

2015

## Cavalry in Xenophon

Katie M. Luckenbill  
*Wright State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd\\_all](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd_all)



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Luckenbill, Katie M., "Cavalry in Xenophon" (2015). *Browse all Theses and Dissertations*. 1289.  
[https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd\\_all/1289](https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/etd_all/1289)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Browse all Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact [library-corescholar@wright.edu](mailto:library-corescholar@wright.edu).

CAVALRY IN XENOPHON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Humanities

By

KATIE LUCKENBILL

B.A., Wright State University, 2012

2015  
Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL

January 13, 2015

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY  
SUPERVISION BY **Katie Marie Luckenbill** ENTITLED **Cavalry in Xenophon** BE  
ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF Master of Humanities.

---

Bruce LaForse, Ph.D.  
Thesis Director

---

Valerie Stoker, Ph.D.  
Director, Master of  
Humanities Program

Committee on  
Final Examination:

---

Bruce LaForse, Ph.D.

---

Jeanette Marchand, Ph.D.

---

Rebecca Edwards, Ph.D.

---

Robert E. W. Fyffe, Ph.D.  
Vice President for Research and  
Dean of the Graduate School

## ABSTRACT

Luckenbill, Katie. M.Hum., Wright State University, 2015. Cavalry in Xenophon.

Recent scholarship concerning Xenophon's works has focused on his ideas of leadership. A very few, if any, scholars have examined his portrayal of the cavalry and the cavalry commander. With so many of Xenophon's writings involving cavalry, it is possible to draw a comparison between Xenophon's idealized portrayals of cavalry operations in the *Cyropaedia* and *Cavalry Commander*, and his historical accounts of the cavalry, especially with regards to its training and effectiveness in battle. In comparing these works, their similarities and differences, a cohesive portrait of Xenophon's ideal cavalry and its commander emerges.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. THE <i>CYROPAEDIA</i> .....	5
III. THE IMPORTANCE OF CAVALRY .....	6
IV. FORMING THE CAVALRY .....	12
Enlistment .....	13
Leadership .....	18
Equipment.....	20
Training .....	24
Provisions and Pay .....	27
V. DEPLOYMENT .....	31
Reconnaissance.....	31
Raids .....	33
Marching Formation.....	35
Protecting the Army .....	38
Battle.....	41
Mixed Troops .....	43
IV. TACTICS .....	44

TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

Deception .....	44
A Small Force vs. A Large One .....	45
VI. CONCLUSIONS .....	49
VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	52

## ABBREVIATIONS

Xen.	Xenophon
Ages.	<i>Agesilaus</i>
An.	<i>Anabasis</i>
Cyn.	<i>Cynegeticus (On Hunting)</i>
Cyr.	<i>Cyropaedia</i>
Eq.	<i>De equitandi ratione (The Art of Horsemanship)</i>
Eq. mag.	<i>De equitum magistro (Cavalry Commander)</i>
Hell.	<i>Hellenica</i>
Mem.	<i>Memorabilia</i>
Hdt.	Herodotus

All other abbreviations same as *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Revised Third Edition

## I. INTRODUCTION

The fourth century BC Athenian writer Xenophon is best known for his historical works, which include the *Hellenica (Greek Affairs)*, a continuation of Thucydides' history, and his philosophical writings, which comprise the only extant Socratic dialogues other than the more famous dialogues by Plato, as well as his *Cyropaedia (Education of Cyrus)*, an idealized view of the career of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire. Many of Xenophon's works involve the cavalry, particularly its execution. Xenophon himself was a cavalryman and devoted a great deal of time to the subject. Indeed, he wrote two treatises that deal specifically with cavalry: a handbook for commanders of the Athenian state cavalry, and a guide to horsemanship.

Xenophon was born c. 430 BC to an aristocratic Athenian family. The Peloponnesian War dominated much of his early life and, as a result of the war, he spent a great deal of his youth in Athens. As a young man, he no doubt served in the Athenian state cavalry.<sup>1</sup> Although Xenophon probably did not agree with the ideology of democracy, he did not support the brutality of the Thirty Tyrants in Athens either. However, after the fall of the Thirty, the cavalry class was looked upon with suspicion and anger. For these reasons, Xenophon was motivated to leave Athens and join his friend Proxenus in Asia. He was likely one of many Athenian cavalrymen who made up

---

<sup>1</sup> Waterfield (2006), 37



the Greek contingent of Cyrus the Younger's army.<sup>2</sup> It is probable that Xenophon arrived in Asia with some cavalry experience; certainly he gained much more in the time he spent helping lead the Greek retreat, and then as a mercenary for Sparta from 399 BC onward. As a result of this experience, Xenophon should be viewed as an authority on 4<sup>th</sup> century BC cavalry operations.

Recent scholarship concerning Xenophon's works has focused on his ideas of leadership. A very few, if any, scholars have examined his portrayal of the cavalry and the cavalry commander. Xenophon's writing is almost always didactic. He wrote primarily as a teacher and philosopher and his works are meant to educate his reader, though not always explicitly. Comparing Xenophon's idealized picture of cavalry in the *Cyropaedia* with his historical accounts, as well as with both his guides for cavalry and horsemanship, casts light not only on how the cavalry of Xenophon's time operated, but also how Xenophon believed it should have operated, and why a strong cavalry was important.

A close examination of Xenophon's works on cavalry shows that he clearly believed a strong cavalry was a crucial part of a successful army. His *Cyropaedia* is his idealized account of how a commander should manage all aspects of cavalry operations, if given unlimited power to do so. As we will see, the cavalry of Cyrus the Great begins small, but grows quickly and is funded through the spoils of war. By Cyrus' death, the cavalry is an immense and highly trained force. Such a force was necessary for the large Persian Empire.

---

<sup>2</sup> Waterfield (2006), 50

Xenophon's other works show that Greek cavalry operations were often restricted by outside influences, whether due to the circumstances of the army, as in the *Anabasis* and *Hellenica*, or restrictions imposed by the government, as in the *Cavalry Commander*. Xenophon's idealized cavalry portrait in the *Cyropaedia* would not have been sustainable in the Greek world. The democracy of Athens did not allow the cavalry commander the necessary flexibility to establish a cavalry like Cyrus the Great's. Further, Sparta did not value the cavalry, as Xenophon believed they should have. Also, the Greek city-states would not have been able to finance the cavalry using the same means shown in the *Cyropaedia* without constant campaign and expansion. The cavalry was not the pride of the Greek army, either. It nearly always served as a subsidiary arm in Greek warfare, which relied on hoplites, heavily armed infantrymen, as its main striking arm.

The purpose of the cavalry force is the crucial differentiating factor among these works. Cyrus the Great's intention in the *Cyropaedia* is to establish a massive force capable of helping him win an empire. His cavalry needs to be of a size and skill level appropriate for all the possible uses of cavalry, including deployment in battle, scouting, and supporting his large infantry force. By raising and increasing his cavalry force while on campaign, Cyrus is able to establish an impressive force with little cost to himself. He gathers the horses as spoils of war or gifts, and as such does not have to pay the expenses associated with raising, breeding, and purchasing horses.

In contrast, the *Cavalry Commander* is an instructional treatise specifically addressing the commanders of the Athenian state cavalry. Xenophon's purpose in this work is to instruct these commanders how to raise a force within the constraints of the Athenian democracy and at the same time increase the status of the cavalry class, which

had fallen into decline since Xenophon's childhood. The *Cavalry Commander* can also be viewed as his ideal vision for the Athenian cavalry. This treatise is addressed directly to the *hipparch*, the cavalry commander, and offers recommendations on the reform of the Athenian state cavalry. The cavalry as a defensive arm to guard against invasion is particularly stressed.<sup>3</sup>

The Greeks in the *Anabasis*, like Cyrus the Great, raise a force while in enemy territory at little expense, but theirs is a cavalry with a much different purpose and scope than Cyrus'. Here, Xenophon is illustrating how a commander can raise an effective force with the resources he has at hand. The Greeks are not interested in establishing a force for empire, like Cyrus the Great. They form their cavalry so they can make a safe retreat from Asia. Therefore, they do not need a corps the size of Cyrus' and are not interested in gathering additional horses wherever possible. Additional horses, their supplies, and caregivers would mean less money and provisions for the already disadvantaged Greeks.

In his encomium *Agesilaus*, Xenophon praises the Spartan king for establishing a well-trained cavalry force at little cost to his state. Agesilaus does this by compelling the Ionian Greek cities to supply his cavalry. He is far from home and it would not be practical to request Sparta to send him a cavalry. Even if he did, Sparta had a weak cavalry tradition and would likely have had no force to send to Agesilaus. Xenophon is also illustrating how a reputation for fairness can influence allies to lend assistance to a commander. In all of his works on cavalry, he is educating commanders in several aspects of cavalry management: how to train and pay the men, where to gather horses and

---

<sup>3</sup> Anderson (1974), 184

their equipment, how to provide for the cavalrymen and their horses, and how properly to evaluate the purpose and circumstances of raising a cavalry force.

## II. THE *CYROPAEDIA*

The *Cyropaedia* is Xenophon's version of a utopia. As such, it offers Xenophon's vision of what a cavalry could be, if the commander were able to raise and manage his force without restraint. He describes Cyrus the Great as having to raise an elite cavalry force while on campaign because, according to Xenophon, the Persia of Cyrus' childhood did not value horsemanship. In fact, he says Cyrus was trained to be an excellent horseman only while visiting his grandfather in Media (*Cyr.* 1.3.3). Xenophon quotes Cyrus' father, the Persian king Cambyses, as praising him for establishing the Persian cavalry and making the Persians "masters of the plains" (*Cyr.* 8.5.23). Some scholars have doubted the historical accuracy of this point. Christensen asserts that the Persians were a semi-nomadic people and the role of horseman was central to the identity of the Persian nobility. He also refers to an extant seal of Cyrus' grandfather that depicts a mounted warrior.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Herodotus says that Persian boys learned three things: riding, archery, and honesty (*Hdt.* 1.136). However, this argument is probably irrelevant to a discussion of Xenophon's recommendations for the cavalry in the *Cyropaedia*. His

---

<sup>4</sup> Christensen, 50

purpose was to use Cyrus as a model for his ideal leader, not to deliver an accurate history of events. It is reasonable then, to assume that he would take certain liberties with the historical account. Christensen does admit that Xenophon's version of an early Persia without a strong cavalry tradition, though it would have been alien to both Greeks and Persians, was necessary for depicting the process of introducing a cavalry force.<sup>5</sup>

Xenophon was, no doubt, well aware of Herodotus' Persian history and likely did little research beyond his own experiences with Persians prior to writing the *Cyropaedia*. The purpose of the *Cyropaedia* is to present a portrait of an ideal leader. For Xenophon, one aspect of ideal leadership is the ability to raise and implement a strong cavalry force. For this reason, he needs Cyrus the Great to be the founder of a strong cavalry force as part of his portrait of the ideal ruler. In the *Cyropaedia*, he depicts Cyrus' military increasing as his power and empire also increases. It is only after Cyrus has established a strong cavalry and himself as a formidable leader that he is able to inherit Persia from his father. Xenophon needs Cyrus the Great to create his cavalry and military forces from scratch so he can illustrate how such a feat might be done. For this reason it is useful to hold the *Cyropaedia* as Xenophon's ideal vision of a cavalry force and measure the cavalries described in his historical works against this model.

### III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CAVALRY

---

<sup>5</sup> Christensen, 58

In the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus the Great has several motivations for establishing an effective cavalry. When he sets out from Persia to assist the Medes in war against the Assyrians he takes only an infantry force and, initially, relies on his allies to supply cavalry (*Cyr.* 2.1.9). But, as Xenophon illustrates, this leaves the Persians incapable of capturing any of the enemy or plunder on their own and heavily dependent on their allies for this crucial and profitable task (*Cyr.* 4.3.5-8). In addition to defeating the Assyrians, Cyrus is intending to establish an empire. He finds that it will be much more difficult to expand his territory if he is always dependent on his allies for cavalry. In a speech to the Persians, Cyrus argues that the addition of a cavalry corps will make them more formidable to their enemies. With their infantry force, they are successful in routing the enemy, but without cavalry they cannot kill or capture them, and thus fully exploit their victories. For this reason, enemy archers and other light-armed troops do not fear attacking the Persians from a distance. Most importantly, the Persians' allies act arrogantly toward them because they know that the Persians need their cavalry. Cyrus also argues that the allies feel entitled to a greater share of the spoils because they are the ones who can capture the plunder and bring it back to camp (*Cyr.* 4.3.4-7). With horsemen of their own, the Persians will no longer be reliant on their allies and will be able to keep a greater share of the spoils. Cyrus' aim is to make the Persians similarly eager for the spoils of empire and at the same time remove the vulnerability caused by his lack of cavalry.

While Cyrus the Great tends to deploy the cavalry in the *Cyropaedia* for offensive purposes, the use of cavalry described in the *Anabasis* is defensive. In the *Anabasis*, Xenophon describes how he helped lead a force of 10,000 Greek mercenaries in Asia.

Though their initial purpose was to support the coup attempt of Cyrus the Younger, after the latter's death the Greeks soon find themselves in a desperate march back to the coast through mostly hostile territory. The Greeks have no cavalry of their own, but had depended on the allied Persian cavalry while with Cyrus the Younger. Now, abandoned by their Persian cavalry, they find themselves in a perilous position as they attempt to negotiate a truce. Here, Xenophon emphasizes the essential role of the cavalry in protecting the army. The Greeks are forced to endure an anxious interval as they await the Persian king's emissaries. The long delay makes many of the Greeks nervous and eager to advance, but Clearchus, the most influential general among the Greeks at the time, points out that they cannot move because they have no cavalry, while the Persians have many skilled horsemen. Without a cavalry to escort them, they are susceptible to attack from enemy cavalry and light-troops, especially at the vulnerable rear of the marching formation. Moreover, Clearchus argues that the Greeks cannot capture or kill anyone they defeat in battle (*An.* 2.4.6). While they are capable of routing the enemy, nonetheless it is too dangerous to pursue them beyond the Greeks' main body. If the Greeks attempted to pursue the enemy with only an infantry force, they would run the risk of the enemy turning and cutting them off from the rest of the army. Xenophon repeatedly echoes this sentiment throughout the *Anabasis* and his other works to drive home the importance of this key role for cavalry.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> *An.* 3.3.16; *Cyr.* 4.1.11; *Cyr.* 5.4.19; In the *Cavalry Commander*, Xenophon counsels the Athenian commander that if he ever finds a part of his enemy's force weaker than his own and separated from the enemy's main body, he must not miss the opportunity to attack. He cautions, however, always to be certain that the enemy force is weaker lest the "hunter become the hunted" (*Eq. mag.* 4.17).

Following the loss of their generals, Xenophon makes an interesting speech to the despondent Greeks, which downplays the importance of cavalry to the army. This speech is important because his argument against the cavalry sheds light on its role and why it actually is an important component of the army. It is crucial to remember that Xenophon is doing his utmost here to encourage the greatly depressed Greeks. As a cavalryman himself, he is well aware of the advantages horsemen have over infantry. In these desperate circumstances for the Greeks, Xenophon simply says whatever is necessary to rouse their spirits. He argues that it is a cavalry's riders, not the horses, which do damage in battle. No horse, he says, has ever killed a man in battle with a bite or a kick. Furthermore, horsemen are more vulnerable than infantrymen because they are afraid not only of the enemy, but also of falling from their horses. Contrary to what Xenophon tells the Greeks, however, this must not have been an insurmountable problem for ancient equestrians. Though they lacked stirrups, cavalrymen were clearly able to maintain their seat most of the time as shown by their continued use and success.<sup>7</sup> Xenophon further claims in his speech that the only benefit the cavalrymen have is in their superior speed of flight. As a result, the men should feel confident when facing the enemy cavalry. He also elaborates all the vulnerabilities of the Greeks if they do not leave immediately: they are now without a guide, without the means to purchase provisions, and there are several vast rivers on the way to the coast (*An.* 3.2.20-26).

Xenophon's speech does, in fact, convince the Greeks to assemble and leave camp. Gaebel suggests that the Greeks' willingness to continue without a cavalry

---

<sup>7</sup> Spence, 43-5; how the ancient cavalrymen addressed this concern will be discussed in a following section on equipment.



indicates that few of the Greek hoplites present had any experience with horses.<sup>8</sup> This is highly unlikely however. As will be discussed later, the men who serve in the small cavalry force which the Greeks later form in the *Anabasis* were likely already skilled horsemen. Xenophon never mentions any difficulty they might have understandably had moving from infantry to cavalry roles. Moreover, a man from Athens, a city-state with a strong tradition of horsemanship, is appointed to lead the new cavalry. Further, the Greek hoplite force was very successful in the battle at Cunaxa, so they had no reason to fear the Persian infantry. It is the Persian cavalry that causes their despondency and hesitation. The Greeks know that they will be more vulnerable to light-arm and cavalry attacks while marching than they were in battle formation at Cunaxa. So the Greeks are in a pickle. They are well aware of the danger they are in without horsemen of their own to respond to an enemy cavalry attack. It is certain, however, that if they do not move, they will die.

Their fears are confirmed when the Greeks first set out on their march homeward and Mithradates attacks with 200 Persian horsemen. Xenophon pursues the enemy infantry with his rearguard on foot, but they are incapable of overtaking the mounted enemy troopers. Additionally, the retreating Persian cavalry is able to shoot arrows and javelins behind them, inflicting wounds on the pursuing Greeks. Xenophon says a pursuit any distance away from the main body was impossible, which was likely due to the dangers of being cut off from the protection of the rest of the army. Without a cavalry force to protect the army and pursue the Persians, the Greeks suffer heavily (*An.* 3.3.6-11).

---

<sup>8</sup> Gaebel, 113

After their first day's march, the Greeks have made little progress and are again discouraged. Xenophon then makes another speech, which explains the need for a cavalry force and light-armed troops. He says that the danger posed by the enemy is their ability to attack from a distance, beyond the reach of the Greek bowmen and spearmen. The Greek hoplites cannot pursue the Persians safely or effectively because their shields and arms heavily encumber them. The Persians have the ability to rush in, strike from a distance, and retreat quickly before the Greeks have a chance to catch them. By repeating these quick strikes, the Persians are able quickly to wear down the hoplites. Therefore, Xenophon says, they must raise a cavalry and light-armed troops to counter this threat. Xenophon argues that even a small force will cause some difficulty for the Persians (*An.* 3.3.16-19).

Later in the *Anabasis*, Xenophon expands on his uses of the cavalry for protection. In addition to defending the Greeks as they march, the cavalry is also crucial in guarding them as they gather supplies and fodder. During this activity, the Greeks are particularly vulnerable because they are out of formation and scattered. In Thrace, the Greek army splits into three groups. Xenophon's contingent has all the remaining Greek cavalry, now under the command of Timasion the Dardanian (*An.* 6.3.7). The Arcadian contingent, now without cavalry, has split themselves into even smaller groups to plunder Thracian villages. The enemy cavalry and light-armed troops attack the Arcadians and surround them. It is not until Xenophon comes to their aid with his cavalry and light troops that the enemy flees (*An.* 6.3.18). Xenophon again illustrates the dangers an infantry force without cavalry faces, when Neon, one of the Greek generals, leads his men against some Bithynian villages in search of provisions. Pharnabazus' Persian

cavalry surprises them and kills about 500 of the 2,000 Greeks. Xenophon again must rescue the survivors (*An.* 6.4.24). It is this vulnerability that Xenophon later argues is his reason for offering the Greeks' service to the Thracian Seuthes. After the Lacedaemonians arrive to take control of the Greek army, Xenophon makes a speech defending his decision to put the Greeks in the service of the foreign prince Seuthes at the start of the previous winter. He points out that when the Greeks were on the Thracian coast they no longer had cavalry or peltasts and so could not capture any slaves or cattle. As a result, they were being compelled to purchase insufficient provisions with limited means. It was this want of protection and supplies that made the alliance with Seuthes necessary (*An.* 7.6.26-7).

Xenophon clearly believes a cavalry is an important asset to any army for both offensive and defensive maneuvers. In all of his works regarding cavalry operations, he makes it clear that the cavalry was crucial in protecting the army on the march as well as harassing enemy troops either in marching formation or scattered on the plain. In his other works, Xenophon is showing his reader how a cavalry can be raised in different conditions with special demands. He uses examples in the *Cyropaedia* to show his ideal tactics for developing a cavalry for empire.

#### IV. FORMING THE CAVALRY

## ENLISTMENT

Xenophon not only clearly illustrates in his works the necessity of the cavalry arm, but he also addresses how to establish an effective cavalry force. Through Cyrus the Great, Xenophon demonstrates how a commander might go about gathering troops and equipment to supply his cavalry. Cyrus lacks horses. Moreover, even the Persian troopers he does have lack proper cavalry training. He first trains in horsemanship infantrymen from among the Persian Peers. Then, he adds commoners to increase the size of his force.<sup>9</sup> Being away from home on campaign when he decides to establish a Persian cavalry force, Cyrus first appropriates any horses suitable for service from his baggage train. Then, he asks his allies that the Persians' share of the spoils be horses and equestrian equipment (*Cyr.* 4.3.9). Within a matter of days, Cyrus is ready to march with 2,000 cavalymen outfitted with all the necessary equipment and a squire for each horse (*Cyr.* 5.2.1). However Cyrus' Persian horsemen did have some difficulty in their new role. Xenophon says many of them fell from their horses during their first raid (*Cyr.* 5.3.1). Throughout the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus also collects as many horses as possible as gifts from friends (*Cyr.* 6.1.26). Xenophon notes, for example, that the many horses were the "most important" of the gifts given to Cyrus by his ally, Gadatas. He uses these to increase his cavalry (*Cyr.* 5.4.29-32). Prior to the battle of Thymbrara, Cyrus' cavalry numbers 10,000 Persians (*Cyr.* 6.2.7-8). Cyrus continues to collect additional horsemen and strengthen his cavalry force while marching toward Babylon. By the end of his campaigns, he has amassed a cavalry force 120,000 strong (*Cyr.* 8.6.19).

---

<sup>9</sup> Christensen, 47

The Athenian cavalry commander had to go about enlistment in a much different way than Cyrus the Great. Xenophon's instructions to the *hipparch* include how to recruit men for service and how to make cavalry service appealing to wealthy young men and their parents (*Eq. mag.* 1.9). In addition to making the cavalry attractive to potential recruits, the commander must also convince the state of the importance of maintaining the cavalry and assisting in its financial support (*Eq. mag.* 5.13). Xenophon recommends a force of 1,000 Athenian cavalry and says that resident aliens should be allowed to serve in the cavalry to encourage rivalry and discipline among the men (*Eq. mag.* 9.3-6). Marchant suggests these resident aliens would have comprised 200 of the 1,000 Athenian cavalry.<sup>10</sup> Xenophon also says that, because of retirement and other reasons, the *hipparch* must be constantly recruiting new cavalry members (*Eq. mag.* 1.2). He further states that men unfit or unwilling to serve should be compelled to help sustain the cavalry financially (*Eq. mag.* 9.5). The role of the Athenian commander is more political than simply raising and training a cavalry. The *hipparch* must be constantly promoting the importance of the cavalry so as to both attract new members and encourage state support.

If the *Cyropaedia* is Xenophon's ideal vision of how a commander might raise a cavalry on campaign, the *Anabasis* illustrates the reality in action, albeit on a much smaller scale. In the *Anabasis*, he describes how the Greeks form a small cavalry force and a body of light-armed troops from among their own numbers and resources.

Xenophon says that he brought horses to Asia with him, so it is clear that there are some

---

<sup>10</sup> Marchant. trans. *Xenophon, On The Cavalry Commander* (London 1925), 289fn.

horses present in the army.<sup>11</sup> To establish a cavalry for the Greeks, he assembles the few horses he has with him, those left by Clearchus, some captured from the enemy, and others from the baggage train. The Greeks also establish a corps of peltasts. Within a day, the Greeks have a cavalry force of 50 horses and men. They are outfitted with leather tunics and breastplates and put under the command of the Athenian, Lycius (*An.* 3.3.19-20). Lane Fox asserts that this small cavalry force may have come from infantry, peltasts, or hoplites skilled in horsemanship. They also could have been grooms or camp followers.<sup>12</sup> Xenophon does not say that these men had any difficulty moving from infantry to mounted fighting in the way that Cyrus the Great's Persian horsemen did. It may have been that most of the Greeks' cavalrymen were experienced Athenian horsemen. At this time, not many of the Greek city-states had strong cavalry traditions. Athens, however, had a long-standing history of cavalry.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, like Xenophon himself, many Athenian horsemen had left Athens following the period of the Thirty Tyrants. Waterfield suggests that the new, Greek cavalry commander, Lycius, had previously served alongside Xenophon in the Athenian cavalry under the Thirty.<sup>14</sup>

The Spartan king Agesilaus' cavalry needs resemble those of Cyrus the Great's, but also on a smaller scale. He requires a cavalry force only large enough to match the Persian horsemen. As in the *Anabasis*, Xenophon may have played a role in establishing the cavalry force under Agesilaus, though with far more resources than his 10,000 Greeks

---

<sup>11</sup> Clearchus brought with him a force of more than 40 Thracian horsemen (*An.* 1.5.1). Unfortunately for the Greeks, these 40 Thracians and Cyrus' Persian cavalry desert to the Persian king after the death of Cyrus the Younger (*An.* 2.2.7).

<sup>12</sup> Lane Fox, 219

<sup>13</sup> Spence, 9; Bugh records evidence of an Athenian cavalry from the Archaic Period through the Hellenistic period in his book, *The Horsemen of Athens*.

<sup>14</sup> Waterfield (2006), 51

possessed. When Agesilaus arrives in Asia to help the Greek states on the coast achieve their autonomy, he does not have a cavalry. According to Xenophon, the Persian Tissaphernes sees this as an exploitable advantage. The Persian satrap Pharnabazus and his cavalry also prevent Agesilaus from campaigning in the Phrygian plains, forcing him to contemplate raising his own cavalry (*Hell.* 3.4.12-15).<sup>15</sup> In the *Hellenica*, Xenophon says that Agesilaus arrived in Asia without a cavalry, but the Spartan Lysander soon brings him 200 horsemen from a Persian ally, Spithridates (*Hell.* 3.4.10). It is after a chance encounter between Agesilaus' allied cavalry and a contingent of Pharnabazus' Persian cavalry of equal size, that he realizes the superiority of the Persian horsemen and arms (*Hell.* 3.4.13).

Sparta never possessed a strong cavalry tradition but instead focused on the training and implementation of the hoplite arm. The existence of a force called the *Hippeis*, a bodyguard that fought on foot, suggests that the Spartans did at one time have either a cavalry or a mounted hoplite force.<sup>16</sup> In 425/4 the Spartans took what Thucydides says was the unusual step of raising a cavalry force (that nonetheless was only 400 strong) to counter Athenian raids (Thuc. 4.55.2). This was not an effective military force, however. Xenophon is particularly critical of the Spartan cavalry at the battle of Leuctra in 371 BC. While the Theban cavalry was thoroughly practiced and in excellent condition, he says that the Spartan cavalry was "in the worst of shape" (*Hell.* 6.4.10). He claims this was because in Sparta, only the wealthiest citizens were required to raise warhorses, but the riders were not required to train. Xenophon says these cavalrymen, when summoned, would collect their horses and arms and immediately go to

---

<sup>15</sup> See also *Ages.* 1.15-24

<sup>16</sup> Spence, 2

the field, i.e., without any training or preparation. He also says that these men were in poor physical condition and not eager for honor (*Hell.* 6.4.12). As a result, at the outset of the battle of Leuctra the Thebans quickly defeated them. The Spartan horsemen, in their disarray, fell upon their own hoplites at the same time as the Theban infantry (*Hell.* 6.4.13). The Spartan cavalry also was defeated and their commander killed in 382 BC outside Olynthos. Ten years earlier, a small group of cavalry dismounted to fight on foot against the Argives (*Hell.* 4.4.10). This would seem to illustrate that the Spartans were more comfortable fighting on foot than horseback, which further suggests their ineptitude or lack of interest in cavalry maneuvers.<sup>17</sup>

For these reasons, as well as his distance from home, Agesilaus could not request a cavalry contingent from Sparta. Instead, he decides to gather a better cavalry force from the allied cities under his command in Asia. He decrees to the wealthiest men in these cities that they must become horse breeders. They must also furnish horses suitable for cavalry service and, if they do not wish to serve themselves, they must provide a man and weapons suitable for service. Agesilaus also chooses cities to furnish whole cavalry contingents. Xenophon says that in this way, his cavalry was immediately ready for action (*Hell.* 3.4.13-15).<sup>18</sup> The methods Xenophon ascribes to Agesilaus are unique among those he describes in his other works. Most notably, he allowed the wealthy class to hire mercenaries to serve in their place. So, his cavalry was a mercenary force, rather than a citizen corps.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Spence, 3

<sup>18</sup> See also *Ages.* 1.24

<sup>19</sup> Worley, 131



## LEADERSHIP

Xenophon himself was a successful cavalry commander and he understood well the importance of good leadership. Even the best horsemen will be ineffective with poor guidance. In his treatise on the subject, he says that the cavalry commander must train his men to be obedient, because even the best preparations and armor are useless if the men will not obey (*Eq. mag.* 1.7). He recommends that the commander foster kind feelings among his men by ensuring they are well supplied and by sharing in times of prosperity (*Eq. mag.* 6.2-3). An effective commander shows his men that he goes to great lengths to take good care of them and the horses, and he shares the spoils of his success with his men. Xenophon also says it is important that a commander shows himself to be more capable than his men in all respects because, in this way, his men are more likely to obey his command (*Eq. mag.* 6.2-6).

In addition to obedience through goodwill, Xenophon offers other examples of how a leader might maintain compliance. Cyrus the Great and Agesilaus both use competition for prizes and gifts.<sup>20</sup> Through their generosity, they enrich their men and engender their loyalty. However, in the *Anabasis*, Xenophon does not have the ability to reward his men financially for good behavior. Instead, he uses the effects of peer pressure to keep his men in line.<sup>21</sup> He argues that the risk of losing one's good reputation may be enough to make the men obedient. An example of such an encounter is between the

---

<sup>20</sup> *Cyr.* 2.1.23 and *Ages.* 1.25

<sup>21</sup> Spence, 69

infantryman, Soteridas, and Xenophon. When Soteridas complains that Xenophon has the advantage during an uphill march because of being on horseback while he is on foot, Xenophon immediately dismounts and trades places with him. Xenophon struggles under the weight of both the hoplite shield and his cavalry breastplate and he falls behind. Soon, the other soldiers harass Soteridas until he dismounts and retakes his own shield (*An.* 3.4.47-49).

The circumstances of a cavalry commander in democratic Athens were very different from those of the commanders in the *Cyropaedia*, *Anabasis*, or *Agesilaus*. In the previous three texts, Xenophon illustrates how to raise an effective force while on campaign with limited resources. In Athens, the commander did not have the freedom to do what he wanted, as Cyrus the Great did. The *hipparch* was an elected office and, as such, the commander had to prove his effectiveness and popularity both to the men and the state.<sup>22</sup> State law also determined the number of cavalrymen and their eligibility for service (*Eq. mag.* 1.2). Despite these differences, the Athenian cavalry commander must also engender good will and obedience among his men and the recommendations for good leadership found in the *Cyropaedia* and the *Anabasis* still apply in Athens.

Xenophon uses the example of Cyrus the Great to illustrate how a commander should develop and lead his cavalry in times of expansion and fortune. In the *Anabasis*, however, he depicts a cavalry commander in hostile territory deploying the cavalry so as to best effect a safe retreat. His treatise on the duties of the Athenian cavalry commander is very different. Xenophon is educating these commanders how to make their cavalry the best possible force within the constraints of democracy. Of all the commanders

---

<sup>22</sup> Spence, 74

Xenophon describes, the Athenian cavalry commander has the least independence to train and deploy his force as he wishes. He also has the most leisure to train his horsemen. Unlike the examples of Cyrus, Xenophon, and Agesilaus, who all form their cavalries out of immediate necessity, the Athenian commander has a greater luxury to train his men over time and in familiar territory through frequent public spectacles and friendly skirmishes (*Eq. mag.* 5.4).

## EQUIPMENT

Once the cavalry has been established, commanders must see to it that their men and horses are properly equipped. Xenophon says that Cyrus the Great's Persian cavalymen are armed with bronze frontlets and breastplates. The saddle horses are also armed with thigh pieces (*Cyr.* 6.4.1). Cyrus' personal staff is supplied with bronze corselets and helmets, sabres, and spears made of cornel wood. Their horses are also armed with frontlets, breast-pieces, and bronze thigh pieces, which additionally protect the thighs of the rider (*Cyr.* 7.1.2). Xenophon says that Cyrus' Persian cavalry is the most effective of its time and the equipment used by Cyrus is still in use in his own time (*Cyr.* 7.1.46-7).

Xenophon does not have the luxury of using war spoils and gifts to supply his cavalry in the *Anabasis*. The horses for his small force have to come from the baggage

train and those that individual, well-to-do Greeks have brought along. The new cavalrymen are immediately equipped with leather tunics and breastplates (*An.* 3.3.20). The presence of breastplates seems to imply that there are men already equipped for cavalry service in the army. However it is possible that these men are outfitted with infantry breastplates. When the Younger Cyrus reviews his troops in the parade at Tyriaeum, breastplates are not mentioned among the armor Xenophon describes for the Greeks (*An.* 1.2.16). However, this is not sufficient grounds to suggest that the Greeks did not use breastplates, according to Lane Fox. He says the word commonly translated as ‘tunic,’ *chiton*, can also be translated as ‘cloak,’ which could have covered a breastplate. If Xenophon’s intent is to describe the visual impact of the Greeks at Tyriaeum, he may have chosen to omit the mention of a breastplate. Furthermore, the equipment of the Greek infantrymen varies depending on their personal wealth. Lane Fox also notes that by the end of the march, some Greek infantry do wear breastplates. It is reasonable then that Xenophon would focus on the uniform appearance of the Greeks provided by their cloaks, not what was beneath them.<sup>23</sup> Thus it is likely that there were breastplates available for cavalry as well.

The use of cavalry breastplates is further supported later in the *Anabasis*, when Xenophon relates an instance, mentioned above, when he dismounts from his horse during a march uphill because of the grumblings of an infantryman. He says his progress is slowed because of the weight of the cavalry breastplate he wears (*An.* 3.4.44-9). This seems to imply that there is a difference between a cavalry breastplate and a hoplite breastplate. Xenophon, at least, was wealthy enough to afford cavalry arms and it is

---

<sup>23</sup> Lane Fox, 219-220

reasonable to assume, because he brought horses with him from Greece, that he also brought his cavalry armor. The Greeks are also successful in capturing some enemy cavalry and may have appropriated the captured arms for their own use (*An.* 3.4.1-5).

Xenophon offers the most detail concerning armor and equipment in his two treatises on horsemanship and cavalry. In Athens, horses are supplied to the cavalry by the wealthy class and through state loan (*Eq. mag.* 1.19). The law also requires that cavalrymen spend their pay on their arms (*Eq. mag.* 1.23). In his treatise on horsemanship, Xenophon describes at length how both the rider and horse should be equipped. He says that the rider must wear a fitted breastplate with an additional piece to protect the neck. He recommends the Boeotian style helmet and a piece of armor to protect the left arm from the shoulder to the elbow. He also recommends that the right arm be fully protected by detachable flaps that will allow for freedom of movement when the rider throws the javelin (*Eq.* 12.7). For the horse, Xenophon recommends head, chest, and thigh pieces. The thigh pieces for the horse, like those used by Cyrus the Great in the *Cyropaedia*, will also serve to protect the thighs of the rider. Xenophon says that the horse's belly, which is its most vital and weakest part, must be protected by a cloth that will also serve to help the rider's seat (*Eq.* 12.8-9).

For offensive weapons, Xenophon recommends the sabre over the thrusting sword because of its greater efficiency in close combat. Spence suggests that Xenophon preferred the *machaira* or *kopis* sword because it was shorter and better suited to an overhand, slashing motion.<sup>24</sup> Anderson further notes that the sword he recommends was

---

<sup>24</sup> Spence, 54

curved to allow for the best slashing motion.<sup>25</sup> Xenophon also prefers the Persian cornel wood javelins to the weak and cumbersome long spear (*Hell.* 3.4.14). He suggests that each rider should carry two javelins and a sabre (*Eq.* 11-12). The javelins are used for long-distance fighting, the sabre for close combat.

Moreover, Xenophon recognized that the primary vulnerability of any mounted warrior is the instability of his seat. As noted above, ancient cavalymen rode without the assistance of saddle or stirrups. Anyone who has ever sat on a bareback horse knows how unbalanced and easily jostled the rider is. In response to this vulnerability and the need of a cavalryman to pull up quickly and turn his horse, Xenophon offers two solutions. The first is the kind of bit used in training a horse. It is a well-known fact among equestrians that the harsher the bit, the quicker the response will be from the horse. In his treatise on horsemanship, Xenophon recommends that young horses be trained with a harsh bit with sharp edges so the horse will not grab hold of it with his teeth. As Anderson notes, the severity of this type of bit is visible on the horses of the Parthenon frieze. These horses are depicted as either over-bent, with their noses in their chests, or with their mouths open and their lower jaw forced back with their heads in the air in an effort to lessen the pressure of the bit.<sup>26</sup> The severity of these bits may seem overly harsh or even cruel to a modern reader, but they were necessary to maintain control of a horse without the aid of stirrups for stability. In addition to a harsher bit, Xenophon also recognized the importance of the rider's posture. He instructed the rider to adopt an upright position with the legs beneath the rider, but not with his thighs horizontal. This position allows the

---

<sup>25</sup> Anderson (1974), 76

<sup>26</sup> Anderson (1974), 188

rider a more secure seat and better control through his thighs, which Xenophon says enables the rider to use his weapons more effectively (*Eq. 7.5-6*).

## TRAINING

An obedient and well-equipped force is essential to success, but these qualities do not replace the importance of training. Xenophon says that it is the cavalry commander who is responsible for the training and quality of his force (*Eq. mag. 1.3*). He must make sure that every rider can mount from the spring, maintain his seat in all terrains, throw a javelin while mounted, and be efficient in “all forms of horsemanship” (*Eq. mag. 1.5*). Xenophon stresses that young men be taught early how to mount from the ground, but says it is acceptable for older men to mount with assistance as in the Persian fashion (*Eq. mag. 1.17*).

Xenophon recommends that commanders make themselves and their men familiar with as many roads as possible in both friendly and hostile territories (*Eq. mag. 4.6*). Of course, this is not practical for the commanders of the *Anabasis* or *Agesilaus* who fight in foreign land. The Athenian cavalry, however, operates at home and nearby and so can expect to become familiar with the territories in which they fight. Xenophon also recommends Athenian commanders conduct public displays and offer prizes for proficiency and skill to motivate the men to practice (*Eq. mag. 1.26*). Additionally, he

says that a commander should stage sham fights to gauge the condition of his cavalrymen and horses (*Eq. mag.* 5.4).

Xenophon describes how best to train an effective force while on campaign in the *Cyropaedia*. He portrays Cyrus the Great becoming a skilled horseman through constant practice hunting in his grandfather's lands (*Cyr.* 1.4.5). In the *Cyropaedia* and other works, Xenophon argues that hunting is an excellent way to practice cavalry operations. His specific reasons for why hunting offers the best possible training in horsemanship are: it teaches the rider to have a firm seat in all kinds of footing, to pursue prey wherever it runs, and it trains men to endure hardship, heat, cold, hunger, and thirst (*Cyr.* 8.4.34-36). Cyrus the Great also orders his satraps to use hunting exercises to train their cavalries (*Cyr.* 8.6.10). Xenophon repeats the importance of hunting to cavalry training in his treatise on the subject. He says that this sport is, "the means by which men become good in war" (*Cyn.* 1.18).

The circumstances of war, however, do not offer the leisure to train through frequent hunting expeditions and commanders must sometimes find other means to train their men. While on campaign, Cyrus the Great faces the challenge of training his newly formed cavalry force as quickly as possible. He recognizes the value of hunting as practice for war, but he does not have the time for the sport. To expedite the training of his cavalry, he requires that cavalrymen ride wherever they go and carry their corselets and lances, as Cyrus himself does (*Cyr.* 4.5.58). Agesilaus, Xenophon implies in the *Hellenica*, assembles a force that is largely mercenary. He requires the wealthy to supply a man already capable of service and some cities to supply whole contingents of cavalry. He also says that Agesilaus causes the city of Ephesus, where his force is gathered, to



look like a “workshop for war” as his cavalry and infantry train (*Hell.* 3.4.17). As Xenophon recommends a good commander should do in *Cavalry Commander*, Agesilaus offers prizes to those contingents that perform the best. In this way, he motivates his men to train on their own accord frequently (*Hell.* 3.4.16). In the *Anabasis*, Xenophon does not go into great detail about training. This is understandable because the force is a small, makeshift body formed out of necessity. Nor do they have the same leisure that Agesilaus enjoys to train the cavalry. As noted previously, it is also reasonable to assume that the force is primarily comprised of men who already have experience in horsemanship.<sup>27</sup>

Xenophon clearly believes that training through practice in hunting, as well as friendly sparring, as it were, is essential to the quality of a cavalry force. He feels the best training comes through varied practice on all kinds of terrain so that the horsemen might be prepared for whatever they may encounter in foreign territory. He recognizes, however, that this type of training is not always practical. For this reason, he offers suggestions for other techniques that can be used away from home, such as practice through competition or capturing plunder whenever possible. Xenophon also understands that men are not likely to train without some motivation and instructs commanders in how best to incite their men to practice their skill. Commanders of other regiments, not just the cavalry, could use many of the techniques Xenophon suggests, such as offering prizes.

---

<sup>27</sup> Lane Fox, 219

## PROVISIONS AND PAY

Once a commander has established his cavalry force and provided for their equipment and training, he must address how to pay and provide supplies for both his troops and their animals. Procuring enough supplies while on campaign could be difficult. While Xenophon does not go into detail about the rations required for horses, some figures can be estimated from other sources. In his study of Alexander the Great's Macedonian army, Donald Engels has estimated the necessary rations for cavalry horses in campaign conditions. He found that, depending on temperature, horses on military campaign required an average of 8 gallons (or 80 pounds) of water and 20 pounds of grain and fodder per day. So, Alexander's estimated 6,100 cavalry, marching from the Hellespont to Gaugamela, required 122,000 pounds of feed and 488,000 pounds of water.<sup>28</sup> These rations must have been similar to the requirements of the cavalry horses Xenophon discusses in the *Cyropaedia* and the *Anabasis*, as they were marching through similar terrain and climate as Alexander's cavalry.<sup>29</sup> Finding sources for water and feed enough for both the men and animals must have been a primary concern for commanders.

For the cavalry of the *Cyropaedia*, provisions were gathered through conquest on campaign and through gifts in friendly territories. Cyrus the Great uses funds captured from the enemy to pay both his cavalry and his infantry. The cavalry received pay twice that of the infantry so that they "all may have the wherewithal to buy whatever [they] still may need" (*Cyr.* 4.5.41). Traditionally, the cavalry were paid substantially more than the hoplites, likely because of the costs associated with feeding and maintaining a horse. This

---

<sup>28</sup> Engels, 145

<sup>29</sup> Engels' estimates are for medium sized cavalry horses doing moderate work.

also implies that it was the individual cavalryman's responsibility to provide feed and water for his horse.

Xenophon records the greatest detail about Athens' system for maintaining its cavalry in his treatise *Cavalry Commander*. For the Athenians, the state helped defray some of the costs associated with maintaining a horse. He says that the state supported an expenditure of nearly 40 talents a year on cavalry so that they might be ready at a moment's notice (*Eq. mag.* 1.19). The state also gave assistance to troopers in the purchase of horses through a state loan, or *katastasis*. Athens further provided a daily ration allowance for feed called a *sitos*. These loans only covered a portion of the costs, however. The state still relied on the support of the wealthy for the maintenance of the cavalry corps.<sup>30</sup> It is also important to note that the *katastasis* was only a loan and the cavalryman was expected to reimburse the state in full. This means that cavalry service was still restricted to wealthy Athenians. It is likely that these loans were meant to assist men of means who lacked the ready capital to purchase a cavalry horse. Furthermore, it is uncertain how much of the purchase price these loans covered.<sup>31</sup>

Providing for a cavalry on campaign, as Xenophon notes, could be much more challenging. In the *Anabasis*, Xenophon praises Cyrus the Younger for his habit of giving provisions and fodder to his friends in need (*An.* 1.9.27). However, Cyrus' army is very large and he could not have been expected to provide fodder for every horse. Cyrus the Younger's army is forced to march stretched out in a single, long column along the river so that all the men and animals have access to water. It is for this reason, among others,

---

<sup>30</sup> Spence, 272

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 280

that Cyrus' army has such difficulty getting to their battle positions at Cunaxa.<sup>32</sup> During their retreat, the Greeks in the *Anabasis* are forced to march along the Tigris River because they had exhausted the provisions along the Euphrates while with Cyrus' army.<sup>33</sup> The Greeks are also marching through Persian controlled territory and acquiring provisions is one of the biggest challenges they face. In friendly territories they purchase provisions from markets, but in hostile territory, they must obtain them by plundering.

Toward the end of their march, the Greeks find their supplies low and their funds exhausted. It is easy to see how quickly a cavalryman's funds could become drained if he alone is responsible for supplying his horse with feed and water. On campaign, there is little opportunity for horses to graze. This was especially true for the Greeks of the *Anabasis* as they were making a hasty retreat. Feeding even their small cavalry of 50 horses must have been difficult in hostile territory where supplies were scarce, especially during the winter. Applying Engel's above estimate of cavalry rations suggests that the Greeks' small cavalry alone required 4,000 pounds of water and 1,000 pounds of feed each day. Water could be obtained from rivers whenever possible, but the Greeks were forced to march through mountainous terrain which not only decreased the availability of rations, but also likely increased the need as the horses would be working much harder to cross the mountainous terrains than they had worked to cross the plains. For a horse performing hard labor, Engels increases their necessary rations by an additional 4-12 pounds of feed and up to 15 gallons of water per day.<sup>34</sup> What little rations the Greeks

---

<sup>32</sup> Anderson 1974, 100

<sup>33</sup> Anderson 1974, 113

<sup>34</sup> Engels, 126

possessed must have gone quickly. Surely their low supplies are a key factor when the Greeks decide to offer their services to the Thracian prince Seuthes.

In contrast, Agesilaus, as mentioned, is able to compel wealthy citizens to supply horsemen for cavalry service, as well as their pay, supplies, and horses (*Hell.* 3.4.15). Like Cyrus the Great, he is also generous in his gifts and offers prizes for excellence in performance in all areas including horsemanship (*Hell.* 3.4.16). Through this practice, Agesilaus enriches his men and motivates them to train. In the *Hellenica*, Xenophon includes other examples of allied cities forced to contribute funds for the maintenance of the military, similar to the stipulations Agesilaus places on the Greek cities in Asia. In one instance, the Spartans, seeking to raise a large infantry force, require their allies to provide either men for service or money. Xenophon specifically says that 3 obols is payment for one infantryman and cities that used to provide cavalry are obligated to provide the pay of 4 hoplites in place of each horseman (*Hell.* 5.2.21). This clearly illustrates the much greater resources required to support cavalrymen versus infantrymen.

In his works, Xenophon illustrates various ways for a commander to provide for his men in times of both prosperity and need. Cyrus the Great is Xenophon's example of how a successful commander best benefits his men and provides for them while on campaign at little cost to himself. Alternatively, using the example of the *Anabasis*, he shows how a commander with limited provisions can sustain his army in foreign territories. In all of his examples, Xenophon says it is important to maintain the favor of the army.

## V. DEPLOYMENT

No matter how well provisioned or trained, the cavalry will still be useless if the commander is not able to deploy it effectively. Xenophon addresses this matter in all of his works regarding cavalry. In the *Cavalry Commander*, he warns that every horseman should know two things: at what distance his horse can overtake a man on foot and how much of a head start his horse will need to escape. Further, a cavalry commander must know on what types of terrain the cavalry has an advantage and how to make a small force appear large (*Eq. mag.* 5.1-2). The cavalry commander, according to Xenophon, must always be ready to capitalize on an enemy's mistakes, but also be prepared to withdraw immediately so that the enemy does not have time to regroup (*Eq. mag.* 7.7-10). Xenophon discusses many different kinds of deployment for the cavalry that a commander must be familiar with, including: reconnaissance, raids, the protection of the army during a march, harassment of an enemy force and how best to utilize the cavalry both offensively and defensively in battle.

### RECONNAISSANCE

Some of the most common uses of cavalrymen are independent of the army.<sup>35</sup> In the *Cavalry Commander*, Xenophon recommends that the *hipparch* use spies whenever possible, but also that he spy on the enemy himself to get the most accurate information

---

<sup>35</sup> Spence, 126-133

(*Eq. mag.* 4.16). Horsemen are particularly useful, because of their speed, in reconnoitering what lay ahead of the army and warning their commander if any enemy are in the area. They could also be utilized in capturing men wandering about the plain that could provide information. These actions keep the main body of the army from coming upon the enemy unexpectedly while out of formation.

Xenophon stresses the use of cavalry reconnaissance in his treatise on the cavalry commander (*Eq. mag.* 4.4). After receiving the news that the Assyrian king has fled to Lydia, Cyrus the Great quickly prepares his forces and sets out again in pursuit of the enemy. He arranges his cavalry at the front of the march and sends scouts ahead of the main body (*Cyr.* 6.3.2-4). As Cyrus' force begins to catch up with the Assyrian army, his scouts catch sight of men gathering fodder. Cyrus then sends out a contingent of cavalry to capture the men on the plain so he might interrogate them (*Cyr.* 6.3.5-6). By taking these measures, Cyrus is able to learn the location and actions of the enemy.

Xenophon also uses scouts in the *Anabasis* whenever possible. As he prepares to rescue the Arcadians as they are being besieged on a hill by Thracians, he sends Timasion in advance with the cavalry to scout what lay ahead "in order that nothing may escape [their] attention" (*An.* 6.3.11-18). Agesilaus also employs cavalry for reconnaissance in the *Hellenica* when he sends a small group of cavalry to scout over a hill. Unfortunately for this group, they encounter a similarly sized contingent of Persian cavalry on the hill for the same purpose. Agesilaus' cavalry engages the Persians, but the Persian cornel wood spears prove stronger than the Greeks' (*Hell.* 3.4.13-14).

Reconnaissance was an important, but sometimes over-looked use of the cavalry by commanders.<sup>36</sup> There is an example of such a lapse in the *Anabasis* prior to the battle of Cunaxa when the Younger Cyrus' army comes upon the Persian king's force unexpectedly. While the king's army approaches already in battle formation, Cyrus' army needs several hours to form the battle line. Xenophon says his army is thrown into confusion at the news of the king's approach. Despite Cyrus' men moving with the greatest urgency, it still takes nearly half the day to prepare for battle (*An.* 1.8.1-8). The *Hellenica* offers another example of such a lapse when Derkylidas neglects to deploy scouts when pursuing Tissaphernes in 397 BC. He believes the enemy is far ahead and allows his army to become disordered. It is not until he spots enemy scouts that he sends men to reconnoiter what lay ahead. Derkylidas' scouts soon report that the enemy is close and already in battle formation. Like Cyrus, Derkylidas then must collect his men as quickly as possible (*Hell.* 3.2.14-6).

## RAIDS

Outside of battle, the cavalry is primarily involved in raids and depriving the enemy of property, either by destroying it or by removing it as plunder. The cavalry is particularly well suited for this practice because of its ability to arrive quickly before the inhabitants have the opportunity to remove their property to safety. Raids are popular

---

<sup>36</sup> Spence, 133



among the cavalry because of the opportunity for enrichment.<sup>37</sup> As mentioned above, when convincing the Persians to form a cavalry force, Cyrus the Great points out the enhanced prospects for capturing plunder. It does not take him long to deploy his new cavalry for this purpose (*Cyr.* 5.3.1).

Infantry were not well suited to go on raids without a cavalry escort because they were especially vulnerable to attack. Xenophon records one such instance in the *Anabasis* when the Greek general Neon leads a group of 2,000 infantry to plunder Bithynian villages and capture provisions. Pharnabazus, hoping to keep the Greeks out of Phrygia, comes to the aid of the Bithynians and kills 500 of the Greeks while they are scattered. The Greeks then retreat to the heights where they become trapped. Xenophon rescues the survivors with his cavalry and guards their retreat back to camp (*An.* 6.4.23-27). Here, Xenophon stresses the vulnerability of the Greeks without a cavalry.

The *Hellenica* also includes examples of cavalry forces responding to raids in their own territories. Xenophon warns cavalry commanders, however, against becoming overzealous in their responses. In 381 BC, the Olynthians make a raid against Apollonia, a Spartan ally. In response, the Apollonian commander Derdas readies his cavalry and waits for the Olynthian horsemen to come close to the city. Once they do, he rushes out with his own horsemen and quickly puts them to flight. Xenophon says that Derdas does not halt his pursuit until he chases the Olynthians back to their own city (*Hell.* 5.3.1-2). Derdas is likely feeling confident because of his earlier victory over the Olynthian cavalry, but Xenophon cautions against this type of feverish chase and he immediately recounts another similar pursuit that does not end so well for the pursuers. As the Spartan

---

<sup>37</sup> Spence 135-6

Teleutias approaches Olynthos with his army, the Olynthian cavalry comes out of the city and crosses a river toward the opposing army. When Teleutias sees them, he sends his peltasts to chase them. Xenophon says that the peltasts are too bold in their pursuit and cross the river, separating themselves from the rest of the army. The Olynthians, recognizing the peltasts' mistake, turn and attack. Teleutias' response, according to Xenophon, is a rash act of anger. He immediately sends his cavalry and infantry in pursuit. The Olynthians then send out more cavalry, peltasts, and finally their hoplites. By this time, the Spartan line is disordered, they are vulnerable to missiles from the walls of the city, and the Olynthians quickly gain the advantage. Teleutias is killed and the rest of his army is forced to flee (*Hell.* 5.3.3-6). In this instance, Xenophon is illustrating that the cavalry, while effective in their ability to pursue a routed enemy, can become vulnerable if separated from the main body of the army by too great a distance.

In some instances, the threat of a raid could be enough to extort money from an enemy.<sup>38</sup> Xenophon records an example of this tactic in the *Hellenica*. The Chalcedonians, expecting an attack by the Athenians, transfer all of their portable property to the protection of the Bithynians. The Athenian Alcibiades then leads the cavalry, supported by a hoplite force, against the Bithynians. He threatens to attack unless they give over all the property of the Chalcedonians, which they do (*Hell.* 1.3.1-3).

---

<sup>38</sup> Spence, 136

## MARCHING FORMATION

Aside from raids, the most common use of the cavalry seen in Xenophon's works is during the march. In the fifth book of the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon offers a detailed account of how Cyrus determines his marching formations and it is here that the benefit of developing a highly flexible force is apparent. When moving his entire army quickly, Cyrus employs different formations for daytime and nighttime marching. If an army must march at night then the commander must ensure that its various contingents do not become separated. To address this issue, Cyrus arranges his Persian cavalry single file, in companies, after the camp followers, and with the allied cavalry bringing up the rear. Cyrus further orders that no one be allowed to fall behind the horsemen (*Cyr.* 5.3.41). In this way, Cyrus is able to keep his whole force close together and prevent the cavalry from outpacing the infantry in the darkness. During the march, Cyrus also uses horsemen to send messages to the front of the line while he rides back and forth inspecting the men and keeping order (*Cyr.* 5.3.54). In daylight, Cyrus changes the marching order by bringing his cavalry to the front of the formation to protect against the enemy and engage in pursuit if necessary. He leaves the Cadusian cavalry behind the infantry to protect the rear against enemy attack (*Cyr.* 5.3.57). These are the same marching tactics used in the *Anabasis*, and Xenophon recommends them to Seuthes who uses them successfully (*An.* 7.3.37-9).

For the Greeks in the *Anabasis*, their initial marching order is a hollow square with the baggage train and camp followers protected in the center. This formation is a disaster because they are without a cavalry and vulnerable to long distance attacks by the enemy (*An.* 3.3.6). In response to this, the Greeks adjust their marching formation by

adding their new cavalry and light-armed troops. The Greeks soon realize, however, that the army would often become disordered when using a square formation at close quarters with the enemy. At various times, the wings are forced together or apart because of the terrain. When the wings are forced together by a narrow road, the men are squeezed together and become disordered. Alternatively, when they are drawn apart, they become scattered and gaps open up in the lines (*An.* 3.4.19-20). In response to these difficulties, Xenophon says that the generals form six companies of 100 men with captains for each company, platoon, and squad. In this way, the Greeks are able to maintain their order through all types of terrain (*An.* 3.4.21). Though Xenophon does not say explicitly where the cavalry is positioned in this formation, it is likely that it remains split between the front and rear of the army. Xenophon says in this same passage that the Persians keep up skirmishes at the rear of the Greeks' formation. He also says later that if any of the army is needed to lend aid elsewhere in the formation, they move to that spot (*An.* 3.4.23).

In the *Hellenica*, Xenophon describes an instance when Agesilaus used the hollow square march formation also seen in the *Anabasis*. The cavalry is divided between the rear and the front of the square. When the Thessalians and their allies begin to attack Agesilaus' army from behind, he sends the entire cavalry, except his guard, to the rear. Once both sides are formed for battle, the Thessalians, faced with engaging Agesilaus' cavalry and hoplites, turn about and begin to retreat slowly, reluctant to engage both cavalry and hoplites. Agesilaus' troops at first follow cautiously. Once he recognizes the mistakes both sides are making, he acts quickly. He sends his own guard to the rest of the cavalry with orders to charge the Thessalians and not let up in their pursuit. The Thessalians are caught off guard and in a panic many of them flee as far as they can.

Xenophon says Agesilaus considers his cavalry's victory here to be particularly notable because the Thessalians believe themselves to be the best cavalymen (*Hell.* 4.3.3-8).<sup>39</sup>

## PROTECTING THE ARMY

A marching army faced two primary dangers: coming upon an enemy army unexpectedly and assault from enemy cavalry and light troops.<sup>40</sup> Small numbers of cavalry could be highly effectual if handled properly. The cavalry is most effective against scattered troops. Infantry caught out of formation or whose formation is broken by a previous assault are particularly vulnerable to cavalry attack because of their speed and maneuverability. Spence says, "Xenophon envisaged small bodies of cavalry hovering around superior numbers of enemy like a beast or bird of prey until an opportunity to strike presented itself. When it did so, the cavalry would employ its speed and mobility to strike and then retire."<sup>41</sup> Xenophon says a small force can do damage to a large army on the march by harassing the enemy in areas where a large force has no advantage, such as narrow roads and river crossings. He says the cavalry can "dog the enemy's steps without danger" (*Eq. mag.* 7.10-11). This is the exact tactic Mithradates employs in the *Anabasis* in his assault against the Greeks as they march (*An.* 3.3.6-11).

---

<sup>39</sup> This incident is also recorded in *Ag.* 2.1-5

<sup>40</sup> Spence, 141

<sup>41</sup> Spence, 126

The primary role of the cavalry during a march is protecting the rest of the army. Xenophon offers many examples of situations where an infantry force requires cavalry protection. In the example cited above, Agesilaus uses his cavalry while marching through Thessaly for this very purpose (*Hell.* 4.3.3-6).<sup>42</sup> On another occasion, Agesilaus must march through a narrow mountain pass in Acarnanian territory. Acarnanian light troops on the mountain ridges inflict considerable damage on the Spartans because there is not enough space for their cavalry and hoplites to charge their attackers and prevent the enemy light troops from escaping. Agesilaus can only counter attack on the side where the mountain is more accessible to his hoplites and cavalry. His solution to this difficulty is to use both the infantry and cavalry to pursue the Acarnanians up the mountain. Despite the enemy wounding many with spears thrown from above, the Spartans are successful once they are able to get close (*Hell.* 4.6.11-12).

Xenophon's Greeks in the *Anabasis* form their cavalry out of necessity to protect the army as it retreats. Although they have only 50 horsemen, this force is sufficient because peltasts and a large hoplite force support it. When Mithradates returns the second day with 1,000 horsemen expecting an easy victory, the Greeks' new cavalry and light-armed troops catch him by surprise. The Persians are quick to flee despite their advantage in cavalry numbers. They are only confident enough to attack the Greeks when they are able to do so from a distance and can retreat without being pursued. Although Xenophon warns his cavalry against pursuing the Persians too far from the main body of the army, they are able to do enough to keep the enemy at bay. The success of the 50 Greek cavalrymen was due likely to both the speed they provided to the Greek army and the

---

<sup>42</sup> See also *Ages.* 2.2

psychological shock they inflicted on the enemy expecting an easy victory over an infantry force.<sup>43</sup>

The *Hellenica* also offers examples of the vulnerability of infantry forces lacking a well-deployed cavalry. The well-known Spartan disaster at Lechaion in 390 demonstrates clearly both the vulnerability of an unescorted hoplite force on the march and the danger a badly handled cavalry can pose to its own force. The Athenian Iphikrates and his peltasts attack a Spartan regiment marching past Corinth. The Spartan hoplites suffer heavily during the assault and are unable to pursue effectively the light-armed peltasts because of their heavy shields. When the hoplites quit the pursuit they were scattered and Iphikrates' men are able to turn and resume their attack (*Hell.* 4.5.12-15). Significantly, a cavalry force does come to the assistance of the beleaguered Spartan hoplite regiment. However, as Xenophon notes, the commander badly mishandles the cavalry during a counter attack. When the enemy peltasts give way, the cavalrymen fail to use their advantage in speed and pursue the enemy as far as possible. Instead they keep pace with the hoplites as they attack and retreat. According to Xenophon, the failure of the cavalry to capitalize on their advantages causes the enemy to become bolder. The Spartans lose half of an entire hoplite regiment (*Hell.* 4.5.16-18).

---

<sup>43</sup> Worley, 126

## BATTLE

The cavalry played several roles in all phases of battle. Prior to the battle, the cavalry's responsibilities include reconnaissance of the enemy and battlefield and the protection of their troops' deployment. During the infantry clash, the cavalry provides support by attacking enemy foot troops whenever possible. If victorious, the cavalry's role is to pursue and capture, or kill, as many of the enemy as they can. If defeated, the cavalry is to protect the retreat of the infantry troops.<sup>44</sup>

During the battle, the cavalry is primarily concerned with protecting the hoplite phalanx, which was most vulnerable to attack on both flanks and at the rear. Hoplite clashes are typically head-on, but it is not unheard of, as Xenophon has Cyrus the Great do with his cavalry at the fictional battle of Thymbrara, for a separate body to attack a phalanx on either flank. These types of attacks usually involve cavalry or light troops because of their mobility and flexibility. In response to this danger, it is general practice to protect the flanks with some kind of obstacle, such as a natural barrier like a river, or a body of peltasts or cavalry.<sup>45</sup>

It is for this reason that Cyrus stations his cavalry on the wings of his phalanx as he withdraws his army from the walls of Babylon. After arriving at Babylon and surrounding it with his army to survey the walls around the city, Cyrus is preparing to draw off his army when a deserter comes out and warns him of the city's intent to attack as his force turns to retreat. The enemy is encouraged because, in order to surround the city, Cyrus had drawn up his army in shallow lines. Cyrus quickly devises a tactic to withdraw his army safely and, again, the training and flexibility of his army is evident. As

---

<sup>44</sup> Spence, 151

<sup>45</sup> Spence, 153



he withdraws his forces, he folds the phalanx back on itself, doubling its depth. He also stations the cavalry and light armed troops on the wings. In this way, with the phalanx doubled, the deeper lines encourage the men, and the cavalry is stationed closer to the commander (*Cyr.* 7.5.3-5).

A successful cavalry deployment in battle is illustrated in the engagement between the Spartans and their allies against the Olynthians in 382 BC. The Spartan commander, Teleutias, stations the allied cavalry on the far right of the phalanx with the cavalry led by Derdas on the left. The Olynthians charge the right wing and kill the Spartan cavalry commander, putting the rest of the cavalry to flight. Derdas charges towards the city with his cavalry from the left and the Olynthian cavalry, afraid of being cut off from the city, immediately flee. Derdas' men are already at the gates, however, and are successful in killing many of the enemy cavalry and infantry as they try to re-enter the city (*Hell.* 5.2.40-42). Though the Spartan cavalry failed to hold their position, Derdas' men were successful in using their speed and mobility to cut off the retreat of the enemy.

Xenophon again stresses the advantages in speed and mobility of the cavalry, even against a much larger force, in his account of the Corinthian war. As Xenophon describes in the *Hellenica*, Dionysus, the tyrant of Syracuse, sends a small force of cavalry to aid the Spartans and their allies against the Thebans. Xenophon says that the Thebans and their allies were filling up the plain around Corinth and destroying everything. The Athenians and Corinthians, intimidated by the enemies' numbers, do not go out to meet them. The small Sicilian cavalry, however, harasses the Thebans by continuously riding up alongside them, throwing their javelins, and retreating quickly. By

scattering their numbers and keeping a safe distance from the enemy, the Sicilians are able to attack from several positions repeatedly. Xenophon says that they are so confident in their ability to flee the enemy that they would sometimes dismount and rest. If any of the enemy dared pursue them too far, the Sicilians would turn and counterattack as soon as the enemy turned and headed back to the main body of the army. By repeating these tactics, the Sicilians successfully inflict heavy damage on the enemy and within a few days they help force the Thebans and their allies to retreat (*Hell.* 7.1.21).

#### MIXED TROOPS

Xenophon also advocates the use of cavalry in conjunction with light-armed troops and heavy infantry during battle. In his treatise, *the Cavalry Commander*, Xenophon says the commander must remind the state of the value of using the cavalry in conjunction with the infantry. He argues that the cavalry can hide the infantry behind and among the horses (*Eq. mag.* 5.13). The term for light-armed troops stationed in some fashion among the cavalry is *hamippoi*. Xenophon says this type of troop also is stationed with the cavalry as the rear guard of the Argive army in 369 BC as it withdraws from Phleious. The advantages of light troops with cavalry are not evident in this instance, however, because a small group of only sixty Phleiasian horsemen attack and rout the larger rear guard (*Hell.* 7.2.4). Xenophon also attests to the existence of a contingent of

200 Athenian mounted archers, called *hippotoxotai*, in his *Memorabilia*. He says that their role is to ride out at the front of a cavalry charge (*Mem.* 3.3.1).

Xenophon illustrates the use of mixed infantry and cavalry in his account of the battle at Mantinea in 362 BC. The Theban general, Epaminondas, arranges his cavalry in a wedge formation with infantry among them. He believes that this formation will allow his force to break through the Athenian line and cause it to flee. Despite the failure of his forces to follow up on their victory, Epaminondas' mixed infantry and cavalry is successful in disrupting the Athenian line (*Hell.* 7.5.23-25).

## VI. TACTICS

### DECEPTION

Xenophon also demonstrates how to use deception in cavalry tactics. During Cyrus the Great's first expedition into Armenia he devises a plan to lead out his horsemen as if on a hunting expedition into Armenian territory. Cyrus describes his plan to his men using the metaphor of hunting and refers to the enemy as "game." He arranges his men just as if hunting, which lures the Armenians into a false sense of security (*Cyr.* 2.4.16-25). Similarly, in the *Cavalry Commander*, Xenophon recommends concealing outposts and placing a few guards out in the open. By doing this, he says, the enemy can be lured into an ambush (*Eq. mag.* 4.11-12). He also says a cavalry commander should at

times feign reluctance and cautiousness so as to lure the enemy into making a mistake (*Eq. mag.* 5.15).

In the *Hellenica*, Xenophon records an incident when the Thebans catch Agesilaus' marching army by surprise. While campaigning in Thebes, his army marches on one side of a trench while the Thebans move with them on the opposite side. According to Xenophon, the Thebans hid their cavalry and launch a surprise attack against Agesilaus' army. However, the Spartan cavalry, together with the hoplites, are successful in routing the Thebans. Fortunately for the Spartans, Xenophon says, the Thebans act as though they are drunk and discharge their spears too soon (*Hell.* 5.4.38-41). Had the Theban cavalry performed better, they could have done significant damage to Agesilaus' force.

#### A SMALL FORCE VS. A LARGE ONE

In the *Cavalry Commander*, according to Xenophon, a good leader must know how to make a small force seem large and a large one small. By concealing the size of his force, as Cyrus the Great does at Thymbrara, he can catch the enemy by surprise (*Eq. mag.* 5.2). Furthermore, Xenophon believes the ability to deploy a smaller body against a larger one is essential for a commander. He recognizes that even a small cavalry force could be used effectively. He says that a small force can keep an eye on the enemy and

rescue property just as well as a large one. Moreover, a small force is easier to hide and to keep on constant alert. The bigger the force, the more likely it is to make a mistake either by scattering to gather provisions or by becoming separated while marching.

Xenophon best illustrates his ideal deployment of a smaller cavalry in combat against a larger force in his account of the events leading up to the battle of Thymbrara. While advancing on the enemy's army, Cyrus the Great receives word that a large body of Assyrian horsemen has been spotted within sight of the plain coming in advance of the army. The enemy has sent thirty horsemen against Cyrus' ten in order to capture his lookout post. Cyrus sends out a detachment of his mounted bodyguard and orders them to remain hidden until the scouts have left the lookout place. Then this detachment, led by Hystaspas, is to attack and pursue the enemy only far enough to ensure the lookout remains in Cyrus' possession (*Cyr.* 6.3.13-14). This also echoes Xenophon's sentiment that sending a small detachment of cavalry too far away from the main body of the army is dangerous (*Cyr.* 5.4.19).

Prior to the great battle at Thymbrara, Araspas returns from spying in the enemy camp and describes to Cyrus the Great the enemy's battle formation. He says that the infantry and horse are drawn up thirty deep for a width of forty stadia (*Cyr.* 6.3.19). Here, Xenophon details how best to arrange a small force to appear larger and yet still be difficult for an enemy to out flank. Cyrus arranges his chariots in a shallow line two deep both to make his force appear larger and bring more chariots into action at once (*Cyr.* 6.3.21-3). Cyrus further orders that the baggage train and women's carriages be brought up to the battle line to make his shallower line appear deeper and more difficult for the enemy to encompass (*Cyr.* 6.3.30). He then stations two cavalry regiments and his camels

at the rear of his battle formation where the enemy cannot see them (*Cyr.* 6.3.32-33). Cyrus stations one group of one hundred chariots in front of his battle formation, directly opposite the enemy's phalanx, and the other two contingents are stationed on the right and left flanks of the phalanx (*Cyr.* 6.3.34). Then, Cyrus orders the two cavalry contingents behind the women's carriages to stay where they are until they see him charging the enemy opposite the right wing. At that time, they are to attack those opposite them and simultaneously deploy the camels to disrupt the enemy's cavalry (*Cyr.* 7.1.22). In this way, two cavalry units are able to surprise the enemy line and to follow up swiftly on the initial attack.

As Croesus' army advances against Cyrus, it surrounds Cyrus' smaller force on three sides. The only portions of Cyrus' army not encompassed by the enemy are the horsemen, hoplites, targeteers, bowmen, and chariots that he has stationed in the rear (*Cyr.* 7.1.24). Cyrus opens the battle by taking a unit of cavalry that he has hidden behind his main body against the outer flank of the enemy's right phalanx. At the same time, a similarly hidden cavalry force charges on the left.<sup>46</sup> Soon, Cyrus' smaller force puts the Lydians and their allies to flight (*Cyr.* 7.1.26).

Xenophon offers several other examples in his works to illustrate how a small, well-disciplined force might be deployed effectively against a larger one. In the first mention of a cavalry engagement in the *Cyropaedia*, he says the son of the Assyrian king makes a foray into Median land, under the guise of a hunting party. The Assyrian arranges the best of his cavalry with himself along the Median outposts, to prevent the Medes from coming to the rescue. He then sends out other divisions to capture whatever

---

<sup>46</sup> Anderson 1970, 185

they can in Median territory. Cyrus' grandfather, the Median king Astyages, rides out to meet the Assyrians scouring his land and young Cyrus the Great follows. Once on the field, Astyages halts his forces and surveys the Assyrians. Cyrus advises Astyages that his men and horses, though fewer, are superior to those of the Assyrians and it would be best to make a charge against the Assyrian cavalry immediately rather than wait for reinforcements. At Cyrus' suggestion, Astyages splits his force in two and sends half the cavalry to charge the raiders while Astyages waits with the rest, should the Assyrian make a move against them. Cyrus successfully routs the Assyrians, despite his overzealous actions in the heat of battle (*Cyr.* 1.4.16-23). Xenophon recommends that the cavalry commander use small cavalry contingents to target enemy outposts because they are often weak in numbers and stationed far from the main body. He says that there is no booty to capture as good as an enemy patrol (*Eq. mag.* 7.14-15).

Though sometimes it is unavoidable, Xenophon warns against taking excessive risks (*Eq. mag.* 4.13). He cautions against a small cavalry unit engaging a larger force if preventable. Xenophon offers examples in different works to illustrate the vulnerability of a cavalry force without infantry support. One example is Agesilaus' victory over Tissaphernes at the battle of Sardis in 396 BC. The Persian cavalry, noticing a number of Greeks plundering villages in the plains, attacks and kills many of them. Agesilaus sends his cavalry to their aid and the Persians array themselves in battle order in response. Agesilaus, realizing that the Persian cavalry is unsupported by its infantry, while his own infantry force is close at hand and in battle order, quickly gives orders to his cavalry to attack the Persians, which he follows with his infantry. Agesilaus' men are not only

successful in routing the Persians but also are able to capture the enemy camp (*Hell.* 3.4.22-24).<sup>47</sup>

In the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon also offers instances of misfortune met by cavalry contingents that did not wait for reinforcements. As Cyrus the Great and his army are still marching to his aid, Gadatas is deceived by the Assyrian king and foolishly sends his force in pursuit of a small decoy unit (*Cyr.* 5.4.4). The Assyrians ambush Gadatas' force and he only avoids defeat when Cyrus fortuitously arrives with his army. Cyrus then quickly arranges his army in battle order, which is sufficient to turn back the pursuing enemy. He then sends out his cavalry to pursue and capture any remaining enemy, which they do, including several chariots (*Cyr.* 5.4.7-9). Not long after this, the Cadusians make a foray into Babylon without consulting Cyrus first. They are away from the main body of the army in a small cavalry force. While the horsemen are scattered, the Assyrians attack and kill many of them. Unaware of the Cadusians' absence, Cyrus is unable to lend assistance (*Cyr.* 5.4.15-9).

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

In his works regarding cavalry, Xenophon shows the value of a mounted force to an army and the value of a quality commander to that force. As examples above have

---

<sup>47</sup> See also *Ages.* 1.30-32



shown, even a highly trained cavalry could fail if not properly managed. Xenophon has clear opinions on what makes the ideal cavalry commander. He lists several qualities in his treatise to the Athenian commanders and illustrates those qualities in his examples of Cyrus the Great and Agesilaus. In short, his ideal commander is one who provides for the supplies, equipment, and training of his men and knows how to use his force effectively in a variety of situations including marches, raids, reconnaissance, and battle. The commander not only knows how to raise and establish an effective force, but also is able to motivate his men, and to persuade his state to desire a cavalry. The ideal commander, as Xenophon sees him, knows how best to train his force and motivate his men. As mentioned, He believes cavalrymen should be trained to ride on as many different types of terrain as they are able and should practice through friendly skirmishes and competitions. He also says hunting is the best exercise to train mounted troops for war and the best commanders will use this sport to train their men whenever possible.

Xenophon writes about different commanders in different types of situations. Cyrus the Great is his ideal commander for the sort of fictionalized utopia he presents in the *Cyropaedia*. Cyrus is an influential speaker, a cunning tactician, and creative in the ways he obtains supplies and equipment. He is also a Persian prince establishing a mighty empire. He has much more freedom than his Greek counter parts of the *Anabasis* or the *Hellenica*. Many of his methods would not be practical for the other commanders Xenophon discusses, though there is still value in their examples. Cyrus the Great is his ideal commander for a cavalry whose role is to help establish a formidable empire. As mentioned, the purposes motivating the other commanders in Xenophon's works are very different from those pushing Cyrus to establish his cavalry. The Athenian commander is

looking only to maintain a force to support Athens. He does not want to expand his force and he has clear rules to follow in how he pays and manages his cavalry. Xenophon in the *Anabasis* and Agesilaus are both operating small cavalries in foreign lands. The purpose behind Xenophon's force is to protect the retreat of the Greek army from Asia. Agesilaus intends to establish a force large enough to repel the Persian horsemen. Neither Xenophon nor Agesilaus are intent on empire. They do, however, reflect many of the qualities that Xenophon also attributes to Cyrus the Great. The successful cavalry commander, in addition to being well versed in horsemanship and cavalry tactics, must also be an excellent speaker and motivator. While Cyrus the Great is Xenophon's ideal cavalry general, Agesilaus, and the Xenophon of the *Anabasis* are useful examples of how his ideal commander might operate in different circumstances.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Ancient Sources

Ambler, W. trans. *Xenophon, The Education of Cyrus* (Ithaca 2001).

Dillery, J. ed. *Xenophon, Anabasis* (Cambridge 1998).

Marchant, E.C. trans. *Xenophon, Agesilaus* (London 1925).

Ibid. trans. *Xenophon, Hiero* (London 1925).

Ibid. trans. *Xenophon, Memorabilia* (London 1925).

Ibid. trans. *Xenophon, On The Art of Horsemanship* (London 1925).

Ibid. trans. *Xenophon, On The Cavalry Commander* (London 1925).

Miller, W. trans. *Xenophon, Cyropaedia Vol 1* (Cambridge 1950).

Ibid. trans. *Xenophon, Cyropaedia Vol 2* (Cambridge 1951).

Strassler, R. ed. *The Landmark Herodotus* (New York 2007).

Ibid. ed. *The Landmark Xenophon's Hellenika* (New York 2010).

Waterfield, R. trans. *Xenophon, The Expedition of Cyrus* (Oxford 2005).

### Secondary Sources

Anderson, J.K. *Ancient Greek Horsemanship* (Berkeley 1961).

Ibid. *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (Berkeley 1970).

Ibid. *Xenophon* (New York 1974).

Bugh, G. *The Horsemen of Athens* (Princeton 1988).

Carrier, P. "L'idee de monarchie imperial dans la Cyropedie de Xenophon" in Gray, V.

ed. *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Xenophon* (New York 2010) 327-366.

- Christensen, P. "Xenophon's "Cyropaedia" and Military Reform in Sparta," *JHS* 126 (2006) 47-65.
- Dillery, J.D. *Xenophon and a History of His Times* (London and New York 1995).
- Engels, Donald W. *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley and London 1978).
- Flower, M.A. *Xenophon's Anabasis or The Expedition of Cyrus* (New York 2012).
- Fox, Lane, ed. *The Long March: Xenophon and the Ten Thousand* (London 2004).
- Gaebel, R.E. *Cavalry Operations in the Ancient Greek World* (2002).
- Gera, D.L. *Xenophon's Cyropaedia: Style, Genre, and Literary Technique* (Oxford 1993).
- Gray, V. *Xenophon's Mirror of Princes Reading the Reflections* (New York 2011).
- Ibid. *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Xenophon* (Oxford 2010).
- Ibid. ed. *Xenophon: On Government* (Cambridge 2007).
- LaForse, Bruce. "Xenophon and the Historiography of Panhellenism," Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1997.
- Lee, J.W.I. *A Greek Army on the March: Soldiers and Survival in Xenophon's Anabasis* (Cambridge 2007).
- Nadon, C. *Xenophon's Prince: Republic and Empire in the Cyropaedia* (Los Angeles 2001).
- Spence, I.G. *The Cavalry of Classical Greece: A Social and Military History* (Oxford 1993).
- Stadter, P. "Fictional Narrative in the *Cyropaideia*." in Gray, V. ed. *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Xenophon* (New York 2010) 367-400.

Tuplin, C. "All the King's Horse: in Search of Achaemenid Persian Cavalry" in G.G. Fagan and M. Trundle, eds. *New Perspectives on Ancient Warfare* (Boston 2010) 101-182.

Waterfield, R. *Xenophon's Retreat: Greece, Persia, and the End of the Golden Age* (Cambridge 2006).

Worley, L.J. *Hippeis: the Cavalry of Ancient Greece* (Boulder and Oxford 1994).