The work of Xenophon of Athens «Cyropedia», as the main source for the study of the life of the Persian king Cyrus II the Great

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Abstract.
These article are devoted to the analysis of the work of the famous ancient Greek writer, historian and political figure of the middle of the 5th – the first half of the 4th centuries BC Xenophon Athenians «Cyropedia», as the main source for studying the life of the famous military and political figure and king of the Persian Empire Cyrus II the Great.

Keywords:
Cyrus II
Xenophon
Persian
Empire
Achaemenid
This work was written approximately in the 1st half of the IV century BC, which Xenophon of Athens tells about the famous military and political figure, the founder of the Achaemenid state (Persian Empire) and the Persian king Cyrus II the Great (?-530 BC), in order to show an ideal, in the opinion of the author, example ruler The analyzed work of Xenophon is generally a free interpretation of various historical facts by the author himself and consists of 8 books (each of which is internally divided into certain sections).

Xenophon Athenians is a famous ancient Greek politician, historian, philosopher and commander (approx. 440 – approx. 350 BC), who was born in Athens into an aristocratic family and went down in history as a famous military and political figure of the Ancient Greece, who supported Sparta and its oligarchic system of government all his life. The author wrote a large number of works on history, philosophy, politics and economics [2] [6] [8] [9] [10].

Returning to the «Cyropedia», the style of presentation of the work is very similar to Xenophon's other work «Agesilaus» [3], as well as to the work «The Ruler» [5] by the famous politician, writer and philosopher of the Renaissance Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), who, according to modern scientists, very actively studied and used the researches of the ancient Greek author during his lifetime.

It can also be added that Xenophon was the only one who completely wrote a biographical work about the famous Persian king, but due to the author's free interpretation of some historical facts, many modern scientists consider this work to be a rather dubious source about the life of Cyrus II the Great and above all tries to refer to the works of other famous ancient authors, such as the «History» of Herodotus [1] or the «Persian History» of Ctesias [7].

Now in more detail about the work of Xenophon of Athens.

The first book of this work is divided into 6 chapters and is generally devoted to some aspects of the development of the Persian state system and the years of Cyrus II the Great's youth.

For example, at the beginning of the second chapter, the author notes that Cyrus II was a descendant of the ancient Greek hero Perseus, and Xenophon devoted the third and fourth
chapters to the story of the upbringing of the future king at the court of his grandfather and king of the Median state Astyages (†), where he was quite popular at court:

«...Finally, his mother left, but Cyrus stayed, and they began to bring him up here, in Media. He quickly made friends with his peers, winning their favor, and just as quickly attracted the sympathy of the fathers, visiting them and showing friendly feelings for his sons. If the fathers needed to turn to the king, they asked Cyrus through their sons to assist. Cyrus, with his characteristic philanthropy and ambition, willingly stood up and did what these young men asked him to do. And Astyages, no matter what Cyrus addressed to him, could not resist his requests and never refused him. And when Astyages was ill, Cyrus did not leave him for a moment and did not stop lamenting, so that everyone saw how he feared for the life of his grandfather. At night, if Astyages needed someone, Cyrus was the first to know about it. He ran faster than anyone to help and do what Astyages could most like. In doing so, Cyrus completely won his favor...» [4].

Regarding the presentation of the system of ancient Persia, Xenophon took the laws and education system in Sparta as the basis of his story, as well as some points about the organization of ancient Greek polises in general. For example, the author talks in great detail about the upbringing and duties of young Persian youths, whom he calls ephebes (young men aged 16–18 in Ancient Greece):

«...The service of the ephebes proceeds as follows. Coming out of childhood, they have been guarding near government buildings for ten years, as we have already mentioned above. This is done for the sake of the security of the state and for the education of morality. The Persians believe that young men of this age require the most attention. And throughout the day, the ephebes put themselves at the disposal of the leaders, in case they are needed for any state affairs. If necessary, they can all be found near government buildings. When the king goes hunting - and this is done several times a month - he takes with him half the guard...» [4].

The next book of this work is divided into 4 chapters and is devoted to some aspects of the character and skills of the
general Cyrus II the Great.

For example, in the second chapter of this book, Xenophon tells about a conversation during a banquet between Cyrus II and his soldiers, the theme of which was honesty, decency and justice among people. According to Xenophon, the Persian king said this about bad people:

«...very often the vicious ones attract far more people than the honest ones. By enticing with immediate pleasure, vice in this way recruits many like-minded people, while virtue, which shows a steep path to the heights, is not very attractive in the present to be followed without much thought, especially when others lead you along a sloping and seductive path vice...» [4].

At the end of the second book, in the last chapter, the author tells about a meeting between Cyrus II and the new king of Media Cyaxares (?-585 BC), the purpose of which was to discuss the conduct of the war with the Assyrian Empire and the organization of paying tribute to the king of Armenia. Also, in this section, Xenophon tried to portray Cyrus II as a fairly organized and modest person. As an example, you can cite the following passage:

«...Cyrus entered the palace of Cyaxares in his usual Persian attire, without changing it in the least. When Cyaxares saw him, he was delighted at the speedy arrival of Cyrus, but grieved when he noticed a simple outfit on him, and said:

– What's wrong, Kir? In what form will you show yourself to the Indians? I hoped that you would have the most resplendent look. The appearance of my sister's son in magnificent attire would add splendor to my throne. Cyrus replied to this:

– In what case, Cyaxares, do I do you a great honor: wearing a purple robe, bracelets and an expensive chain, but slowly carrying out your orders, or now, when I have carried out your order with such speed, leading a large army, out of respect for you, covered then from a quick transition and demonstrating to you the discipline of warriors?» [4].

The third book consists of 3 chapters, which Xenophon devotes to the activities of Cyrus II during the battle with the Armenian king, who refused to pay tribute, and to the
resolution of conflicts between the Chaldean tribe and the Armenians regarding the distribution of lands.

Thanks to the activities of the future Persian king, according to Xenophon, all conflicts were more or less peacefully resolved. During the conflict between the Chaldean tribe and the Armenians, Cyrus II made a great speech that called on the peoples to befriend each other and unite against their public enemy - the Assyrian Empire, and in the case of the Armenian king, the future king of Persia forced the latter to pay tribute, also calmly deciding dispute:

«...The next day, the Armenian king sent gifts to Cyrus and his entire army. At the same time, he warned his soldiers, who were to go to war with the Persians, to arrive on the third day. He also counted out a double amount of money against that which he had promised Cyrus. But Cyrus took exactly as much as was agreed, and sent the rest back...» [4].

At the end of the second book, in the last chapter, the author begins to describe the participation of Cyrus II in the battle against the Assyrian Empire, moving to Book IV.

Xenophon divided the fourth book of his work into 6 chapters, where he describes the attitude of Cyrus II to the people around him.

For example, in the fourth chapter, the author clearly shows the attitude of Cyrus II to the captives, who constantly appeared before them, reassured them and promised to protect them:

«...Then Cyrus summoned all the captives and spoke before them with the following speech:

— People! Now, by showing obedience, you have saved your life. If you continue to act in this way, your life will not change, except perhaps that you will be ruled by those who were not before. You will live in the same dwellings, cultivate the same land, live with the same wives, and raise your children in the same way as now. You just must not wage war with us or with anyone else. And if anyone hurts you, we will protect you. You must hand over all weapons to us so that no one can demand that you participate in the war. Everyone who surrenders their weapons will be provided with a peaceful existence, and everything that we promise will be without deceit. Against those who do not lay down their arms,
we will march. And if any of you, being in our camp, shows fidelity in words and deeds, we will treat him as a friend and comrade, and not as a slave. Remember all this yourself and pass it on to others. But if there are those who do not want to submit, while you express your full consent, lead us against these people so that you rule over them, and not they over you.

Cyrus made this speech. All the prisoners fell on their faces before him and made a promise to fulfill his order» [4].

The author devotes the last chapter of Book IV to the acquaintance of Cyrus II with the Assyrian Gobrius and the distribution of trophies by the Medes:

«...Meanwhile, the Medes arrived at Cyrus, who had already allocated to the magicians what they had chosen from the captured booty in favor of the gods. They selected Cyrus the best tent, a captive Susian, who was said to be the most beautiful woman in Asia, and two of the best harpists. What they found after this especially precious one, they intended for Cyaxares. And they took for themselves many valuable things that they needed, so that during the campaign they would not feel lack of anything; because everything was in abundance. The Hyrcanians also received everything they needed. A worthy part was assigned to the herald who came from Cyaxares. They gave the rest of the tents to Cyrus to distribute to the Persians. As for the money, they said that they would divide it among the soldiers as soon as they collected this money...» [4].

The next book is divided into 5 chapters and is devoted to the siege of Babylon by Cyrus II and the conflict due to the jealousy of King Cyaxares to the future Persian king, which ended in favor of the second:

«...— In the name of the gods, uncle, if I pleased you in any way before, then now you also give in to my request: stop reproaching me for the time being. First make sure how we treat you, and if it becomes clear to you that everything I did was done for your good, then answer my love with love and recognize me as your benefactor, and if it turns out the opposite, then reproach me.

— Well, — Cyaxares remarked, — perhaps you are right; I
will do so ...» [4].

Xenophon divided the sixth book of his work into 4 chapters, which he devoted to the activities of King Croesus of Lydia (595–546 BC) against Cyrus II and the story of the alliance with the region of Susiana (present-day Iran):

«...After that, Abradat went to Cyrus. Approaching him, Abradat seized him by the hand and exclaimed:

- For all the good that you have done for us, Cyrus, I can offer you only one thing: have me completely as a friend, servant and ally. From now on, I will try to be for you, as far as I can, the best assistant in all your undertakings.

- I accept your offer — Cyrus answered him. — However, now I am letting you go so that you can have dinner with your wife, but from now on you will have to dine with me with our mutual friends. ...» [4].

Xenophon ends this Book with a great speech of Cyrus II to the soldiers before the battle with King Croesus:

«...– Friends, valiant allies! The gods show us the same auspicious signs in the sacrifices as when we first won the victory. For my part, I want to remind you of circumstances that I think will induce you to go into battle with much more enthusiasm. Indeed, you are much more seasoned in military affairs than your enemies; you lived together and formed one battle column much longer than they did; you were participants in a common victory, while they in their majority are participants in a common defeat. As for the warriors who, on both sides, have not yet taken part in the battles, these recruits see traitors in their neighbors in the ranks of the enemies, while you, our new comrades-in-arms, know that you will fight side by side with people, always ready to help their comrades. It is natural to expect that warriors who trust each other will fight with a single common impulse, not retreating a single step, while those who are filled with distrust will think only of one thing - how to quickly flee from the battlefield. So, let us boldly rush on the enemies, with our well-equipped chariots against their unprotected ones, with our cavalry, where men and horses are equally well armed, against their unarmed riders; We will immediately impose hand-to-hand combat on them. As for their infantry, the bulk of it is the same as you fought before; the new ones
are only the Egyptians, who, however, are also poorly armed, are also poorly built. For their shields are so large that they make it difficult for warriors to fight and even to see anything ahead, and their formation in a hundred ranks will undoubtedly prevent them from participating in the battle, with the exception of a few advanced fighters...» [4].

The penultimate Book (divided into 4 chapters) was entirely devoted by the author of the work "Cyropedia" to the defeat of King Croesus and the inclusion of his territories in the composition of the Persian state in 546 BC. (although in this chapter the author does not mention the name of the state of Cyrus II) and the successful siege of Babylon by the combined army of Cyrus II (the author calls Babylon the capital of Assyria, which at that time, back in 605 BC, was conquered Media; in this case it was the capital of the Chaldean kingdom).

Xenophon divided the last Book into 8 chapters, in which the author tells about the reign of Cyrus II in peacetime.

An interesting point in this Book is that Xenophon tells about the death of Cyrus II the Great. According to the author, the ruler of Persia died in his bed at an advanced age and surrounded by friends and relatives, although according to Herodotus (which, as noted above, is considered more reliable by modern scholars) Cyrus II died in a battle with the Massagetae tribe around 530 to n. e. (or according to the records of Ctesbius - with the Derbic tribe in the same year). [4] [1] [7].

Xenophon devoted the last eighth chapter of Book VIII to his conclusions, as well as to criticism of the rule of all the descendants of the Persian king, whose power, according to the author, leads exclusively to the disorder and decline of the Persian state, and also criticizes the society of Persia itself, which calmly reacts to the given political situation and conducts wars exclusively thanks to Greek mercenaries:

«...However, the Persians themselves understand what military means are now left at their disposal; they resigned themselves to the existing situation and never go to war without the help of the Hellenes, whether they are at enmity with each other or repel the attacks of these same Hellenes,
because they are convinced that it is necessary to wage war with the Hellenes themselves with the support of their own relatives...» [4].

Xenophon Athenians ends his work «Cyropedia» with the following words:

«... So, I believe that I have fully coped with the task that I set for myself. I think that I have succeeded in proving that, in comparison with the past, the Persians and their allies have now become more impious towards the gods, more shamelessly towards their relatives, more unjustly towards other people, they have begun to behave more cowardly in war. If anyone is of a different opinion, then let him look at their deeds, and he will find that they fully confirm my words.» [4].

The following conclusions can be drawn from the above.

First of all, the work «Cyropedia» by Xenophon Athenians can be considered a rather detailed source for studying the biography of the famous Persian figure King Cyrus II the Great, but first of all it should be considered as the author's attempt to tell about the ideal, in his opinion, monarch.

Secondly, this source has a large amount of material freely provided by Xenophon, which is very different from the historical facts mentioned in this work, so it is impossible to consider it an absolutely true source from the life of the Persian monarch.

It can also be added that the political views of Xenophon, who tried in his work to look at the society of Ancient Persia through the system, views and laws of Sparta and the political system of Ancient Greece in general, are quite clearly traced in this work.

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