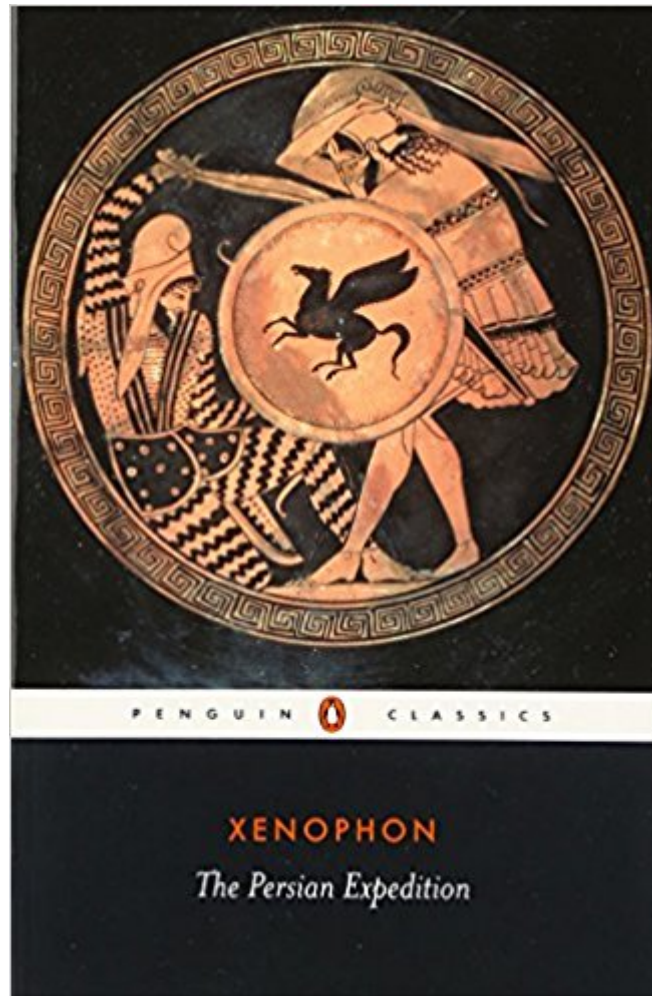




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The Persian Expedition (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Xenophon's epic march into the heart of Persia has stirred the imagination of free men for centuries. Possibly written from diaries compiled at the time, there is no doubt that The Persian Expedition is one of the best pictures we have of Greeks confronting the "barbarian" world. We see the soldiers debate leaders and strategy in open assembly; we see them falling on their knees in superstitious fear; we see them planning a piratical colony on barbarian land. And at the same time we share the rigors of the march to Babylon, the dismay of unexpected defeat, the uncertainty of the long road home through wild Armenia, and the relief at last when the Ten Thousand reach "the sea, the sea".

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Text: English, Greek (translation)

Xenophon was an Athenian country gentleman born about 430 BC. He may have helped to publish Thucydides' History, and certainly wrote his own Hellenica as a continuation of it. By his own (probably reliable) account he was a fine officer and outstanding leader, but his admiration for Sparta and devotion to Socrates, among other causes, led to his banishment. He was given an estate at Scillus and settled down to enjoy the life of a landed aristocrat, and it was during this period that he began to write histories, biographies, memoirs and specialist treatises. The defeat of Sparta in 371 forced him to move to Corinth where he probably lived for the rest of his life.

Warner was a Professor of the University of Connecticut from 1964 until his retirement in He was born in 1905 and went to Wadham College, Oxford, where he gained a TM in Classical Moderations, and took a degree in English Literature. He taught in Egypt and England, and was Director of the British Institute, Athens, from 1945 to 1947. He has written poems, novels and critical essays, has worked on films and broadcasting, and has translated many works, of which XenophonTMs History of My Time and The Persian Expedition, ThucydidesTM The Peloponnesian War, and PlutarchTMs Lives (under the title Fall of the Roman Republic) and Moral Essays have been published in Penguin Classics. George Cawkwell is a Fellow and Praelector in Ancient History of University College, Oxford. He has specialized in the history of the fourth century B.C.

I picked up this book, as it was referenced in Victor David Hanson's "Carnage and Culture", and I wanted the first hand experience of reading the text. My only previous experience reading Greek literature was the Iliad in high school, which I enjoyed, but found to be a bit dry at times. I was pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed this book. This translation of the Persian Expedition, by Rex Warner, was a page turner! It brings to life the hardships and triumphs faced by Greek soldiers in antiquity and offers an unparalleled glimpse of the frontiers of the western world as they existed from 401 -399 B.C. ***CAUTION-SPOILER AHEAD***The Persian Expedition is the story of 10,000 Greek mercenaries who have been hired by Cyrus the younger to dethrone his brother, Artaxerxes, from the Persian throne. The plan to dethrone Artaxerxes comes to a halt when the Greek's benefactor, Cyrus, is killed in the opening skirmishes of the battle of Cunaxa, outside of Babylon, in the heart of the Persian Empire. With Cyrus dead, and their military campaign at an end, the Greeks attempt to negotiate safe passage out of the Persian Empire with one of Artaxerxes' generals. In the course of the negotiation, the Greeks are betrayed and their generals captured and killed. Rising up to fill the void in leadership, Xenophon, a pious Athenian noble, attains a position of prominence in the army and leads the 10,000 out of Persia. Facing hostile tribes, political infighting, freezing cold, and a shortage of supplies the 10,000's eventually make their way to Thrace, where they are re-hired by Sparta to fight for Greek interests in Asia. ***END SPOILER***Overall, I would recommend this book for anyone seeking an in-road into Greek history. Also, anyone with an interest in Biblical history can enjoy: the Greek march through Nineveh (400 years after Jonah); and have a sense of the world inhabited by Esther (478 B.C.), Ezra (458 B.C.), Nehemiah (445 B.C.) and Malachai (433 B.C.).

This translation of *Anabasis* by Rex Warner is probably the best I have found. His wording is clear, concise, and contemporary. The introduction is as thought provoking as his translation phrase and word choice. It is also one of the most informative discussions on the distinctions regarding Greek and Persian culture in Xenophon's time. This is a keeper.

I had always heard of Xenophon's 10,000 Greeks marching out of Persia back to Greece but had never read specifics until now. While this story can get tedious at times (constant references to how far they travel each day, etc) it is a fascinating look into the ancient world. The fact that Persia employed a large number of Greeks is testimony to the superiority of Greek heavy infantry in this part of the world at this time. However, the story also discusses the military shortcomings of the Greeks in detail. Great primary source resource for about a buck. You can't beat that.

I first became interested in reading this because Director Walter Hill cited Xenophon's account as the inspiration for his 1979 manflick "The Warriors". Xenophon tells the story of his 10,000 Greeks marching into Persia, the Battle of Cunaxa, the death of Cyrus, and then having to fight their way back through the Persian Empire with hostile forces all around. They march to the sea and home...It's an easy read. Each chapter tells an anecdote and is about 3 to 5 pages long. I read a chapter each night before bed. A very interesting peek into the ancient world!

I guess I enjoyed reading Xenophon's "The Persian Expedition" or "Anabasis". The book and Xenophon has been denigrated through the millennia for not being truthful or rigorous, but the book, nevertheless is interesting to read through to get a first hand account of mercenary life in 400 BC as well as a hint of life in Persian lands. On the other hand, the book has been read throughout the ages by school children and those learning Greek. The translation is very easy to read and the lengthy introduction spells out the shortcomings of the book: there are several other accounts of the Ten Thousand that do not offer the same account of events as Xenophon's. Regardless, if you are interested in antiquity, primary source material is limited, making books like this worth while. I'd also consider Robin Waterfield's translation which has much more extensive footnotes

The translation is very well done and the journey is very exciting as well. Recommended this book very much to any burgeoning Classicist

I kept hoping this would get better as it dragged on. It was a "must read" recommendation on a

military history web site. There were a few surprises but there is no narrative per se. The author refers to himself in the third person and provides a journal-like accounting of the "Expedition" - often in mind numbing detail. To paraphrase: We marched to this city, camped for 3 days, sacrificed to see if we should continue, marched to this city, camped for 5 days, battled and beat the locals, pillaged their villages, sacrificed, marched to this city, etc.,etc, ad nauseam. Often, it felt like the translation was poor - awkward. Most of the city states and peoples (of which there are hundreds) encountered are (with the exception of Athens, Persia and Sparta) I'd never heard of and those too became mind-numbing. I don't think Sparta was ever actually referred to as Sparta. Instead, it's referred to as Lacedaemon - one of the few things you can look up. Turns out that's the name given to the area by the Byzantines centuries later. So I'm guessing that once again it's the translator. Unless you're a hardcore history fan who digs ancient writings, I recommend you take a pass on this one - or, at least try to find a better translation.

Its a classic.

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