

# A Greek Army on the March

Soldiers and Survival in Xenophon's *Anabasis*



JOHN W. I. LEE

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## A GREEK ARMY ON THE MARCH

*A Greek Army on the March* is a social and cultural history of the Cyreans, the classical Greek mercenary soldiers depicted in Xenophon's *Anabasis*. While historians have traditionally viewed the Cyrean army as a single political community, this book reveals that the soldiers' lives were largely defined by a pair of smaller social communities: the formal unit organization of the *lochos* ('company') and the informal comradeship of the *suskenia* ('mess group'). Drawing on an extensive array of ancient literary and archaeological evidence, along with perspectives from military sociology and modern war studies, the book provides a comprehensive portrait of the Cyreans' experience. It examines the environmental conditions of the campaign, ethnic and economic relations amongst the soldiers, the role of camp followers, and the practicalities of daily survival on the march. Anyone interested in ancient Greek warfare or in Xenophon's *Anabasis* will want to read this book.

JOHN W. I. LEE is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of California at Santa Barbara.



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## *Preface*

This book is about an army of Greek mercenaries who marched into Mesopotamia twenty-five centuries ago. Their objective was the fabled city of Babylon, but they never got there. In the spring of 2006, a former student of mine, once a history major and now a US Army captain, returned to campus to say hello after spending a year in Iraq with an infantry company. Ever the historian, he had wrangled a visit to the ruins of Babylon, and proudly showed me photographs. Looking at them, I was reminded that when I first started working on Xenophon's *Anabasis* in 1996, Mesopotamia was an abstraction for most of us. Now images of the war in Iraq appear daily. Eerie resonances between past and present occasionally emerge. For example, the mercenaries spent the night before the climactic battle of Cunaxa camped not far from the site of what is today Fallujah. As I write these lines, I am reminded again of both hometown friends and former students now serving overseas. I await their safe returns, and hope that someday soon nobody will have to become a warrior to see Babylon.

Santa Barbara, California  
July 2006

## *Acknowledgments*

This book would not exist without the generous guidance, assistance, and support I received from many people and institutions. Thank you all very, very much. I only wish there was space here to recognize everyone by name.

Lawrence Bliquez, Alain Gowing, and Carol Thomas at the University of Washington first sparked my interest in ancient history. At Cornell University, Judy Ginsburg, Charles Peterson, and Barry Strauss ably supervised the PhD dissertation that provided the seeds of this book. I owe a special debt to Barry Strauss, who first suggested I investigate Xenophon's *Anabasis*. He has been a model of rigorous, innovative historical practice.

The Departments of History and Classics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, provided a superb environment for research and writing. Apostolos Athanassakis, Randy Bergstrom, Beth Digeser, Hal Drake, Francis Dunn, Frank Frost, Mike Osborne, and Robert Renehan offered scholarly assistance and advice. Ralph Gallucci and Jack Talbott read and commented on numerous draft chapters. Jessica Chapman, Brice Erickson, Patrick McCray, Gabriela Soto Laveaga, and Paul Spickard made sure I got out of the office once in a while.

In Ithaca and Seattle, Dennis Ellard, Jean-Michel Kent, Michael Quinn, Nora Salvatore, and Sarah Stroup have offered years of unfailing friendship. I am grateful too for the enduring comradeship of Michael Dixon, Susanne Hofstra, Kathleen Lynch, Richard Neer, Brian Rutishauser, and Barbara Tsakirgis, my *suskenoi* from the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1996–7.

I have been informed, challenged, and inspired by the example of many scholars in my field, from the early work of H. W. Parke on mercenary soldiering to the recent writings of Victor Hanson, Peter Krentz, James Roy, Christopher Tuplin, and Hans van Wees on Greek warfare and Xenophon. Any contribution this book has to make rests on the foundation of their research.

I received help from around the world during my research. Melissa Carlson, DVM, shared her expert knowledge of horses and other equids. 1LT Larry Cox and his fellow Rakkasans of 3–187th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) offered their perspectives on ancient and modern soldiering. Frank Frost taught me about cooking and meat preservation in antiquity. Kathleen Lynch took time from her research at the Athenian Agora to measure volumes and weights of Greek cooking pottery. Arman Oduncuoğlu went to great lengths in obtaining meteorological data from the Turkish Ministry of the Environment. Dr. Hakan Özhan explained the pharmacology of “toxic honey.” The staff of UCSB’s Davidson Library, especially in Interlibrary Loan and at the Map and Imagery Laboratory, speedily fulfilled my every request. A grant from the UCSB Academic Senate helped defray the costs of preparing the index.

I am extremely grateful to Michael Sharp of Cambridge University Press, who displayed an early interest in my project and has worked tirelessly on my behalf. Several anonymous readers for the Press provided invaluable comments and suggestions. Sarah Parker, Jodie Barnes, and the other members of the Cambridge staff efficiently managed all aspects of publication.

Finally, *mahalo nui loa* to my parents Samuel and Marilyn Lee, my sister Kammy, and my brothers Tom and Andrew. I could ask for no better family, and I dedicate this book to them.

*Abbreviations, transliterations,  
and other conventions*

Abbreviations of ancient authors and works follow the style of Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (revised third edition 2003, hereafter *OCD*), except for the following:

Asclep.	Asclepiodotus
[Hyg.]	Pseudo-Hyginus, <i>On Camp Fortifications</i>
Onas.	Onasander, <i>Strategikon</i>

Xenophon's works are cited by title alone (*An.*, *Cyr.*, *Hell.*, etc.), using the abbreviations of the *OCD*. Archaeology, ancient history, and classical studies periodicals are abbreviated in accordance with the conventions of *l'Année philologique* ([www.annee-philologique.com](http://www.annee-philologique.com)). Other periodical titles are not abbreviated.

All translations are my own except where otherwise indicated. In order to make this book more accessible to non-specialists, most transliterations from Greek follow the Latinized style – e.g. Achaea, Arcadians, Cheirisophus rather than Akhaia, Arkadians, Kheirisophos – of the readily available Loeb Classical Library series. Technical Greek terms such as *lochos*, *suskenia*, and *taxiarchos* are transliterated more exactly, with singular and plural forms indicated, so Greekless readers who wish may look them up using the Perseus website ([www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)). For clarity, final eta (ἔ) and omega (ῶ) receive macrons.

Measurements are provided in both metric and English units. For ancient measures of length, weight, and volume, see pages 942–3 and 1620–1 of the *OCD*. All figures resulting from calculations (multiplication, division, etc.) and conversions (from ancient to modern, or from metric to English measures) have been rounded up to two decimal places: e.g. 5.355 becomes 5.36.

## CHAPTER I

### *Introduction*

It all began with sibling rivalry. Darius II (r. 424–404 BC), Great King of Achaemenid Persia, had many children with his wife Parysatis, but his two eldest sons Arses and Cyrus got the most attention.<sup>1</sup> Parysatis always liked Cyrus, the younger of the two, better. Darius, though, kept Arses close, perhaps grooming him for the succession. Cyrus he sent west to Ionia on the shores of the Aegean Sea, appointing him regional overlord. Just sixteen when he arrived at his new capital of Sardis, the young prince found western Asia Minor an unruly frontier. Its satraps (provincial governors), cunning and ruthless men named Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus, often pursued virtually independent foreign policies, and sometimes clashed with each other. There were also western barbarians for Cyrus to deal with. Athens and Sparta, now in the twenty-third year of their struggle for domination over Greece (today we call it the Peloponnesian War, 431–404 BC), had brought their fleets and troops to Ionia. The Athenians needed to preserve the vital grain supply route from the Black Sea via Ionia to Athens; the Spartans wanted to cut it.

The Achaemenids had their own interest in this war: after two humiliatingly unsuccessful invasions of Hellas in the early fifth century, they wanted to see Greeks lose. Hoping to wear both sides down, the western satraps had intermittently supported Athens and Sparta, but Darius desired a more consistent policy. That was one reason why Cyrus was in Ionia, to coordinate Persian efforts.<sup>2</sup> He made friends with the newly arrived Spartan admiral Lysander. Persian gold darics flowed into Spartan hands; the ships and troops they bought helped put the Lacedaemonians on the way to final victory.<sup>3</sup> In return, the Persians reasserted their old claims over the Greek cities of western Asia Minor.<sup>4</sup> To safeguard their interests, Cyrus and the satraps relied on an unlikely source of manpower: Greek soldiers of fortune.

<sup>1</sup> On Darius, Parysatis, and their sons, see Briant (2002) 612–20.

<sup>2</sup> Briant (2002) 600.      <sup>3</sup> Cawkwell (2005) 155–9.

<sup>4</sup> Briant (2002) 593–600, Buckler (2003) 39–41, Rhodes (2006) 149.

Mercenaries were nothing new in the eastern Mediterranean, but by the end of the fifth century unprecedented numbers of Greek hoplites (armored spearmen) had entered Persian employment. Many of them garrisoned the Persian-controlled cities along the Aegean coast.

In the fall of 405 BC, as Sparta tightened its grip on Athens, Darius took ill. He summoned Cyrus home; the prince arrived at the fabled city of Babylon with a bodyguard of 300 mercenary hoplites, a symbol of what Ionia could do for him. On his deathbed, Darius left the throne to Arses, who took the royal name Artaxerxes II. The satrap Tissaphernes took the opportunity to accuse Cyrus of plotting against the new Great King. Artaxerxes, believing the charge, had his younger brother arrested. Parysatis, though, intervened to keep Artaxerxes from executing Cyrus, and sent him back to Ionia. Cyrus took the lesson to heart. The only way to keep his head off the chopping block was to depose Artaxerxes and become Great King himself. He set about making his preparations.

Across the Aegean, the Peloponnesian War was coming to a close. In May 404, Athens fell to Lysander. The city was stripped of its fleet and empire, its walls pulled down to the music of flute girls. For nearly a year following the end of the war a murderous oligarchic junta ruled the city, and with democracy restored the Athenians would begin looking for scapegoats; Socrates was to be one of them. The victorious Spartans faced other challenges. Having promised liberation from Athenian domination during the war, Sparta now found itself ruling Athens' former subjects. The austere Spartan way of life provided poor preparation for the role of imperial master. Accustomed to unhesitating obedience at home, Lacedaemonian officials abroad alienated local populations with their harsh administration. Even wartime allies like Corinth and Thebes soon chafed under Sparta's overbearing hegemony. Then there was the problem of Ionia. While their struggle with Athens went on, the Spartans had acquiesced in Persia's expansionism, but now their attention began to turn eastward.<sup>5</sup>

It was against this backdrop that, probably in February 401 BC, Cyrus, now an impetuous twenty-three-year-old, again set out from Sardis. His goal: take Babylon, unseat Artaxerxes, and rule as Great King in his brother's stead.<sup>6</sup> At the head of some 13,000 mostly Greek mercenaries along with perhaps 20,000 Anatolian levies, Cyrus marched east from Sardis across the plains of Lycaonia, over the Taurus mountains through the famed pass of

<sup>5</sup> On Spartan imperialism and Asia Minor see Cartledge (1987) 77–115, Hamilton (1994), Buckler (2003) 1–34.

<sup>6</sup> On the revolt of Cyrus, see Dandamaev (1989) 274–85, Briant (2002) 615–34, Buckler (2003) 31–6, Cawkwell (2005) 159–61.

the Cilician Gates, through northern Syria, and down the Euphrates River valley into the heartland of Mesopotamia. Artaxerxes had been intent on suppressing a revolt in Egypt, but after being warned by Tissaphernes, he turned to face the new threat. Mustering an army at Babylon, the Great King waited until Cyrus was a few days away, then moved north against him.

In early August the two brothers and their armies met near the hamlet of Cunaxa, north of Babylon and west of present-day Baghdad.<sup>7</sup> The heavily armed mercenaries routed the Persian wing opposing them, but to no avail: Cyrus, charging forward against Artaxerxes, fell mortally wounded on the field.<sup>8</sup> In the days following the battle, the prince's levies quickly fled or switched loyalties to the Great King, leaving the mercenaries stranded in unfamiliar and hostile territory. Their generals tried negotiating a way out of the predicament, but the Persians had other ideas. After a shaky six-week truce, Tissaphernes succeeded in luring the senior mercenary leaders to his tent under pretense of a parley; then they were seized, brought before Artaxerxes, and beheaded.

Rather than surrendering or dispersing after this calamity, though, the mercenaries rallied, chose new leaders, burned their tents and baggage, and embarked on a fighting retreat out of Mesopotamia. Unable to return the way they came, they slogged north up the Tigris River valley, then across the rugged mountains and snow-covered plains of what is today eastern Turkey, finally reaching the Black Sea (the Greeks called it the Euxine) at Trapezus (modern Trabzon) in January 400 BC. From there they traveled west along the water, plundering coastal settlements as they went. Arriving at Byzantium (today Istanbul) that fall, the soldiers then spent the winter on the European side of the Hellespont, working for the Thracian kinglet Seuthes. Finally, spring 399 saw the survivors return to Ionia, where they were incorporated into a Spartan army led by the general Thibron. In two years of marching and fighting, the mercenaries of Cyrus, the Cyreans, had covered some 3,000 kilometers, or almost 2,000 miles – a journey roughly equivalent to walking from Los Angeles, California, to Chicago, Illinois.<sup>9</sup> Of the 12,000 Cyreans who set out with Cyrus, approximately 5,000 remained under arms to join Thibron. At least a thousand had deserted along the way; the rest had succumbed to wounds, frostbite, hunger, or disease.

<sup>7</sup> For the battle of Cunaxa see Rahe (1980), Bigwood (1983), Wylie (1992), Lendle (1995) 57–90.

<sup>8</sup> On Cyrus' death see Bassett (1999).

<sup>9</sup> I follow Xenophon (*Hell.* 3.2.6–7) in using the name "Cyreans." On the more common, but later, label of the "Ten Thousand" see Bonner (1910) 97, Stronk (1995) 22–3.

The march of the Cyreans fascinates on many accounts. Cyrus' machinations open a revealing window on Achaemenid dynastic rivalry and satrapal politics. His reliance on Greek mercenaries and Artaxerxes' attempt to destroy them dramatically symbolize the convoluted blend of cooperation and conflict that characterized Greek–Persian relations between the first meeting of Hellene and Persian in mid-sixth-century BC Ionia and Alexander's entry into Babylon some two centuries later. With its unprecedented mustering of more than 10,000 mercenaries, the campaign marks a crucial moment in the development of paid professional soldiering in the Aegean world. Perhaps most of all, though, Cyrus' revolt draws attention because of our main ancient source for the event: Xenophon's *Anabasis*.

Amongst the replacement generals the Cyreans selected in Mesopotamia was Xenophon the son of Gryllus, a twenty-seven-year-old Athenian aristocrat and sometime associate of Socrates.<sup>10</sup> A later biographer would call him "modest and superlatively handsome."<sup>11</sup> Having joined the army as a sort of observer at the invitation of his friend Proxenus the Boeotian, Xenophon stepped forward after Proxenus was seized at Tissaphernes' tent. At times as commander of the rear guard, at others as a skilled orator in the mercenaries' assembly, Xenophon played an active role in the army's successful retreat from Cunaxa to the sea and in its adventures along the Euxine coast and in Thrace. Three decades later, he set down his account of the Cyrean experience in a work entitled the *Anabasis*. Part military handbook, part ethnography, part retrospective self-justification, the *Anabasis* is above all a personal reminiscence of war, making it arguably the first soldier's memoir in world literature.<sup>12</sup>

Like Cyrus' revolt, the *Anabasis* has been approached from manifold angles. Traditional military historians have long mined the text for information on tactics and equipment, on discipline and leadership, and on the conventions of mercenary service. Those interested in politics and philosophy have examined Xenophon's panhellenism and his depiction of the Cyreans as an ideal, ordered society. Others have scrutinized Xenophon's evidence for Near Eastern geography and his ethnographic portrayals of the "barbarian." Yet others have followed a more literary bent, examining Xenophon's artful construction of a seemingly guileless yet subtly focused narrative.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On Xenophon's life and works see Delebecque (1957), Breitenbach (1967), Anderson (1974a); Krentz (1995) 1–11 offers an excellent short overview.

<sup>11</sup> Diog. Laert. 2.48.

<sup>12</sup> For the *Anabasis* as memoir and on the meaning of its title, see Lee (2005) 47–9.

<sup>13</sup> See below for more about Xenophon's style and the *Anabasis* as a source.

Although it draws on all these perspectives, this book is different. It is a history of the Cyreans themselves, an attempt to rediscover the daily rhythms of an army, not a generic “classical Greek army,” but a particular force in a particular set of circumstances. I employ three intertwining threads of analysis. First, I focus on the lived experience of ordinary soldiers, an approach well known to students of ancient and modern warfare. The second thread, that of military supply or logistics, is less familiar, but equally essential to understanding Cyrean life. The third thread, the concept of the army as a mobile community, began with Xenophon himself and has remained an enduring concern of *Anabasis* studies; I put a new twist on it by showing how the dynamics of small communities within the army shaped the troops’ behavior. None of these threads alone suffices to tell the story of the Cyreans. All three woven together, though, produce a remarkable tapestry, never glimpsed before, of soldiering and survival in an ancient army.

#### THE FACE OF BATTLE

John Keegan’s *The Face of Battle*, published in 1976, may well be the single most influential work of military history written in the past fifty years. Dissatisfied with a traditional historiography that privileged strategy and tactics, treated armies as sterile abstractions, and narrated fighting in stereotypical, bloodless terms, Keegan decided to examine battle through the soldier’s rather than the general’s eyes, from the “personal angle of vision,” as he called it.<sup>14</sup> Using three famous British examples – Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme – he focused on the physical and emotional dimensions of war at its most basic: how soldiers overcame their fears to advance into the fight, what combat sounded and smelled like, the effects of arrows, blades, and bullets on human flesh, the fates of the captured, the wounded, and the dead.

Keegan restored humanity to stale military history. Little wonder, then, that historians of modern warfare quickly and widely accepted his method.<sup>15</sup> In classical studies, although there had always been a few who combined conventional military studies with a concern for the lived experience of ancient soldiers, it took about a decade for the new approach to take hold.<sup>16</sup> Victor Davis Hanson’s *The Western Way of War*, appearing in 1989, explicitly acknowledged Keegan as progenitor, but went a step further. In addition to

<sup>14</sup> Keegan (1976) 42–3, 111–15.

<sup>15</sup> An important early example is Holmes (1985).

<sup>16</sup> See for example Griffith (1935) 322–4.

reconstructing the battle experience of the Greek citizen hoplite, Hanson also sought, by portraying the quest for decisive pitched battle as a defining aspect of Greek culture, to make an ideological point about the nature of Western civilization.<sup>17</sup> In a collection of essays on hoplite battle published a few years later, Hanson went on to argue that “in the future the pragmatic concerns of hoplites will not be a footnote to more conventional studies; rather they will rightly become the central focus of Greek military history.”<sup>18</sup> Battle, he asserted, and above all hoplite battle, represented the central, only truism of Greek warfare.<sup>19</sup>

Thanks to Keegan and Hanson, emphasis on the common soldier’s experience of combat has over the past few decades become a standard of Greek (and Roman) warfare studies.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, what was once revolutionary has now become so well entrenched that even books largely devoted to straightforward expositions of ancient strategy and tactics include an obligatory section on the face of battle.<sup>21</sup> The widespread acceptance of the approach has been invaluable for understanding Greek warfare not merely as an unreal game of faceless ranks and files but as the affair of ordinary people with ordinary concerns.<sup>22</sup>

There is no denying that battle deserves a central place in the story of soldiering and warfare. Keegan himself opined that “military history . . . must in the last resort be about battle.”<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, if we want a full comprehension of the ordinary soldier’s experience, examining battle is not enough; we must go beyond the battlefield. Most soldiers in all times and places, after all, spend most of their time not actually engaged in combat. This brings us back to the Cyreans, who fought a single major pitched battle – Cunaxa – in two years’ campaigning. As we will see, they did a lot of other kinds of fighting, but combat was nowhere near the totality of their existence. Understanding the experiences of the Cyreans requires looking at the entirety of their lives, not just how they behaved on the battlefield. We must reconstruct the physical environment of the campaign and its effects on the troops. We must examine what soldiers carried, how they marched and encamped, where they obtained food and water, when and how they cooked, and where they disposed their waste. Acknowledging

<sup>17</sup> The book is now in a second edition: Hanson (2000). For an incisive critique of the idea of a “western way of war,” see Lynn (2003) 12–27; cf. van Wees (2004).

<sup>18</sup> Hanson (1991c) 253.

<sup>19</sup> Hanson (1991a) 3. His rhetoric notwithstanding, some of Hanson’s most important research has examined war beyond pitched battle; see for example Hanson (1998).

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. Mitchell (1996) 87, Goldsworthy (1996), Sabin (2000).

<sup>21</sup> See for example Daly (2002). <sup>22</sup> Hanson (1991a) 8, Hanson (2000) 6–8.

<sup>23</sup> Keegan (1976) 29, but cf. Keegan (1976) 30, which leaves room for “campaign history.”

these aspects of Cyrean life takes us to our second interpretive thread, the study of logistics.

#### LOGISTICS

If examining the face of battle has become a familiar trope of ancient warfare studies, the study of military supply or logistics has not. Indeed, logistics – shorthand for the feeding, maintaining, and moving of military organizations – is perhaps the most important but least appreciated facet of warfare in any place or period.<sup>24</sup> Yet the vast modern literature on military history has tended either simply to ignore, or at best to treat fragmentarily, how armies have been equipped and supplied.<sup>25</sup> Those who do tackle logistics tend to be a little apologetic about it, as if the subject were somehow not glamorous enough to merit attention.<sup>26</sup> The situation is a little better than average when it comes to Greek antiquity, where the philological impulse and dedicated scholarship have resulted at least in the collection and presentation of much of the literary evidence.<sup>27</sup>

The most influential treatment of ancient military supply, though, remains Donald Engels' slim volume, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*, published in 1978, just two years after *The Face of Battle*. While the eminent Alexander historian W. W. Tarn had confined his examination of Macedonian logistics to a single passing reference, Engels made supply the key to understanding Alexander's astounding conquests. He combined close reading of ancient texts, mathematical calculations, and topographical analysis to create a logistical model for the Macedonian army that explained "how the availability, acquisition, distribution, consumption rates, and transport of provisions affected Alexander's strategy, tactics, and the timing and direction of his marches."<sup>28</sup> The method was not entirely unprecedented, for already in 1930 the British Army general Frederick Maurice had used topographical and hydrographical analysis to reevaluate the size of Xerxes' Persian army of 480/79 and its route through the Hellespont region.<sup>29</sup> Still, Engels was the first systematically to apply what might be called a mechanical model of logistics to examine the entirety of an extended ancient campaign.

<sup>24</sup> For the genealogy of the term see Thorpe (1986) xi–xxviii.

<sup>25</sup> Luttwak (1993) 3. <sup>26</sup> See for example Thompson (1991) xvi.

<sup>27</sup> See for example Tänzer (1912), Anderson (1970) 43–66, Pritchett (1971) 30–52, van Wees (2004) 102–8.

<sup>28</sup> Engels (1978) 1–3.

<sup>29</sup> Maurice (1930). The study by Perjés (1970) of early modern European logistics also seems to have influenced Engels.

Although less widely read than *The Western Way of War*, Engels' book has been equally influential, and with good reason. It provides extraordinary insight into the practical dimensions of supplying an ancient army on campaign: the complexities of moving columns of men and animals that could extend for kilometers, the problems of transporting large amounts of provisions overland, the difficulties of drawing water from a limited number of wells. Such is the usefulness of Engels' method that ancient historians have adopted it to analyze the logistical problems of other campaigns, including the Persian assault on the Greeks in 480/79, and Hannibal's march through Italy during the Second Punic War.<sup>30</sup> A few have borrowed the model to analyze portions of the Cyrean march, although not the entire campaign.<sup>31</sup> The book's reach today stretches well beyond classical studies. For example, several general surveys of the history of warfare, including one by John Keegan, rely almost entirely on Engels for their treatments of ancient Greek logistics.<sup>32</sup>

For all its value, though, Engels' book shares with most other works on logistics a highly impersonal view of the realities of daily life on campaign. If learning, for example, that 65,000 troops required some 195,000 pounds of grain daily heightens our appreciation of the Macedonian logistical accomplishment, we never discover how individual soldiers obtained their ration, how they carried and cooked it, with whom they ate.<sup>33</sup> To be sure, Engels did not set out to describe Macedonian logistics from anything but the commander's perspective, and his interest rests not so much in logistics itself but in Alexander's relation to supply factors. Nonetheless, his mechanical model largely keeps its distance from the realities of life at the army's lowest levels.<sup>34</sup> Reading Engels and his emulators, it is easy to forget that ancient armies existed not just as staff officers' ration lists, but also as living social organisms, comprising common soldiers, slaves, women, children, and animals, whose daily survival required the performance of essential but prosaic logistical tasks like foraging and cooking.

The reader may already perceive the direction we are headed: pairing Engels' emphasis on the practical constraints of logistics with the soldier's-eye view of Keegan and Hanson offers a promising path to recovering the totality of the Cyrean experience. Just as it is possible to reconstruct soldiers'

<sup>30</sup> Persians: Young (1980); cf. Tuplin (1997a). Hannibal: Shean (1996). For the extent of Engels' influence, cf. Manfredi (1986) 38–9.

<sup>31</sup> Lang (1992), Descat (1995), Gabrielli (1995).

<sup>32</sup> Ducrey (1986) 201–8, Jones (1987) 45–65, Keegan (1993) 301–5.

<sup>33</sup> Note that Foxhall and Forbes (1982) 80 make some important corrections to Engels' figures for grain requirements and bread production.

<sup>34</sup> See for example Engels (1978) 13.

behavior in battle, so too can we investigate the army's life on the march and in camp. The picture that such a combined approach can furnish, though, remains incomplete without one final thread, that of community life.

#### COMMUNITY

So much has been made of the Cyreans as a mobile community that it is worth taking a closer look at the various ways their society has been portrayed. Perhaps the most enduring tendency has been to concentrate on the mercenaries' political life. Xenophon himself started the trend: the *Anabasis* gives much attention to the army's politics and communal decision-making, its assemblies and speeches. Comparing the Cyreans to a stereotypical Greek *polis* (city-state) has been a scholarly habit since at least the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Taken to extremes, it appears in Carleton Brownson's introduction, written in 1922, to his Loeb Classical Library translation of the *Anabasis*: "These Greek soldiers of fortune . . . have truly been called 'a marching democracy,' 'a roving commonwealth,' 'deliberating and acting, fighting and voting; an epitome of Athens set adrift in the center of Asia.'"<sup>36</sup>

Flaws in this formulation are easy to find. For instance, of the more than sixty Cyreans whose origins Xenophon records, only eight are Athenians; more than half the troops were actually from Achaea and Arcadia in the Peloponnesus.<sup>37</sup> More importantly, although assemblies were sometimes critical in altering the army's course, they were infrequent events until the Cyreans reached the Black Sea shore, more than halfway through the campaign. Most of the time, the generals made decisions without consulting the soldiery, and even in assemblies, the soldiers' role was often simply to rubberstamp officers' resolutions.<sup>38</sup> A *polis*, in any case, required much more than simply an assembly of male citizens. Children and wives, public buildings and temples, private households and shrines, not to mention a sense of common ancestry and shared customs, were its indispensable ingredients. The Cyreans themselves told Xenophon as much when they refused his proposals to settle on the Euxine coast.<sup>39</sup>

Even so, the notion of the Cyreans as a moving *polis* long persisted. Its foremost proponent, Gerald Nussbaum, divided the army into institutional components – soldiers, generals, captains – equivalent to the assembly, archons, and council of a generalized *polis*, and then enumerated a

<sup>35</sup> Bury (1852) 527, Grote (1852) XI.2, 191–2; cf. Dalby (1992) 16.

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter Three on the ethnic origins of the mercenaries.

<sup>38</sup> Stronk (1995) 27 and note 26. <sup>39</sup> *An.* 5.6.15ff.; cf. 6.4.7–8.

<sup>36</sup> Brownson (1992) xii–xiii.

bewildering array of formal relationships amongst these components.<sup>40</sup> Nussbaum considered this political framework so important that he denied the significance of life outside the assembly, asserting that in the simplified Cyrean political community, “the ‘private life’ of the individual and its interaction with ‘public life’ is also simplified and largely eliminated.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, despite recognizing that non-citizens formed an important component of a “normal” *polis*, and that numbers of non-soldiers (“non-citizens” in his interpretation) accompanied the army, he deliberately omitted them from discussion.<sup>42</sup> The effect was an artificial view of the Cyreans as a monolithic creature comprising nothing but soldiers and concerned with nothing but politics.

While Nussbaum took the *Anabasis* as an objective account of Cyrean political reality, others recognize Xenophon’s artful narrative and subtle ideological purposes. John Dillery, for instance, sees in the *Anabasis* an attempt to depict the evolution and decay of a model community of order and discipline.<sup>43</sup> In a nuanced analysis, he demonstrates how the army’s shifting levels of unity and concord, changing objectives, division of tasks, and command structures both enact and contradict Xenophon’s utopian vision. Even so, Dillery, like Nussbaum before him, views Cyrean community only at the highest, most abstract level, that of the army as a whole. He does write of “an army of comrades,” but treats only the officers.<sup>44</sup> Thus we find Dillery asserting that in books three and four of the *Anabasis*, the soldiers themselves “do not figure in the narrative very much at all.”<sup>45</sup> That, as we shall see, is not the whole story. The soldiers’ actions, from marching to quartering to building fires and cooking, are central to any reading of the *Anabasis* that does not view events solely through political eyes. It is just that in books three and four the Cyreans meet only once in assembly, and that, for Dillery as much as for Nussbaum, is what counts.

Another view of Cyrean community comes from Andrew Dalby, who compares the army to a Greek colonizing expedition.<sup>46</sup> Thinking of the mercenaries as colonists is problematic, not least because the troops themselves made a point of refusing to found a colony anywhere. Nonetheless, by concentrating on what he terms “economic” aspects of Cyrean behavior – food collection and preparation – Dalby suggests an escape from the model of the army as an abstract political entity. He correctly observes that for

<sup>40</sup> Nussbaum (1967); cf. Mossé (1963), Aymard (1967). For critiques of Nussbaum see Perlman (1976–7) 242, Marinovic (1988) 192–5, Dillery (1995) 64–5. It is worth noting that there was not much modern scholarship on the *Anabasis* when Nussbaum wrote; he faced the additional challenge, as he remarks in his preface, of being blind.

<sup>41</sup> Nussbaum (1967) 10.

<sup>42</sup> Nussbaum (1967) 12.

<sup>43</sup> Dillery (1995), especially 59, 63.

<sup>44</sup> Dillery (1995) 64, 77.

<sup>45</sup> Dillery (1995) 93.

<sup>46</sup> Dalby (1992).

the Cyreans, finding food was usually more important than anything else, whether that meant assemblies or even getting home.<sup>47</sup> What is more, Dalby briefly argues for the importance of communities below the level of the entire army. The way he puts it, the troops “no doubt placed importance on the links between equals that are reinforced by certain kinds of food preparation and by communal eating.”<sup>48</sup> Community life, in other words, means not just politics, but also logistics at its most basic. Understanding everyday behaviors like cooking and eating as above all small group activities enables a whole new grasp on the notion of community.

#### THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

The triple threads of individual experience, logistics, and community, then, run all through this book. We begin with a pair of chapters explaining who the Cyreans were, where they came from, and where they went. Chapter [Two](#) lays out the march route and the changing environmental conditions the troops faced along the way. Chapter [Three](#) provides a portrait of the army as a whole, with particular attention to its changing contingent organization, and to its ethnic, demographic, and economic characteristics.

From there, we move to the heart of the study. Chapter [Four](#) concentrates on the set of small communities that most shaped the soldiers’ day-to-day lives. The first, the *lochos* (plural *lochoi*) or “company,” was a formal tactical and administrative unit, mustering about a hundred men. The *lochos*, the basic maneuver unit of the army, was also the basic marching and camping unit. A Cyrean could expect to live day and night with the same *lochos*, for the duration of the campaign. The second, the *suskenia* (plural *suskeniai*) was an informal small mess group, numbering at most ten to fifteen comrades (*suskenoi*; the singular is *suskenos*). *Suskeniai* developed within each *lochos* to compensate for the army’s lack of a developed logistical apparatus. Our focus will be on the pragmatic daily concerns of these communities – marching, quartering, foraging, cooking – on social interactions within them, and on the relationship between the structures of *lochos* and *suskenia*. Although *suskeniai* fostered the cohesion and effectiveness of their *lochoi* and of the army, it will also become apparent how the soldiers’ suskenic loyalties could bring them into conflict with the demands of the army’s formal unit structure. As we shall see, the daily mediation between demands of *lochos* and loyalty to comrades, not the occasional army-wide assembly, constituted the enduring dynamic of Cyrean experience.

<sup>47</sup> Dalby (1992) 23.

<sup>48</sup> Dalby (1992) 30.

To reveal the pervasiveness of *lochos* and *suskenia*, the following chapters delve systematically into the army's life on campaign. Chapters [Five](#) and [Six](#) work together, the former laying out the troops' arms and equipment, and the latter explaining their march formations and techniques. So too do Chapters [Seven](#) and [Eight](#), which examine bivouacking patterns and camp activities, especially cooking and eating. Chapter [Nine](#) covers medical and health aspects of the campaign, including sections on battle wounds, sanitation and disease, and environmental injuries like frostbite. Finally, Chapter [Ten](#) investigates the non-combatants who accompanied the army, including slave attendants as well as male and female companions. The Cyreans, unlike their citizen militia counterparts in mainland Greece, generally did not possess slave attendants or servants. As we will see, however, boys and women initially taken as captives over time became cherished companions of individual Cyreans and participants in the social life of their *suskeniai*. In the conclusion, I outline the wider implications of understanding the Cyreans from the "personal angle of vision," and tackle the larger question of why the army's overall logistical structure took the particular form it did.

#### SOURCES AND METHODS

Until recently, asking a classicist about Xenophon was prone to prompt polite condescension at best. Although praised in antiquity as the "Attic bee" for his pure prose, Xenophon was considered too simple and credulous for modern philologists to admire. His earthy portrait of Socrates earned few plaudits from those who preferred Plato's over-intellectualized version. As a historian he was typically compared unfavorably to Thucydides. Xenophon's penchant for didacticism, apparent in all his works but perhaps most prominent in the manual *On Horsemanship*, also did not endear him to the sophisticated.<sup>49</sup> As for the *Anabasis*, its widespread use in beginning Greek classes from the nineteenth century onward contributed little to help its popularity amongst literary types.

Whatever critics may say, Xenophon's *Anabasis* stands as great literature in its own right. It is a moving read, full of heroism, treachery, despair, jubilation, even dry wit.<sup>50</sup> Xenophon's style is perhaps best exemplified by the moment when the Cyreans finally reach the Euxine:<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Horse trainers think differently; many in the US and UK still use Xenophon's manual today.

<sup>50</sup> Higgins (1977) 1–20, Hirsch (1985) 14–17, Dillery (1995) 59–98. For the literary reception of Xenophon since antiquity see Anderson (1974a) 1–9.

<sup>51</sup> *An.* 4.7.21–6 (transl. Dillery); cf. Rood (2004).

Now as soon as the vanguard got to the top of the mountain and caught sight of the sea, a great shout went up. And when Xenophon and the rearguard heard it, they imagined that other enemies were attacking also in front; for enemies were following behind them from the district that was in flames, and the rear guard had killed some of them and captured others by setting an ambush, and had also taken about twenty wicker shields covered with raw, shaggy ox-hides. But as the shout kept getting louder and nearer, as the successive ranks that came up all began to run at full speed towards the ranks ahead that were one after another joining in the shout, and as the shout kept growing far louder as the number of men grew steadily larger, it became quite clear to Xenophon that here was something of unusual importance; so he mounted a horse, took with him Lycius and the cavalry, and pushed ahead to lend aid; and in a moment they heard the soldiers shouting, "The Sea! The Sea!" and passing the word along. Then all the troops of the rearguard likewise broke into a run, and the pack animals began racing ahead and the horses. And when they had all reached the summit, then indeed they fell to embracing each other, and generals and captains as well, with tears in their eyes.

This passage well demonstrates how Xenophon's precise choice of words creates a scene whose details "seem to manifest themselves spontaneously even as [he] consciously focuses them into a coherent unity."<sup>52</sup> What is more, Xenophon draws striking characters: Dracontius the hoplite, exiled in youth from his native Lacedaemon for accidentally stabbing another boy; an unnamed mercenary from Macronia, once a slave in Athens, who realizes that the tribesmen blocking the army's advance across a river are in fact his countrymen; the "learned and beautiful" Phocaeen concubine of Cyrus, captured by the Persians at Cunaxa, who became a companion to Artaxerxes and eventually priestess of Artemis at Ecbatana.<sup>53</sup> Attention to detail and character are just a few of Xenophon's literary skills, and if scholars for long denigrated Xenophon, the pendulum now seems to be swinging the other way.<sup>54</sup>

The *Anabasis* is also, as Ernst Badian once wrote, "the only work that throws light on the facts of military life" in classical Greece.<sup>55</sup> In contrast to, say, Thucydides, Xenophon regularly describes the daily activities of soldiers on campaign, sometimes at length. He finds space to record the Cyreans' reactions to the physical and physiological stresses of the march: the effects of frostbite in the mountains, the difficulty of building a fire in driving wind and snow, the tastes of new and exotic foods, the emotions of

<sup>52</sup> Higgins (1977) 4.

<sup>53</sup> Dracontius: *An.* 4.8.25–26; Macronian: 4.8.4–7; Phocaeen: 1.10.2–3; priestess of Artemis: Plut. *Artax.* 27.

<sup>54</sup> Tuplin (2004b) 13–29; cf. Higgins (1977) 1–6, Georges (1994) xiv, Stronk (1995) 304.

<sup>55</sup> Badian (1979) 55; its importance was already recognized by Rennell (1814) 4.

soldiers who unexpectedly find themselves becoming attached to boys and women they had at first treated as mere captives or hostages. The care that Xenophon takes in constructing a varied and genuinely arresting narrative allows him to recount all sorts of episodes that other ancient aristocratic writers might have ignored.<sup>56</sup>

The *Anabasis* thus furnishes exactly the sort of material we need to study the Cyrean experience. Yet precisely because Xenophon has so deliberately constructed his narrative, we must not accept it unhesitatingly. We have only to reread the passage, just quoted above, of the army's first sight of the Euxine to see how the Athenian consistently places himself at the center of the action, whether in battle, on the march, or in assembly. Sometimes he takes credit for tactical innovations that may not have been entirely his own.<sup>57</sup> And, especially when the Cyreans run into difficulties along the Euxine coast, Xenophon carefully exculpates himself while skillfully denigrating his opponents. All of this has led some to judge him a self-justifying apologist.<sup>58</sup>

There are other criticisms. For one thing, Xenophon was a young man when he marched with Cyrus. Not until several decades later, his memories dimmed by time, did he sit down to write the *Anabasis*.<sup>59</sup> Nor was he the only Cyrean to pen a narrative of the campaign. There may once have existed several other accounts, none of which survive today – Sophænētus of Stymphalus, another Cyrean general, is known to have written one; perhaps these others were more accurate.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, like virtually every classical Greek author, Xenophon was a wealthy, aristocratic male; an anti-democrat, laconophile, and panhellenist, he had many axes to grind. We must, in reading the *Anabasis*, always remember these biases.

Nevertheless, as William Higgins points out, it also bears remembering that “Xenophon figures so much in the *Anabasis* . . . because it is about him and his life; it is avowedly, not deceitfully or apologetically, one-sided.”<sup>61</sup> Moreover, for all that Xenophon emphasizes himself, he acknowledges his failings and limits along with his successes.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, Xenophon

<sup>56</sup> Tuplin (2003a) 1629.

<sup>57</sup> For two examples of this tendency, see the discussion of *lochos* attack columns in Chapter Four and of hollow square (*plaision*) formation in Chapter Six.

<sup>58</sup> Most notably, Dürrbach (1893) found in Xenophon “une habilité d’apologiste.”

<sup>59</sup> Whether Xenophon kept detailed journals during the march on which he subsequently based his text remains debated. Cawkwell (2004) 54–5 makes a strong negative case, but Tuplin (1991) 45–7 allows for some sort of written record; cf. Roy (1968b). For the date of composition of the *Anabasis* see Lee (2005) 44–5.

<sup>60</sup> Breitenbach (1967) 1649, Stylianou (2004) 69–72; cf. Bassett (1999) 483.

<sup>61</sup> Higgins (1977) 96. <sup>62</sup> Seelinger (1997) 30.

shared in every day of the march, and the stories of otherwise forgotten common soldiers he preserves must reflect some real intimacy with their actual social conditions.<sup>63</sup> It is telling that much of the behavior he describes seems antithetical to the values of an aristocratic, wealthy, oligarchic Athenian. We should, therefore, give Xenophon some credit for, at least sometimes, telling the truth. We need not trust him unreservedly, but at a certain point we must rely on the presumption that he set out to record parts of the army's experience truthfully.<sup>64</sup>

For those reluctant to trust Xenophon at all, there is an alternative. Even if, and perhaps especially because, every sentence of the *Anabasis* represents a conscious literary construction by a highly self-aware author, we can nevertheless read "under" Xenophon. We are searching for recurrent, constant, typical behaviors – for such constituted the daily lives of the Cyreans – and Xenophon, despite his own self-awareness, repeatedly provides the evidence for these activities. In taking this approach, we can appeal to the wisdom of Jacob Burckhardt, who made a similar method central to his practice of cultural history:<sup>65</sup>

Cultural history . . . consists for the most part of material conveyed in an unintentional, disinterested or even involuntary way by sources and monuments; they betray their secrets unconsciously and even, paradoxically, through fictitious elaboration, quite apart from the material details they may set out to record and glorify, and are thus doubly instructive for the cultural historian.

So it is with Xenophon and the *Anabasis*. If, in the course of narrating the campaign, Xenophon makes offhand, repeated remarks about soldiers' everyday behavior, we can accept these statements as useful evidence, even if they are embedded in an otherwise self-interested, selective narrative.<sup>66</sup> To put it another way, consider Italo Calvino's remark that reading the *Anabasis* is like watching a black-and-white war documentary on late night TV.<sup>67</sup> Whatever Xenophon's voice-over is saying, in his flickering shots of Cyreans struggling against enemies and weather we can catch the candid images, gestures, and exchanges that reveal the army's inner workings.

Although the *Anabasis* forms the core of our evidence, in the coming chapters we will have occasion to consult Xenophon's other works for supplementary or comparative information. Most notably, there is the

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Dillery (1995) 64.

<sup>64</sup> Naturally, this does not mean never admitting ignorance. We will in the coming pages repeatedly face the frustrating truth that numerous aspects of Cyrean life can simply never be completely recovered.

<sup>65</sup> Burckhardt (1998) 5.

<sup>66</sup> For a similar approach, cf. Roy (2004) 264–5.

<sup>67</sup> Calvino (1999) 19.

*Cyropaedia*, a fictionalized biography of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Empire.<sup>68</sup> *Anabasis* and *Cyropaedia* have often been seen as a pair, the former a work of memory, the latter of imagination.<sup>69</sup> Xenophon may have exaggerated his prominence amongst the Cyreans, but if he wanted to distort the realities of life on the march he could have presented in the *Anabasis* an army with perfect logistics and planning.<sup>70</sup> In fact, he does not. It is striking in this respect to compare the real difficulties the Cyreans faced with the idealized Persian army of the *Cyropaedia*, and there will arise several opportunities to make this comparison in the coming chapters.

Other ancient sources offer little specifically on the Cyrean campaign. Plutarch's biography of Artaxerxes, for instance, presents only information on prominent personalities, notably the subsequent career of Cyrus' Phocaeen concubine, and has nothing to say about the mercenaries after Cunaxa. Likewise, the account of Diodorus Siculus, perhaps little more than an epitome of Ephorus, affords only a bare summary of events Xenophon records at length.<sup>71</sup> These other sources do reveal something about Xenophon the author. For example, Diodorus' account barely mentions Xenophon.<sup>72</sup> The conclusion quickly follows that Xenophon exaggerated his prominence in the campaign. As we have already seen, though, careful reading of the *Anabasis* alone suggests this conclusion even without reference to Diodorus. More important is that neither Diodorus nor any of the other ancient sources provide more or better information about the Cyreans than does the *Anabasis*.

Ancient sources both Greek and Roman, however, do furnish some valuable supplementary and comparative information, especially about clothing and shoes, tents, camp layout, and everyday logistical tasks. The archaeological and art-historical evidence is helpful too, but as we will see in Chapter Five has its own difficulties. We will also have occasion to employ analogies and examples drawn from studies of modern armies, particularly by military sociologists. All such comparative material, as we will discover, is sometimes more useful for highlighting the divergences, rather than the similarities, between the mercenaries' behavior and the practices of other armies. It is in these contrasts that the particular lines of Cyrean life often stand out the most clearly. Finally, to supplement Xenophon's descriptions

<sup>68</sup> On the *Cyropaedia* see Due (1989), Tatum (1989), Nadon (2001); cf. Hirsch (1985) 6–13 and 61–100.

<sup>69</sup> Tatum (1989) 41–5, Tatum (1994) 17–18, Tuplin (1997b).

<sup>70</sup> Similarly, many of the Cyrean combats Xenophon narrates are far from the artificially perfect staff-college *exempla* that they are often considered; see Tuplin (1991) 46–7.

<sup>71</sup> For the latest opposing views on Diodorus and his source(s), see Cawkwell (2004) and Stylianou (2004).

<sup>72</sup> Diod. 14.19.1–14.31.5, 14.37.1; Westlake (1987).

of the soldiers' health, hygiene, and diet, or to fill in what he leaves out, we will consult modern reference works including medical manuals, nutritional guides, and sanitation handbooks. Here at least we can rest secure in assuming that however much the Cyreans differed culturally from us, they were physiologically as human as we are.

In sum, our analysis of the mercenaries of Cyrus combines the personal angle of vision introduced by Keegan and Hanson, the logistical perspective of Engels, and Dalby's emphasis on soldiers' small communities. It is a study grounded in Xenophon's text, tempered with a constant awareness that his narrative should never be accepted unquestioningly, and making as full and appropriate use as possible of comparative evidence. Let us begin, then, to discover the Cyreans.

## CHAPTER 2

### *The march route*

Open most any book on the *Anabasis* and you will find a map of the Cyreans' march. Invariably this is in stark black and white, the army's route traced decisively against a backdrop of cities, rivers, and mountains; the map in this chapter (Map 2.1) is little different.<sup>1</sup> Maps enable modern readers to comprehend Xenophon's narrative visually. They show the magnitude of the trek, all 3,000 kilometers of it. They allow us to place the Cyreans geographically as no ancient reader ever could have. Little wonder that figuring out exactly what path the Cyreans took from Ionia to Cunaxa and back again has been an enduring concern of *Anabasis* studies. Indeed, scholars have been producing reconstructions of the army's route since at least the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to them, we can now trace the Cyreans' footsteps fairly precisely, although some of the most vexing topographical questions, especially for central Anatolia, can never be definitively resolved.

What maps are not so good at conveying, though, are the changing conditions the Cyreans encountered during successive stages of the campaign. To be sure, much attention has been paid to Xenophon's descriptions of weather and climate, often in attempts to fix an absolute chronology for the march. Yet, we can do more to set the Cyreans into their world. Call it an environmental rather than a topographical approach. Dividing the campaign into six stages or periods provides a clearer view of the physical realities that shaped the army's behavior. Conditions during each period were by no means wholly uniform, but each possesses enough climatic, geographic, logistical, and military similarity to warrant consideration as a unit.

<sup>1</sup> For another overview map see Dillery (2001) 44–5. For detailed maps of each section of the route consult Lendle (1995) and Talbert (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Rennell (1814), Ainsworth (1844), Koch (1850), Robiou (1873), Boucher (1913), Segl (1925), Manfredi (1986), Lendle (1995), Hewsen (2001). Rood (2004) 134–61 surveys the nineteenth- and twentieth-century geographers of the *Anabasis*.

Recovering the geographical, logistical, and military aspects of each period is the easier part of the task. Xenophon of course provides the core of our evidence; modern topographical, anthropological, and agricultural research helps fill in what he leaves out. For climate and weather, including temperature, precipitation, sunlight, and winds, we can correlate Xenophon's testimony with modern climatological and astronomical data. Fortunately, the climate of Anatolia and the Middle East in the fifth and fourth centuries BC appears overall to have been similar to today's.<sup>3</sup> Performing this correlation, however, requires fixing an absolute chronology for the march.

When did the Cyreans leave Sardis? The year, at least, is not in doubt: 401 BC.<sup>4</sup> Maddeningly, however, while Xenophon furnishes a fairly full accounting of the relative chronology of the campaign, including tallies of march days and lengths for about half the route, he gives no absolute indication of when the expedition began.<sup>5</sup> No other ancient source fills this gap, and the traditional departure date of March 6 is just an educated guess handed down from the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Some, arguing that a March departure does not accord with environmental conditions described in the *Anabasis*, have advocated a late chronology, with the army leaving Sardis in April.<sup>7</sup> Glombiowski, however, has demonstrated that an earlier departure, with the campaign beginning in February, best matches both ancient and modern evidence, and his chronology has been adopted, with some modifications, here.<sup>8</sup>

Even with the expedition's start date fixed, there are some limitations to keep in mind. Xenophon was not on a geographical expedition, and episodes of severe weather tend to enter his narrative only selectively. In Carduchia, for instance, he notes the first heavy autumn rainstorm to emphasize the Cyreans' logistical predicament: they would have liked to take shelter, but lack of provisions made it necessary to keep going. He juxtaposes a second downpour with the beginning of an operation to seize an enemy-held ridge, and mentions a heavy fog the following day to explain the army's successful advance.<sup>9</sup> The snows of Armenia, likewise, make their appearance to highlight the generals' decisions or the soldiers' sufferings.<sup>10</sup> It probably rained and snowed, in other words, more often than Xenophon

<sup>3</sup> Beaumont et al. (1988) 117, Kuniholm (1990) 649, Sallares (1991) 391, Lemcke and Sturm (1996) 653–78.

<sup>4</sup> Diod. 14.19.1; Bickerman (1980) 138–9. <sup>5</sup> On these tallies see Tuplin (1997a).

<sup>6</sup> Koch (1850); cf. Boucher (1913). <sup>7</sup> Lendle (1984) 210–11, Lendle (1995) 291.

<sup>8</sup> Glombiowski (1994); see Table 1 for the complete chronology.

<sup>9</sup> *An.* 4.1.15, 4.2.2, 4.2.7. <sup>10</sup> *An.* 4.4.7–13, 4.5.1–22, 4.6.1–3.



Map 2.1 The march of the Cyreans, 401-399 BC

lets on. Nonetheless, it seems unlikely that he would have omitted weather conditions that did have a severe impact on the Cyreans. The modern data too need careful handling. Although weather records for Turkey and the Near East are relatively complete and reliable from the late nineteenth century onward, there are some gaps. Especially for eastern Turkey, snowfall is difficult to measure and few records exist. Local climate can also vary