



CLEARCHUS OF SPARTA

CLEARCHUS OF SPARTA (b. Sparta ca. 450 b.c.e., d. Babylon 401 b.c.e.), son of Rhamphias, Greek general in the service of [Cyrus the Younger](#) (Thucydides, 8.8.2; cf. Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.6.15). In 412 b.c.e., during the Peloponnesian war, he commanded a Lacedaemonian naval operation in the Hellespont, during which Byzantium was taken (Thucydides, 8.8.2, 8.39.2, 8.80.1-3), and from that time he was in close contact with Pharnabazus, satrap of [Dascylium](#) (Diodorus, 13.40.6). In the battle of Cyzicus in May 410 Clearchus, in command of parts of the Lacedaemonian land forces and the Greek mercenaries of Pharnabazus's army, was defeated by the Athenian generals Thrasybulus and Theramenes (Diodorus, 13.51.1-8). Two years later he was able to defend Byzantium against the besieging Athenians, though, while he was absent to solicit money and support from Pharnabazus, the city was delivered to the Athenians by treachery (Diodorus, 13.66.5-67.7; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1.3.15-22). In 403 the Lacedaemonians again sent him to Byzantium to bring order to its affairs; he soon established a reign of terror, apparently punishing those who had earlier betrayed the city (Diodorus, 14.12.3). He was therefore removed from his post by the authorities in distant Sparta and sentenced to death for failing to follow instructions (cf. Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.6.4).

At the beginning of 402 he entered the service of Cyrus the Younger (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.6.4; Diodorus, 14.12.7-9), brother of [Artaxerxes II](#); Cyrus, recognizing Clearchus's skill, supplied him with funds and instructed him to recruit as many mercenaries as possible (Diodorus, 14.12.7-9; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.1.9). With this new army Clearchus marched against the



Thracians to protect the Hellespontic cities. In 401, when Cyrus began to gather an army against his brother on the pretext of preparing for war against the Pisidians, Clearchus brought 2,000 men (1,000 hoplites, 800 Thracian peltasts, and 200 Cretan archers) to join him at Celaenae (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.2.9). He was given command of most of Cyrus's Peloponnesian mercenaries (Diodorus, 14.19.8), apparently with the tacit agreement of the Spartan authorities; he was the most trusted of the Greek generals because, whenever the mercenaries quarreled or resisted marching, he identified himself with Cyrus's interests.

At the battle of [Cunaxa](#) near Babylon Clearchus commanded the Greek soldiers in the right wing of the army along the Euphrates, with orders to attack the enemy center. Instead, he advanced straight ahead, driving back the enemy left wing and following in pursuit, leaving Cyrus in danger of an encircling maneuver by his brother's larger army. Cyrus then launched himself against Artaxerxes' center and was killed (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.8.14-29; Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 8). After the battle Clearchus held the Greek troops together and, while parlaying with the Persians, began to retreat up the Tigris (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.1.4ff., 2.2.2ff., 2.3.4ff., 21ff.). Tissaphernes (see *Čiθrafarnah-), satrap of Sardis and a general in the army of Artaxerxes, invited him to a banquet, then seized him and his companions (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.5.24-32; Diodorus, 14.26.6-7) and took them to the royal court in Babylon. Although Parysatis, the king's mother, and the royal physician [Ctesias](#) attempted to obtain special privileges for him, he was executed at the behest of Queen Stateira (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.6.1; Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 18; Ctesias, in Jacoby, *Fragmente* III/C, pp. 480–82, frags. 27-28).

As portrayed by Xenophon (*Anabasis* 2.6.1-15), Clearchus was a skilled general, popular with his troops, but both Xenophon and Ctesias, who knew him personally, seem to have been biased in his favor. Judging from the events of his life, he must have had the harsh nature associated with military adventurers.



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