Xenophon Reading Group 2010

Books II.3.11 - III Study Guide Questions

1. The Tyranny of the Thirty - In 404 (Book II.3.11 - 56), the tyranny of the Thirty is called to task by one of their own, Theramenes. Xenophon presents two points of view from within the ranks of the Thirty: Kritias’ accusation and Theramenes’ defense. Athens’ immediate post-war administration is admittedly a scary one. How practical are Kritias’ arguments? How defendable are Theramenes’ arguments, considering what he is being accused of? How is democracy working in Athens at this point? What does this regime remind us of today?

2. Rebellion at Athens - In 403, pro-Athenian exiles led by Thrasyboulos gather to take back Athens from the Thirty. At Athens’ main port (the Peiraieus) the pro-Spartan Athenians are defeated. How do the Spartans react to this threat to Athens? What does the result say about the Spartan ability to run an empire? What does the result say about Athenian independence? (II.4.1 - II.4.43)

3. Sparta vs. Persia - In 401-400 (III.1.1 - III.1.3), two very important events introduce Book 3: a successful invasion and withdrawal of Greek mercenary troops into Persia (i.e. Xenophon’s Anabasis) in 401 which reveals Persia’s vulnerability and Tissaphernes’ attempt to control Ionian (Greek) cities in Asia Minor. This in turn triggers direct Spartan military intervention on Persian soil in 399-397 (III.1 - III.2.20). How were the Spartan generals Thibron & Derkylidas able to succeed in Asia Minor against the might of Persia? What does Xenophon teach us about the effectiveness of Persian satrapies and administration?

4. Sparta vs. Elis - Sometime around 402-401 (III.2.21 - III.2.31), the Spartans put political pressure on their Peloponnesian neighbor to the north, Elis. The Spartan king Agis leads the war against Elis and eventually achieves a victory. Given the various reasons that Xenophon puts forth for this conflict, what do you suppose was really the root cause? How does this Sparta - Elis conflict reflect Sparta’s ability to control its Peloponnesian allies in general? Looking at Diodorus’ account of this same event in Appendix O (14.17.4-12, 14.34.1), how do the two accounts compare? What does each account emphasize that the other doesn’t?

5. Sparta’s new king - King Agis’ death around the year 400 brings up the question of Spartan monarchical succession soon after the Spartan-Elis conflict. In Book III.3.1-3, Leotychidas and Agesilaos contend for the kingship. What does Xenophon reveal to us about Spartan dynastic lineage and the power of Spartan queens through this debate between Leotychidas and Agesilaos? (Note: Appendix E, section 22 on pp. 357-358 briefly comments on Xenophon’s exclusion of Spartan women in the Hellenika).

6. Kinadon’s conspiracy - The first event associated with Agesilaos’ early rule is Kinadon’s conspiracy (III.3.4-11). Given the nature and extent of this conspiracy within Sparta, what do you suppose concerns Xenophon so much by including the account of it in this way? What does this conspiracy say about the state of Sparta’s internal affairs at this time?

7. Agesilaos invades Asia Minor - [recap: After a flashback and digression into Sparta’s internal affairs (see questions #4-6 above), Xenophon picks up the narrative of Spartan military operations in Asia Minor (399-397) left off at III.2.20, when Derkylidas concluded a truce concerning Ionia and its coastal Greek city-states, with two Persian satraps, Tissaphernes (south) and Pharnabazos (north). This truce in 397 resulted in Derkylidas withdrawing Spartan land troops from Persian territory in Asia Minor with the agreement that Ionia be regarded as independent by Persia. It is assumed that Derkylidas was then relieved of his command.]

In the year 396 at the beginning of Book III.4, Agesilaos and Lysander lead an expedition back to Asia Minor and Persian territory in response to Persia’s increase of its naval forces with Phoenician ships. Outnumbered by both Persian land and naval forces, what is Agesilaos’ strategy in dealing with the Persian satraps Tissaphernes and Pharnabazos? How does Agesilaos make the best use of his own troops on the tactical level in individual battles? What is the significance of religion, piety, and sacrifices on Agesilaos’ decisions?

With such detail being given by Xenophon in these chapters, do you suspect that this information is from Xenophon’s own first-hand experience campaigning with Agesilaos? If so, are there any examples of historical detail that stand out more prominently for you in these chapters than in any others before this?

What is the ultimate goal for this Spartan military intervention on Persian soil? How do we know, if at all, that the Spartan mission has been fulfilled? What, if anything, do the Spartans get out of this campaign in the years 396-395 (III.4.1 - III.4.29)?

8. Greece rebels against Sparta - As Xenophon opens III.5 on p. 110, he digresses from Agesilaos’ campaign in Asia (see question #7 above) back to events in Greece in 395. On orders from the Persian king, Tithraustes had just previously eliminated Tissaphernes, a Persian satrap, and directly intervened in negotiations with Agesilaus. With these events going on in Asia, Tithraustes attempts to bribe other Greek city-states to turn against Sparta. To some extent, Persian bribery succeeds in stirring up some unrest among the Greeks against Sparta. Which city-state leads the revolt against Spartan hegemony in Greece? Why do certain Greek city-states decide to actively resist against Sparta? With troops already fighting in Asia Minor and with king Agesilaos far off, why would the Spartans think it prudent to respond to Greek baiting and initiate a second military campaign?

Xenophon includes some stirring rhetoric in III.5.8-15. Given the relations between Athens and Thebes in the Peloponnesian war, how convincing is this speech? How ironic is it from Xenophon’s point of view?

Greek armies clash at Haliartos (III.5.17-24). What is the outcome? What does this battle say about Spartan hegemony over other Greek city-states in 395? What happens to the Spartan king Pausanias in 394 (III.5.25)? What does king Pausanias’ banishment say about Sparta’s leadership at this time?