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978-0-521-87068-9 - 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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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521870689](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521870689)

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First published 2007

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-0-521-87068-9 hardback

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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

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## *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.



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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.

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*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 (ἒ) 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.