



## ANABASIS

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**ANABASIS** (Greek *anábasis*, “going up, way up, expedition up [from the coast]”), title of ancient campaign accounts stylistically influenced by the so-called *Periplus* books; more especially, title of the famous firsthand account by Xenophon of Cyrus the Younger’s campaign (the so-called March of the Ten Thousand), the model for Arrian’s *Anabasis*, a description of Alexander’s expedition. The seven books of the *Kýrou Anábasis* (“Cyrus’ expedition”) describe the advance in 401 B.C. of the Greek mercenaries in Cyrus’ service against his brother, the Persian king Artaxerxes II Mnemon, and especially their retreat after the battle at Cunaxa and Cyrus’ death. The books form probably one of the first works of Xenophon and may have been composed and published piece by piece. Perhaps they were first made public under the nom-de-plume Themistogenes of Syracuse (Xenophon *Hellenica* 3.1.2, correctly understood by Plutarch *De gloria Atheniensium* 345e); this would explain the seemingly “objective” presentation of the events in the third person.

Xenophon, son of Gryllus, was born in the Attic deme Erchia about 430-25 B.C. and belonged to the class of knights. In 401 B.C., invited by Proxenus, his Boeotian friend, he joined the Greek mercenaries who assisted Cyrus the Younger in his rebellion. Book I of his work narrates succinctly the events from which the entire work is titled—their rapid advance and the success in the battle at Cunaxa, made meaningless by Cyrus’ death. The 10,000 mercenaries were deprived of their Greek generals by an insidious assassination; constantly surrounded by hostile enemies, they withdrew through the Tigris valley and the wintry Armenian highlands to the Black Sea



and finally to Byzantium. In this difficult retreat, full of losses, Xenophon, chosen as general in the meantime (3.1.47), served as chief of the rearguard and almost the intellectual leader of the whole venture.

The contents of Xenophon's *Anabasis* can be summarized as follows: *Book 1.* Introduction; background of Cyrus' rebellion (1.1-5); levying of the Greek mercenaries (1.6ff.); concentration of the troops in Sardis (2.1-5); departure for the pretended Pisidian war and march from Sardis to Tarsus (2.6ff.); rest for twenty days and negotiations with the army refusing continuation of the march (3); march from Tarsus via the Syrian Gates to Thapsacus, where the Euphrates river was crossed, then to the river Araxes, the modern *Ḳābūr* (4); Cyrus' revelation of his real plan (4.11-13); march through Arabia and Babylonia (5-7); inspection (7.1ff.) and computation of the troops (7.10); the battle at Cunaxa (8); Cyrus' death (8.24ff.); characterization of Cyrus (9); continuation of the battle and the Greeks' return to the camp (10). *Book 2.* Waiting for Cyrus and news from his general Ariaeus (1.1-6); negotiations with a royal legation on surrender (1.7-23); agreement with Ariaeus and beginning of the retreat (2); negotiations on armistice with the king's emissary Tissaphernes (3); march along the Tigris up to Caenae (4); further negotiations, seizure and assassination of most of the Greek leaders (5); characterization of the murdered commanders (6). *Book 3.* Description of the soldiers' morale (1.2-3); Xenophon's debut (1.4ff.); meeting of the officers (with the election of new leaders) and the whole army (1.32-2.38); continuation of the march and smaller clashes with the Persians (3-5). *Book 4.* March through the Carduchian land, hard fights and negotiations with the Carduchians (1-2); crossing of the Centrites river (3.3-34); continuation of the march through wintry Armenia (4.1ff.); expulsion of the troops of the Armenian satrap Tiribazus (4.16ff.); march through Armenia to the Taochian frontier with heavy losses because of snow and cold (5-6); march through the land of the Taochi, whose fortress is conquered (7.1-14), the Chalybians and other highlanders (7.15ff.); arrival at the mountain Theches, from which the Black Sea is seen (7.21ff.); continuation of the march to Trapezus/Trebizond (8.1ff.), where the Greeks rested for thirty days (8.22ff.). *Book 5.* Plans for the return to Greece (1.2ff.); continuation of the march from Trebizond to Cotyora (3.2-5.4); further fights with the Drilae (2) and the Mossynoeci (4.14ff.); discussions and assembly of the army in Cotyora, accusations against Xenophon (6-8). *Book 6.* Sea voyage to Heraclea Pontica (1.1-2.1); continuation of the march and sea voyage of the dissociated units to Calpe (2.9-3.26); stay there (4.1-6.36); march to Chrysopolis near Calchedon (6.37f.). *Book 7.* Crossing of the Hellespont and arrival in Byzantium (1.7);



events in Thrace with the Thracian king Seuthes (2.10-7.57); departure for Pergamum (8.1ff.), where the remains of Cyrus' army are taken over by the Lacedaemonian general Thibron (8.24).

To a great extent the experiences related are the author's own or those guaranteed by eye-witnesses. The account is full of vivid descriptions and mirrors lively adventures and fears and hopes changing from one day to the next. Although the diction is rather technical and objective and often dry, the abundance of geographical and ethnographical details makes the work especially fascinating; receptive to the unfamiliar, Xenophon portrays in detail foreign lands and peoples and their habits and customs, e.g., Cyrus' "paradise" (*parádeisos*) in Celaenae (1.2.7), the region of Arabia and its fauna (1.5.1ff.), the channel system in the Tigris plain (2.4.13), the ruins of Larise and Mespila, ancient Ninive (3.4.7ff. and 10ff.), Armenian villages (4.5.25ff.). Generally speaking the facts are precise and reliable, so that the Anabasis as a historical source is much esteemed, as it was already in antiquity.

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