

# An Evaluation of the Return Route of the Ten Thousand and Theches Hill: Arakli/Sürmene– Bayburt Road

## Onbinlerin Dönüş Rotası ve Theches Tepesi Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme: Araklı/Sürmene– Bayburt Road

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### ABSTRACT

This article is the result of the surveys conducted within the scope of the TUBITAK 2519-EU COST ACTION SEADDA Project on “The Detection, Modelling, and Marking with Geographical Symbols of the Historical Routes Followed by the Ten Thousand at 401-400 BC and Mehmet the Conqueror at AD 1461” which aims to identify and model the historical routes of Xenophon and the Tens of Thousands to the Black Sea. Xenophon was an Athenian historian, philosopher, and soldier who probably lived between 430 and 355/354 BC. He served as a mercenary in the Persian army during the Persian occupation of Anatolia. In 401 BC, he commanded ten thousand Greek mercenaries in the army formed by the Persian satrap of Sardis and Prince Cyrus of Persia to seize the Persian throne. However, when the expedition failed and Cyrus died, he tried to bring the ten thousand Greek soldiers back by the shortest and safest route. In the hard winter conditions of Antiquity, the Ten Thousand survived by crossing the steep, impassable mountains of Eastern Anatolia and reaching the port of Trabzon. The book *Anabasis*, which describes this journey, provides very important information for the region, especially Anatolia. Within the scope of this project, it was aimed to reevaluate a large number of opinions by examining the routes that Ten Thousand would have passed through to arrive at the Black Sea, according to the *Anabasis*. This article focuses on an evaluation of Theches Hill and the Arakli/Sürmene-Bayburt route, one of the historical routes between Gymnias (near modern Bayburt) and Trabzon. On this road, ancient passages, milestones, religious and military buildings, and inns were also examined. The societies, travel times, vegetation, and climatic conditions mentioned by Xenophon in his book *Anabasis* were evaluated and examined in the field. On examined route Bayburt-Aydıntepe, Kılıçkaya, Dumlu (Henege), Şehitler Tepesi, Taşlıhanları, Mt. Madur, Ağaçbaşı, Ebehani, Soğuksu, Kahvedüzü, Aksuhani, Zavzaga, Canayer, Araklı route was tracked and examined.

**Keywords:** Anabasis, Arakli, Bayburt, Historical Routes, Xenophon

### ÖZ

Bu makale öncelikle Xenophon ve Onbinlerin Karadeniz’e ulaşan tarihî güzergahlarını yerinde tespit etmeyi ve modellemeyi amaçlayan “MÖ 401-400 Yılında Onbinlerin ve 1461 Yılında Fatih Sultan Mehmet’in Karadeniz’e Varış Güzergâhlarının Tespit Edilerek Modellenirilirip Coğrafi İşaretlerle Belirlenmesi” isimli TÜBİTAK 2519-Avrupa Birliği (AB) COST ACTION SEADDA 18128 Projesi kapsamında yapılan yüzey araştırmaları sonucu hazırlanmıştır. Bilindiği üzere Xenophon muhtemelen MÖ 430-355/354 arasında yaşamış Atinalı bir tarihçi, filozof ve askerdir. Anadolu’nun Persler tarafından işgali döneminde Pers ordusunda paralı asker olarak görev yapmıştır. MÖ 401’de Pers Sardes satrapı ve Pers Prensi Cyrus’un Pers tahtını ele geçirmek için oluşturduğu orduda da on bin Yunan paralı askerinin komutanlığını yürütmüştür. Ancak sefer başarısız olup, Cyrus ölünce on bin Yunan askerini en kısa ve güvenli yoldan geri götürmeye çalışmıştır. Onbinler Antik Çağ’ın zorlu kış şartlarında Doğu Anadolu’nun sarp, geçit vermez dağlarını aşarak Trabzon limanına ulaşabilip, hayatta kalabilmişlerdir. Bu yolculuğunu anlatan *Anabasis* isimli kitap, başta Anadolu olmak üzere bölge için çok önemli bilgiler vermektedir. Bu proje kapsamında da Onbinleri Karadeniz’e ulaştıran yolların *Anabasis*’e göre yerinde incelenmesini çok sayıda görüşü tekrardan değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu makale de Theches tepesinin üzerine bir değerlendirmeyi ve Gymnias- Trabzon arasındaki tarihî yollardan Arakli/Sürmene- Bayburt yolunu konu almaktadır. Bu yol üzerinde antik patikalar, mil taşları, dinî ve askerî yapılar, hanlar yerinde incelenmiştir. Xenophon *Anabasis* isimli kitabında belirttiği topluluklar, yolculuk süreleri, bitki örtüsü ve iklim şartları yerinde değerlendirilmiştir. Bu yol güzergahında Bayburt-Aydıntepe, Kılıçkaya Yaylası, Dumlu (Henege) Köyü, Şehitler Tepesi, Taşlıhanları, Madur, Ağaçbaşı, Ebehani, Soğuksu, Kahvedüzü, Aksuhani, Zavzaga, Canayer, Araklı rotası izlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Xenophon, Anabasis, Araklı, Bayburt, Kadim Rotalar

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## Introduction

Trabzon has been home to many nations throughout history. Its location has always maintained its strategic importance. Despite its topography being characterized by steep valleys, high mountains, and fast-flowing rivers, it has always been at the forefront of military and commercial activities because the historical roads from the interior of Anatolia to the Black Sea pass through the city.

The historical roads/routes starting from Trabzon are older; they have been more preferred since the first century BC. The roads, which started to be used intensively, especially during the period of the Roman Emperor Nero, fulfilled an important mission in the Eastern policy of Rome in the second century AD (Tac. Ann. XIII. 8; Magie, 1950: 571; Hind, 1971: 492-494; French, 1980: 716; Çiğdem, 2007: 14; Emir & İnan, 2018: 62). These historical routes, which continued to maintain their importance in the Eastern Roman period, played an active role in commercial activities with the small colonies established by the Genoese and Venetians in the Black Sea during the 13th century AD (Yılmaz, 2009: 361). In addition, the crusades between the 11th and 13th centuries AD also contributed to the development of these roads. In fact, instead of the Syrian and Egyptian ports, which were blockaded by the Crusades, the eastern Black Sea ports and the roads connected to these ports were preferred as alternative routes for transportation to the Middle East. Due to the political turmoil in the Middle East in the 12th and 13th centuries, the Trabzon–Basra and Trabzon–Tabriz routes were frequently used by merchants, travelers, and official embassy delegations (Saydam, 1998: 205).

The abovementioned historical roads, which maintained their importance during the Ottoman period, became more active, especially at the beginning of the 19th century. This period is considered to be the most developed period for the roads from Trabzon to Tabriz. In addition to the use of steamships in the Black Sea, factors such as the British preference for the eastern ports of the Black Sea in search of a shorter route for the Iranian transit trade and the fact that the ports on the Circassian and Georgian coasts, which were seen as an alternative to the port of Trabzon, came under the control of Russia, were the main reasons for that development (Yılmaz, 2015: 218). Fontanier (1834: 223), one of the 19th-century historians, stated that the caravan routes connecting Trabzon to the interior were the shortest in terms of Iranian imports and that with the revitalization of the eastern Black Sea ports by the British, an important commercial activity emerged on these routes.

As mentioned above, it is possible to say that there were roads connecting Trabzon to the interior in the historical process, and especially since the beginning of the 19th century AD, it is possible to say that these roads were often preferred and took place in modern scientific studies in a remarkable way. In this study, the Araklı/Sürmene–Bayburt Caravan Road, which stands out among the roads connecting Trabzon to the interior in archaeological and written sources, will be examined.

### Araklı/Sürmene–Bayburt Route

It is known that there are many different road networks connecting Trabzon to the interior. However, 2 important ports connect these road networks to the sea. The first one is Trabzon Port, and the other one is Araklı/Sürmene Port. Araklı Port is located about 30 km further east of Trabzon Port, in the part where today's Karadere flows into the sea (İnan, 2018: 170-171). This port, which Arrianus (Periplus, III. 1-2), was governor of the Cappadocia province of the Roman Empire between 131 and 137 AD, called Hyssos, is located at the beginning of important road routes like Trabzon Port (Talbert, 2000: 1232; Doğanç, 2020: 689). Arrianus mentions a Roman auxiliary force and fortress in and around the Araklı port. Procopius (de Bellis, VIII, II. 16, 6th century AD) and Notitia dignitatum (XXXVIII. 34), about three centuries after Arrianus, still mention this auxiliary unit. However, this port and fortress remained in the center of Araklı on the western side of the valley, about 1 km inland from the coast, due to the filling of the Karadere delta with alluvium (Eruz & Erbaş, 2020: 48). Two important roads starting from the hinterland of Araklı Port, which, according to the sources, were actively used during the Roman imperial period.

**First road:** Karadere–Çatak–Yağmurdere–Yayladere–Pirahmet–Kelkit (Bryer & Winfield, 1985: 10, 54, 323). This road was the second gateway of *Satala* (Gümüşhane/Sadak), one of the garrison cities of the Roman Empire, to the sea after Trabzon Port.<sup>1</sup> The road is much shorter than the other roads from Satala to Trabzon. Sources indicate that there was a Roman auxiliary unit just above the port and that it was an important military route during the Roman Period.

**Second road:** Çavuşlu–Kava Plain–Ağaçbaşı–Madur Mountain–Aşot Pass–Limonsuyu to Aydıntepe–Bayburt road (Bryer & Winfield: 1985: 97-98; Erüz et al., 2015b: 544). The most important feature of this road is that it is the shortest and most comfortable summer route from Trabzon to Bayburt. Evliya Çelebi (2008: 116) states that there was only 1 passage between Trabzon and Bayburt and that it was mostly preferred. However, Fontanier (1829: 289-300), one of the 19th-century travelers, stated that this historical caravan route was actively used at that time as well.<sup>2</sup> This caravan road, which was frequently preferred for transportation until the 1970s, was planned as an alternative to the Trabzon–Erzurum–Kars road during World War I (Erüz & Erbaş, 2020: 49). This road, which was actively used in

1 Bryer (1980: 26) emphasized that this ancient road from the port of Hyssos to Satala was even busier in the Middle Ages.

2 Lynch (1967: 240), one of the 19th-century travelers, states that although this route between Maçka and Bayburt was shorter than the other roads, it was quite difficult and challenging for travelers. However, Lynch stated in his report that those who wanted to go from Trabzon to Bayburt generally preferred this short route.

many periods of history, is one of the estimated routes used by Xenophon to reach Trabzon in 401 BC.<sup>3</sup> *Madur Mountain*, which is located on this route, is accepted as “*Theches Hill*,” where Greek soldiers saw the Black Sea (Pontus) in some sources (Zehiroğlu, 2000: 14; Bilgin, 2000: 18; Erüz & Erbaş, 2020: 50).

Within the scope of the TUBITAK 2519-EU COST ACTION SEADDA Project, which aimed to identify and model the historical routes of Xenophon and the Ten Thousand reaching the Black Sea, the first fieldwork started in Aydıntepe in 2022. Aydıntepe is located 18 km northwest of modern Bayburt, on the slope where the Soğanlı Mountains, which line the natural border between Trabzon and Bayburt, and a branch of the Northern Anatolian mountain range meet the plain. During the surveys conducted in the Aydıntepe district center, important archaeological sites were identified in the outer part of Aydıntepe Castle. A significant part of the structures and materials found in and around the castle are dated to late antiquity. In addition, the findings from the grave excavations carried out in the region between 1989 and 1991 were also dated to Late Antiquity. One of the most important historical structures discovered in Aydıntepe is the underground system in the district center. The data obtained from the excavations in this system, consisting of many chambers and tunnels, and the ceramics collected during the recent surveys prove that there was a populated settlement here (Özkorucuklu, 1992: 237-238; Özkorucuklu, 1993: 103-127; Ünsal 2006: 192; Çiğdem, 2013: 67).

All this data reveals that Aydıntepe was a strategic location and is a historical settlement with its surface morphology. This place is also one of the beginnings of the historical passages reaching Trabzon. Moreover, Aydıntepe is also located on the shortest caravan routes reaching Trabzon. Another importance of Aydıntepe was that it is identified with “Gymnias” mentioned in Xenophon’s *Anabasis* (Mitford, 2000: 127; Bilgin 2000: 16–17; Çiğdem et al., 2020: 20).<sup>5</sup> So much so that the route in Xenophon’s *Anabasis* and the geographical definitions mentioned along the route are following the Aydıntepe–Gymnias mostly overlap.

The Araklı/Sürmene–Bayburt Road route was followed in the field studies started from Aydıntepe. The first stop was Kılıçkaya Plateau, located just north of Aydıntepe (📍 Location: 40.51372, 40.25249). Kılıçkaya Plateau is located on the route connecting the Silk Road to the Soğanlı Mountains. For this reason, Xenophon and the soldiers (Ten Thousand) accompanying him may have climbed to the summits of Soğanlı via this route. After the Kılıçkaya Plateau, there are many alternative historical routes leading down to Trabzon. However, in line with the limits of the project, the Araklı/Sürmene–Bayburt route was also included. On this route, several milestones were identified on the caravan route passing through Dumlu Village (Henege), 44 km from Bayburt, and 36 km from Aydıntepe (Hart) (📍 Location: 40.2555, 40.1717). Milestones are known to have existed since the Ottoman period and are known to facilitate wayfinding, especially in winter and foggy weather (Figures 1 and 2). Similar milestones are also found at Uluçayır in the south of this route (Çiğdem et al. 2020: 437-438).

In addition, another milestone, largely buried in the ground, was observed about 200 m south of Koyaklar-tepe Fortress (Barchon-Adabaşı Village? Figure 3) on the Aydıntepe–İspir road (İlhan, 2019: 50). It is not possible to date these structures exactly. However, written information and surface findings indicate that the use of this road dates back much further than its known history. These milestones were partially chiseled and erected from the natural granite rocks abundant in the region. The milestones and the structures accompanying them indicate that the route was an important historical road. Based on the idea that this route may have been used by Xenophon, the first points on the route where the sea can be seen were tried to be determined.

With the help of information obtained from local inhabitants of Dumlu Village, it was determined that the sea can be seen from the point called “Şehitler-tepesi” 500 m west of the village (Figure 4; 📍 Location: 40.3318, 40.1155, 2.458 m). However, this point is quite close to Aydıntepe, where Gymnias was located. This is because Xenophon states in his work that there is a distance of 5 days between Theches Hill and Gymnias. Because of its much shorter distance, that information makes Şehitler-tepesi not a good option for Theches Hill.

*“...They stayed in their villages till the Greeks had passed by when they pursued and perpetually harassed them. They had their dwellings in strong places, in which they had also laid up their provisions so that the Greeks could get nothing from that country, but lived upon the cattle which they took from the Taochi. The Greeks next arrived at the river Harpasus, the breadth of which was 4 Plethron. Hence, they proceeded through the territory of the Scythini, 4 days journey, making 20 parasangs, over a level tract, until they came to some villages, in which they halted 3 days and collected provisions. From this place they advanced a 4-day journey, twenty parasangs, to a large, rich, and populous city, called Gymnias, from which the governor of the country sent the Greeks a guide, to conduct them through a region at war with his people. The guide, when he came, said that he would take them in 5 days to a place whence they should see the sea; if not, he would consent to be put to death. ... On the 5th day, they came to the mountain and the name of it was Theches.” (Xen. Anab. IV-7: 17–21).*

When the historical route was followed after Şehitler-tepesi, first Limonsuyu Hanları (inns) and then Taşlı Hanları (inns) on the Taşlı Plateau were reached, respectively. These inns, known as one of the places frequented by caravans or travelers in the 19th century, have unfortunately not survived to the present day, only their ruins are visible. After Taşlı Hanları, the 2.742 m high Madur Mountain (📍 Location: 40.6524, 40.0405- Grade 42.7/9.9) in Köşk Plateau, which is claimed to be *Theches Hill* in modern sources (Zehiroğlu, 2000: 14; Bilgin,

3 On the alternative routes used by Xenophon and the accompanying soldiers to reach Trabzon, see Erüz & Erbaş, 2020: 23 ff. Erüz & Erbaş, 2020: 23.

4 Other proposed locations for “Gymnias” are Gümüşhane (Sagona & Sagona, 2004: 68), Bayburt–İspir Road (Hamilton, 2013: 235), Erzurum (Paradeisopoulos, 2014: 254).

5 Modern studies identify Aydıntepe with the settlement named “Charton” in the work of Procopius, who lived in the 6th century AD. Because the oldest name of Aydıntepe is known as “Hart,” and it is accepted that this name turned into Hart-Chart-Charton over time. For more information, see Emir, 2022.



**Figure 1.**  
Soğanlı Mountain

2000: 18), was reached<sup>6</sup> (Figure 5). It is quite difficult to reach the hills from the foothills of this mountain, which looks like a very steep hill. In addition, since *Mount Madur* is one of the highest points in the region, it is covered with fog and mist most of the day. After Madur Mountain, the place called “Ağaçbaşı Inns” was reached by moving towards the north (📍 Location: 40.4423, 39.3415). Although no remains of this inn have been identified, stone-paved traces of the old caravan route can be seen on the route at the location.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 2.**  
Dumlu Village (Heneye) Milestones

<sup>6</sup> Other recommended destinations for Theches Hill are Bayburt Vavuk Pass (Rorit, 1870: 463), Mount Kop (Ainsworth, 1842: 127–153), Torul-Uğurtaş (Istavri) Ayesertepesi (Zerzelidies, 1961: 252), Deve Boynu (Mitford, 2000: 129; Paradeisopoulos, 2014: 334; Erüz & Erbaş, 2020: 41), Turnagöl (Mitford, 2000: 130), and Maçka/İskobel Hill (Karagöz, 1998: 137).

<sup>7</sup> Arslan & Demirtaş (2007), after their field studies in the region, state that it is very difficult to find ancient road remains on this route due to the road maintenance, repair and expansion activities carried out on this old Silk Road route from Karadere to Bayburt or Satala until recent periods. However, the most prominent traces of the ancient road on this route are found between the villages of Pazarcık-Bahçecik and Bahçecik-Güney Mahallesi, emphasizing that it would not be wrong to assume that this route was also used by the Romans.

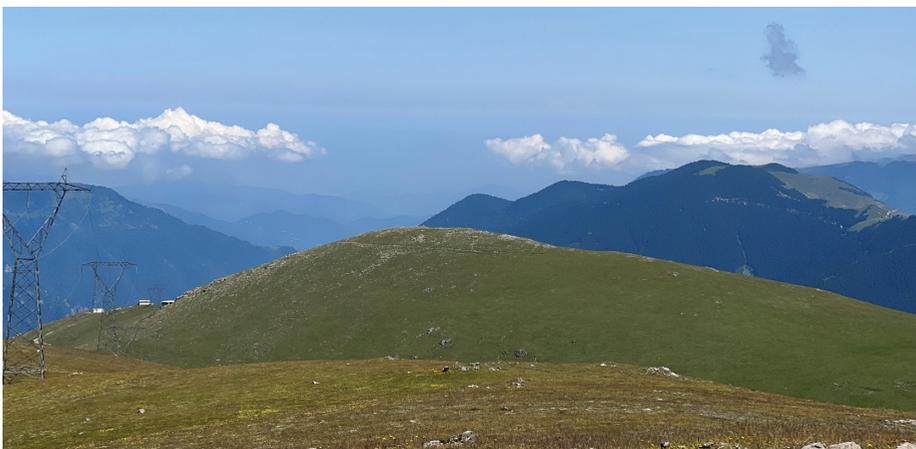


**Figure 3.**  
Koyaklartepe Fortress (Barchon-Adabaşı Village?)

After the *Ağaçbaşı Hanları*, *Ebeler Hanı* (Beşkøy Village), *Soğuksu Hanları* (Beşkøy Village), and then *Kahvedüzü Hanları* were reached, respectively. Like the other inns, the present buildings in *Kahve Düzü* Inns were built on top of the old structures dating back to the Ottoman Period. Therefore, although traces of the old inn could not be detected among the ruins, many architectural structures built in the old style were observed. Between the *Kahvedüzü* and *Soğuksu Hanları*, with the information obtained from the residents, the remains of the old stone way were identified (Figure 6). Continuing northward from *Kahvedüzü*, the Araklı District was reached via *Aksu Hanları* (*Yokuşbaşı Village*).

In Ortaköy Quarter, 4 km from Araklı, there is a castle called *Zavzaga Castle* (*Yoncalı Village* 📍; Location: 40.5237, 40.127) built on a steep hill rising just above *Karadere* (Bryer & Winfield, 1985: 329; Bilgin, 1990: 34; Sinclair, 1990: 468; Öztürk, 2005: 1197). However, since the castle is located next to a quarry today, a large part of it has been destroyed (Figure 7). Despite the information that a chapel and wall remain on the site, this could not be confirmed. However, the fact that it is located on the historical route suggests that the main task of the castle was to ensure the security of the passage.

In Araklı District, close to the sea, there is *Canayer* (*Buzluca*) Castle (Sinclair, 1990: 151; Crow & Bryer, 1997: 283 et al.; Bryer & Winfield, 1985: 328). *Canayer Castle* once upon a time was the arrival spot to the sea that can be easily followed in historical sources (📍 Location: 40.948170, 40.028019). *Canayer Castle* is located approximately 2 km within Araklı (*Sürmene*) Port, known as the Ancient *Hyssos Port* (*Ysi Porto*). The structure, considered a special survey, located in *Buzluca Village* and its ridge in a position dominating the sea and the port, is known to belong to the Roman period and is identified with the castle in *Hyssos* mentioned in *Arrianus'* work (Crow & Bryer, 1997: 283 et al.; Bryer & Winfield, 1985: 328). The castle has historically been the starting gate for important routes used both militarily and commercially (Emir, 2020: 12). The examination of the fortress revealed that the structure was built as an ideal Roman camp. The



**Figure 4.**  
Şehitlertepesi (Dumlu Village)



**Figure 5.**  
*Madur Mountain*



**Figure 6.**  
*Kahvedüzü and Aksu Hanları (inns) Old Stone Way*



**Figure 7.**  
*Zavzaga Castle (Yoncalı Village)*

fortress is located on a naturally fortified flat hill at an altitude of approximately 700 m. Despite the dense vegetation, it is understood that the fortress was surrounded by walls exceeding 3 m in height in some parts. It is also estimated that towers were built around four sides of the castle. However, only three of these towers can be seen today<sup>8</sup>. Because of the dense vegetation and vines surround-

8 For more information on the fortress structure see Çilingiroğlu & Derin, 1994: 346.

ing the walls, it is almost impossible to determine the whole castle plan. The determinations were made with the help of aerial drones (Figures 8 and 9). From Canayer Castle, a road of approximately 2 km to the south was followed to reach Araklı Port, and thus the Araklı/Sürmene–Bayburt caravan route was examined and completed on site.

### **The Hill of Theches and the Debate on the Return Route of the Ten Thousand**

The Araklı/Sürmene–Bayburt caravan road, which was examined, came to the fore with its features such as having many points overlooking the sea, passing around historical castles and inns, being actively preferred in the historical process, and being the shortest and most comfortable route between Bayburt-Trabzon. However, another importance of this road, as mentioned above, is that it is identified with the possible route used by Xenophon and the soldiers accompanying him. So much so that Aydıntepe, which lies to the south of this road, is associated with Gymnias mentioned in Xenophon's *Anabasis*. At the same time, it is claimed that Madur Mountain, one of the highest peaks of the region, located on the route, may be "Theches Hill" (Figures 10 and 11; Zehiroğlu, 2000: 14; Bilgin, 2000: 18).

Our investigations in the region confirm that this route, where Madur Mountain is located, is the shortest and easiest way to reach the sea (94 km between Bayburt and Araklı). Therefore, it seems strategically more reasonable for the army, which could see the sea from Madur and the hills before it, to land at Araklı/Sürmene Port, which is 50 km from Madur, instead of reaching Trabzon via a more circuitous route by crossing valleys, mountains, and densely forested areas (Erüz & Erbaş, 2020: 43-44). However, a few questions arise here that need to be answered:

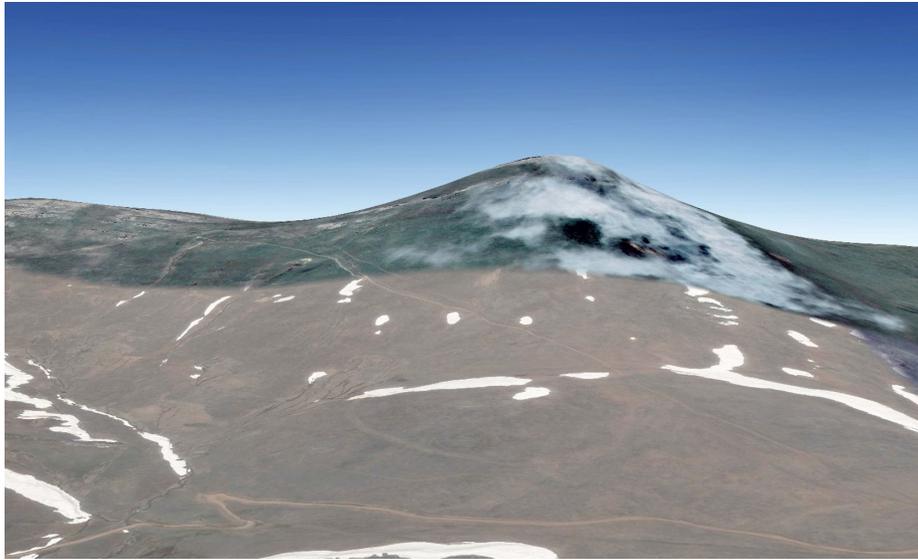
- After Gymnias, why did the local guide take the Greek soldiers to the more distant Madur Mountain when they had the opportunity to see the sea from a much closer place and in a shorter time (e.g., Şehitler Tepesi)?



**Figure 8.**  
*Canayer (Buzluca) Castle*



**Figure 9.**  
*Black Sea from Canayer (Buzluca) Castle*



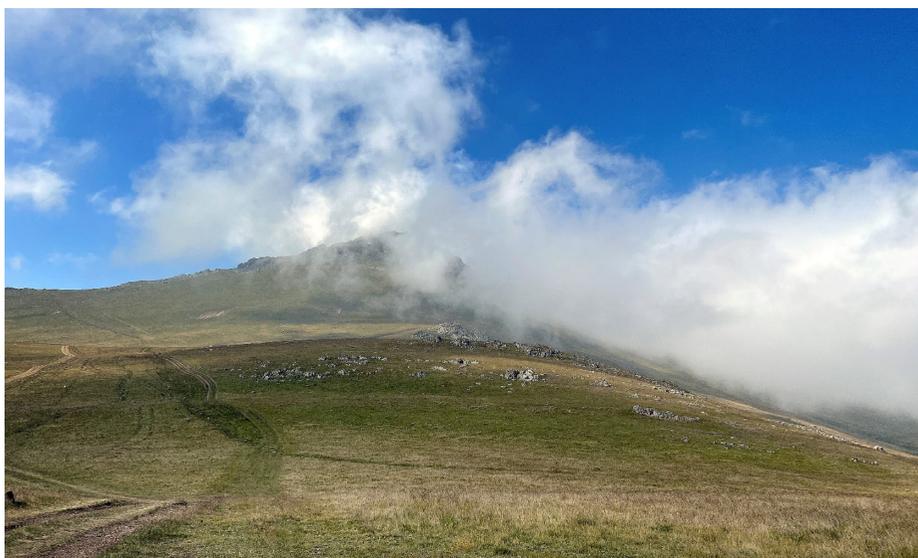
**Figure 10.**  
Madur Mountain

- How and why did the army, fully equipped and tired from marching, climb en masse from the foot of Madur to the very steep summit (2742 m, 150–160 m)?

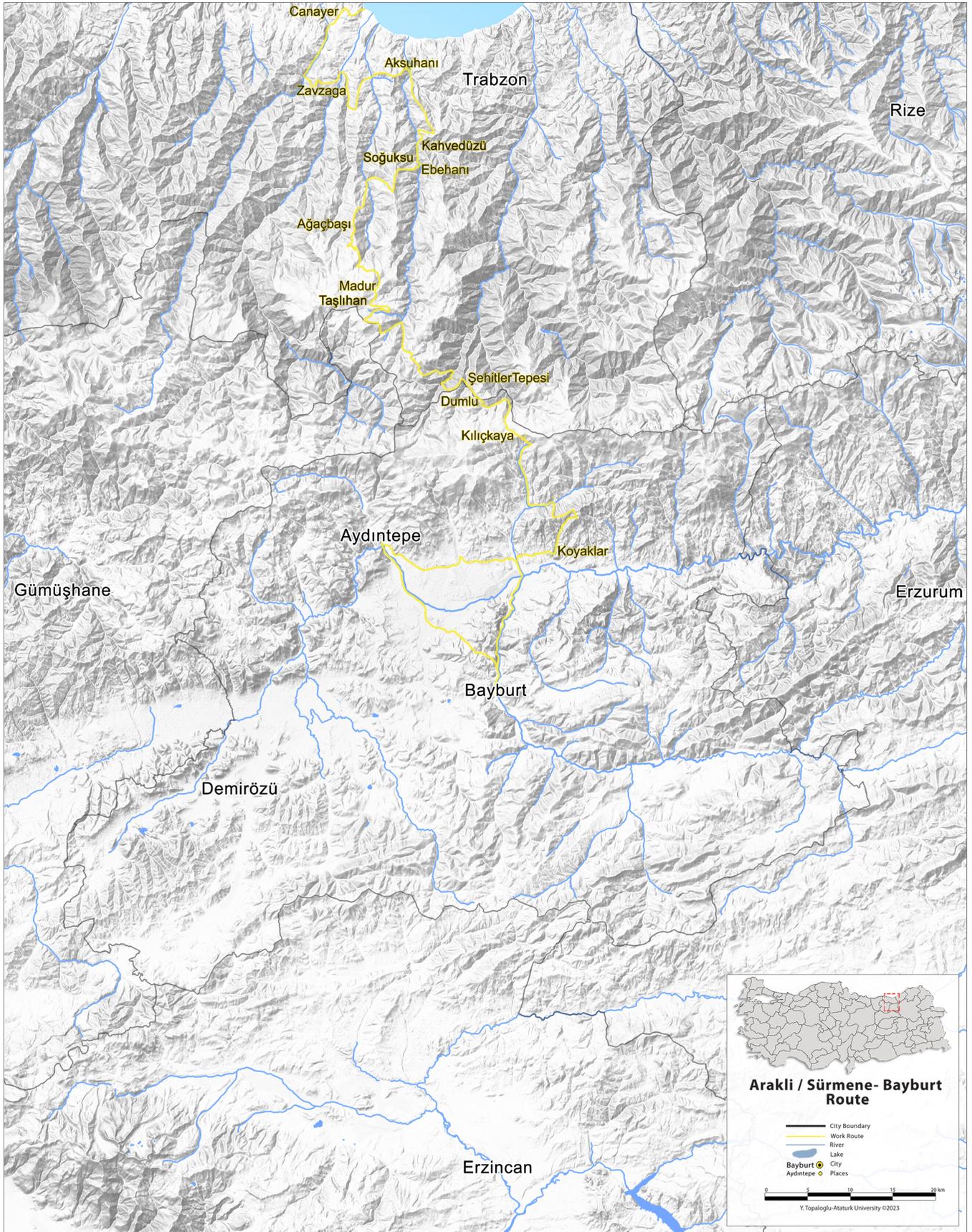
The answers to these questions can be found between the lines of the sentences in which Xenophon talks about the 5-day journey with the local guide they received from Gymnias. Xenophon (Xen. Anab. IV.7. 20-21) states that the guide deliberately took them through different routes during this journey, especially through lands hostile to the people of Gymnias, so that Hellenic soldiers could harm or even destroy them.

*"... (Guide) led the army and as soon as it was in enemy territory, he provoked the troops by ravaging the country. This showed that he had not come to the Greeks out of friendship but for this purpose only. On the fifth day, they reached the mountain called Theches..."* (Xen. Anab. IV.7. 20-21).

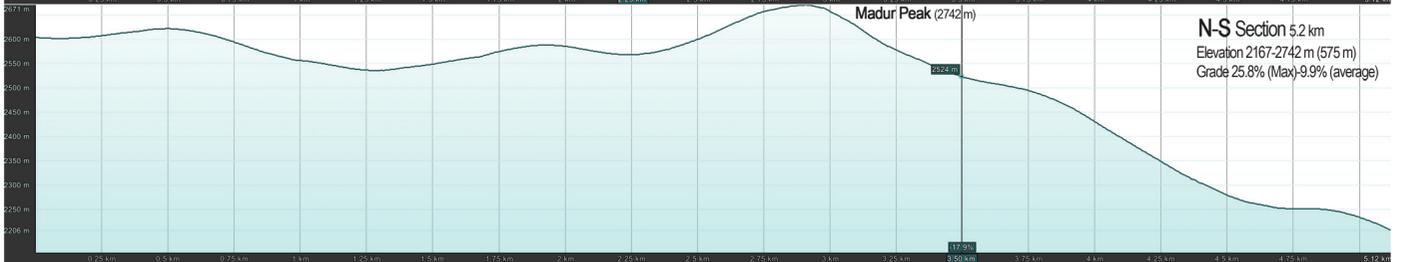
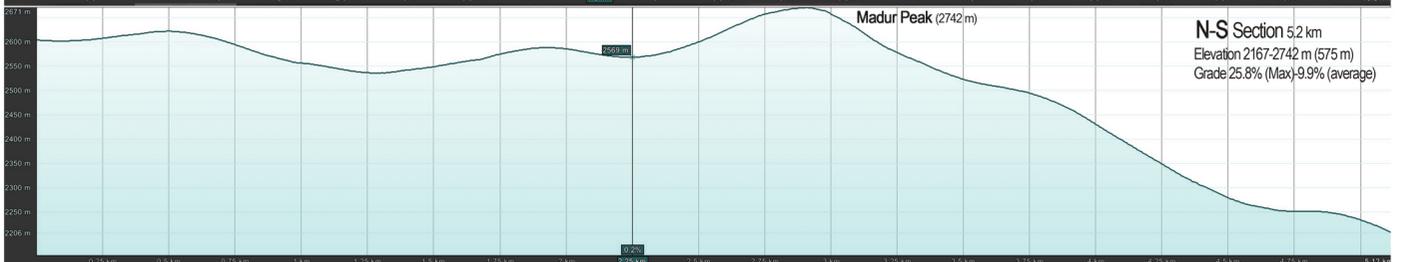
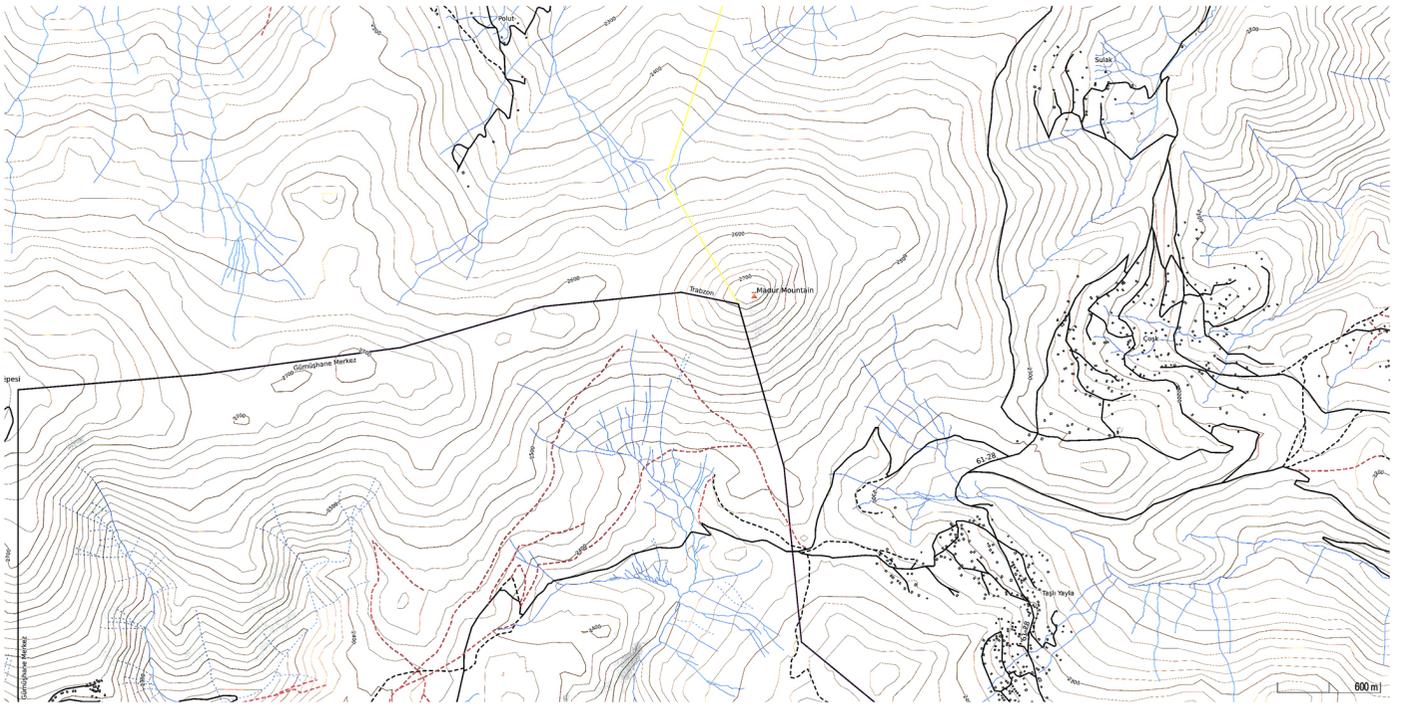
This information proves the fact that the local guide did not use the known route to reach Theches Hill but preferred a more difficult and longer alternative. This is part of the answer to the question of why Mount Madur could not be the hill Ten Thousand climbed and saw the sea. In addition, it is still very difficult to say that the Arakli/Sürmene–Bayburt road was the route used by Xenophon and his soldiers to reach Trabzon and that Mount Madur was the Theches Hill where the soldiers saw the sea at that time. Because if Xenophon and his soldiers used the route of Mount Madur, then the closest place in the city where they would meet the sea would be Araklı Port. Because there is no other historical route to Trabzon to the west through the Karadere Valley and the steep slopes to the south and



**Figure 11.**  
Madur Mountain



**Map 1.**  
Arakli/Sürmene-Bayburt Route



**Madur Mountain**  
Trabzon-Gümüşhane-Bayurt

**Map 2.**  
Madur Mountain (Trabzon-Gümüşhane-Bayurt) Topographic Map and Elevation Sections

west of Mount Madur. However, there is a coastal road of at least 40 km from Arakli Port to the city center where the Trapezus (Modern Trabzon) colony was located, and Xenophon (Xen. Anab. IV.7. 22) stated that they reached Trabzon directly after a total of 5 days of walking after Theches Hill. In other words, Xenophon did not mention the coastal road of about 40 km from Arakli port to Trabzon. If we suppose that Xenophon had landed in Arakli port from the Madur Mountain route and not directly to Trabzon, in that case, it should be seen that Xenophon, who pays attention to every detail in the regions he passes through, would also mention the 40 km coastal road route.

In addition, the physical structure of Mount Madur, which is at an altitude of 2742 m under constant fog, is a very steep hill that is far beyond the reach of an army. Even the most easily accessible part of the hill requires a steep climb of 150–160 m (Grade 42.7 and 9.9). Although Xenophon says that this hill was climbed by running and even by beasts of burden and horses, unfortunately, it is not possible to reach the summit of this hill today by running and running with beasts of burden.

When the men who were in the front had mounted the height and looked down upon the sea, a great shout proceeded from them, and Xenophon and the rear guard, on hearing it, thought that some new enemies were assailing the front, for in the rear, too, the people from the country that they had burned were following them, and the rear guard, by placing an ambush, had killed some and taken others' prisoners and had captured about 20 shields made of raw ox hides with the hair on. But as the noise still increased and drew nearer, and as those who came up from time to time kept running at full speed to join those who were continually shouting, the cries becoming louder as the men became more numerous, it appeared to Xenophon that it must be something of a very great moment. Mounting his horse, therefore, and taking with him Lycius and the cavalry, he hastened forward to give aid, when presently they heard the soldiers shouting, "Thalatta, Thalatta (sea, sea)" and cheering on one another. They then all began to run, the rear guard as well as the rest, and the baggage cattle and horses were put to their speed. When they had all arrived at the top, the men embraced one another and their generals and captains with tears in their eyes. Suddenly, whoever it was that suggested it, the soldiers brought stones and raised a large mound, on which they laid a number of raw ox hides, staves, and shields taken from the enemy. The shields the guide himself hacked in pieces and exhorted the rest to do the same. Having then pointed out to them a village where they might take up their quarters, which they were to proceed to the Macrones, the evening came on and he departed, his way during the night (Xen. Anab. IV.7. 21-27).

## Conclusion

Within the scope of the TUBITAK 2519-EU COST ACTION SEADDA Project, one of the routes examined within the scope of the project we started at the beginning of 2022 is to investigate the arrival routes of Xenophon and Mehmet the Conqueror to the Black Sea. Was the passage possible through the Araklı/Sürmene–Bayburt route or not?

The historical routes from Trabzon to the interior were sometimes preferred for commercial and sometimes military activities, and as the strategic importance of the region increased, other alternative routes broke through. While factors such as security, climatic conditions, seasonal changes, and duration of passage were effective factors for the preference of any of these alternative routes, arrivals, or starting ports. Therefore, as it is clearly seen, including passage lines of Ten Thousand and Mehmet II Conqueror, there are numerous turbulent factors that affect the choice of the passage alternative. The historical choices inevitably affected the importance and value of the routes. Two historical passages are among the basics that increased the value of the mentioned routes (Map 1 and 2).

The Araklı/Sürmene–Bayburt Road, which is one of the alternative routes connecting Trabzon to the interior, is the shortest alternative from Trabzon to Bayburt, and the presence of an important port at the arrival location has been effective in increasing the increasing importance of the road during the known historical span.

Throughout history in the region, military and civilian buildings and small village settlements, which were generally built using wood, were established in a geography covered with dense forest and sub-forest vegetation (Kızıltan, 1992: 213-242). Wooden building material, which was preferred due to its easy accessibility, was widely used, especially in the coastal region from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. The fact that the coastal region, and other regions of the Black Sea have different topographical features, different vegetation, and different building material possibilities has affected the preservation of historical remains. Nevertheless, the castles, historical mansions, inns, and bridges, as well as milestones found during surface surveys on the route, are the most concrete evidence of the importance of the road. In addition, the information provided by 19th-century travelers also shows that this road was actively used in that period. Therefore, in the light of archaeological and written documents, it is possible to say that the Araklı/Sürmene–Bayburt Road was an important road used since ancient times and was used especially by the people of the region until the late 19th century. However, the available data is not sufficient to determine whether this road was the route used by Xenophon and his soldiers to reach the city of Trabzon, which has an important place in history. For this, it is necessary to complete research on all alternative routes in the region and review them together with other alternatives.

Nevertheless, geographical reasons have shown that the view of Mount Madur, which is shown as Theches Hill, could not be convenient. We think that the modern researchers who put forward this view did not climb to the summit of Mount Madur and did not see the more favorable points on the route overlooking the sea and where the army could reach. For all these reasons, it can be said that Mount Madur cannot be a strong candidate to be the Theches Hill. Ten Thousand saw the Black Sea and yelled, "Thalatta, Thalatta!"

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## Yapılandırılmış Özet

Trabzon tarih boyunca birçok ulusa ev sahipliği yapmıştır. Konumuyla her daim stratejik önemini korumuştur. Sarp vadiler, yüksek dağlar ve yüksek debili akarsuların şekillendirdiği topoğrafyaya rağmen Anadolu'nun iç kesimlerinden Karadeniz'e ulaşan tarihî yollar kentten geçmesi sayesinde askerî ve ticari faaliyetleri ile sürekli ön planda olmuştur. Trabzon'dan başlayan tarihî yollar daha eski olsa da MÖ I. yüzyıldan itibaren daha çok tercih edilmiştir. Özellikle Roma İmparatoru Nero Dönemi'nden itibaren yoğun olarak kullanılmaya başlanan yollar, MS II. yüzyıldan itibaren Roma'nın Doğu politikasında önemli bir misyonu yerine getirmiştir. Tarihsel süreçte Trabzon'u iç kesimlere bağlayan yolların bulunduğu, özellikle MS XIX. yüzyılın başlarından itibaren de bu yolların sıklıkla tercih edilmesiyle modern dönem bilimsel çalışmalarda dikkate değer bir şekilde yer aldığını söylemek mümkündür.

Xenophon ve Onbinlerin Karadeniz'e ulaşan tarihî güzergahlarını yerinde tespit etmeyi ve modellemeyi amaçlayan bu makale, "MÖ 401-400 Yılında Onbinlerin ve 1461 Yılında Fatih Sultan Mehmet'in Karadeniz'e Varış Güzergâhlarının Tespit Edilerek Modellendirilip Coğrafi İşaretlerle Belirlenmesi" isimli TÜBİTAK 2519- Avrupa Birliği (AB) COST ACTION SEADDA 18128 Projesi kapsamında yapılan yüzey araştırmaları sonucu hazırlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada da Trabzon'u iç kesimlere bağlayan yollar arasından özellikle arkeolojik ve yazılı kaynaklarda ön plana çıkan Araklı/Sürmene Bayburt Kervan Yolu incelenmiştir.

Trabzon'dan iç kesimlere ulaşan tarihî yollar kimi zaman ticari kimi zaman ise askerî faaliyetlerde tercih edilmiş ve bölgenin stratejik önemi arttıkça başka alternatif güzergâhlar da ortaya çıkmıştır. Güvenlik, iklim şartları, zaman gibi etkenler ortaya çıkan bu alternatif güzergâhların herhangi birinin tercih edilmesinde etkili olurken, bu rotaların sonunda bulunan limanlar da yolların değerini artıran en büyük faktör hâline gelmiştir. Trabzon'u iç kesimlere bağlayan alternatif güzergâhlardan olan Araklı/Sürmene Bayburt Yolu Trabzon'dan Bayburt'a ulaşan en kısa mesafeli yol olması ve çıkış noktasında önemli bir limanın bulunması yolun tarihsel süreçte giderek önem kazanmasında etkili olmuştur. Çavuşlu- Kava Düzlüğü- Ağaçbaşı- Madur Dağı- Aşot Geçidi- Limonsuyu üzerinden Aydıntepe-Bayburt yoluyla birleşen bu rota Evliya Çelebi ve. XIX. yüzyıl seyyahlarından Fontanier tarafından o dönemde de aktif kullandığını belirtmiştir. MS 1970'lere kadar taşımacılıkta sıklıkla tercih edilen bu kervan yolu, I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Trabzon-Erzurum-Kars yolunun alternatifi olarak planlanmıştır. Bu yol aynı zamanda Xenophon'un MÖ 401'de Trabzon'a ulaşmak için kullandığı tahmini rotalardandır. Bu rota üzerinde ki Madur Dağı da bazı kaynaklarda Yunan askerlerin Karadeniz'i (Pontus) gördükleri "Theches Tepesi" olarak ileri sürülmektedir.

Tarih boyunca birbirine uzak genelde ahşap ile inşa edilen askerî ve sivil yapılar ve küçük köy yerleşimleri yoğun orman ve orman altı bitki örtüsüyle kaplı bir coğrafyada kurulmuştur. Kolay erişilebilirliğinden tercih edilen ahşap yapı malzemesi özellikle kıyı bölgesinde Tunç Çağı'ndan Demir Çağı'na yaygın olarak kullanılmıştır. Karadeniz'in kıyı bölgesi ile diğer bölgelerinin farklı topografik özelliklere, farklı bitki örtüsü ve farklı yapı elamanı olanaklarına sahip olması tarihî kalıntılarında günümüze ulaşmasını etkilemiştir. Buna rağmen güzergâh üzerinde yapılan yüzey araştırmalarında mil taşlarının yanı sıra tespit edilen kaleler, tarihî konaklar, han ve köprüler yolun önemini ortaya kayan en somut kanıtlardır. Ayrıca özellikle XIX. yüzyıl seyyahlarının verdikleri bilgiler de bu yolun o dönemde oldukça aktif olarak kullanıldığını göstermektedir. Arkeolojik ve yazılı belgeler ışığında Araklı-Sürmene Bayburt Yolu'nun eski çağlardan itibaren kullanılan önemli bir yol olduğunu ve XIX. yüzyılın sonlarına kadar özellikle bölge halkı tarafından kullanıldığını söylemek mümkündür. Ancak bu yolun Xenophon ve onun beraberindeki askerlerin Karadeniz'e ulaşmak için kullandığı güzergâh olup olmadığını belirlemek eldeki veriler yeterli değildir. Bunun için bölgedeki tüm alternatif güzergâhlarda araştırmaların tamamlanması ve diğer alternatiflerle birlikte gözden geçirilmesi gerekmektedir.

Rotaların tespiti için öncelikle Gymnias'ın konumunu belirlemek bu rota için oldukça önemlidir. "Gymnias" için Bayburt, Aydıntepe, Gümüşhane, Bayburt- İspir Yolu üzerinde bir yere Erzurum gibi öneriler bulunmaktadır. Ancak bu önerilerden en mantıklısı Aydıntepe'dir. Zira Aydıntepe, Trabzon'a ulaşan en kısa kervan yollarının üzerinde bulunmakta ve Xenophon'un belirttiği yol güzergâhı ve güzergâh boyunca bahsi geçen coğrafi tanımlar, mesafeler uygunluk gösterir. Diğer bir lokalizasyon ise yukarıda da belirtildiği üzere Theches Tepesi olarak gösterilen Madur Dağı'dır. Madur Dağı'nın bulunduğu bu güzergâhın, denize ulaşan en kısa ve en kolay yol olduğunu teyit edilebilmektedir. Madur ve öncesi tepelerde denizi gören ordunun, karadan vadi, dağ ve ormanları aşmak sureti ile daha dolambaçlı bir rota ile Trabzon'a ulaşmak yerine, Madur Dağı'ndan 50 km mesafedeki Araklı/Sürmene Limanı'na inmesi stratejik açıdan makul görülmektedir. Ancak burada cevaplanması gereken birkaç soru ortaya çıkmaktadır. -Rehber Gymnias (Aydıntepe?) sonrası Yunan askerleri çok daha yakın bir yerden ve daha kısa zamanda denizi gösterebilme imkanına sahipken neden daha uzak Madur Dağı'na getirir? -Tam teçhizatlı ve yürümekten yorulan ordu, nasıl ve neden toplu hâlde Madur'un eteklerinden çok dik zirveye (2742m, 150-160m) tırmanmıştır? Bu soruların yanıtları yine Xenophon Gymnias'dan aldıkları kılavuz ile birlikte gerçekleştirilen 5 günlük yolculuktan bahsettiği cümlelerin satır aralarında bulunabilir. Zira Xenophon, kılavuzun bu yolculuk sırasında kendilerini bilinçli olarak farklı yollardan özellikle Gymnias halkına düşman topraklardan geçirerek Helen askerlerin bu halklara zarar vermesini hatta yok etmesini amaçladığını ifade etmiştir. Böylece Madur Dağı görüşünün doğru olmadığı coğrafi nedenler ile açıklamak mümkündür. Ayrıca diğer bir soru; bu yol güzergâhının doğrudan Trabzon'a değil Trabzon'dan yaklaşık 35 km daha doğusunda ki Araklı Limanı'na inmesi ve Xenophon ve ordusunun 35 km'lik bir sahil yolu yürüyüşü gerçekleştirmiş olmaları gerekmektedir. Ancak Xenophon eserinde her ayrıntıya dikkat çekerken böylesi bir yola da yer vermesi beklenirdi.