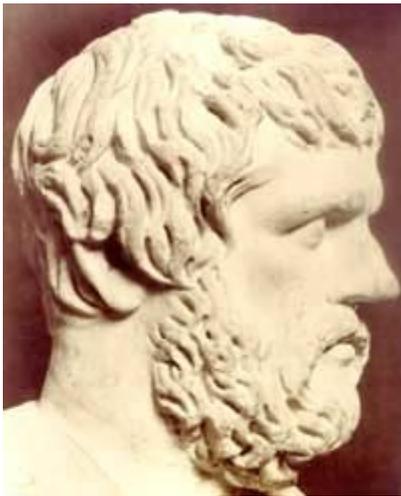


Xenophon's 10,000

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Ravi Rikhye

The 1600 km fighting retreat of Xenophon's Greeks over terrain that was not properly explored till modern times is one of the most famous in military history. Its origins lie in the recruitment by Cyrus, a Persian prince who was governor of Anatolia, of Greek mercenaries who were to help him defeat his brother. The march began in 401 BC, and the survivors returned home in 398 BC.



Xenophon

<http://www.classicreader.com/author.php/aut.208/>

How did Cyrus enlist the Greeks to his enterprise? He had helped the Spartans win against the Athenians in the Peloponnesian Wars and they returned the favor.

The Persians under the rightful king Artaxerxes II, son of Darius II, are supposed to have numbered 400,000; the figure may be exaggerated. The usurper, Cyrus, defeated his brother, but at the last minute he sighted his brother on the battlefield, and ran to personally kill him. In the process, Cyrus was killed.

The fame of *Anabasis* arises because it is the first eyewitness account known to history.

The following quote from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Thousand_%28Greek%29 puts the story succinctly:

Anabasis is the most famous work of the Greek writer Xenophon. The journey it narrates is his best known accomplishment. Xenophon accompanied the Ten Thousand, a large army of Greek mercenaries hired by Cyrus the Younger, who intended to seize the throne of Persia from his brother, Artaxerxes II. Though Cyrus' army was victorious in a battle at Cunaxa in Babylon, Cyrus himself was killed in battle and the expedition rendered moot. Stranded deep in enemy territory, the Spartan general Clearchus and most of the other Greek generals were subsequently killed or captured by treachery. Xenophon played an instrumental role in encouraging the Greek army of 10,000 to march north to the Black Sea. This is the story he relates in this book. The Greek term anabasis referred to an expedition from a coastline into the interior of a country. The term katabasis referred to a trip from the interior to the coast. Since most of Xenophon's narrative is taken up with the march from the interior of Babylon to the Black Sea, the title

is something of a misnomer. Socrates makes a cameo appearance when Xenophon asks whether he ought to accompany the expedition. The short episode demonstrates the reverence of Socrates for the Oracle of Delphi. Historically the *Anabasis* has been one of the first unabridged texts presented to students of the classical Greek language due to its clear and unadorned style, much like Caesar's *Gallic Wars* for Latin students. One of the best and most easily found translations is Rex Warner's *The Persian Expedition*. The *Anabasis* was the (loosely-adapted) basis for Sol Yurick's novel *The Warriors*, which was later adapted into a 1979 cult movie of the same name.

The "10,000" is partly a literary device, as the force began with 15,000 in support of a Persian Army estimated at between 20-100,000. The higher figure is Xenophon's, but modern historians incline toward the lower. Six thousand five hundred deserted at various times before the battle of Cunuxa, and about 3000 were killed or died during the expedition.

Cunuxa lay 700-kilometers north of Babylon, on the left bank of the Euphrates.

Table of Organization (start of the expedition)

Commander: Claearchus

- **Clearchus** (Sparta) 1000 hoplites, 800 Thracian peltasts, and 200 Cretan archers plus 2000 men who choose not to desert with Xenias and Proxenus (see below)
- **Sophaenetus** of Stymphalia: 1000 hoplites
- **Socrates** of Achaia 500 hoplites
- **Sosis** of Syracuse 3000 hoplites
- **Sophaenetus** of Arcadia 1000 hoplites
- **Chirisophus** of Sparta 700 hoplites
- 400 Greek deserters from Artaxerxes' army
- *Xenias of Arcadia (deserted in Syria) 4000 hoplites*
- *Proxenus of Boeotia (deserted) 1500 hoplites and 500 light infantry*
- *Pasion of Megara (deserted) 300 hoplites and 300 peltasts*
- 1000 Paphlagonian cavalry (joined before battle)

This gave¹:

- 11,700 hoplites
- 2,300 peltasts archers and light troops
- 1000 cavalry

The numbers do not exactly match the contingents above, but after all, we are discussing events from 24 centuries ago!

¹ See http://www.ancientbattles.com/AtG_GreekMercs.htm

The Persian usurper's forces consisted of:

- 60 tiremes
- Ariaus of Persia: between 20,000 and 100,000 troops (modern researchers use the lower figure, Xenophon gives the larger)
- Others

The Persian army is given by <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~ancientpersia/cunaxa.html>

Senior commanders:

Artaxerxes II	King
Tissaphernes	Strap of Ionia
Artagerses	King's bodyguard (6000 troops)
Gobrias	Persian Commander
Arbaces	Satrap of Media

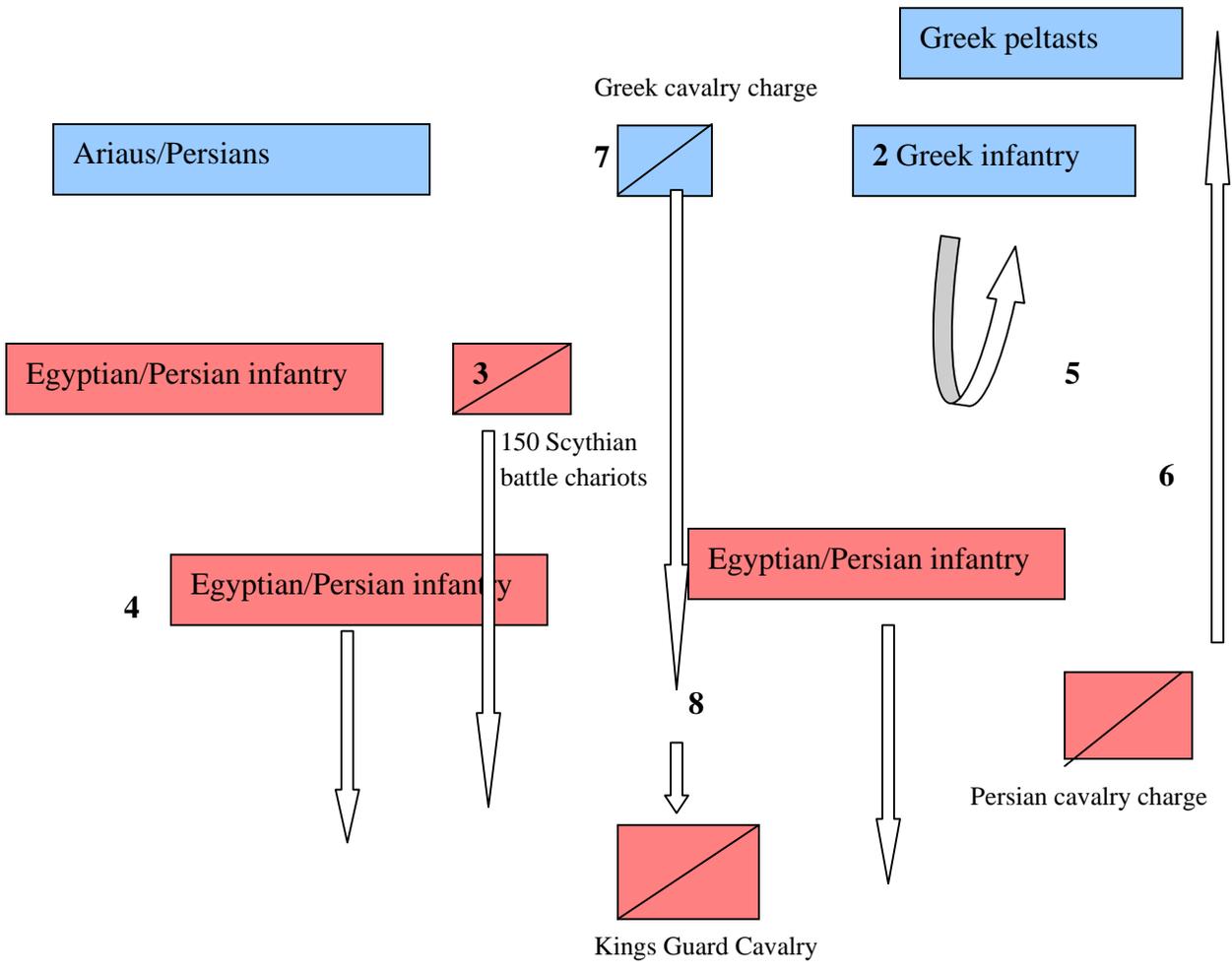
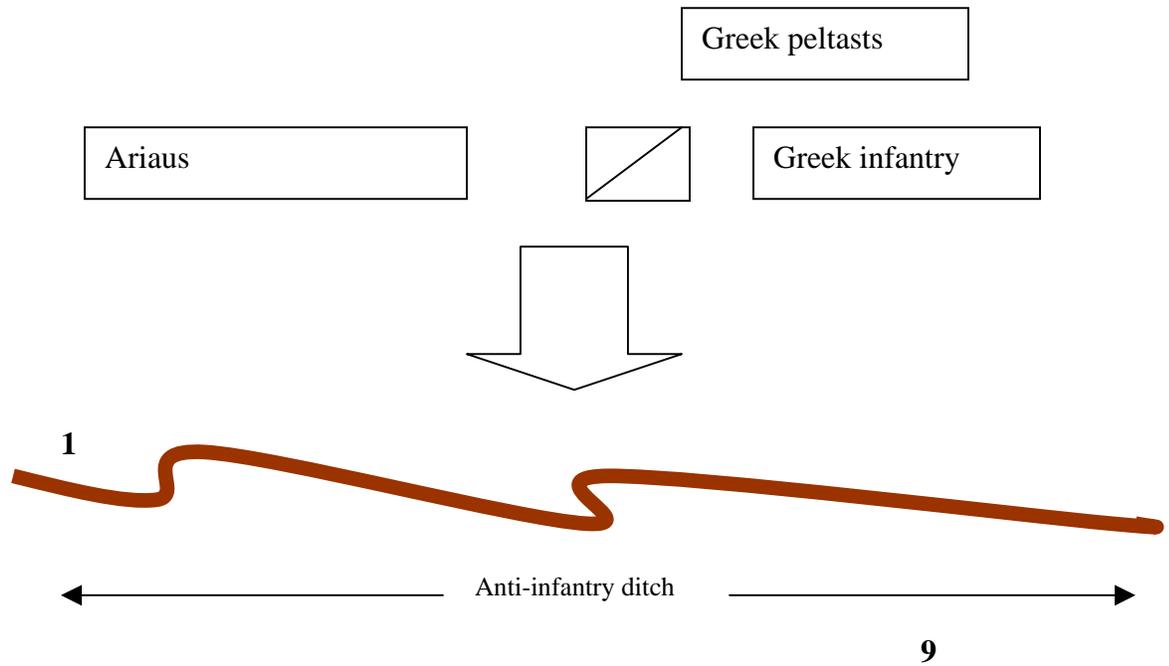
<i>Infantry</i>	400,000
Egyptian heavy infantry	
Persian infantry	
<i>Cavalry</i>	6,000 (Tissaphernes)
<i>Scythed Chariots</i>	150

Nonetheless, a number of Artaxerxes II's generals were known by him to be sympathetic to the usurper Cyrus, and the king did not take the suspects with him. The number of troops at the battle would have been much smaller than the total available.

Rough schematic of battle²

There is no implication in the schematic concerning orientation of the troops: we do not know if the Greek order was reversed, i.e., Ariaus and his Persians are on the right.

² Data from <http://wildfiregames.com/0ad/page.php?p=1516> . Schematic created for Orbat.com



1. Ataxerxes constructs anti-hoplite ditch but decides to let Greeks cross unopposed. This gives him a chance to determine the Greek order for battle and serves to convince Greeks Ataxerxes does not intend to fight.
2. Greek infantry advances
3. Scythian battle chariots (cutting blades on wheel axles) panic at noise advancing Greeks are making; retreat causing casualties to own troops
4. As planned, Egyptian/Persian infantry “breaks” and begins headlong retreat; Greeks pursue.
5. Greeks realize they are in danger of being outflanked, retire to reform.
6. Tissaphernes now leads his heavy cavalry in a charge against Greek peltasts, who break, leaving Greek camp undefended. Tissaphernes is now behind the Greek phalanxes and proceeds to loot Greek camp.
7. Cyrus realizes his position is dire: he leads 600 Greek cavalry in a charge against the King’s guard cavalry. Though outnumbered 10-1, the Greeks break the guard cavalry.
8. Without reforming, Cyrus heads straight at his brother. He tosses his javelin which misses its target but wounds a Persian commander. Cyrus is killed.
9. Greek infantry now decides to retreat from the battlefield.