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Pharnabazos, Cyrus' Rebellion, and the Spartan War of 399¹

Introduction – In the summer and fall of 399 BC, the Persian satraps Tissaphernes and Pharnabazos faced a Spartan invasion of their territories in western Anatolia. The initial Spartan attacks targeted the southern province of Tissaphernes, but after a new Spartan general took over command, the invading army turned north against Pharnabazos instead. The Greek historian Xenophon, a participant in the campaign, reports that this Spartan change in strategy exploited an astounding division in the Persian leadership: “When Derkylidas took over the army, knowing Tissaphernes and Pharnabazos to be suspicious of each other (*hypoptous ontas allēlois*), reaching a common agreement with

¹ I presented early versions of this paper in workshop settings at Illinois Wesleyan University and Christopher Newport University. I am grateful to the participants in these events for their feedback.



Tissaphernes he led the army away towards the territory of Pharnabazos” (*Hell.* III.1.9). Xenophon does not elaborate on the reasons for this powerful suspicion, but indicates that the satraps’ mistrust was convenient for their enemies. Without Tissaphernes’ support, Pharnabazos lost a series of cities in the Troad, exposing the interior of his province to potential Spartan attack.

Achaemenid history is dotted with examples of tension between provincial elites, but Tissaphernes’ betrayal of Pharnabazos is one of the more extreme cases recorded before the inter-satrapal warfare of the 360s. Modern scholars, commenting in passing on the events of 399, have followed two approaches. The first explains the suspicion between the satraps as an extension of their earlier competition in the Peloponnesian War, described in the last book of Thucydides’ history.² The second approach is more structural in nature, regarding Tissaphernes and Pharnabazos as participants in a long running feud between their respective satrapies, based on territorial rivalry.³

Neither approach, though, is sufficient to explain their actions in 399. Before Tissaphernes’ and Pharnabazos’ time, the alleged rivalry between their provinces was limited to a sixth-century assassination, long before either of the later satraps or their families received authority at Sardis or

² Westlake 1981, 277.

³ Weiskopf 1989, 16; Debord 1999, 94-95; Briant 2002, 594.



Daskyleion.⁴ Thucydides' references to the two satraps' alternating activities at the Greek poleis of Antandros and Atramyttion show overlapping spheres of influence, but do not refer directly to border conflict.⁵ As for their attested competition during the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides depicts Tissaphernes and Pharnabazos at odds over an identical objective; both offered to subsidize an allied Spartan fleet, and each tried to persuade the fleet to operate along his own stretch of coastline.⁶ Both satraps were pursuing royal favor through competitive support of a common ally, as opposed to what occurred in 399, when Tissaphernes cooperated with a foreign enemy to achieve the embarrassment of a fellow satrap.

The key to understanding Tissaphernes' treatment of Pharnabazos in 399 is not to be found in the intrigues of the Peloponnesian War, nor in a border dispute or a permanent dislike between the administrators of neighboring territories. It is more likely that recent political developments within the Achaemenid empire formed the context for their rivalry. At

⁴ Herodotus iii.126 describes the murder of Mitrobates, satrap of Daskyleion, by Oroites, satrap of Sardis, during the anarchic period after Cambyses' death.

⁵ The theory of a dispute over Atramyttion is based on its apparent ownership by Pharnakes, father of Pharnabazos, in 421, and by Tissaphernes' hyparch Arsakes at a later date (Thuc. v.1, viii.108.4); Antandros expelled Tissaphernes' garrison in 411, but Pharnabazos later issued supplies there to the Peloponnesian fleet (Thuc. viii.108.4; Xen. *Hell.* i.1.25).

⁶ For Tissaphernes' competition with Pharnabazos, see Thuc. viii.6.1, 109.1.



the beginning of the fourth century, Persia's western provincial elites owed their political fortunes (or lack thereof) to the outcome of the dramatic struggle for the throne between Cyrus the Younger and King Artaxerxes II in 401.

Tissaphernes' role on the royalist side is well known, but Pharnabazos' political affiliation has remained obscure due to the Greek historians' lack of attention. Luckily, there are a few key passages in Xenophon and Diodorus that can shed important light on Pharnabazos' activities in the early stages of the conflict. This article will examine how the circumstances of Cyrus' rebellion placed the satrap of Daskyleion in a difficult and vulnerable position, and led to his abandonment by Tissaphernes during the Spartan invasion two years afterwards. I will attempt to show that the satraps' behavior in 399 was a direct product of the political entanglements of the recent Achaemenid civil war.

1 Pharnabazos, Cyrus, and the King (403-401)

Before discussing the affiliations of the western satraps in 401, it is necessary to consider the timeline of Cyrus' revolt. The succession struggle seems to have developed over a three-year period: shortly after the death of Darius II in the spring of 404, Cyrus was arrested in Persis on suspicion of a plot against the new king Artaxerxes, but was released after an unspecified interval. Most scholars guess that he returned



to western Anatolia between autumn 404 and spring 403, but the sources do not allow precise chronology.⁷ At some point between 403 and 402, Cyrus fought against Orontes at Sardis and later in Mysia (*Anab.* 1.6.6-7), and by the winter of 402 to 401, some of his forces were besieging a Tissaphernes-backed regime in Miletos (*Anab.* 1.1.7). While Xenophon claims that Cyrus' conflicts with Orontes and Tissaphernes did not constitute action against the King, scholars have been skeptical, and Pierre Briant has argued forcefully that Cyrus could be considered a rebel as soon as he took up arms against royal officials in the west.⁸ Very early in 401, Cyrus assembled an army of Greeks, Anatolians, and Persians for the march that would lead him to defeat and death in Babylonia that summer.⁹ Western satraps and dynasts had to make their choice: stand with the current King, or back Cyrus in case he succeeded in taking the throne.

Tissaphernes committed himself early and irrevocably, accusing Cyrus of treason shortly after Darius' death and riding to warn Artaxerxes of Cyrus' army assembly in early 401. Pharnabazos' loyalties at time of Cyrus' rebellion, on the contrary, remain obscure. Xenophon never mentions him in association with the campaign of 401. In light of his prominence in Greek historiography, one would expect a

⁷ Scholarly consensus tends to place Cyrus' return sometime in 403: see Andrewes 1971, 215; Bommelaer 1981, 124; Lane Fox 2004, 13.

⁸ Briant 2002, 617-19.

⁹ For Cyrus' departure in February 401, see Lee 2007, 2.



reference if Pharnabazos had accompanied Cyrus' march (he certainly would have held a position of prominence above or similar to that of Ariaaios). Similarly, after Kounaxa, the Greeks could not have failed to notice his presence in the royalist army, particularly as Klearkhos knew him personally from their shared campaigns in the Peloponnesian War.¹⁰

There are a few pieces of Greek evidence, though, that offer clues about Pharnabazos' behavior in the period of Cyrus' preparations, before the actual march against the King. Examined in detail, they suggest that the satrap of Daskyleion, while not physically present with either side during the Kounaxa campaign, made shows of support to both.

1A Diodorus XIV.11: Warnings to Artaxerxes

The only piece of direct evidence for Pharnabazos' royalist affiliation is a fragment of Ephorus, claiming that Pharnabazos warned the King in advance of Cyrus' intentions. Ephorus' story, reported by Diodorus (xiv.11.1-4), concerns the sensational murder in late 404 or early 403 of the Athenian exile Alkibiades, somewhere in northwestern Anatolia. While most Greek accounts of this event assumed some communication between Pharnabazos, Sparta, and the Thirty at Athens, Ephorus believed that Pharnabazos killed

¹⁰ For Klearkhos and Pharnabazos in the Peloponnesian War, see Thuc viii.39.2, 80.1,3; Xen. *Hell.* i.3.17. On Pharnabazos' portrayal in Greek historiography, see Bosworth 1997.



Alkibiades because the Athenian intended to inform the King of Cyrus' plans to revolt, and Pharnabazos hoped to take the credit for himself.

As a murder motive this is less than compelling, and Ephorus' story does not seem to have impressed other ancient authors.¹¹ Even Diodorus seems to prefer a different version, and Plutarch, who took great trouble to compare the accounts of Alkibiades' death, ignores it completely (Plut. *Alc.* 37.4-39.5). It is unclear why Pharnabazos needed to kill him if they shared the same intention of warning Artaxerxes. The satrap could have gained credit for loyalty simply by escorting Alkibiades to court, or testifying himself to Cyrus' treason and producing the Athenian exile as an expert witness. It is likely that Ephorus (or his source) knew of Persian involvement in Alkibiades' murder, and tried to give it a Persian political context by inventing the link to the events surrounding Cyrus' rebellion.

Even if the assassination of Alkibiades remains a red herring, though, this does not mean we have to discard a tradition that Pharnabazos warned the King against Cyrus at some point before the rebel army marched. A number of modern scholars, notably Briant, have accepted Ephorus' account as evidence for Pharnabazos' loyalty to Artaxerxes.¹² Briant connects Pharnabazos' warnings to Cyrus' fighting with Orontes in 403 or 402, which might have given evidence

¹¹ See the criticisms of Lenschau 1938, 1844; Hatzfeld 1951, 341-49; Ruzicka 1985, 211 n. 22.

¹² Bommelaer 1981, 129-30; Munn 2000, 233; Briant 2002, 618.



that a revolt was underway. It may be relevant that the final clashes between Cyrus and Orontes took place in Mysia, close to Pharnabazos' own territory, and it is possible that the northern satrap felt threatened and decided to assure the King of his own loyalty before the situation escalated further.

1B Xenophon *Anabasis* I.8.5 and Diodorus XIV.22.5: Cyrus' Paphlagonians

On the other hand, Xenophon and Diodorus agree on a fact that drastically undermines belief in Pharnabazos' loyalty to the King. In their descriptions of the Cyrean order of battle at Kounaxa, both authors state that Klearkhos' hoplites on the right wing were supported by 1,000 Paphlagonian cavalry. The Paphlagonian horsemen go unmentioned in the fighting that follows, but given their position on the field, it seems likely that they saw some action against the cavalry of Tissaphernes; their support may help explain the lack of casualties among the Greek peltasts who faced Tissaphernes' charge (*Anab.* I.10.7).¹³

Paphlagonia, a large region of northern Anatolia ruled by local warlords, is generally considered the responsibility of the Persian satrap at Daskyleion.¹⁴ If Pharnabazos was true to the royalist cause, then what were his Paphlagonian

¹³ The Paphlagonian support of Cyrus may have caused increased royal interest in the area after Kounaxa; Xenophon's *Hellenika*, narrating events of the 390s, mentions the Paphlagonian ruler Otys' refusal to obey a summons to court from Artaxerxes (iv.1.3).

¹⁴ Weiskopf 1989, 23 n. 18; Tuplin 2004, 177-78.



dependents doing in a prominent position in the rebel army, battling against Tissaphernes? At some point in the early months of 401, perhaps in time to join Cyrus at Sardis before his February departure, this large body of Paphlagonian cavalry would have passed through Pharnabazos' own territory. Given Xenophon's silence, we cannot say for sure that he did not try to impede their progress, but if he did his efforts were ineffective. Pharnabazos' failure may be contrasted with his rapid action in 400 to forestall the march of Xenophon's Cyrean mercenaries into his territory from Paphlagonia (*Anab.* VI.4.24), and his officer Rhathines' tenacious defense of Gordion, an important stop on the roads connecting Paphlagonia to western Anatolia, against Spartan attack in 394 (*Hell. Oxy.* 21.6).

It seems more likely that Pharnabazos stood aside, or even encouraged the Paphlagonians' journey. This impression is strengthened by a consideration of the logistics involved. It was a long journey from Paphlagonia across the mountains and the Halys and Sangarios to the eventual meeting with Cyrus, between 250 and 450 miles depending on the site of the original muster. If the Paphlagonian contingent included light infantry as well as cavalry, as did a force the chieftain Otys mustered several years later, the march would have taken longer, but even a cavalry force could have taken a few weeks to reach its objective.¹⁵ Ancient armies could usually carry a

¹⁵ The logistics of the Paphlagonian journey required careful preparation in advance; supply independent of Pharnabazos would have required the use of wagons which would



maximum of seven days supplies with them, and usually Greeks took much less. The horses would have required large quantities of straw or grazing, and it is doubtful that they found much to graze on mountainous trails in late winter.¹⁶ It is certain that the Paphlagonians would have needed to stop to take on considerable amounts of grain and fodder along the way.

One could not simply withdraw supplies from Persian storehouses, or for that matter pass checkpoints on official roads, without a satrap's authorization. This point is demonstrated by a number of Persepolis Fortification tablets that record supplies for traveling parties and their guides. Perhaps the most famous example is an Aramaic letter from Arsames, the late-fifth-century satrap of Egypt, authorizing his estate manager Nakhthor to take on supplies at seven stations between northern Mesopotamia and Syria (AD 6). The letter is precise on the numbers of travelers involved and the rations authorized for each, and contains an extra warning at the

have slowed the column down considerably, making it easier to intercept; while carrying supplies on baggage animals without wagons would have had practical limits and could not have sustained the army for the entire journey. On calculations for such logistical problems, see Engels 1978, 14-22.

¹⁶ For horses' consumption requirements, see Gabrielli 2006, arguing from inadequate dry rations in the Fortification Tablets that equine diets at Persepolis depended heavily on forage (53-65, 134-135; statistics provided in tables 1-11). The lack of grazing material could have dire results for an army's animals unless there was sufficient grain available to make up the shortfall (cf. Xen. *Anab.* I.5.5).



end: “If he stops in any place more than one day, do not give them any extra provisions for the additional days.”¹⁷ In light of this preoccupation with satraps’ control and distribution of supplies for parties using their roads, the fact that Pharnabazos allowed rebel forces en route to Cyrus to re-supply in his territory could be taken as evidence of complicity with the rebels.

Given Pharnabazos’ assistance to Cyrus’ Paphlagonian reinforcements, we are entitled to wonder about his involvement with Cyrus’ Greek mercenaries as well. Their most prominent commander, Klearkhos, had a history of personal cooperation with Pharnabazos dating back to the Ionian War, and this contact probably continued into Klearkhos’ tenure at Byzantion in 403.¹⁸ After losing Byzantion, Klearkhos sailed to meet Cyrus, who helped him reestablish himself in the Khersonese. Pharnabazos, while unmentioned in these incidents, was geographically situated between Klearkhos and Cyrus, and one is tempted to speculate that he helped facilitate their contact.

The chances of cooperation between Klearkhos and Pharnabazos increase with the mobilization of Cyrus’ army. We are not told how Klearkhos’ army got from the Thracian

¹⁷ For the translation, see Lindenberger 2003, 90-91. Numerous scholars have commented on the Nakhthor letter and the wider issue of satrapal travel authorizations; see in particular Briant 2002, 364-68.

¹⁸ In 400, Pharnabazos maintained close contact with the Spartan harmosts at Byzantion, to be discussed further below (*Anab.* vii.1.2, vii.2.7).



Khersonese to Kelainai in spring 401 (I.1.9, I.2.9), but a Hellespontine crossing and march through Pharnabazos' Troad was probably part of its itinerary. One of Klearkhos' most prominent officers, Timasion, was technically a subject of Pharnabazos, hailing from Dardanos, the home of the sub-satrap Zenis and Mania and center of satrapal authority in the Troad; during the return march along the Black Sea coast, he would boast of his familiarity with all the routes through Pharnabazos' territories (Xen. *Anab.* v.6.24).¹⁹ One wonders if the satrap or his subordinates authorized Klearkhos, Timasion, and their troops to use these roads on their journey to link up with Cyrus, or if Pharnabazos' towns or storehouses issued them supplies on the march.

If Pharnabazos had allowed the passage of soldiers through his territory and facilitated Cyrus' efforts to mobilize army, then he had compromised his loyalty to Artaxerxes. This was especially true if Ephorus is correct and Pharnabazos had shown awareness of Cyrus' intentions two years earlier. He could not fall back on the excuse of ignorance, based on Cyrus' claimed objective of fighting Pisidian brigands, which Tissaphernes had seen through immediately. A more plausible excuse might have been a lack of sufficient military

¹⁹ For Pharnabazos' sub-satrap Zenis and Mania in the Troad, see Xen. *Hell.* III.1.10-13. In 400, Timasion was a fugitive, but Xenophon does not give the date or cause of his exile; a possibility is that he was outlawed by Zenis or Mania as a response to his Cyrean service when the news of the rebellion's failure returned to Anatolia, and that Timasion learned of his exile when he reached Sinope, where Xenophon first mentions it (v.6.23).



strength to bar the rebels' progress; but he was able to assemble large military forces very quickly when the returning Cyreans posed a threat to his satrapy the following year (*Anab.* VI.4.24, VI.5.7).

1c Pharnabazos' Motives

It is not necessary to assume a conflict between Ephorus' account of Pharnabazos' warning to the King and the satrap's apparent acts of collaboration with the rebel army. In trying to reconstruct Pharnabazos' behavior in 401, we are lucky to have a point of comparison in Greek accounts of Cyrus' dealings with a local dynast in Cilicia. The *Syennesis*, the hereditary ruler at Tarsus, allowed his wife to visit Cyrus and transport supplies to the rebels, but Xenophon claims that he stayed reluctant to meet Cyrus in person. When the rebel army entered Tarsus, though, the *Syennesis* was compelled to a meeting, and assured Cyrus of his continuing support (I.2.26-27). Diodorus, on the other hand, is more explicit than Xenophon in recounting the Cilician ruler's ongoing commitments to the royalist cause (XIV.20.3):

When the *Syennesis*, the dynast of Cilicia, heard of the size of the enemy's forces, he faced a great dilemma, not being their equal in battle. When Cyrus sent for him and offered gifts, he went to him, and learning the truth about the war, he promised to ally with him against Artaxerxes, and dispatched one of his sons along with Cyrus, giving him a sufficient force of Cilicians to join the campaign. But being a wicked sort and having prepared against the uncertainty of fortune, he sent his other son in secret



to the King, exposing the powers arrayed against him, and claiming that he himself had been compelled into the alliance with Cyrus by force but remained loyal in spirit; and when the opportunity arose to desert Cyrus, he would campaign for the King.

The evidence for Pharnabazos' stance during Cyrus' rebellion suggests that the northern satrap may have had a great deal in common with the *Syennesis*. Like the Cilician dynast, he warned the King of Cyrus' threat, but also helped Cyrus to procure valuable troops for his campaign, thus attempting to ensure a favorable position in both camps pending the outcome of the conflict.

There are a number of plausible reasons for Pharnabazos' hesitation to commit thoroughly to either side. He had good cause to fear Cyrus, whose army contained troops from several satrapies in Anatolia as well as Greece, with numbers beyond anything the Daskyleion satrap could muster. The geography of his satrapy would isolate Pharnabazos from royal aid if he chose to make a stand against the rebels. Cyrus' execution of two royal nephews in 405, allegedly for refusing to pay him royal homage, sent a message to other Persian nobles that he would be ruthless to those who did not support him (*Xen. Hell.* II.1.8-9). It is also possible that Pharnabazos was one of those impressed by Cyrus' charisma, receptive to the sort of propagandistic appeal that Plutarch depicts Cyrus sending to Sparta (*Artax.* 6.3):

He said he bore a stouter heart than his brother, was wiser and



more accomplished in Magian knowledge, could drink more wine and hold it better; and his brother, through cowardice and softness, was unable to keep his seat on a horse when hunting, or on his throne when in danger.

Artaxerxes, on the other hand, had much greater manpower and resources at his disposal, and Xenophon's narrative suggests that even Cyrus knew his brother to hold the advantage if all the royal armies could concentrate for a decisive battle (*Anab.* 1.5.9). The previous two reigns, in Pharnabazos' lifetime, had seen their share of satrapal revolts, and all had ended in disaster. Pharnabazos' father and predecessor at Daskyleion, Pharnakes, had kept his office while the Sardis satrap Pissouthnes, rising up against Darius II, lost his satrapy and his life. The evidence would have shown Pharnabazos that the odds against a successful rebellion were heavy. Despite any compulsion or sympathy towards the rebel cause, therefore, he was careful enough to avoid marching after Cyrus in person. This, and his early warning to Artaxerxes, were intended to give him insurance against Cyrus' failure, but would not be sufficient in the aftermath of the rebellion to convince royal adherents like Tissaphernes of Pharnabazos' loyalty.

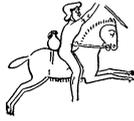


2 Pharnabazos and the Spartans (400-399)

Having established Pharnabazos' attempts to curry favor with both sides in 401, it is possible to turn back to his strained relationship with Tissaphernes two years later, at the time of the Spartan invasion. After the rebellion's failure, Pharnabazos' acts of support for Cyrus put him in a precarious position, which Tissaphernes, appointed in 400 to restore royal authority in the Anatolian satrapies, was willing and able to exploit. Their Peloponnesian War era grudge may have exacerbated the situation, inclining Tissaphernes against leniency or Pharnabazos against cooperation, but ultimately their competition in 411 over which one could do more harm to the Athenians is not enough to explain their failure to support each other against a foreign enemy twelve years later.

The satrapal schism of 399 is only understandable in its post-civil war context, as Pharnabazos' Cyrean sympathies endangered his career, attempts to repair his reputation dragged him into dependence on the soon-to-be enemy Spartans, and Tissaphernes viewed him as a potential rebel.

In late 401 and 400, as news of the Battle of Kounaxa circulated through the Achaemenid empire, many of the western provincial elites who had supported Cyrus took rapid steps to restore their credentials at court. Amnesty had been granted to several of Cyrus' prominent followers who had not



died at Kounaxa, and there was some hope that those who had chosen unwisely might have a chance at rehabilitation.²⁰ In practice, this often involved seeking the favor of Tissaphernes, whom Artaxerxes rewarded with Cyrus' old position of supreme general in Anatolia. Without naming names, Diodorus writes that most of the Anatolian satraps contacted him in efforts to escape punishment: "sending embassies to Tissaphernes, they conciliated him and put their affairs in order for him, as much as they were able" (xiv.35.3). It is likely that Pharnabazos was among these, and that he made some effort to prove his loyalty to the royalist cause. He might have mentioned his early warnings to Artaxerxes, but was apparently unable to convince Tissaphernes to trust him.

The obvious strategy for regaining favor was military action against enemies of the King. Mithridates and Ariaaios, the pardoned generals of Cyrus, had taken leading roles in Tissaphernes' pursuit of Cyrus' Greek mercenaries in the Tigris valley.²¹ In early 400, Pharnabazos assembled troops and resisted the attempt of the surviving mercenaries to enter his satrapy, which he might have been able to cite to Tissaphernes as evidence of good behavior (*Anab.* vi.4.24f). After initial successes, though, he lost a battle against the mercenary army, lacking the numbers to put up a fight against a large, disciplined body of hoplites. In order to divert

²⁰ For discussion of the amnesties granted after Cyrus' rebellion, see Briant 2002, 631.

²¹ Xenophon discusses Mithridates at *Anab.* iii.3.1-6 and iii.4.2-4, and mentions Ariaaios' support for Tissaphernes at *Anab.* iii.5.1.



the mercenaries from his territory, he did not turn to Tissaphernes or other Persian allies. Instead, Pharnabazos chose to cooperate with the closest source of military power, the Spartan harmost at Byzantium, who provided a fleet and transported the Cyrean survivors back to Europe (*Anab.* VII.1.2). Xenophon alleges that he promised to do anything the harmost wished in return, and later established a close relationship with the harmost's successor in office at the end of the summer (*Anab.* VII.2.7).

These were dangerous friendships in the wake of Cyrus' rebellion. Sparta had given Cyrus ships and troops, and at the same time that Pharnabazos was hobnobbing with its harmosts, the Spartan government was sending an embassy to threaten Tissaphernes with war over the freedom of the Ionian Greeks who had supported Cyrus' cause.²² The Daskyleion satrap's Spartan contacts, while undertaken out of necessity and involving attempts to break up the Cyrean mercenary army, probably reinforced Tissaphernes' initial belief in Pharnabazos' disloyalty.

During the Spartan invasion in the spring and summer of 399, Tissaphernes' suspicion of Pharnabazos' Cyrean and Spartan sympathies could only have increased. Xenophon gives the impression that the Spartans named Tissaphernes the specific target of their campaign, and Thibron, the com-

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For Pharnabazos' contacts with the harmosts Anaxibios and Aristarkhos, see *Anab.* VII.1.1, VII.2.4, 7, and 14; On the Spartan threat of war after Tissaphernes' attack on Kyme, see Diod. XIV.35.6.



mander of the initial invasion force, marched immediately against Tissaphernes' territory in the Maiandros valley.²³ Pharnabazos, meanwhile, sat on the sidelines and took no steps to oppose the return of Xenophon and the Cyrean mercenaries, who agreed to join Thibron's Spartan army and crossed back to Pharnabazos' side of the Hellespont on Spartan ferries. The satrap had no fleet to oppose the crossing itself, but this was the same man who had led his cavalry into the surf when Athenian triremes threatened the beach at Abydos in 411 (Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.6); his lack of enthusiasm against the Spartan enemy in 399 is glaring by contrast. The ex-rebel army landed in Lampsakos, marched to Ophrynion, and crossed Mount Ida to Antandros, all places in Pharnabazos' sphere of influence, without any interference (*Anab.* VII.8.1-8). It was only when they reached Tissaphernes' territory in the Kaikos valley that the mercenaries began hostile actions against Persian authorities, battling and capturing Asidates near Pergamon (*Anab.* VII.8.12-22).

Pharnabazos' inactivity in 399 may have resulted from a lack of sufficient military force, the same reason he had asked the Spartans to remove the Cyrean army for him in 400, but this inaction would have compounded his apparent disloyalty to Tissaphernes. Pharnabazos had not only aided Cyrus, but was now apparently unwilling to fight against Cyrus' other former allies. It is possible that he did entertain

²³ On Tissaphernes as the object of Sparta's declaration of war, see *Anab.* VII.6.1, 7; cf. *Hell.* III.1.3. On Thibron's itinerary, Xenophon is less detailed than Diodorus XIV.36.2-3.



some sympathy with the Spartans with whom he had so recently cooperated, or at least hoped that their friendship would leave his own territory unscathed by the armies marching against Tissaphernes. The change of Spartan policy that led to Derkylidas' attack on Pharnabazos appears to have taken him by surprise, and it is possible that he felt the same sense of betrayal that Xenophon makes him claim a few years afterwards in his famous speech to Agesilaos (*Hell.* IV.1.32-33). Regardless of Pharnabazos' intentions, his earlier links to Cyrus and reluctance to oppose the Spartans forfeited official Persian support, making him uniquely vulnerable when the Spartans turned on him late in 399. He lacked the resources to defend his satrapy without significant external help, but there was no reason for Tissaphernes to provide that support if Pharnabazos was unwilling to commit to full obedience. Tissaphernes' choice to negotiate with Derkylidas, securing a respite for his own satrapy while the Spartans punished Pharnabazos, drove this point home in the clearest of terms.

Diverting the invading Spartans against Pharnabazos' satrapy would accomplish two goals for Tissaphernes. The first was essentially punitive in nature, and can be illuminated by comparison with Tissaphernes' behavior towards another prominent Cyrean supporter in the weeks after Kounaxa. While escorting Cyrus' Greek mercenaries up the Tigris valley, before renewing hostilities with them in September 401, Tissaphernes had temporarily suspended a prohibition on Greek foraging, and authorized the mercenaries to plunder the estates of the queen mother Parysatis, whose devotion to Cyrus' cause was well known (*Anab.*



II.4.27).²⁴ Xenophon claims that Tissaphernes took this action “to ridicule Cyrus,” but it must have also served as a lesson to Parysatis and other Persians whose loyalty to the King was questionable. In 399, when he allowed the Spartan army (including Xenophon’s Cyrean survivors) to seize Pharnabazos’ cities in the Troad, it is likely that Tissaphernes was operating on similar principles.

Tissaphernes’ second objective went beyond mere punishment. By causing Pharnabazos’ humiliation at Spartan hands, the truce with Derkyllidas was the fastest way to compel Pharnabazos to choose a side. Either he would rebel outright and join forces with the Spartans, as his subordinate Spithridates did a few years later, or more likely, the loss of territory would force Pharnabazos into active resistance to the Spartans and obedience to the authority of the King and Tissaphernes in the future. In other words, Tissaphernes’ brief agreement with the Spartans removed neutrality as an option for his satrapal rival.

Xenophon’s account of subsequent events suggests that this was exactly the result of Pharnabazos’ defeat in 399. After Derkyllidas overran nine cities in a lightning campaign through the southern Troad, Pharnabazos would take more effective steps to return to the Persian fold. He had lost any faith he may have held in the good will of his Spartan neighbors, and had no choice but to seek forgiveness and reinstatement as a loyal member of Artaxerxes’ empire.

24

For Tissaphernes’ dealings with the Cyrean Greeks, see Bassett 2002.



3 Subordination and Survival (398-397)

Despite the disasters of 399, the subsequent success of his career shows that Pharnabazos managed to recover from his damaging links to Cyrus and Sparta and Tissaphernes' belief in his disloyalty. Once again, the Greek sources are not completely aware of the complexities of Persian politics, but offer enough evidence for us to fill in the gaps. They suggest that he survived through painful but prudent decisions to humble himself in front of higher authorities, reestablishing his status as the King's loyal servant through acts of self-effacement.

Isolated by Spartan hostility and Tissaphernes' refusal to protect him, Pharnabazos was unable to respond to Derkyllidas' invasion or retake the cities he had lost. Instead, after accepting extended truces from the Spartans in 398, Pharnabazos began the process of restoring his status, through a long journey to the court of Artaxerxes. Diodorus associates Pharnabazos' court visit with its best known long-term result, the construction of a royal fleet which would bring an end to Spartan adventurism in Anatolia (xiv.39.1).²⁵ The Persian political background, though, suggests that Pharnabazos had a greater motive in mind, the need to clear his name of Cyrean and Spartan sympathies. He may have proposed the

²⁵ On the timeline of the journey, see Westlake 1981, 260-61, and March 1997, 258-59.



naval strategy in order to reassure the King of his loyalty. Another way to reestablish his credentials might have been attacks on other nobles for disloyalty, attempting to shift suspicion away from himself. It is possible that Pharnabazos used the royal audience to denounce Tissaphernes, accusing him of treachery to royal interests for his encouragement of Spartan attacks on Persian territory. Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus suggests as much, making Pharnabazos assert that Tissaphernes had bought a shameful private truce that would harm the King's interests and the empire as a whole (vi.1.3-6).²⁶

He was fairly successful on the first count, less so on the second. On the one hand, the King did decide to proceed with the fleet construction that Pharnabazos received the credit for recommending, and despite some hesitance, eventually agreed to the commander, Konon, whom Pharnabazos had recommended.²⁷ When Pharnabazos returned to Anatolia, though, he had to visit Tissaphernes in person in the spring of 397. At their meeting, Pharnabazos swore an oath before Tissaphernes, indicating a willingness to accept a

²⁶ Cornelius Nepos also treats the incident in indirect fashion (*Con.* 2.2, 3.1-2), claiming that Pharnabazos sent Konon to court to denounce Tissaphernes for treason and for encouraging Agesilaos' invasion of Asia; Westlake 1981, 271, discusses the problems in Nepos' account and the implicit confusions between Pharnabazos' and Konon's separate court visits and the Asian commands of Agesilaos and Derkylidas.

²⁷ On the King's hesitance to appoint Konon and his reluctance to provide significant funding for the initial years of the fleet's existence, see March 1997, 268.



hierarchical arrangement that he had balked at in the recent past. According to Xenophon, the oath promised “to make war in common, and ally with him, and cooperate in expelling the Greeks from the King’s land” (*Hell.* III.2.13). The fact that only Pharnabazos had to swear emphasized his rival’s superior position, and the King’s support for Tissaphernes as the supreme Persian commander in Anatolia.²⁸

After taking the oath before Tissaphernes, Pharnabazos was required to offer a final proof of his renewed loyalty. Before further consultation about strategy could take place, Tissaphernes ordered Pharnabazos to accompany him to his own territory in Karia, where they took measures for local defense.²⁹ He stayed with Tissaphernes for the rest of the campaign as the Persian army maneuvered against Derkylidas in Ionia (*Hell.* III.2.14-20). Active support of Tissaphernes, and personal involvement in the defense of a neighboring satrapy which he had failed to assist in 399, was the only way that Pharnabazos could assure the King that his allegiance was now above question.

Pharnabazos survived through submission to conditions that must have seemed humiliating at the time. The insult involved in his loss of independence seems to have impressed itself upon Greek witnesses, as Xenophon suggests

²⁸ Note the contrast to Pharnabazos’ oath-exchange with Alkibiades in 408, when the Athenian refused to swear unless Pharnabazos did likewise (*Xen. Hell.* I.3.11).

²⁹ Xenophon makes Tissaphernes switch to direct speech, commanding in the imperative that Pharnabazos follow him.



when he makes him complain to Agesilaos that he would rather revolt than endure another subordination to a rival commander (*Hell.* iv.1.37). In the long run, though, Pharnabazos' surrender to authority paid off handsomely. His status with Artaxerxes restored, he was able to profit from the purge of his rival Tissaphernes in 395 and the success of his own naval strategy in 394, rising by the end of his career to fortune, fame, and marriage to a daughter of the King.

4 Conclusions

Pharnabazos' fall from grace and eventual recovery illustrate the complex career paths and difficult choices that faced Achaemenid satraps in times of succession struggle and civil war. In making gestures of support to both sides in the war between Cyrus and Artaxerxes, he was not unusual, as the example of the *Syennesis* in Cilicia demonstrates. It appears, though, that his commitments to Cyrus were more substantial than those to the King. The Paphlagonian cavalry almost doubled the size of Cyrus' mounted forces, a significant boost to the rebels' military capability, and it is possible that Pharnabazos also played a role in the recruitment of Greek leaders like Klearkhos, who played such a critical role in Cyrus' hopes for victory. In the aftermath of civil war, therefore, verbal warnings to Artaxerxes would not be enough to excuse such blatant material support of the losing side. Pharnabazos' caution in 401 turned into an extreme liability



over the next two years, tainting his career and exposing him to punitive measures from officials like Tissaphernes who had thrown all their resources behind the winning side. His weakness and exposure caused him to make a further mistake in 400 by relying on the Spartans, who had supported Cyrus' rebellion and were about to launch a full scale war against Artaxerxes' men in Anatolia.

The satrapal schism of 399 was a direct product of these considerations, as Tissaphernes reacted to Pharnabazos' dubious political relationships and insufficient zeal in opposing the enemies of the King. The division between them was serious enough to grant the Spartan army a temporary advantage in its incursions into the western satrapies. Ultimately, though, it worked to Persia's benefit, turning the once-hesitant Pharnabazos into Sparta's open and bitter enemy, and leading him to replace his former caution with whole-hearted and energetic service to Artaxerxes' interests. It demonstrates the flexibility and overall stability of Achaemenid imperial politics, in which the most violent of succession struggles might still allow the survival of capable men, who might have doubted the outcome, but whose rehabilitation in the years to come could only enhance the authority and power of the Great King's regime.

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