tarsus, Cyrus is asked to give a new explanation of the purpose of his expedition. He tells the Greeks that he wants to advance against his enemy Abrocomas, who, he has heard, was stationed at the Euphrates, '12 stages away' (1.3.20). What happens? We read of successive marches of two, one, two, one, one, four, five and three stages (1.4.1–11; the quote at the start of the chapter is from this section). Readers who work through Xenophon's parasangs will see that Cyrus has lied to the Greeks.[20] They also come to see that the procession of parasangs could have been harder. Cyrus, we discover, had expected Abrocomas to offer resistance not at the Euphrates, but at the gates of Cilicia and Syria (1.4.5).

Another advantage of the regularity of Xenophon's marching formula is that it highlights those portions of the march where that regularity is not kept up. There are two disruptions to the basic pattern in Book 1, and they both point up irregularities in the march. The first irregularity is purely physical. Xenophon offers no distance for the potentially hazardous crossing of the mountains of Cilicia, where Cyrus was fearing resistance, and then he uses the aorist of the uncompounded verb ἤλασε, with stages and parasangs, for the march across the plain to Tarsus (1.20–23). So too in the account of the retreat, mountain passes disrupt both the Greeks' progress and Xenophon's textual strategies.[21] The second irregularity in the march upcountry is a matter not of terrain, but of discipline. After the king has failed to offer battle where Cyrus expected, 'on the following day Cyrus marched (ἐπορεύετο) with less caution; and on the third day he was making his march (τὴν πορείαν ἐποιεῖτο) sitting on his chariot . . . and most of the army was marching in no sort of order' (1.7.19–20). Xenophon here uses a different verb for Cyrus' march and a different tense (imperfect instead of present tense). Also, he marks time in days, not stages, and he does not say how far they marched on these two days. Yet he could easily have given a distance, of sorts, for the march on that third day, the day when Cyrus did meet his brother's army, since he later says that Cyrus' Persian followers fled after the battle 'to the stage from which they had started; this was said to be four parasangs away' (1.10.1). As with the technique for mountain passes, this rather more sketchy way of describing a march becomes, as we shall see, more common in the account of the retreat.

I have argued that Xenophon's formulaic technique for describing Cyrus' march upcountry has several advantages. It gives a sense of Cyrus' regular progress, as we follow the gullible Greeks deep into the heart of the Persian Empire and it throws more stress on disruptions to that stately progress.

[19] Higgins (1977) 84, *cf.* 95 on their 'ever deepening ensnarement'.

[20] *Cf.* Curtius' technique of showing how Alexander falsely promises a four days' march (6.3.16).

[21] For example, 3.4.32, 4.1.10, 4.4.19–22, 4.6.23–27. Note that at 1.2.23 there is a geographical problem, and something may be wrong with the text (see Manfredi (1986) 73–75; Lendle (1995) 26–28); but this does not affect the argument.

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The sense that Cyrus is in control is confirmed by the word used for his progress: ἐξελαύνειν. This verb, which, I noted above, is used more than 20 times in this section, is not used elsewhere in the work. And comparison with its use in other works suggests that it was thought the right word for majestic Eastern contexts (hence my translation 'progresses': the English 'progress' has the now rare sense 'to make a state journey, travel ceremoniously, as a royal, noble, or official personage' (*OED* 1a)). It is used in this intransitive sense in Xenophon's account of Cyrus' Median ceremonial in the *Cyropaedia* (8.3.1), in Ctesias (*FGH* 688 F 1h: 'from there Semiramis progresses, herself and her army', the use of 'from there', ἐντεῦθεν, makes this particularly close to Xenophon, though there is no asyndeton; F 13: 'Xerxes progresses to Ekbatana', from Photius' summary) and in Plutarch, in an account of the battle of Cunaxa based on Ctesias (*Artax.* 13.3: 'Artaxerxes had progressed (ἐξεληλάκει), as Ctesias says, to the battle with four hundred thousand men', perhaps Plutarch's pluperfect replaced a present tense in Ctesias' account). The verb is also used in Eastern contexts by Arrian, a well-known imitator of Xenophon, both in his *Anabasis* (for the start of Alexander's move to Asia at 1.11.3 and in the phrase 'from there taking with him . . . he progresses', ἔνθεν δὲ ἀναλαβών . . . ἐξελαύνει, at 2.5.6, 6.16.1) and in his history of Trajan's Parthian campaigns (*Parth.* 9 Roos = *FGH* 156 F 140; also *Parth.* 55 Roos).[22] It is also a measure of Cyrus' control of operations, and of his Eastern majesty, that the verb is used in the singular. When the Greeks march to the sea, plural forms and a different verb are used. It is to this section of Xenophon's account that we now progress.[23]

III. The march to the sea

The way Xenophon describes the retreat of the Ten Thousand as they make their way from the plains of Mesopotamia back to the Black Sea can often seem as formulaic as his description of the march upcountry:

> From there they marched through the Chalybes seven stages, 50 parasangs. . . . From there the Greeks arrived at the river Harpasus, four plethra in breadth. From there they marched through the Scytheni four stages, 20 parasangs through a plain to villages, in which they stayed for three days and got provisions. From there they went through four stages, 20 parasangs to a big and prosperous city . . . And a guide came and told them that he would lead them within five days to a place from where they would see the sea . . . And they arrive at the mountain on the fifth day . . . From there the Greeks marched through the Macrones three stages, ten parasangs . . . From there they marched two stages, seven parasangs, and they came to the sea at Trapezus, a Greek city. (4.7.15, 4.7.18–19, 4.7.20, 4.7.21, 4.8.1, 4.8.22)

[22] The attribution of the second *Parthica* fragment (= Suda s.vv. Ἀνθεμοῦς and ὑφηγήσονται) to Arrian is far from certain: it is one of several anonymous notices on Trajan's Parthian expedition cited by the Suda, and the only two named citations on the expedition are both from Arrian (von Gutschmid (1887) 25, n.2). The Eastern link is stronger if it is not from Arrian, as it could be dismissed as a mere echo of Xenophon; but it is still important that the context is Eastern (and it is still a Xenophontic echo even if it is not by Arrian). And note also Arr. *Anab.* 1.5.9, 1.15.7 (where the historic present is used of leaders in battle: at 1.15.7, note also the metaphor 'wedge, as it were, of cavalry', which recalls Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.22, 7.5.24). This usage tells against Bosworth's claim that 'the direct contribution of Xenophon to the Alexander history is limited' ((1993) 275); he does not discuss the word in his commentary on Arrian's *Anabasis*. *Cf.* also Hdt. 7.41.1 (aorist used for Xerxes leaving Sardis); the three other uses in Hdt. are less majestic.

[23] On the solemnity of ἐξελαύνειν, *cf.* Delebecque (1978) 108, n.2 on *Cyr.* 8.3.1. Gray (1991) 221–22 notes the shift from 'progress' (ἐξελαύνειν) to 'march' (πορεύεσθαι), but while she considers the possibility that ἐξελαύνειν may denote 'impressive speed and drive' and 'majesty' by contrast with the 'ordinariness' of the Greeks, she concludes that the shift is simply an instance of Xenophon's fondness for 'synonym variation' and perhaps a way of structuring the account and marking the end of a significant phase.

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The succession of stages and parasangs makes it tempting to explain the account of the march back more or less as I have explained the account of the march out. On the march out, those parasangs seemed to recreate the sense that the Greeks were being drawn by Cyrus further and further away from a world that was familiar. Similarly, these parasangs seem to recreate the slow return to the fringes of the Greek world from the point where they are distressed at being cut off 'ten thousand stades' from Greece (3.1.2). Xenophon's parasangs take them from danger. Before, geography mastered them. Now they master geography.[24]

This analysis seems to be confirmed by the use of a new verb to describe the march through those stages and parasangs: the aorist ἐπορεύθησαν. The shift to this form – which is found 21 times in this section of the narrative (excluding the counter-factual at 4.2.10) – marks the transition to a new section with a new ambience. The verb used for marching is extremely common, but it is still tempting to connect its use with Xenophon's frequent stress on the Greeks' *aporia.* They were in an *impasse*, with no apparent way out. The use of a cognate verb shows how they pass through those difficulties, how they make their way out. The form of the verb also helps to create a new ambience. It is no longer a single leader who 'progresses', it is 'they' who 'marched'. And that aorist tense is interesting not just because it marks a change from the present, but also because it is itself uncommon. The imperfect, not the aorist, is the normal narrative tense for 'marched' (and found, as we shall see, several times in this section when Xenophon does not use the stage and parasang framework); it is appropriate for marches that are conceived as preparing for the main action rather than as significant events in themselves.[25]

Yet already the section of the narrative quoted above suggests that the way Xenophon describes the retreat is not quite as formulaic as the way he describes the march out. Once, they 'went through' (διῆλθον) stages and parasangs (4.7.19). And after that guide promises to show them a sight of the sea, 'they arrive at the mountain on the fifth day' (4.7.21). No stages or parasangs here, and, as we shall see, Xenophon adopts that framework much less regularly in this section of the march, even when he is using his standard verb for marching.[26] In this case, that 'on the fifth day' at least does the duty of stages, but we are nowhere told how far they marched. It is as if Xenophon was so uplifted by the guide's promise that distance no longer seemed so important: what he emphasizes instead (by using a historic present) is their arrival at the mountain where the guide's promise is fulfilled. The stage and parasang formula would have been inappropriate for what is presented not as a regular section of a standard route, but a one-off trip to a vantage spot that has particular significance for these travellers.

[24] One of the referees prefers to see a continuity in the idea of external control: 'Even where there isn't literal external control in the shape of Cyrus one might say that the marching formula represents a sort of external control in the sense of the presence of a clear and single imperative (to escape) and the existence of an itinerary for doing so. It creates a sense of the journey existing independently of the traveller'.

[25] For the *aporia* motif, see especially 2.5.9, 3.1.2, 3.1.11 (*cf.* also Hude's emendation at 21), 3.3.4, 3.5.7, 3.5.8, 4.3.8; *cf.* also 1.3.1, 1.3.13 from the march upcountry, and 2.2.11, 3.5.17 for reversals of the motif. The verbal play is anticipated at Thuc. 4.127.2–128.2. Note, though, that πορεύεσθαι and its cognates are used occasionally of the Greek march upcountry (for example, 1.3.5, 1.4.9, 1.5.4; *cf.* also 1.3.4, 1.3.7 of Clearchus, and πορεία at 3.1.5); they are also common in the march along the Black Sea coast, though the aorist is used only once (5.5.1, see below). Tenses: a TLG search of Hdt., Thuc. and Xen. *Anab.*, *Hell.* and *Cyr.* for the third-person singular and plural imperfect and aorist of πορεύεσθαι reveals 179 uses of the imperfect and only 27 of the aorist, 22 of which are in *Anab.* 2–4; on the variations in the use of imperfect and aorist of this verb between *Hell.* and *Ages.*, see Buijs (2007), whose analysis of the significance of the different tenses I follow.

[26] The aorist of πορεύεσθαι is used once with a slight variant on the usual formula ('seven stages at a rate of five parasangs a day', 4.6.4); once with stages but without parasangs (3.4.23); once with parasangs but without stages (4.4.1, where it is fairly clear that it is a single day's marching); and twice in summaries of days, in both cases without parasangs (a single day at 4.1.14, which is itself part of the seven days summarized at 4.3.2). The imperfect is used once (4.5.3) with stages and parasangs, but also several times without. The other verb, διέναι ('go through'), is used with stades at 3.3.11, 3.4.37 (aorist indicative) and 4.5.19, 4.5.22, 6.5.5 (infinitive after πρίν); and with stages at 2.4.12 (aorist participle).

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Why does Xenophon avoid the monotony of the description of the march upcountry? A simple answer would be that the retreat was far less monotonous. But there are sections in the retreat where the stage and parasang framework does dominate. Xenophon's technique demands a closer look.

In the early stages of the retreat, there seems to be a shift from irregularity to regularity. After the battle, the Greeks rejoin Cyrus' follower, Ariaeus, and he tells them that they cannot go back the way they had come up, as even on the way up no supplies could be got from the land in the nearest 17 stages. So he advises that they try to get away from the king's army by making the first stages of their march as long as possible. They set off, but still end up camping close to the king. A truce is agreed, and they are guided to some villages. They continue marching, and encamp a 'parasang or more apart' from the king's army (2.4.10). Throughout this section, Xenophon does not say how far they have marched, and for the march itself he uses the (more tentative?) imperfect (2.2.13, 2.4.9), or a participle (2.3.14, 'marching they arrived . . .'). They have not yet thought of striking for home by themselves. Rather, the focus of the narrative is on negotiations about supplies and on the growing suspicions between the two camps, and so it is their distance from the Persian army that is important. But then even their suspicions seem to be stabilized, and the march and the narrative both gain some momentum: 'having gone through three stages' (2.4.12, note the lack of parasangs), they pass the Median Wall, and 'from there they marched two stages, eight parasangs . . . and arrive at the river Tigris' (2.4.13), and on from there, through more stages and parasangs, to the river Physcus, through Media, and on to the river Zab (2.4.25, 2.4.27, 2.4.28). All this time the Persian force has remained close to them, but the narrative lulls us into a sense that relations have become a bit more settled after the awkwardness of the immediate aftermath to the battle. But it is at the Zab that the Greek generals are murdered, and the disruption to the narrative caused earlier by Cyrus' death is repeated (compare how both Cyrus and the generals receive extensive obituaries).

The narrative rhythm after the death of the generals echoes the rhythm in the aftermath of Cunaxa. The Greeks resolve to march by themselves, but they have to fight against Mithradates' slingers and cavalry, and 'during the whole day they got through no more than 25 stades' (3.3.11). They change their formation, beat off Mithradates' assault and 'marching safely the rest of the day they arrived at the river Tigris', where there was a city, Larisa (3.4.6). For these early marches, imperfect tenses are used for the initial march (3.3.6, 3.4.1), and a different form for the continuation after the encounter with Mithradates. At Larisa (Nimrud), the strong Eastern flavour found earlier in the description of the Median Wall returns (Larisa's walls are two parasangs long, 3.4.7). And, as if in response to this Eastern landscape, and to the Greeks' successful adaptation to Persian assaults, the stage and parasang framework reappears (3.4.10, 3.4.13). But the marches are only one stage each, and, as earlier, the hint of normality restored is deceptive. Tissaphernes reappears, now with a considerably larger army, and first there is skirmishing for two days, with the Greeks marching and Tissaphernes following (3.4.16, 3.4.18, imperfects), but then the Greeks change their marching order again ('in this way they marched four stages', 3.4.23, aorist, no parasangs). They proceed to make further changes when they come to hills ('when they were marching the fifth stage', 3.4.24, imperfect) and the enemy use slingers from the hilltops (compare 'marching in this way the rest of the day' at 3.4.30 with the almost identical phrase at 3.4.6, cited above, where the Greeks had also successfully adapted). The point is that they are resisting: we do not hear how far they are marching, only, a bit later, that the camps are 60 stades apart (3.4.34). The focus on the relative positions of the two armies is further borne out by the fact that the Greeks now marched for a second time in one day, and 'went through as much as 60 stades, and this put such a distance between the armies that the enemy did not appear on the next day or even on the one after that' (3.4.37). Here there is not just no indication of distance, but not even a verb of marching.

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The most significant gap in the parasang framework is for the march through the mountains of the Carduchi. The principle is the same as for earlier disruptions caused by mountainous areas, but it is here that the sense of toil and hardship in an unfamiliar and primitive world is greatest, and more effectively conveyed owing to the total absence of stages and parasangs. Xenophon describes how they fight their way through day after day (for example, 4.1.14, 'this day they marched in this way, fighting part of the time, at other times resting') and how they 'often talked over the hardships they had been through: for they had been fighting continually through all the seven days during which they had been going through the country of the Carduchi' (4.3.1–2). After this, the return to a more ordered style for the crossing of the Armenian plain and the march down to the sea is telling (4.4.3, 4.4.7, 4.5.2, 4.6.5, 4.7.1 and *cf.* the passage cited above) – though the proximity of the Carduchi still forces the Greeks to march 'no fewer than five parasangs' on their first day out of Kurdistan after a particularly difficult river crossing, 'for there were no villages near the river because of the wars against the Carduchi' (4.4.1). But even through Armenia there are breaks for passes (4.5.1, *cf.* 4.4.19, 4.6.23–27), where again it is not the distance marched, but the obstacle crossed, that receives stress. And, more strikingly, snow increasingly causes a breakdown in the regularity of their march: the unique use of the imperfect with stages and parasangs at 4.5.3 conveys their battle against nature. After that, they 'marched' (again imperfect, 4.5.7) 'the whole day', but there is no sense of how far they marched, indeed there could be no sense of how far they marched as a group since the snow has pulled the army apart and many are forced to spend the night scattered over the plain, unable to reach the warmth of a village.

Analysis has suggested that, while the smoothness of the march upcountry was disturbed only by the crossing into Cilicia and in the days immediately before the battle, during the retreat there is a much greater sense of an alternation between regular and disrupted marching. In the first few stages after disruptions, Xenophon tends to focus less on distance covered and more on the army's distance apart from Persians, or on how they have adapted to new terrain and new types of attack. The return to the rhythm of stages and parasangs, the rhythm of the outward journey, signifies their conquest of difficulties, their regaining of the sort of control exercised by Cyrus earlier.

But it would be misleading to imply that Xenophon uses stages and parasangs, and the aorist 'marched', for summaries of uneventful marches and other forms for more scenic treatment of troubled marches. Stages and parasangs may be used in summarizing 'topic sentences' that are followed by more detailed narratives. Take those three stages through the Macrones (cited at the start of this section). As we read on, a more precise account is given: 'on the first day they arrived at the river which divides the land of the Macrones and that of the Scytheni'; at first their crossing was opposed, but then they came to an agreement and 'the Macrones led the Greeks through their country in three days until they brought them to the borders of the Colchians' (4.8.1, 4.8.8).[27] Here, a likely obstacle proves to be an advantage. But earlier, the stage and parasang framework makes the sudden appearance of Tissaphernes that much more surprising – as it doubtless was for the Greeks (3.4.13, 'they marched one stage, four parasangs; and in this stage Tissaphernes appeared', *cf.* 3.4.16 for the rest of this day's march). Later in the march, the Greeks have become used to fighting their way through. The five stages, 30 parasangs, that take them to the Taochi (4.7.1) offer no security: short of supplies, they are forced to make a terrible assault on a mountain stronghold. And it no longer seems surprising when we hear that they marched seven stages, 50 parasangs, through the Chalybes – and then that these were the most warlike people they passed through, and they fought continually (4.7.15–17).

[27] Xenophon's technique here misled Breitenbach, who thought that the Greeks made two separate marches of three days through the land of the Macrones ((1967) 1612). Some of the stages and parasangs in the march upcountry are also 'topic sentences', for example 1.5.5.

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There is some variety, then, in Xenophon's treatment of the march. It is not just that he shifts from one mode of description to another to convey how the Greeks overcome the obstacles posed by their opponents, regain some sort of control and cover more and more of the ground that separates them from Greece. It is also that he comes to exploit the sense of regularity implied by those stages and parasangs. Throughout, he succeeds in conveying a sense of how the Greeks grapple with the difficulties of their march.

IV. The march along the coast

Xenophon's account of the final part of the Greeks' journey differs in two important respects from the preceding sections: it no longer uses the stage and parasang framework; and the vocabulary used for the journey is much more varied.

How does Xenophon measure time and distance in the absence of stages and parasangs? To express how long the Greeks marched, he uses days (5.5.3, 6.1.14, 6.2.1), as occasionally in the earlier narrative, and also adjectives like τριταῖοι ('on the third day', 5.3.2; *cf.* 6.6.38). Only once is there something close to the old formula: 'the Greeks marched eight stages through this land' (5.5.1). This is not just the only time stages are mentioned in this section, it is also the only time that the most common verbal form in the second part of the march, the aorist ἐπορεύθησαν, reappears. The reappearance of the old formula for the march through the territory of the Mossynoeci, who were perceived by the soldiers as the most barbaric people they passed through (5.4.34), suggests that the Greeks have returned briefly to the earlier experience of marching through alien territory (though they had allied with one Mossynoecian faction against another). At the same time, this exception to the rule about stages proves the rule about parasangs.[28] Yet the parasang's replacement, the stade, is used far less often. Xenophon very rarely reveals how far the Greeks travelled in the last part of their journey, and the distances that he does reveal are not distances for their journeys by land or sea along the coast, but marches away from or back to the sea: first, when the Arcadians break off by themselves (6.3.2) and later when part of the army moves out to bury some men killed in an expedition to get supplies and then has to fight its way back (6.5.5, 6.5.32). (Apart from this, the only journeys whose lengths are mentioned occur in the early parts of the Greeks' dealings with Seuthes, 7.2.17, 7.3.7.)

The total omission of parasangs from the last three books seems easy to explain. Parasangs were a Persian measure suitable for a Persian setting. Once the Greeks reached Trapezus, they were back in a Greek milieu and stades were appropriate. But it is not quite as simple as that. The Greeks still had to march through areas like Bithynia, where the Persian presence was strong, and indeed to face the forces of the satrap Pharnabazus. The Roman road map known as the Peutinger Table used parasangs for Asia Minor, as for all former parts of the Persian Empire. It is, moreover, not just the omission of parasangs that demands explanation. What also needs to be explained is why Xenophon does not use stades with the same regularity as he earlier used parasangs. Contrast how the Peutinger Table gives, with an equal regularity, measurements in parasangs, Roman miles and leagues for different areas.[29]

Why does Xenophon stop using a repetitive formula for the Greeks' march after they have arrived back at the Black Sea? The sense of increasing distance away from, or decreasing distance towards, Greece is no longer so important. Their journey is no longer focused narrowly on one aim. There are longer stops and more diversions. Whereas earlier the Greeks only went back on their tracks to rejoin Ariaeus after Cyrus' death and when Tissaphernes scorched the earth ahead (2.2.8, 3.5.13), now they go back to get more plunder before they arrive in Greece (6.6.38). And the difficulties they now have to surmount are political rather than spatial. If they

[28] The only other passages where stages are used without parasangs are 2.4.12 and 3.4.23, both discussed above.

[29] See Dihle (1985) 115.

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had received help from Sparta, they could simply have sailed back to Greece proper and Xenophon could have rounded off his account with a Hecataean coastal narrative. And while he does briefly adopt the style of the *periplus* when the Greeks sail part of the way (6.2.1–2), even there he does not say how far they sailed. Again, if the Ten Thousand had decided to settle at one of the advantageous sites along the coast, distance to Greece would not have been important. As it is, it is expressive that the only distances given in this part of the text are for marches forced on the Greeks by their own internal and external problems; and they are for journeys away from where they want to go.

That Xenophon's shifts in technique have an analytical force is confirmed by the vocabulary he uses for the Greeks' journey. While he still uses πορεύεσθαι in the imperfect a number of times (5.3.1, 5.4.1, 7.8.7), as in some parts of the second section, on the whole his vocabulary is now much more varied. It is not just that there are times when some, or all, of the army goes by sea. It is also that a richer supply of words is used for the various expeditions inland – a richness that reflects the fact that the Greeks are no longer a unified group.[30]

V. Conclusions

Høeg has talked of 'the slight tint of snobbery (Persophilia!) and boastfulness' in Xenophon's 'eternal parasangs (of such sweet memory for us all!)'.[31] My analysis has suggested that we can explain Xenophon's parasangs without resorting to language quite like that. Those parasangs, I have suggested, do not just map space, they also give an impression of place. That is, their presence in the first four books creates an Eastern flavour and their absence in the final three books, after the Greeks have returned to the sea, to a world of Greek cities, creates an appropriately different flavour. So Xenophon's parasangs tell us something about his perceptions of the Achaemenid Empire – just as the fact that the farsakh was of interest to Robert Byron now that he was at Tasr Kand, in country that had to be crossed on horseback, tells us about the Persia of Reza Shah. Yet the equation between the farsakh and the parasangs is less straightforward than Byron supposed. Xenophon's parasangs are missing for some sections of the earlier narrative, and above all when the Greeks are crossing rough terrain. And that is when Byron starts using farsakhs. So we see that what was once central – what, indeed, was still central for travellers in the 19th century – had become marginal by the 1930s.

Equally revealing is another difference between the experiences of the ancient and modern travellers. Xenophon's parasangs, I have suggested, recreate the sense of steady progress out to the plains of Mesopotamia and the more awkward journey back to the sea. There seems to be a blunt honesty about the passage of parasangs. Xenophon was not afraid of seeming boring. For Robert Byron, on the other hand, farsakhs were not systematically of interest. He can write that he rode 'five farsakhs' one day, or 'one farsakh' the following morning, but he gives no figure for the afternoon's ride, and he denies farsakhs altogether to the muleteers who walk 'twenty miles in the night' to look for a wallet which his friend Christopher Sykes thought he had lost, but then found buttoned in his shirt ((1981) 65, 67). Byron's farsakhs seem faintly exotic, snobbish even.

In another respect, however, Byron does seem to appreciate the power of Xenophon's parasangs. He does not equate the farsakh with, say, Herodotus' parasang or Ctesias', and while this may simply bear witness to the traditional pedagogic role of the *Anabasis*, one may suspect

[30] Note the imperfects ἐκομίζοντο at 5.4.1 and ἔπλεον at 6.1.14, 6.2.1 for their voyage along the coast, and the present διαβαίνουσι at 7.1.7 and aorist διέπλευσαν at 7.8.1 for the crossing to and from Byzantium; and, for land marches, the use of words not found earlier, such as ἐξέρχονται (6.4.23, 6.5.4) and ὁδεύσαντες (7.8.8).

[31] Høeg (1950) 166 ('la légère teinte de snobisme (Persophilie!) et de fanfaronnerie de ces éternels parasanges (de si douce mémoire pour nous tous!)').

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that Xenophon also appealed to Byron as a traveller in a foreign land. It is as if Xenophon has lodged with posterity a claim to possession, not of one of the rivers or towns that he passed, but of the parasang itself and all that it implies – that sense of covering ground, of enduring tough marches day after day, of a heroic confrontation with space.

The strong sense of actuality conveyed by Xenophon's parasang framework has also, as we have seen, been taken as a conceptual map designed to help invaders. But the lack of detailed guidance about Cyrus' actual route does not support claims that Xenophon's account had a practical aim.[32] The parasang framework could equally have been designed to deter invaders by stressing the length and difficulty of the march upcountry, rather as it has been argued that Herodotus' account of the Royal Road was written in opposition to the wild panhellenic schemes that he attributes to Aristagoras of Miletus (5.49).[33] To imagine that Xenophon's parasangs prepare for an Alexander seems dangerously anachronistic: invaders from Alexander to Caesar were ready to launch expeditions with a fairly sketchy knowledge of where they were going, content for the most part to rely on captives and local guides for more detailed information. It was their own achievements that would make real advances in geographical knowledge possible.[34]

My suggestion that Xenophon uses different frameworks for the different sections of his march as a way of shaping readers' perceptions of his Persian adventure still leaves open the question of his source for the distances that we find in the *Anabasis.* One possibility is that Xenophon calculated those distances himself. Particularly after Cyrus' death, concern for safety might well have prompted the Greeks to keep track of how far they travelled. And one gap in the parasang framework has been taken to suggest that Xenophon did usually keep track of distances himself: Tarn suggested that 'Xenophon had to neglect his diary' in the crossing of Kurdistan because the Greeks were 'fighting perpetually'.[35] On the other hand, other oddities in the text have been taken as evidence that Xenophon did not calculate the parasangs himself. Take the figure he gives for the distance between the final stage before Cunaxa and the battleground itself (a distance he covered both before and after the battle): 'it was said to be four parasangs' (1.10.1). Why the unprecedented uncertainty? Rennell inferred that Xenophon had previously obtained distances from a source (a Persian officer) that was no longer available after the battle ((1816) 323). But Xenophon does not qualify later parasang figures for stages when the Greeks were marching on their own.[36] Rather, the uncertainty over that distance seems to go hand in hand with Xenophon's expressions of uncertainty about other details of the battle ('some say', 1.8.18; 'they said', 1.8.20; 'is said', 1.8.24, 1.8.28; 'Ctesias says', 1.8.26, 1.8.27; 'some say . . ., others that', 1.8.29); and this cognitive confusion doubtless reflects, and recreates, the actual confusion before and during the battle.

[32] When the Ten Thousand think about leaving Cyrus' service at Tarsus and discuss the possibility of asking him for a guide back (1.3.14–17), Xenophon did not pop up with his notes and volunteer for the job. He in fact gives more information about the direction of travel after Cyrus' death, when the Greeks have to grapple with geography for themselves.

[33] *Cf.* Flower (2000) 70–73; for Xenophon's alleged panhellenism, see Rood (2004b), with further bibliography.

[34] *Cf.* Bertrand (1997) on Caesar in Gaul; Russell (1999) 54–60 on the use of local guides; and for increased knowledge as one result of conquest, for example, Polyb. 3.59.3; Strabo 15.1.27, 15.1.32.

[35] Tarn (1927) 12, *cf.* 5 on how Xenophon 'must have kept a diary, but in the retreat it was sometimes scantily posted up'; also Koch (1850) 4.

[36] Rennell's case could be made slightly stronger by following Grote's view ((1846–1856) 9.19, n.3) that the parasang was a measure of space in the early stages and of time in the later stages, when Xenophon had formed an idea of how long it took to march a parasang (though Grote probably makes Persian roads a bit too much like Roman ones: *cf.* Bunbury (1879) 1.360 on the distances as estimates, 'as at the present day along the so-called post-roads of Persia'). Compare also Høeg's view ((1950) 159–60) that Xenophon asked Persian officers up to Cunaxa and calculated distances himself after that.

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It has also been argued, as I noted earlier, that Xenophon derived some, or all, of his distances from a written source, perhaps Ctesias. Support for this view is seen in the particularly close attention to distances in the march upcountry or in the gap in the parasang framework for the march through Kurdistan, a non-subjected area of the Persian Empire. But it seems unlikely that Ctesias' list of parasangs provided the sort of information required for Xenophon's account, especially as Cyrus' march upcountry did not follow the usual route. And it is not just in Kurdistan that there are gaps. There are even, we have seen, one or two in the account of the march upcountry. Nonetheless, the possibility that Xenophon got some, at least, of his figures from a written parasang list cannot be discounted.[37]

There is still a place for positivist approaches to Xenophon's sources, even if it is impossible to prove whether or not he used a diary or consulted Ctesias' list. The more exactly one can work out his route, the more exactly one can discuss his conception of space. And if he is misleading about where he went, it is important to know why. But explanations of variations in Xenophon's techniques that look primarily to his sources beg some important questions. It is not just that he may not have had any sources at all, though the parasangs are in fact the strongest evidence that Xenophon did not compose the *Anabasis* entirely from memory. It is also that we cannot know how he used sources. Explanations in terms of sources cannot, in any case, exclude explanations in terms of the effect of those variations of technique. And such literary explanations may well seem more powerful. Even if they were taken from an external source, Xenophon's parasangs gain by being integrated in his broader account of the Greeks' travels. They demonstrate the difference between a mere itinerary and a complex travel narrative that is also a powerful work of political analysis.

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[37] Written source for Book 1: Breitenbach (1967) 1651. Ctesias: Cawkwell (1972) 22; contrast Tuplin (1991) 47–48, though he is still prepared to accept that the early stages were 'filled in afterwards from external sources' after it became clear that the expedition was against the king; see also the excellent detailed discussion at Tuplin (1997) 409–17. Compare how variations in the Alexander historians were once explained by speculation that parts of Alexander's supposed *Ephemerides* (daily notes) were lost, perhaps in a fire (Robinson (1932) 70–73); but see Bosworth (1988) 157–84 for some different approaches to this diary, which is only attested for the final days of Alexander's life and is often regarded as a later fiction.

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