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Xenophon on the Athenian Embassy to Susa (367 BC)

In Summer 367 Sparta sent Eucles to Susa asking for financial help, which was necessary to cope with the consequences of the defeat of Leuctra and the invasions of the Peloponnesus by the Thebans. These sent to Susa Pelopidas¹, in order to substitute Sparta in the relations with Persia and to obtain the recognition of Thebes as a warrant of the *koine eirene*. Pelopidas was accompanied by Theban allies, the Arcadians (who sent Antiochos) and the Eleans (who sent Archidamos and Argaios). When the Athenians heard of the embassy, they sent in their turn Timagoras and Leon.

Our information on the negotiations derives mostly from Xenophon (*Hell.* VII, 1, 33-38) and Plutarch (*Pel.* 30-31, 1; *Artax.* 22, 4-6), whereas Diodorus says nothing on the subject². Xenophon's and Plutarch's accounts are very different. In my opinion, Xenophon, although biased, is the only source which allows us to reconstruct the Athenian embassy in political and not exclusively moralistic terms. This paper aims at demonstrating this interpretation.

¹ And Ismenias, son of the Ismenias who was condemned to death by Leontiades and the Spartans: cf. Plut. *Artax.* 22, 4.

² Diod. XV, 81, 3; cfr. Nep. *Pel.* 4, 3. Diod. XV, 76, 3 speaks of a *koine eirene* under the year 366/5, which Xenophon does not mention. See JEHNE 1994, 86-90 (who considers Diodorus' information reliable).

1) Xenophon, *Hellenica* VII, 1, 33-38

33. And now the Thebans, who were continually planning how they might obtain the leadership of Greece, hit upon the idea that if they should send to the King of the Persians, they would gain some advantage in him (πλεονεκτῆσαι ἄν τι ἐν ἐκείνῳ). Thereupon they immediately summoned their allies, on the pretext that Euthycles, the Lacedaemonian, was also at the King's court; and there went up thither Pelopidas for the Thebans, Antiochus, the pancratiast, for the Arcadians, and Archidamus for the Eleans; an Argive also went with them. And the Athenians, upon hearing of this, sent up Timagoras and Leon. 34. When the ambassadors arrived there, Pelopidas enjoyed a great advantage (πολὸν ἐπλεονέκτει) with the Persian. For he was able to say that his people were the only ones among the Greeks who had fought on the side of the King at Plataea, that they had never afterwards undertaken a campaign against the King, and that the Lacedaemonians had made war upon them for precisely the reason that they had declined to go with Agesilaus against him and had refused to permit Agesilaus to sacrifice to Artemis at Aulis, the very spot where Agamemnon, at the time when he was sailing forth to Asia, had sacrificed before he captured Troy. 35. It also contributed greatly toward the winning of honour for Pelopidas that the Thebans had been victorious in battle at Leuctra, and that they had admittedly ravaged the country of the Lacedaemonians. Pelopidas also said that the Argives and Arcadians had been defeated by the Lacedaemonians when the Thebans were not present with them. And the Athenian, Timagoras, bore witness in his behalf that all these things which he said were true, and so stood second in honour to Pelopidas (συνεμαρτύρει δ' αὐτῷ ταῦτα πάντα ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγει ὁ Ἀθηναῖος Τιμαγόρας, καὶ ἐτιμᾶτο δεύτερος μετὰ τὸν Πελοπίδαν). 36. Pelopidas was therefore asked by the King what he desired to have written for him; he replied, that Messene should be independent of the Lacedaemonians and that the Athenians should draw up their ships on the land; that if they refused obedience in these points, the contracting parties were to make an expedition against them; and that if any city refused to join in such expedition, they were to proceed first of all against that city. 37. When these things had been written and read to the ambassadors, Leon said in the King's hearing, "By Zeus, Athenians, it is time for you, it seems, to be seeking some other friend instead of the King." And when the secretary had interpreted to the King what the Athenian had said, he again brought out a further writing: "And if the Athenians are aware of anything juster than these provisions, let them come to the King and inform him". 38. Now when the ambassadors had returned to their several homes, Timagoras was put to

death by the Athenians on the complaint of Leon that he had refused to share quarters with him and had taken counsel in all matters with Pelopidas (κατηγοροῦντος τοῦ Λέοντος ὡς οὔτε συσκηνοῦν ἑαυτῷ ἐθέλοι μετὰ τε Πελοπίδου πάντα βουλευοίτο). As for the other ambassadors, Archidamus, the Elean, praised the doings of the King, because he had honoured Elis above the Arcadians; but Antiochus, because the Arcadian League was less regarded, did not accept the royal gifts, and reported back to the Ten Thousand that the King had bakers, and cooks, and wine-pourers, and doorkeepers in vast numbers, but as for men who could fight with Greeks, he said that though he sought diligently he could not see any. Besides this, he said that for his part he thought that the King's wealth of money was also mere pretence, for he said that even the golden plane-tree, that was forever harped upon, was not large enough to afford shade for a grasshopper³.

Xenophon's version (which mentions Pelopidas here for the first time)⁴ shows a strong anti-Theban bias, which emerges in several traits of the account.

a) Thebes' intention was to obtain hegemony over Greece; Xenophon employs twice (§§ 33 and 34) the verb *pleonektein* (= "to demand more" without just right) in order to underline the consequences of the King's support to Thebes. From Thucydides onwards, the use of *pleonexia* suggests an imperial, and not hegemonic, terminology⁵.

b) Pelopidas was welcomed by the King because of the traditional medism of Thebes, which had found expression in the battle of Plataea and in the prohibition of Agesilaus' sacrifice at Aulis before he sailed to Asia in 396. It is noteworthy that Pelopidas appears to be proud of Theban medism before the King⁶; the great fame of Thebes as the winning enemy of Sparta and as aspiring to recognized hegemony over Greece is only secondarily recalled as a reason for the King's esteem. This passage maliciously evokes

³ Translation by BROWNSON 1918-1921.

⁴ TUPLIN 1993, 154: Pelopidas's presentation (he lowers himself to recalling Theban medism without obtaining anything from the King) appears as "a deliberate response to the creation of heroes by the pro-Theban tradition".

⁵ TUPLIN 1993, 152, notes that *pleonexia* is rejected in Autocles' and Kallistratos' speeches at the peace congress of Sparta (371).

⁶ BUCKLER 1980, 153-154.

one of the most important themes of fourth-century anti-Theban propaganda (which found expression in the so-called “oath of Plataea” and in the question of the tithe to be consecrated by the Thebans to the Delphian Apollo evoked in the Spartan peace congress of 371, cf. Xen. *Hell.* VI, 3, 20).

c) Xenophon maliciously emphasizes the increasing tensions between Thebes and her Peloponnesian allies (the Argives and particularly the Arcadians: Pelopidas underlines publicly their dependence on Theban help and their claims are not accepted, in favour of the Eleans). This topic is absent from other sources, but occurs elsewhere in the *Hellenica* (cf. VII, 1, 22-26; 39-40): at VII, 1, 22-26, regarding the claim to Peloponnesian hegemony by the Arcadians, and at VII, 1, 39-40, regarding the refusal of the Greek allies to sign the peace of Susa. The opposition was led by Lycomedes of Mantinea⁷, but according to Xenophon several allies showed dissatisfaction: this ended up endangering Thebes’ hegemonic ambitions.

d) As for the clauses of the peace treaty, Xenophon’s selection is revealing: Pelopidas requires the disarmament of the Athenian fleet⁸, the independence of Messene and the obligation to follow Thebes against those who violate the peace treaty (a retraction compared to the peace of Athens of 371/70, which provided for voluntariness in military interventions for the allies)⁹. In two cases out of three, these requests reflect exclusively Theban interests; only the independence of Messene can be considered of pan-Hellenic interest.

Another characteristic of Xenophon’s version is the interest in Athenian matters (which can be found in other accounts of diplomatic missions, as for the peace congress of 371)¹⁰. As already highlighted, Xenophon is the only source which recalls the disarmament of the Athenian fleet requested by the

⁷ On Lycomedes, perhaps a nationalist like the Theban Ismenias, see DUŠANIĆ 1970, 292-302; BUCKLER 1980, 105-106; 158-159; 185-198; BECK 1997a, 74 and n. 48, 222-224; see also TUPLIN 1993, 151-152.

⁸ According to RYDER 1965, 80 (see also BUCKLER 1980, 155), this clause imposed general demobilization, and Xenophon underlines its most important consequence; see JEHNE 1994, 83.

⁹ “If anybody takes the field against any one of the cities which have sworn this oath, I will come to her aid with all my strength” (*Hell.* VI, 5, 1-3).

¹⁰ BEARZOT 2004, 93-107.

Thebans, and is also the source which speaks more widely (and with more political sensitivity) of the role of the Athenian ambassadors Timagoras and Leon¹¹.

Xenophon's treatment of Timagoras is particularly interesting, since the latter recurs in other sources, yet with a different characterization. In Xenophon's account Timagoras "stood second in honour to Pelopidas" and appears as Pelopidas' supporter: he "bore witness in his behalf that all these things which he said were true" and "took counsel in all matters with Pelopidas"; furthermore, he gives open expression to his dissent from his colleague Leon by refusing to share quarters with the Athenian delegation. Leon, on the contrary, appears as a loyal supporter of Athenian interests, who violently reacts to the request to disarm the fleet, threatens to persuade the Athenians to look for other allies¹², obtains from the King the insertion in the treaty of a clause favourable to the Athenians, and after coming home prosecutes his colleague as a supporter of Theban politics, obtaining his condemnation to death¹³.

In Xenophon the contraposition between the two Athenian ambassadors is strictly political¹⁴ and it highlights the internal tensions in Athens between pro-Theban and anti-Theban factions. It is noteworthy that Xenophon introduces no moralistic remarks on the relations between Timagoras and the King, as it occurs instead in other, also Athenian, sources, which speak of bribery. For example, Demosthenes mentions Timagoras' case in the speech *On the False Embassy*, in a list of *prodidontes*, *parapresbeuontes* and *dorodokountes* (XIX, 191)¹⁵: Timagoras is said to have obtained forty talents from the King in exchange for unspecified promises (XIX, 137), and for this reason was charged by Leon (XIX, 191)¹⁶ and condemned to death by the

¹¹ On Timagoras see KIRCHNER, *PA* 13595; TRAILL, *PAA* 883250; on Leon, KIRCHNER, *PA* 9101; TRAILL, *PAA* 605450.

¹² TUPLIN 1993, 153 (see also BUCKLER 1980, 157), suggests that Leon's threat can refer to a possible Athenian support to the Great Satraps' Revolt.

¹³ According to Hansen, the trial (367) was an *eisanghelia* to the assembly for *prodosia* and *dorodokia* (HANSEN 1975, nr. 82).

¹⁴ PERLMAN 1976, 229; TUPLIN 1993, 153.

¹⁵ ORSI 1987, 296.

¹⁶ "Leon denounced Timagoras, his fellow-ambassador for four years". The problem of the four years is discussed by MOSLEY 1968, who speaks of a groundless rhetorical exaggeration.

people (XIX, 31). While recalling the privileged relation between the King and Timagoras, Xenophon does not speak of bribery: rather, Timagoras is guilty for not having cooperated with Leon and having supported Pelopidas in all matters.

Finally, Xenophon's interest for the Arcadian ambassador Antiochos is worth noting. First, the refusal of the King's gifts by Antiochos certainly aims at showing dissatisfaction for the issue of the embassy¹⁷. Furthermore, Antiochos' words on the bravery of the Arcadians and the weakness of the Persians denote consciousness of the unity of the *Arcadikon* and of its military strength, and confirm the increasing self-consciousness of the Arcadians favoured by the already mentioned intervention of Lycomedes of Mantinea¹⁸. Lastly, Xenophon's account highlights the forming of two opposite axes at the end of the embassy: Thebans/Eleans and Athenians/Arcadians. Xenophon's information on the "Arcadian side" could derive, on the one hand, from Leon's statement (for Antiochos' disdainful behaviour with the King), on the other, from the strong relations with Athens, set up by Lycomedes while breaking off with the Thebans, which were interrupted by his murder in 366 (for the contents of Antiochos' statement to the Ten Thousand)¹⁹.

2) Plutarch, *Life of Pelopidas*, 30²⁰:

1. Now, when the Thebans learned that ambassadors from Sparta and Athens were on their way to the Great King to secure an alliance, they also sent Pelopidas thither; and this was a most excellent plan, in view of his reputation. For, in the first place, he went up through the provinces of the king as a man of name and note; for the glory of his conflicts with the Lacedaemonians had not made its way slowly or to any slight extent through Asia, 2. but, when once the report of the battle at Leuctra had sped abroad, it was ever increased by the addition of some new success, and prevailed to the farthest recesses of the interior; and, in the second place, when the satraps

¹⁷ PERLMAN 1976, 228.

¹⁸ BEARZOT 2004, 127-138.

¹⁹ On Lycomedes' death see BECK 1997b.

²⁰ See GEORGIADOU 1997, 205-211.

and generals and commanders at the King's court beheld him, they spoke of him with wonder, saying that this was the man who had expelled the Lacedaemonians from land and sea, and shut up between Taÿgetus and the Eurotas that Sparta which, a little while before, through Agesilaus, had undertaken a war with the Great King and the Persians for the possession of Susa and Ecbatana. 3. This pleased Artaxerxes, of course and he admired Pelopidas for his high reputation, and loaded him with honours, being desirous to appear lauded and courted by the greatest men. But when he saw him face to face, and understood his proposals, which were more trustworthy than those of the Athenians, and simpler than those of the Lacedaemonians, 4. he was yet more delighted with him, and, with all the assurance of a king, openly showed the esteem in which he held him, and allowed the other ambassadors to see that he made most account of him. And yet he is thought to have shown Antalcidas the Lacedaemonian more honour than any other Greek, in that he took the chaplet which he had worn at a banquet, dipped it in perfume, and sent it to him. 5. To Pelopidas, indeed, he paid no such delicate compliment, but he sent him the greatest and most splendid of the customary gifts, and granted him his demands, namely, that the Greeks should be independent, Messene inhabited, and the Thebans regarded as the king's hereditary friends²¹. With these answers, but without accepting any gifts except such as were mere tokens of kindness and goodwill, he set out for home; and this conduct of his, more than anything else, was the undoing of the other ambassadors. 6. Timagoras, at any rate, was condemned and executed by the Athenians, and if this was because of the multitude of gifts which he took, it was right and just; for he took not only gold and silver, but also an expensive couch and slaves to spread it, since, as he said, the Greeks did not know how; and besides, eighty cows with their cow-herds, since, as he said, he wanted cows' milk for some ailment; and, finally, he was carried down to the sea in a litter, and had a present of four talents from the King with which to pay his carriers. But it was not his taking of gifts, as it would seem, that most exasperated the Athenians (ἀλλ' ἔοικεν οὐχ ἡ δωροδοκία μάλιστα παρ-

²¹ As for the factors of Pelopidas' success, personal esteem is emphasized by our sources (cf. also Xen. *Hell.* VII, 1, 34-35) and seems to have had an important role, besides the perception of Spartan isolation in Greece (JEHNE 1994, 82).

οξῦναι τοὺς Ἀθηναίους). 7. At any rate, Epicrates, his shield-bearer²², once confessed that he had received gifts from the King, and talked of proposing a decree that instead of nine archons, nine ambassadors to the King should be elected annually from the poor and needy citizens, in order that they might take his gifts and be wealthy men, whereat the people only laughed²³. But they were incensed because the Thebans had things all their own way (ἀλλ' ὅτι Θεβαίοις ἐγγέγονει πάντα, χαλεπῶς ἔφερον), not stopping to consider that the fame of Pelopidas was more potent than any number of rhetorical discourses with a man who ever paid deference to those who were mighty in arms²⁴.

Plutarch's account in the *Life of Pelopidas* differs from Xenophon's and shows a sharp pro-Theban bias.

a) Plutarch's version on the origin of the Theban embassy differs from Xenophon's: in Plutarch the Thebans react to Spartan and Athenian initiative, while in Xenophon they react only to the Spartan envoy; Athens sent envoys as last. The discrepancy is not irrelevant: Xenophon emphasizes Athens' "defensive" reaction and suggests that she does not intend to get in touch with the Persians on her initiative; Plutarch reflects a Theban tradition, according to which Athens and Sparta act as allies in order to isolate Thebes.

b) Pelopidas, who is preceded in Asia by the fame of his brilliant victories against the Spartans, is represented in a very favourable way; the great admiration of the King does not depend on the medism of Thebes but exclusively on Pelopidas' military bravery. In Persian admiration Theban propaganda is very probably to be recognized, which exalted the Theban role (Thebes is said to have expelled Sparta "from land and sea") and exaggerated the purposes of Agesilaus' expedition (he aimed at freeing Asia Minor, not at conquering Ecbatana and Susa). As for the acceptance of gifts by Pel-

²² Σακεφόρος means "shield-bearer" (so Perrin) or "bard-bearer" (which is preferred by many scholars).

²³ The anecdote is mentioned by Hegesandros of Delphi [F 7, *FHG* IV, 414] in Athenaeus (VI, 58 [251b]), in the same context of Timagoras' condemnation to death for the *proskynesis* to the King during the embassy: see GEORGIADOU 1997, 210-211. On Epicrates' case see PERLMAN 1976, 230-231.

²⁴ The explanation is superficial and does not consider the support obtained by Timagoras (GEORGIADOU 1997, 211). Translation by PERRIN 1917.

opidas, this is not presented as a symptom of bribery: by accepting the gifts which “were mere tokens of kindness and goodwill” (χάριτος ἦν σύμβολον καὶ φιλοφροσύνης), Pelopidas only shows satisfaction for the good outcome of the embassy (contrary to Antiochos, who in Xenophon’s account refuses them not for his moral integrity but for his dissatisfaction).

c) Pelopidas’ requests on the treaty clauses are very different in comparison with Xenophon’s account: he obtains from the King the autonomy of the Greeks and the repopulation of Messene, as well as friendship between Thebes and Persia. In two cases out of three, the requests are of pan-Hellenic interest; only the *patrike philia* between the Thebans and the Persians – which is the sole allusion in Plutarch’s account to Theban medism, moreover in a positive sense – can be considered of exclusive Theban interest. On the contrary, the trickier matters mentioned by Xenophon are omitted: Plutarch mentions neither the disarmament of the Athenian fleet nor the obligation to follow Thebes in war.

As for the role of the other ambassadors, Plutarch mentions only Timagoras; he is hostile to him, not because of his pro-Theban orientation but because of his appreciation of the Persian gifts. He recalls his condemnation to death, due not to his corruption (*dorodokia*) by Persian gifts – which are, however, carefully listed – but to the success of the Theban embassy: “the Thebans had things all their own way”. Although Plutarch’s source emphasizes bribery, it ends up by admitting, like Xenophon, that Timagoras’ real fault had been the cooperation with Pelopidas²⁵.

According to Georgiadou, Plutarch knows two versions, that of Xenophon and another which could go back to Kallisthenes (the pan-Hellenic tone and the exaltation of Pelopidas seem to support this theory)²⁶; yet he chooses the version which permits him to compare Pelopidas’ and Timagoras’ behaviour before the King and to underline Pelopidas’ nobility²⁷. If Plutarch reflects, as it appears, Theban information, the impression is that this tradition

²⁵ PERLMAN 1976, 229.

²⁶ GEORGIADOU 1997, 15-24: the account is supplemented with anecdotal elements. For Kallisthenes’ presence in Plutarch’s *Pelopidas* (he is cited at 17, 4) see WESTLAKE 1939, 18-21; FUSCAGNI 1975 (see also PRANDI 1985, 51 n. 29); BUCKLER 1981; PRANDI 1985, 70-74. Further observations in BUCKLER 1980, 263-277; SORDI 2002 [1989]; SORDI 2002 [1995].

²⁷ GEORGIADOU 1997, 209-210.

intends to keep Timagoras at a distance, undermining him and connecting him with the Persian King rather than with the Thebans (by recalling anecdotes which the Athenian tradition on the whole considers with limited interest). However, despite the anecdotic context, Plutarch substantially confirms Xenophon's version: Timagoras' behaviour had been politically, rather than ethically, deplorable; the reason for Athenian irritation – and for Timagoras' condemnation – was a political, not a moral one, and regarded the relations with Thebes, not with the Persians²⁸.

3) Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes* 22, 4-6²⁹:

4. Ismenias the Theban also, and Pelopidas, who had just been victorious in the battle of Leuctra, went up to the king. Pelopidas did nothing to disgrace himself; but Ismenias, when ordered to make the obeisance to the king, threw his ring down on the ground in front of him, and then stooped and picked it up, thus giving men to think that he was making the obeisance. 5. With Timagoras the Athenian, however, who sent to him by his secretary, Beluris, a secret message in writing, the king was so pleased that he gave him ten thousand darics, and eighty milk cows to follow in his train because he was sick and required cow's milk; and besides, he sent him a couch, with bedding for it, and servants to make the bed (on the ground that the Greeks had not learned the art of making beds), and bearers to carry him down to the sea-coast, enfeebled as he was. 6. Moreover, during his presence at court, he used to send him a most splendid supper, so that Ostanes, the brother of the king, said: "Timagoras, remember this table; it is no slight return which thou must make for such an array." Now this was a reproach for his treachery (εἰς

²⁸ GEORGIADOU 1997, 209, only speaks of Timagoras' bribery by the King, emphasizing the affinity between Plutarch's and Athenaeus' tradition. However, Athenaeus only says that Timagoras had been honoured by the King (II, 31 [48e]) and had made the *proskynesis*, which he considers the reason for his condemnation (VI, 58 [251b]); as for Plutarch, in his *Life of Artaxerxes* he speaks of a condemnation to death for *prodosia* and *dorodokia*, but in *Life of Pelopidas* says that "it was not his taking of gifts, as it would seem, that most exasperated the Athenians ... they were incensed because the Thebans had things all their own way".

²⁹ On this passage see ORSI 1987, 293-296. Translation by PERRIN 1917.

προδοσίαν) rather than a reminder of the king's favour. At any rate, for his venality (διὰ τὴν δωροδοκίαν), Timagoras was condemned to death by the Athenians.

In comparison with *Life of Pelopidas*, the account in *Life of Artaxerxes* shows a similar bias, yet information is differently selected. A pro-Theban orientation is unquestionable, since Plutarch underlines Pelopidas' and Ismenias' honourable behaviour before the King: Ismenias avoids to make *proskynesis*, while Timagoras is expressly accused to have made it (cf. Ath. II, 31 [48e] and Ath. VI, 58 [251b], which respectively depend on Heraclides of Cuma [*FGrHist* 689 F 5] and on Hegesandros of Delphi [F 7, *FHG* IV, 414])³⁰. Timagoras (about whom Plutarch mentions a secret message, *grammatidion aporetton*, to the King) accepts gifts which make him a suspect of treason (*prodosia*) and provoke his condemnation to death for corruption (*dorodokia*); Plutarch's source breaks his ties with Thebes, underlining that his betrayal favours the King, not the Thebans.

Thus, pro-Theban tradition avoided to emphasize the agreement between Timagoras and Pelopidas, recalling their different behaviour at the King's court, and underlined that Timagoras rather acted in accordance with the King. The relation Timagoras/Thebes, which clearly emerges in Xenophon and is also recognizable in Plutarch's *Life of Pelopidas* – which in turn perhaps partially depends on Xenophon's account (*Pel.* 30, 6-7: “But it was not his taking of gifts, as it would seem, that most exasperated the Athenians ... they were incensed because the Thebans had things all their own way”) – is totally obscured here.

The comparison of our main sources, Xenophon and Plutarch, highlights a noteworthy difference of interests and bias, which also reveals a different origin of their information.

Xenophon's interest is focused on (illegitimate) Theban hegemonic claims, on Thebes' difficult relations with her allies and on her contraposition with Athens; at Susa Thebes acts on her own behalf, in an anti-Hellenic

³⁰ For the debate on this controversial passage of Athenaeus see ZECCHINI 1989; RUBERTO 2006a; RUBERTO 2006b.

and pro-Persian perspective. Xenophon's information, which represents Timagoras as a man of the Thebans, is of Athenian origin and could derive from Leon, one of the Athenian ambassadors involved in the negotiations.

According to Plutarch, on the contrary, Thebes acts in an exclusively anti-Spartan and pan-Hellenic perspective, without subordination to the Persians; in his account there are no traces of tensions with Athens and the Peloponnesian allies; the role of Athens is not emphasized. Timagoras appears as a corrupt politician, who appreciates oriental luxury, rather than a pro-Theban traitor; he is represented as a man of the Persians, who has nothing to do with Thebes. Plutarch also knows several anecdotic stories on Timagoras which are found neither in Xenophon (who only says that Pelopidas "stood second in honour to Pelopidas") nor in Demosthenes (who considers Timagoras as guilty of bribery but recognizes that he had no time to repay the King for his gifts)³¹. Thus, Plutarch's information probably derives from Theban sources.

The information provided by Xenophon and Plutarch also differs in quality: at a historiographical level their versions, although both interesting, cannot be considered equivalent. Xenophon's information, although biased, appears to be of better quality. He offers a detailed account, with a strictly political statement, that is based on the theme of the relations among the Greek, without introducing anecdotic elements or moralistic remarks. His account identifies the main lines of Theban hegemonic policy, such as the requests to acknowledge the independence of Messene and to disarm the Athenian fleet, which intend to strike Sparta and Athens respectively³²; as for the request to the King to support the Eleans against the Arcadians on Triphylia, it created difficulty to the Arcadians, who were claiming hegem-

³¹ Demosthenes adds that Artaxerxes consequently restored Amphipolis to the Athenians, but that thereafter he avoided to give money to anyone. According to BUCKLER 1980, 153-154, Amphipolis' question was the purpose of the Athenian embassy; Artaxerxes expected help from Timagoras, on the one hand, to divide the Athenians, on the other, to obtain Athens' acceptance of the peace.

³² This request shows the increasing interest of Thebes in sea politics; after she had isolated Sparta on land and had withdrawn the King's favour from her, she could face Athens and the question of maritime hegemony. The King possibly offered financial help to Thebes to build a fleet, in order to control the Aegean sea, which was menaced by Ariobarzanes' rebellion. See BUCKLER 1980, 155.

ony over the Peloponnesus³³. When the ambassadors came home, Sparta refused to accept the independence of Messene, while Athens refused the disarmament of the fleet: Timagoras' condemnation to death on Leon's denunciation clearly revealed that Athens was not inclined to sign the peace³⁴. But, above all, the Thebans were not able to obtain the undersigning of the treaty by the Greeks, who had been summoned in Thebes with this purpose (there was a strong conflict with Lycomedes of Mantinea, who left the negotiations with all the Arcadians): thus, "the hegemonic claims of Pelopidas and of the Thebans, for the moment, were annihilated" (Xen. *Hell.* VII, 1, 39-40). The failure of the negotiations appears in Xenophon as the inevitable consequence of Thebes' evident inability to defend common interests. Plutarch, on his part, omits to mention the failure of the hegemonic ambitions of the Thebans, since the Greek refusal to undersign the treaty is incompatible with his pan-Hellenic reconstruction of the negotiations. Indeed, he says (31, 1) that "this embassy, then, added not a little to the goodwill felt towards Pelopidas, on his return home, because of the peopling of Messene and the independence of the other Greeks": in this way, among the issues discussed during the negotiations, he exclusively underlines those of pan-Hellenic interest. However, although Messene's liberation was one of Pelopidas' great successes, the embassy in Susa did not give rise to a more stable balance of power in Greece. Plutarch's version seems to reflect Kallisthenes' bias, which was favourable to Pelopidas and had a pan-Hellenic tone.

Finally, Xenophon is the only source which provides us with detailed information on the behaviour of the Athenian ambassadors. Xenophon's reconstruction is definitely favourable to Leon, about whom the rest of tradition knows nothing (in addition to Xenophon, only Demosthenes mentions him as the prosecutor of Timagoras); the insertion in the treaty of a clause which kept open relations between the Athenians and the King, despite the privileged role given to the Thebans, is presented as a success, due to Leon's resolute reaction. Xenophon's account cannot be explained with a generic pro-Athenian bias: rather, Leon was likely his main source of information. Furthermore, we could hypothesize that Leon shared the same political orientation of Xenophon, not only for his hostility to Thebes but also because he probably favoured the restoration of good diplomatic relations between

³³ BUCKLER 1980, 156-157.

³⁴ BUCKLER 1980, 157-158.

Athens and Sparta, by dividing Greece in two spheres of influence according to the traditional “cimonian” policy. These good relations had been restored after Leuctra through an alliance treaty which was, according to Xenophon, the accomplishment of his political vision, and which Kallistratos had proposed in the Spartan peace congress of 371³⁵. The hypothesis of a political consonance between Leon and Xenophon is suggested by a Suda entry (s.v. Τιμαγόρας) which scholars have not fully appreciated yet:

Τιμαγόρας· οὗτος πρεσβευτῆς πεμφθεὶς πρὸς βασιλέα Ἄρταξέρξην ὑπὸ Ἀθηναίων, οὐ μόνον χρυσίον ἔλαβε παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀργύριον, ἀλλὰ καὶ κλίνην πολυτελεῆ καὶ στρατιώτας³⁶ θεράποντας καὶ βοῦς π' καὶ κατέβη ἐπὶ θάλασσαν ἐν φορείῳ κομιζόμενος· καὶ τοῖς κομίσασι παρὰ βασιλέως ἐδόθη μισθὸς τάλαντα δ'. τοῦτον οὖν ἀνεΐλον Ἀθηναῖοι. οἱ δὲ φασιν ὑπεσχῆσθαι αὐτὸν διαλύσειν τὴν οὖσαν Λακεδαιμονίους καὶ Ἀθηναίους φιλίαν. οὗτος οὖν ὁ Τιμαγόρας προσκυνήσας τὸν Περσῶν βασιλέα παρὰ τὰ Ἑλλήνων ἔθη καὶ δωροδοκηθεὶς ὑπὸ Ἀθηναίων ἀνηρέθη.

After reporting the well-known data on Timagoras' bribery and on his condemnation to death, which is connected with *proskynesis* (as in Ath. II, 31 [48e] and VI, 58 [251b]) and *dorodokia* (data are the same reported by Plutarch's *Life of Pelopidas*), the entry offers a very interesting piece of information which is not found in remaining tradition: “Others, though, say that he had promised (ὑπεσχῆσθαι) to undermine the existing friendship between Sparta and Athens”.

According to this piece of information, which goes back to an unspecified source but cannot have been invented, Timagoras was a member of the pro-Theban and anti-Spartan faction, whose purpose was, among other things, to put an end to the Athenian/Spartan alliance concluded in 369 (the position of this faction is highlighted by Autocles' speech at the Spartan peace congress of 371)³⁷. That the King was interested to support Thebes and to weaken the axis between Athens and Sparta is fully understandable in the political context of 367³⁸. Thus, Timagoras' double-cross among Athens,

³⁵ SCHEPENS 2001.

³⁶ On this error see GEORGIADOU 1997, 210.

³⁷ BEARZOT 2004, 85-92.

³⁸ BUCKLER 1980, 155.

Thebes and the King becomes easier to understand. Demosthenes' allusion to the "promises" to Artaxerxes made and never kept by Timagoras also becomes clearer (XIX, 137: μή τί γ' ἄ ἐκείνω τόθ' ὑπέσχετο πράξαι): among these "promises" there was probably that of "undermining the existing friendship between Sparta and Athens", mentioned by the Suda.

Thus, Leon's accusation is better highlighted by the political background evoked by the Suda. In a moment in which Athens believed that her political fortune depended on the renewed friendly relations with Sparta, Timagoras' behaviour gives a good explanation for his trial, his condemnation, and his insertion by Demosthenes, almost twenty-five years after the events, in a list of men guilty of *prodosia*, *parapresbeia*, and *dorodokia*. Timagoras was prosecuted and condemned for strictly political reasons tied to his role as an ambassador, which had favoured Thebes and tried to break Athenian/Spartan alliance. The charge to have been bribed by the King, which originates from a shared interest in supporting Thebes and is scarcely found in the Athenian tradition, aims at making Timagoras' position more serious by presenting moralistic issues in which the public opinion was very interested³⁹. As a matter of fact, in Timagoras' vicissitudes *prodosia* largely prevailed on *dorodokia*: however, medism was a useful topic against the Thebans and their supporters (it is noteworthy that it had already been used in the trial of Ismenias in 382: Xen. *Hell.* V, 2, 35-36).

Xenophon's partiality for Leon, the convergence of their political ideas, and the reconstruction of Timagoras' case in political and not moralistic terms testify, as already recalled, in favour of the identification of Xenophon's source with Leon; he was perhaps his friend, surely a member of the same political faction. It was the availability of an excellent source of information (an eye witness, directly involved in the events, and perfectly informed on different aspects of the embassy) which prevented Xenophon's account from recurring to moralistic banalities, like the interpretation of Timagoras' behaviour in terms of mere bribery. However, it must be noted that the Suda's evidence does not derive from Xenophon: a distinct channel of tradition, which cannot be fully reconstructed, had preserved traces of a strictly "political" interpretation of the Athenian embassy to Susa in 367. I would not exclude that Plutarch's second source, besides the pro-Theban

³⁹ PERLMAN 1976, 229: bribery was an "additional accusation" which came after the trial initiated by Leon.

source (Kallisthenes?), is not Xenophon, but rather the historian (an author of *Hellenica*?) on whom the Suda depends when referring to Timagoras' political purposes ("to undermine the existing friendship between Sparta and Athens") and whose testimony adds a significant tessera to our mosaic.

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