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XENOPHON  
ANABASIS



*Translated by*  
CARLETON L. BROWNSON

*Revised by*  
JOHN DILLERY

# XENOPHON

## ANABASIS

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY  
CARLETON L. BROWNSON

REVISED BY JOHN DILLERY

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For this Revised Edition of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, John Dillery has extensively revised the text in accordance with current scholarship, made consequent revisions as well as corrections throughout Carleton L. Brownson's translation, supplied updated notes, and provided a new Introduction.

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Anabasis* is Xenophon's account of the march of ten thousand Greek soldiers through much of the western portion of the Persian empire. Mercenaries hired by a rebellious Achaemenid prince, Cyrus the Younger, they followed him to the great battle of Cunaxa, fought near Babylon in the summer of 401 BC. There Cyrus fell in the effort to wrest the throne of Persia from his brother, Artaxerxes II, and the Ten Thousand (as they were later called), without their leader and employer, had to make their own way back to the Greek world. Along the way their generals were captured (and later executed), and the Ten Thousand were forced to choose new leaders. Xenophon emerged as the ideal replacement, and guided the men through difficult terrain, food shortages, and sometimes hostile peoples to reach the relative safety of the northwest coast of Asia Minor.

For many decades the language, style, and content of the *Anabasis* made it the recommended text for learners of Attic Greek. At the same time scholarly attention was addressed mainly to its stylistic and linguistic features. More recent studies have redressed this balance by greater

*Note.* I would like to thank Professor Zeph Stewart for his generous and invaluable advice about this introduction.

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concentration on the work's importance as a historical source and as a work of literature. The *Anabasis* tells us a great deal about the inner workings of the Persian empire at the end of the fifth century, about relations between the Greeks and the Persians, and more generally about the experience of one of the earliest mercenary armies in the West, a type of army that was to be seen with greater frequency in the years to come. It also provides us with more reliable information about the life of Xenophon himself than any other document surviving from antiquity. The *Anabasis* is first and foremost a memoir written by a military man about his earlier career. But it is also a work of biography, containing, most notably, a famous obituary of Cyrus, as well as brief character sketches of the captured generals. Indeed, as with so many of Xenophon's works, the *Anabasis* defies generic categorization: not entirely a history nor a travelogue, the work combines elements of both.

### *Xenophon*

Xenophon was a man of unusually wide experience who lived for more than seventy years. He seems to have known personally, to varying degrees of familiarity, several of the men who shaped the political and intellectual landscape of the last years of the fifth century and the first half of the fourth: among them, Socrates, Cyrus the Younger, and Agesilaus of Sparta. He was both a professional soldier and a writer. In his corpus we find works we can style philosophy as well as history: indeed, in antiquity he was considered first a philosopher, and secondly a historian. He lived in an age of change and was, as an exile from his native Athens who also had an intimate knowledge of Sparta, in

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an intermediary or interstitial position: from his vantage point he could draw on experiences few others had, and provide unique insights into the world in which he lived. All his works demonstrate a mind that was at one moment very much a product of its time, yet also capable of radically new understandings. The *Anabasis* is particularly illustrative in this regard.

The *Anabasis* tells us more about Xenophon than any other document from antiquity; but with that said, we do not know very much. Indeed, passages from this work are at the heart of three disputed points regarding his life: the year of his birth, and consequently his age; the precise circumstances surrounding his exile from Athens (the date and cause); and the exact nature of Xenophon's relationship with Socrates. Although all these issues remain unresolved, the *Anabasis* does provide repeated confirmation of perhaps the most important fact about his career: Xenophon was a military man, and military thinking is at the center of how he understood his world.

As with many authors from antiquity, we do not know precisely when Xenophon was born. All that can be said with certainty is that the year of his birth was probably between 430 and 425.<sup>1</sup> At 3.1.25 he implies that his youth might discourage some from appointing him leader of a unit once commanded by his Boeotian friend Proxenus; we learn in Proxenus' obituary that he was about 30 when he died (2.6.20). Hence modern scholars have reasoned that Xenophon was probably younger than Proxenus, putting him in his late twenties in 401, which sets his year of birth

<sup>1</sup> Dates are BC unless otherwise specified; all references without title are to the *Anabasis*.



in 428. A passage that has been overlooked in this discussion, and one that complicates the standard view of Xenophon's age, is the Thracian chief Seuthes' offer to Xenophon to take as wives each other's daughters (7.2.38). For Seuthes to imagine that Xenophon had a daughter of roughly marriageable age (which, of course, could be as early as twelve or thirteen), he could not have been quite as young as 3.1.25 implies.

Another major question concerning Xenophon's life that is touched on in the *Anabasis* is his exile from Athens. At 5.3.4ff. we learn about two dedications he made from booty acquired with the mercenary army, one to Apollo at Delphi, and the other to Artemis of Ephesus. In reporting how he managed the second dedication he mentions his exile from his native city (5.3.6–7). The problem centers on the precise phrasing of "when Xenophon was in exile," and in particular the exact time that is indicated.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the correct reading may be, most scholars conclude that 5.3.7 suggests that Xenophon was banished either shortly before or after the battle of Coronea (394). It seems most likely

<sup>2</sup> The manuscripts transmit a variety of readings. The three major ones are ἐπεὶ δ' ἔφυγε, ἐπεὶ δ' ἔφευγε, and ἐπειδὴ δ' ἔφευγε. It is the readings with imperfect verb form that have been accepted in modern critical editions: Marchant (OCT) and Masqueray (Budé) print ἐπειδὴ δ' ἔφευγε; Hude/Peters (Teubner) ἐπεὶ δ' ἔφευγε. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the two main families of manuscripts are judged to be of equal value: see the introductory statement about the text. See also C. Tuplin, "Xenophon's Exile Again," in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, M. Whitby, P. Hardie, M. Whitby eds. (Bristol 1987) 62 and n.15.

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that his participation in Agesilaus' march back to Greece from Asia Minor (spring-summer 394), combined with his earlier service with Cyrus, a friend of Sparta and enemy of Athens, were both causes for the banishment.

The *Anabasis* also contains an important passage that relates to the issue of the relationship between Xenophon and Socrates: the famous story at 3.1.4–8 of Xenophon's consultation at Delphi regarding service with Cyrus, and Socrates' advice on the matter. There we are told that his friend Proxenus had written him a letter inviting him to join the other mercenaries in Cyrus the Younger's army. Without explaining why, Xenophon reports that he then showed the letter to Socrates "the Athenian." At this point Socrates expresses his worry that support for Cyrus would lead to suspicion at home; further, he recommends that Xenophon consult the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. Xenophon goes to Delphi and asks to which god he should sacrifice and pray in order that he might fare well on his intended journey and return home in safety. Having received his answer Xenophon returns to Athens and tells Socrates the response he had been given; Socrates scolds Xenophon for not first asking whether he should go on the journey at all. But, since the god had responded positively, Socrates recommends that Xenophon follow the advice of the oracle.

This story reflects a close relationship between Xenophon and Socrates. Xenophon has no reservations about taking his problem to the philosopher; Socrates, for his part, is concerned that the young man will excite hostility at home. Socrates' scolding of Xenophon for not asking the primary question—should I go on the expedition—sug-

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gests almost a father/son relationship. Although Xenophon implies here and elsewhere a close bond between himself and Socrates, it is widely believed that while he was more than just an acquaintance of Socrates, they were not intimate. Whatever the precise nature of the connection, Xenophon thought of himself as a follower of Socrates; and like other associates of Socrates, he may have played some role in the government of the Thirty Tyrants, perhaps as a member of the 3000 enrolled citizens.

The precise year of Xenophon's death, as with his birth, is not known. The last datable event alluded to in his *Hellenica* is from some time between 357/6 and 353. And we know from his last work, the *Poroi* or *Revenues*, that he lived to see the end of the Social War between Athens and its allies (355).<sup>3</sup> Hence, a date for Xenophon's death in the late 350s seems most probable.

### *Anabasis: Formal Issues*

At the beginning of Book Three of his *Hellenica* Xenophon provides a succinct summary of the *Anabasis*: "As to how Cyrus collected an army and with this army made the march up country (*ἀνέβη*) against his brother, how the battle [of Cunaxa] was fought, how Cyrus was slain, and how after that the Greeks effected their return in safety to the sea—all this has been written by Themistogenes the Syracusan" (*Hell.* 3.1.1–2, Brownson trans. LCL). The ref-

<sup>3</sup> *Hell.* 6.4.37 refers to the Thessalian king Tisiphonus being in power; his reign is known from Diodorus to extend from 357/6 to 353 (*Diod.* 16.14.1, 35.1).

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erence to Themistogenes is remarkable. The only other ancient authority also to mention Themistogenes is the *Suda*, and its entry is dubious and looks as if it has been constructed out of the passage from the *Hellenica*. Plutarch, for one, believed that Xenophon was attributing his own work to a fictional Themistogenes in order "to win greater credence for his narrative by referring to himself in the third person" (*Moralia* 345e). While there was probably not a Themistogenes the Syracusan, there were two and possibly three other accounts of the journey of the Ten Thousand. We know from Xenophon himself that Ctesias also dealt with it in his history of Persia which went down to 397, for he mentions Ctesias' version of Cunaxa in his own treatment of the battle (1.8.26-7 = *FGH* 688 F 21). Additionally, another veteran of the march, Sophaenetos, also wrote a *Kύρου Ἀνάβασις*, as we can tell from a number of geographical references preserved in the sixth century AD writer Stephanus of Byzantium (*FGH* 109 FF 1-4). The suggestion has been made that Xenophon wrote his *Anabasis* in part as a response to Sophaenetos' account. Later, in the first century, Diodorus of Sicily also wrote about the Ten Thousand. His source (Ephorus, fourth century) was manifestly drawing on material different from what Xenophon provides; further, to judge from Diodorus' narrative, this earlier version did not even mention Xenophon. If Sophaenetos is the text in question, he evidently did not think Xenophon's role in the army was important, and Xenophon may have wanted to counter this assessment. Ephorus' source is uncertain. It has recently been argued that he was using not Sophaenetos but the unknown author of a continuation of Thucydides' history of

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the Peloponnesian war, the so-called Oxyrhynchus historian.<sup>4</sup> However the question of the source for Diodorus/Ephorus might be resolved, it remains that Xenophon's *Anabasis* was not the only history of the events it recounts, and that Xenophon may have been motivated to write his version in response to another.

The title *Anabasis* means a journey up-country or inland, referring to the march of Cyrus the Younger and his army from the coast of Asia Minor to the Tigris-Euphrates river valley where the decisive battle of Cunaxa was fought. Xenophon uses this term to describe the beginning of Cyrus' march in his summary of the *Anabasis* in the *Hellenica*, quoted above. Inasmuch as this phase of the march covers only the first two books of the text, some have thought that the work would be better called a *katabasis* or "journey back," or perhaps also *parabasis* for the "journey along" the Black Sea to Byzantium, following a division of the march that was observed by ancient writers. *Anabasis*, however, is the title used by Diogenes Laertius in his list of the works of Xenophon (2.56).

The dating of the composition of the *Anabasis* is problematic, as is the case with most of Xenophon's works. An early examination of the change in particle usage in the works of Xenophon suggested the *Anabasis* came from the middle period of his literary career.<sup>5</sup> Few would now

<sup>4</sup> H. D. Westlake, "Diodorus and the Expedition of Cyrus," *Phoenix* 41 (1987) 241-54.

<sup>5</sup> W. Dittenberger, "Sprachliche Kriterien für die Chronologie der platonischen Dialoge," *Hermes* 16 (1881) 331. Cf. J. Hatzfeld, "Notes sur la composition des *Helléniques*," *RPh* 4 (1930) 113-17

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endorse the precise chronology that emerged from this and similar studies. All that can be said with confidence is that the *Anabasis* was written late in Xenophon's life, not earlier. This suggestion suits the view that it is in part an *apologia* or response to other accounts of the same events. Further, many have argued on the basis of Xenophon's description of his estate at Scillus (5.3.7–13) that when he wrote up his version of the March of the Ten Thousand, he had lost this property as a result of the first Theban invasion of the Peloponnese following the battle of Leuctra, that is, after 371: the passage is thought to have a nostalgic or even wistful outlook that makes sense if it concerns something that Xenophon no longer possessed. This argument, however, is highly speculative.

The *Anabasis* has no real precursors. It is true that in the fifth century, travel literature was not uncommon, a genre that combines biography, autobiography, and ethnography—elements that are also to be found in the *Anabasis*.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, passages that have often bored and confused its readers find an explanation if we remember that this work was written when gazetteers were also popular. Xenophon frequently mentions distances between stopping points on the march inland; he may have derived

and 209–26, and M. MacLaren, "On the Composition of Xenophon's *Hellenica*," *AJP* 55 (1934) 121–39 and 249–62.

<sup>6</sup> Scylax of Caryanda, mentioned in Herodotus (4.44.1; cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 1332b), included autobiographic information in the account of his nautical explorations, and probably also penned a biography of Heraclides, tyrant of Mylasa. Ion of Chios wrote an account of his visits to famous people and places in the *Epidemiai* or *Hypomnemata*.

these from a written description of the Persian road system, perhaps from Ctesias' history of the Persian empire.<sup>7</sup> The repeated description of cities and other communities as inhabited, flourishing, great, and the like (1.2.6–7, 10–14, 20; 1.4.1; 1.5.4; 2.4.13; 3.4.7; 4.7.19; 6.4.6), almost certainly comes from geographical literature.<sup>8</sup> But these details provide only a superficial link between the *Anabasis* and other literature from the period.

The obituaries Xenophon provides for Cyrus (1.9) and the captured generals of the Ten Thousand (2.6) offer a better clue to the orientation of the *Anabasis*. These are clearly biographies. The latter group of portraits has been linked to the description of the heroes in Euripides' *Suppliants* (860ff.).<sup>9</sup> They were surely planned as a set, contrasting good and bad forms of leadership: the Spartan Clearchus is presented as an energetic and capable leader who was too severe; Proxenus the Boeotian is the opposite, a "soldiers' man" who lacked the necessary discipline; Menon was altogether worthless, interested in his own ad-

<sup>7</sup> G. Cawkwell, *Xenophon: The Persian Expedition* (Harmondsworth 1972) 21–22. Cyrus did not take the famous Royal Road inland; cf. Herodotus 8.98 and Xenophon, *Cyr.* 6.17–18.

<sup>8</sup> H. R. Immerwahr, "Ergon: History as a Monument in Herodotus and Thucydides," *AJP* 81 (1960) 264 and n.7, and the bibliography cited there. Note also L. Geysels, "Πόλις οἰκουμένη dans l'Anabase de Xénophon," *Les études classiques* 42 (1974) 29–38. The phrase "great and flourishing" was relatively common: cf. Aristophanes, *Birds* 37. It had a long life: it is in Dexippus *FGH* 100 F 3, and was spoofed by Lucian, *Hist. Conscr.* 31.

<sup>9</sup> A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge Mass. 1971; exp. ed. 1993) 49 and 57; cf. C. Collard, *Euripides Supplikes* vol. 2 (Groningen 1975) 445.

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vancement and wealth, and proving to be a completely unreliable and deceitful commander with a lurid past. It is telling that Ctesias' characterization of Menon is not so negatively drawn (*FGH* 688 F 27–28); further, Menon does not appear to be the reprobate Xenophon considers him in the Platonic dialogue that bears his name.<sup>10</sup>

The ideal leader is Cyrus. In the obituary Xenophon traces his life from childhood in the Persian court to his death at Cunaxa. Focus is directed primarily on his ability to generate loyalty among his followers, to cultivate good soldiers, to outdo his friends in kindness and the giving of rewards and outdo his enemies in exacting punishment and revenge. In many ways Cyrus is the ideal Greek: he is expert at helping his friends and hurting his enemies. When earlier in the *Anabasis* Cyrus complains that his own native troops are vastly inferior to the Greeks under his command, he also confesses that rather than all the material goods he possesses he would prefer to have the freedom that makes excellent soldiers (1.7.3–4); Herodotus could not have put the difference between Greek and barbarian better (Cyrus even uses the term *barbaros* in the passage). In Xenophon's understanding, Cyrus has the mentality of a Greek, and a particularly insightful and generous one at that.

Xenophon's interest in ideal leadership is found throughout his corpus. In the *Hellenica* he provides miniature portraits of successful and unsuccessful commanders similar to those at *Anabasis* 2.6: the paired studies of Iphicrates and Mnasippus (*Hell.* 6.2.4–32), and the two estimations of Teleutias' leadership (*Hell.* 5.1.3–4, 5.3.3–7) espe-

<sup>10</sup> Cawkwell, *Persian Expedition* 25, 135 n.12.



cially come to mind. In all of these passages Xenophon implies that one of the functions of history ought to be the education of future military commanders in the art of leadership.<sup>11</sup> The obituary of Cyrus, on the other hand, is similar to Xenophon's encomium of the Spartan king Agesilaus, perhaps influenced by Isocrates' *Evagoras*. The *Agesilaus* also moves from a narrative of the life of its subject to a more general summation of his virtues.

The closest parallel to the portrait of Cyrus is the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon's fictional account of the education of Cyrus the Great, Cyrus the Younger's ancestor and the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty. The linking of the two men as representatives of the ideal leader is suggested by Xenophon himself at the beginning of the obituary: the younger Cyrus was the man "who was the most kingly and the most worthy to rule of all the Persians who have been born since Cyrus the Elder" (2.9.1).<sup>12</sup> What made the second man a good leader is precisely what forms the subject of the work devoted to the first: education and royal character. Clearly the influence of Socrates is to be felt in all of Xenophon's experiments in moral-didactic biography; and to the extent that this is true, he was participating in the

<sup>11</sup> Cf. H. R. Breitenbach, *Historiographische Anschauungsformen Xenophons* (Freiburg in der Schweiz 1950); P. J. Rahn, "Xenophon's Developing Historiography," *TAPA* 102 (1971) 497-508.

<sup>12</sup> This tendency to associate the two Cyruses, which appears elsewhere in the literature of the period (e.g. Antisthenes), may be linked to Persian sympathizers of the younger Cyrus: on the fashioning of his tomb after Cyrus the Great's, see Boyce *HZ* 210 and n.3.