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CYRUS THE YOUNGER IN SYRIA AND MESOPOTAMIA, ABROKOMAS, AND THE GREAT KING'S DEFENSIVE STRATEGY (401 BC)*

Keywords: Abrokomas, Artaxerxes II, Cyrus' expedition, strategy

In 401 BC, a revolt broke out in the Achaemenid Empire against the Great King Artaxerxes II (404–359 BC). It was led by Artaxerxes' younger brother Cyrus, known to history as Cyrus the Younger, who exercised supreme power (Old Persian **kārana-*, Greek *κάραβος*) over Achaemenid Anatolia. In the spring of 401 BC, Cyrus set out from his Anatolian dominion with an army of Asiatic troops and mainly Greek mercenaries to fight Artaxerxes for the royal throne. The result was the Battle of Cunaxa on the Euphrates in northern Babylonia in the late summer/early autumn of 401 BC. Artaxerxes was victorious, while Cyrus fell in the heat of battle.¹ During Cyrus' invasion, Abrokomas, the King's commander in Syria, played a significant role. His actions and routes are worth examining as part of the defensive strategy employed by the Great King's forces against Cyrus' invasion.

Information about Abrokomas appears in Xenophon's *Anabasis* in connection with Cyrus' expedition against Artaxerxes in 401 BC. According to the Athenian historian, while Cyrus and his army were in Cilician capital of Tarsus

* I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the several reviewers of this article for their valuable remarks and comments, which resulted in substantial improvements, changes and additions. The responsibility for its present content lies, of course, with me.

¹ For more information on Cyrus' position in Anatolia in 401 BC, his expedition against Artaxerxes and the Battle of Cunaxa, including further references, see Lee 2016; Podrazik 2017, 278–286; Podrazik 2019; Rop 2019; Głogowski 2020; Podrazik 2021, 38–43, 50–51; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 10 (Map 1.2.10), 12 (Map 1.2.13), 21 (Map 1.4.1), 27 (Map 1.5.1), 38–39 (Diagram 1.8); Thomas 2021, 461–462; Thomas 2021a; Podrazik 2022; Podrazik 2023.

in the summer 401 BC,² the Greeks in his army were informed that he was leading his forces against Abrokomas, his enemy, who was staying near the Euphrates.³ This information was Cyrus' response to the reluctance of the Greeks to continue the expedition, as they were suspecting that its goal was to confront the Great King and his forces.⁴ In fact, from the beginning of the expedition, including the gathering of his troops, Cyrus had been concealing its real objective in order not to arouse the suspicion of the Great King and his followers. This was part of Cyrus' strategy to keep Artaxerxes unaware that his actions were actually directed against him. The element of surprise would give Artaxerxes as little time as possible to gather his forces.⁵

The Persian commanders in Cyrus' army probably knew the real goal of his expedition from its beginning.⁶ Among the Greek commanders the Spartan Clearchus, one of Cyrus' closest companions,⁷ was in the know from the start of the expedition.⁸ The other Greek commanders, according to Xenophon, caught wind of the true objective during their stay in Cilicia.⁹ The expedition against the Great King meant marching deep into his vast empire and facing his numerous forces. These were worrying factors, especially among the Greek soldiers, that could have led to desertion.¹⁰ It was therefore needful to conceal Cyrus' intentions for as long as possible.

² Cyrus and his army's stay at Tarsus: Xen. *Anab.* 1.2.23-1.3.21, also 3.1.10; cf. Diod. 14.20.2-5. See also Roy 1967, 313; Ruzicka 1985, 210 with note 21; Lendle 1995, 20, 28-33, 150-151; Shannahan 2015, 39, 46; Dandamaev 1989, 277-278; Briant 2002, 623-624, 627; Braun 2004, 100-101, 110, 116; Stylianou 2004, 90; Lee 2007, 50; Lee 2016, 107, 112, 113, 114, 117-118; Podrazik 2017, 282; Głogowski 2018, 13 note 13, 14-15 notes 23-27; Rop 2019a, 73-74; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 22 note 1.4.5a.

³ Xen. *Anab.* 1.3.20.

⁴ Reluctance of the Greeks to continue the march: Xen. *Anab.* 1.3.1-21, also 3.1.10; cf. Diod. 14.20.4-5.

⁵ Regarding the concealment of Cyrus' actions, see Xen. *Anab.* 1.1.6-8, 1.1.11, 1.2.1, 1.2.4, 3.1.8-10; Diod. 14.19.3, 14.19.6; Plut. *Art.* 4.2; also Podrazik 2021, 38-41, 50-51. Otherwise Briant 2002, 616-620, 987, who suggests that Artaxerxes was aware of Cyrus' revolt earlier (404-403 BC) and had taken some preventive measures (see also Głogowski 2020, 167, 182-189, 190-191). However, this suggestion is difficult to reconcile with most of the sources (see Rop 2019).

⁶ See Diod. 14.19.9; Briant 2002, 625 (writes about: 'the Persian high command').

⁷ Xen. *Anab.* 3.1.10; see also Dandamaev 1989, 277; Lendle 1995, 150; Lee 2007, 47; Flower 2012, 15; Thomas 2021, 468. See also Xen. *Anab.* 1.3.1-21 (Clearchus' attitude towards the Greek soldiers during their stay at Tarsus); also Lendle 1995, 30-33; Braun 2004, 100-101.

⁸ Regarding Clearchus' position in Cyrus' entourage, see Schmitt 1992; Podrazik 2019a, 101-104; cf. Thomas 2021, 468-469, 471.

⁹ Xen. *Anab.* 3.1.10; cf. Diod. 14.19.8-9, 14.20.4-5; Roy 1967, 313; Cawkwell 2004, 54; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 83 note 3.1.10a; Thomas 2021, 468. See also Lendle 1995, 18; Lee 2016, 106.

¹⁰ See Xen. *Anab.* 3.1.10, also 1.3.1, 1.3.7, 1.3.13-21, 1.4.11-14; Diod. 14.19.3, 14.19.6, 14.19.9, 14.20.4-5; Roy 1967, 313; Briant 2002, 625-626; Stylianou 2004, 87-88; Głogowski 2020, 188.

Cyrus and his troops remained in Tarsus for twenty days.¹¹ Suspecting that the expedition was against the Great King, the Greeks discussed the matter¹² and sent an embassy to Cyrus, led by Clearchus. They learned from Cyrus that Abrokomas, an enemy of his, was near the Euphrates, twelve days' march away, and that it was against him that the expedition was directed. Having received this news, as well as the promise of increased pay, and despite the lingering suspicion that the expedition's target was the Great King, the Greeks decided to continue marching.¹³

After five days of march from Tarsus, Cyrus and his army arrived at Issus.¹⁴ They stayed there for three days,¹⁵ during which 400 Greek mercenary hoplites, after deserting Abrokomas,¹⁶ joined them.¹⁷ The purpose behind the stay at Issus was to bolster Cyrus' army with reinforcements brought by sea by Tamos, one of his companions.¹⁸ They arrived from Ephesus in dozens of ships along with additional land forces.¹⁹

Leaving Cilicia and heading towards Syria, after a day's march Cyrus and his army reached the Syrian-Cilician Gates, a pass between the two lands. A narrow passage surrounded by steep mountains, it was well suited to defensive operations and, manned by garrison troops, was very difficult for an enemy army to penetrate.²⁰ Cyrus therefore planned to use his fleet to transport the Greek

¹¹ Xen. *Anab.* 1.3.1; Diod. 14.20.4.

¹² Discussion in the Greeks' camp: Xen. *Anab.* 1.3.1-20.

¹³ Xen. *Anab.* 1.3.20-21, also 3.1.10; cf. Diod. 14.20.4-5. See also Roy 1967, 313; Ruzicka 1985, 210 with note 21; Lendle 1995, 32-33, 150-151; Braun 2004, 100-101, 110, 116; Shannahan 2015, 46; Lee 2016, 114 and 116 (suggests negotiations between Cyrus and Abrokomas (or his subordinates) that did not result in an agreement); Głogowski 2020, 167, 168; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 22 note 1.4.5a; Rop 2023, 119-120, 122 (suggests negotiations between Cyrus and Abrokomas).

¹⁴ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.1.

¹⁵ Cyrus and his army's stay at Issus: Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.1-3, also 1.2.21; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.1; Diod. 14.21.1-2, also 14.19.4-5. See also Roy 1967, 300, 301 with note 67, 302; Dandamaev 1989, 278; Lendle 1995, 33-35; Lee 2007, 47-48; Podrazik 2017, 282; Głogowski 2018, 15 notes 28-29; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 20 note 1.4.2a, 21 (Map 1.4.1).

¹⁶ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.3.

¹⁷ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.3. Regarding these 400 Greek mercenary hoplites joining Cyrus, see also Roy 1967, 301 with note 67, 302; Cook 1983, 212 with note 11; Tuplin 1987, 231; Dandamaev 1989, 278; Lendle 1995, 32-33, 34-35, 37, 58; Briant 2002, 623; Cawkwell 2004, 49-50; Lee 2007, 47-48, 51; Shannahan 2015, 39, 46-47; Lee 2016, 113, 114; Rop 2019a, 68 with note 15, 72 note 30, 85 with note 72 (suggests that Cyrus persuaded Abrokomas to be neutral); Głogowski 2020, 168-169; Rop 2023, 102-104, 112-116, 118-121, 122.

¹⁸ For general information on Tamos, see Podrazik 2017, 282; Podrazik 2019a, 102; Thomas 2021, 480-481; Tuplin 2021, 290.

¹⁹ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.2-3, also 1.2.21; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.1; Diod. 14.21.1-2, also 14.19.4-5. See also Podrazik 2017, 282.

²⁰ March of Cyrus and his army from Cilicia to Syria and the characteristics of the Syrian-Cilician Gates: Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.4-5; Diod. 14.21.2-5; see also Cook 1983, 212 with note 10; Dandamaev 1989, 278; Lendle 1995, 35-37; Stylianou 2004, 89; Shannahan 2015, 46-47; Głogowski 2018, 16 notes 30-32; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 22 note 1.4.4a.

hoplites to the other side of the gates, who would then crush the forces defending the passage. He reckoned with the possibility that Abrokomas, with a large army of 300,000 men according to Xenophon,²¹ would put up stiff resistance on the Syrian side of the gates. However, when Abrokomas learned that Cyrus and his forces were in Cilicia, he moved his army from Phoenicia likely towards the Euphrates Valley and Upper Mesopotamia.²²

As a result, Cyrus and his forces passed through the gates unhindered²³ and then, after a day's march and a seven-day stay at the coastal city of Myriandros,²⁴ advanced towards the Euphrates and, after a twelve-day march, reached the city of Thapsakos on the west bank of the river, encountering no resistance along the way.²⁵ Thapsakos has long been a subject of scholarly debate, with numerous experts suggesting varied locations for this ancient city. Some scholars posit that Thapsakos was situated in proximity to the historically significant cities of Carchemish and Zeugma,²⁶ while others assert that it may have been located near the city of Dausara.²⁷

Thapsakos was the place where Cyrus and his army crossed the Euphrates.²⁸ They did this by foot, as the boats there had been burned by Abrokomas, who had passed through earlier, to prevent them from crossing.²⁹ Cyrus and his army

²¹ The given figure should be considered as overstated. See Heckel 2020, 103; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 22 note 1.4.5b; also Podrazik 2017, 284 with note 58.

²² See Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.5; cf. Diod. 14.21.2-5. See also Cook 1983, 212 with note 11; Dandamaev 1983; Dandamaev 1989, 278 ('Abrocomas, however, whose duty it was to guard the gates, heard about Cyrus' advance, and cowardly decided not to put up any resistance, and to lead his troops to the Persian king'); Lendle 1995, 32-33, 37, 59; Briant 2002, 626-627 (suggests that Cyrus made contact with Abrokomas, but the latter sided with the Great King), 628; Shannahan 2015, 39, 46-47, 48; Lee 2016, 114-115, 116; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 22 note 1.4.5a-b.

²³ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.5; cf. Diod. 14.21.3, 14.21.5.

²⁴ March to and stay at Myriandros: Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.6-9; see also Dandamaev 1989, 278; Lendle 1995, 37-38; Lee 2016, 114; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1).

²⁵ March from Myriandros to Thapsakos: Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.9-11; Diod. 14.21.5 (writes about a twenty-day march, but does not mention arrival and stay at Myriandros); see also Farrell 1961, 153, 154; Dandamaev 1989, 278-279; Lendle 1995, 38-41; Stylianou 2004, 78 with note 28, 91; Lee 2007, 22-23; Lee 2016, 114; Głogowski 2018, 16 note 33; Brennan 2021, 395, 396 (Map P.1); Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 23-24 notes 1.4.9b-1.4.11b.

²⁶ See Farrell 1961, 153-154; Engels 1978, 64-65 with note 61; Cook 1983, 212 with note 11; Lendle 1995, 36, 40-41; Gawlikowski 1996; Briant 2002, 375-376, 928; Kuhrt 2007, 744 note 4; Lee 2016, 115; Monerie 2019, 158-159, 160 (Fig. 3); Marciak et al. 2022, 63. See also Comfort et al. 2000; Fuensanta / Crivelli 2010.

²⁷ See Brennan 2021, 395-397 (argues for this location by comparing classical sources informing about days of marches from the eastern Mediterranean coast to Thapsakos covered by Cyrus and Alexander of Macedon (336-323 BC)); Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 20 note 1.3.20a, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 24 note 1.4.11b.

²⁸ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.16-18; see also Diod. 14.21.5-7.

²⁹ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.17-18; see also Cook 1983, 212; Lendle 1995, 42-43; Briant 2002, 362, 621-622, 626-627; Shannahan 2015, 48; Lee 2016, 114-115, 116; Monerie 2019, 162; Rop 2019, 82-83; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 22 note 1.4.5a, 24 note 1.4.11b, 25 note 1.4.19a; Rop 2023,

met no resistance from the King's forces while crossing. It is worth noting that before crossing the Euphrates, while still at Thapsakos, Cyrus instructed the Greek commanders of his army to inform their soldiers that the purpose of the expedition was to confront the Great King and that the chosen direction of the march was the city of Babylon.³⁰

In connection with Cyrus and his army's stay at Tarsus, Diodorus states³¹ that the soldiers had heard from Cyrus that he was leading his army '(...) not against Artaxerxes, but against a certain satrap of Syria (...)'.³² Xenophon claims that the purpose of Cyrus' expedition was not the Great King but Abrokomas, who was staying near the Euphrates.³³ It may thus be believed that the satrap of Syria Diodorus refers to is actually Abrokomas. It would then follow that Abrokomas was satrap of Syria in 401 BC.³⁴ It is more likely, however, that Diodorus is not referring to Abrokomas, but to the official known as Belesys (in Babylonian *Bēlšunu*).

Belesys is mentioned by Xenophon in his account of the march of Cyrus and his army from Myriandros towards Thapsakos. Passing through the northern regions of Syria,³⁵ they came to the location of '(...) the palace of Belesys, the late governor of Syria, and a very large and beautiful park containing all the products of the seasons'.³⁶ This palace (*βασίλεια*) and park (*παράδεισος*) were probably Belesys' satrapal residence.³⁷ Both palace and park were destroyed

117, 120, 122; cf. Ruzicka 1985, 210 with note 21, who suggests that Abrokomas and his troops crossed the Euphrates after Cyrus and his army, and that it was not Abrokomas who caused the burning of the boats on the Euphrates, but men sent from the King's camp; similarly Głogowski 2020, 168-169, 171-172, 190. Regarding the crossing of the Euphrates at Thapsakos, see also Monerie 2019, 156-158, 159, 160 (Fig. 3), 162.

³⁰ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.11-13; see also Diod. 14.21.6. Cyrus and his army's stay at Thapsakos: Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.11-18; Diod. 14.21.5-6; see also Farrell 1961, 154-155 (suggests that during the stay at Thapsakos Cyrus may have been secretly negotiating with Abrokomas); Roy 1967, 313 with note 104, 314; Dandamaev 1989, 279; Lendle 1995, 40-43; Gawlikowski 1996, 126; Briant 2002, 624; Stylianou 2004, 91; Shannahan 2015, 47-48; Głogowski 2018, 13 note 13, 16 notes 34-35; Rop 2019a, 74; Głogowski 2020, 178; Brennan 2021, 396 (Map P.1); Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 21 (Map 1.4.1), 24 notes 1.4.11a-1.4.13b, 25 note 1.4.18a; Rop 2023, 117.

³¹ Diod. 14.20.4-5.

³² Diod. 14.20.5: (...) οὐκ ἐπ' Ἀρταξέρξην, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τινα σατράπην τῆς Συρίας (...) (trans. by C.H. Oldfather).

³³ Xen. *Anab.* 1.3.20-21.

³⁴ Abrokomas as satrap of Syria at the time of Cyrus' expedition: Olmstead 1948, 374, see also 398; Roy 1967, 301; Tuplin 1987, 231 (with question mark); Shahbazi 1993; Cawkwell 2004, 54. See also Bivar 1961, 123; Dandamayev 1983; Tuplin 2004, 163; Tuplin 2021, 290; cf. Thomas 2021, 453.

³⁵ See Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.9-11; also Farrell 1961, 153, 154; Lendle 1995, 38-41; Stolper 1987, 389.

³⁶ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.10: (...) τὰ Βελέσνος βασίλεια τοῦ Συρίας ἄρξαντος, καὶ παράδεισος πάνυ μέγας καὶ καλός, ἔχων πάντα ὄσα ὥραι φύουσι (trans. by C.L. Brownson, slightly modified).

³⁷ See Stolper 1987, 389-390; Briant 2002, 627; Kaelin 2021, 588; Jacobs 2021, 1026; cf. Elayi / Sapin 1998, 18-19.

by Cyrus on his arrival.³⁸ Belesys, as may be assumed, was not in his residence at the time.

There seems to be no doubt that Xenophon's Belesys is identical to Bēlšunu, a dignitary known from Babylonian cuneiform texts dated from 407 to 401 BC. Texts from this period refer to him as governor of Ebir Nāri (Across the River, or Transeuphratea), the area west of the Euphrates,³⁹ from which it can be inferred that he was governor of Syria at the time.⁴⁰ In what is probably an interpolated fragment of Xenophon's *Anabasis* – which lists the governors (ἀρχοντες) of the various lands through which Cyrus and his army passed in 401 BC, and then, after the Battle of Cunaxa, Cyrus' Greek mercenaries during the so-called Retreat of the Ten Thousand – Belesys, not Abrokomas, is listed as the governor of Syria and Assyria.⁴¹ Abrokomas does not appear in this fragment at all. The mention of Belesys in this passage as the governor of Syria and Assyria at the time of Cyrus' expedition reinforces the idea that Belesys was then in charge of Syria. This implies that the satrap of Syria mentioned by Diodorus was Belesys.⁴²

³⁸ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.10. See also Stolper 1990, 202–203; Shannahan 2015, 42; cf. Parpola 2003, 345–349, who proposes a different view of Bēlšunu/Belesys' origins. See also Lee 2016, 111.

³⁹ For more information on this area during the Achaemenid period, see Elayi / Sapin 1998, in particular 13–19, 145–158; cf. Jigoulov 2010, 24–32, 37–38. See also Elayi 1980, 25–26; Dandamayev 1987; Dandamayev 1996; Briant 2002, 49, 392–393, 487–490, 492, 544, 601, 627, 709, 713–717, 837, 951, 952, 988; Klinkott 2005, 456–458; Jacobs 2011; Kaelin 2021, 583–591. The scarcity of sources and administrative changes make it difficult to determine more precisely the structure of this area in late 5th and early 4th centuries BC (see Elayi 1980, 25; Dandamayev 1996; Elayi / Sapin 1998, 15–19, 145–146, 149–150, 154–156; Briant 2002, 487, 601, 627, 713–714, 951, 952, 988; Jigoulov 2010, 27–29, 38; Jacobs 2011; Kaelin 2021, 585–586, 587–589).

⁴⁰ See Stolper 1987, 389–392, 393–395, 397–398, 399–400; Dandamaev 1989, 278; Stolper 1990, 199–200, 202–203; Stolper 1994, 238–240; Stolper 1995, 217, 219; also Briant 2002, 601, 614, 626–627, 988; Parpola 2003, 345–349; Braun 2004, 120; Tuplin 2004, 163; Jigoulov 2010, 28; Ruzicka 2012, 244 with note 9; Shannahan 2015, 42; Lee 2016, 111, 112; Głogowski 2018, 15 note 26; Rop 2019a, 68 with note 13; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 23 note 1.4.10b; Tuplin 2021, 290. For more information on the dignitary in question, and the Babylonian texts pertaining him, see Stolper 1987; Stolper 1990; Stolper 1995; Dandamayev 1996; Briant 2002, 601–602, 724–725, 981, 988; Klinkott 2005, 268–270; Jacobs 2011; cf. Parpola 2003, 345–349 (a different view of Bēlšunu/Belesys' origins).

⁴¹ Xen. *Anab.* 7.8.25. For this fragment as a relevant source of information, see Bivar 1961, 121–123, 125, 127; Stolper 1987, 389–390; Lendle 1995, 486–487; Brownson / Dillery 2001, 651 note 63; Jigoulov 2010, 28–29; Rop 2019a, 68 note 16; Jacobs 2011; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 261 note 7.8.25d; Thomas 2021, 453; Tuplin 2021, 292 with note C.16b; cf. Briant 2002, 988, whose approach is skeptical. Regarding this fragment as an interpolation to Xenophon's *Anabasis*, see Bivar 1961, 121, 123, 125, 127; Stolper 1987, 389; Brownson / Dillery 2001, 650 note 15; Klinkott 2005, 440–441, 475; Lee 2016, 111; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 261 note 7.8.25d ('The material presumably comes from another forth-century historian'); Thomas 2021, 453 (writes about: 'the unknown scribe who added a note at 7.8.25'); Tuplin 2021, 292 with note C.16b; cf. Lendle 1995, 486–487 (regards this fragment as Xenophon's notes, which he did not intend to be an integral part of the *Anabasis*); Rop 2019a, 68 note 16 (attributes this fragment to Xenophon). See also Schmitt 2004; Jigoulov 2010, 28–29 with note 58.

⁴² Diod. 14.20.5.

Suggestions have been made, based on Xenophon's references to Abrokomas' presence in Phoenicia at the time of Cyrus' expedition,⁴³ that Abrokomas was exercising authority over Phoenicia at that time.⁴⁴ The boundaries of the area referred to in Greek as Phoenicia (Φοινίκη) during the Achaemenid period are not entirely clear. However, we do know that it comprised the eastern Mediterranean coast, probably reaching as far north as the area around the Gulf of Myriandros and as far south as the city of Ashkelon,⁴⁵ including important Phoenician cities such as Sidon, Tyre, Arvad (Greek Arados) and Byblos.⁴⁶ According to Xen. *Anab.* 7.8.25, it was Dernes who was in charge of Phoenicia, and Arabia, at the time of Cyrus' expedition.⁴⁷ There is no other information about him, but according to this fragment he, and not Abrokomas, ruled Phoenicia at the time.

Another view concerning the position held by Abrokomas in 401 BC in the area between the Euphrates and the eastern Mediterranean is that he was the King's military commander, appointed by Artaxerxes to quell the revolt in Egypt, ongoing since ca. 404 BC.⁴⁸ The activities of Abrokamas with a large

⁴³ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.5, 1.7.12.

⁴⁴ Abrokomas exercising authority over Phoenicia at the time of Cyrus' expedition: Dandamaev 1989, 277-278, also 273; Brownson / Dillery 2001, 82-83 note 38; Parpola 2003, 348 note 51; Braun 2004, 120-121; Klinkott 2005, 300, 457-458 with note 72, 475 with note 118; Lee 2007, 47; Jigoulov 2010, 28 ('Whether he was a satrap or a general, Abrocomas appears to have been in charge of the territory of Phoenicia at the time of Artaxerxes II (ca. 405/4-359/8 BCE)').

⁴⁵ For more information, see Elayi 1982, 83-86, 87, 103-104, 105-108; Graf 1994, 181; also Elayi 1980, 14-17, 18, 25, 27-28; Lipiński 2004, 267-272; Jigoulov 2010, 25-27, 30-33, 36; Lee 2016, 113; Głogowski 2020, 169-171; Heckel 2020, 100-101; Kaelin 2021, 586.

⁴⁶ For more information on individual Phoenician cities in the years ca. 450-350 BC, see Elayi 2018, 241-275.

⁴⁷ Xen. *Anab.* 7.8.25; see also Thomas 2021, 453; otherwise Klinkott 2005, 475, who rejects this information, but does not explain why it refers specifically to Dernes and makes no mention of Abrokomas.

⁴⁸ Regarding this view, see Dandamayev 1983; Ruzicka 1985, 210-211 with note 21; Britton 2002, 619 (writes about: 'the *strategos* Abrocomas' and that: 'Artaxerxes assembled an army in Phoenicia under the command of Abrocomas'), 626 (Abrokomas as 'having been entrusted with the expedition to Egypt'); Lane Fox 2004, 15-16 ('Xenophon does mention that Abrocomas, a Persian commander, marched up from Phoenicia while Cyrus was marching into Syria in summer 401. Abrocomas had a large army and it is an attractive guess that he had initially been sent to Phoenicia to conduct an invasion of the rebellious Egypt'), 18-19; Olbrycht 2010, 93; Ruzicka 2012, 37-38 ('the fact that there was a Persian army in Phoenicia under the command of the Persian general Abrocomas poised to attack Egypt in 401 indicates that (...) Artaxerxes II initiated preparations soon – perhaps immediately – after he became king' (38)) with note 9 ('Most likely, Abrocomas was a specially appointed commander'), 39, 42, 64, 72, 194; Shannahan 2015, 38-39 ('It is generally accepted that a force under Abrocomas was mustered and dispatched in 401: the movement of Abrocomas from the Euphrates into Phoenicia with a substantial army suggests an impending assault on Egypt' (38)), 151-152; Rop 2019a, 68 note 15, 85 with note 71, 88, 98; Głogowski 2020, 167, 171-172, 190; Quack 2021, 560 ('A Persian army under the command of Abrocomas, camped in Phoenicia and poised for countermeasures in 401 BCE, never really set out for Egypt because

army in Phoenicia,⁴⁹ may be linked to Achaemenid military actions against Egypt.⁵⁰

Yet another viewpoint holds that the reason for Abrokomas' presence with a large army in this area was to oppose Cyrus and his forces.⁵¹ However, assuming that this was Abrokomas' mission entrusted to him by the Great King, it should be stated that he did not carry it out, despite the favorable terrain conditions created by factors such as the Syrian-Cilician Gates. He could have also used the eastern bank of the Euphrates to oppose Cyrus and his forces, as they would have had to cross the river from the west. However, Abrokomas confined himself to burning the boats on the Euphrates at Thapsakos to prevent them from crossing the river, an action of little use regardless, as it could be crossed by foot at the time.⁵² It has been suggested that Abrokomas was deliberately avoiding a confrontation with Cyrus and his forces, playing a double game while waiting for the struggle between the Achaemenid brothers to resolve itself.⁵³ Such an attitude, however, would have been a clear act of disloyalty and disobedience to the Great King. At stake in this struggle was the royal throne. Artaxerxes would thus have certainly assigned the mission of confronting Cyrus and his forces to a person

of the inner-Persian conflict between Artaxerxes II and his younger brother Cyrus'); Thomas 2021, 453 ('A quite attractive alternate theory is that the reason Abrokomas had a large army under his control in 401 was that he was supposed to be organizing the reconquest of Egypt (...); if that was the case, perhaps he was not in charge of any other specific satrapy'); Rop 2023, 103, 113, 114, 115-117, 120. See also Cook 1983, 84 (Abrokomas 'appointed by the King as commander-in-chief for a war, whether to resist Cyrus or (...) to recover the newly-revolted Egypt'). For more information on the Egyptian revolt in question, see Olmstead 1948, 373-374; Ruzicka 1985, 208-209, 210-211 with note 21; Dandamaev 1989, 272-273; Briant 2002, 619, 987, 989-990; Lane Fox 2004, 15; Olbrycht 2010, 93; Ruzicka 2012, 37-42 with notes, 64; Shannahan 2015, 2, 38-39, 152; Lee 2016, 106; Rop 2019a, 85 with note 71, 88, 98; Heckel 2020, 103; Quack 2021, 560-561; Thomas 2021, 453; Rop 2023, 115.

⁴⁹ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.5, 1.7.12.

⁵⁰ Achaemenid military actions against Egypt launched from Phoenicia: Cook 1983, 84; Briant 2002, 619; Ruzicka 2012, 67 with notes; Głogowski 2020, 167, 172; Quack 2021, 559 (Cilicia and Phoenicia).

⁵¹ Regarding this viewpoint, see Jigoulov 2010, 28 (writes about: 'Abrocomas, who was sent by Artaxerxes II Mnemon with a company of 300,000 men to defeat the rebellious Prince Cyrus'); Lee 2016, 106, 112-116 ('More likely Abrocomas' position was as a general appointed for war. Abrocomas allegedly led an army of some 300,000 men and 50 scythed chariots. (...) It is often inferred from the sequence Euphrates-Phoenicia that Abrocomas was en route to quell the revolt in Egypt. On general strategic grounds, however, it seems more likely that Abrocomas' mission was to confront Cyrus' (112-113)). See also Cook 1983, 84 (Abrokomas 'appointed by the King as commander-in-chief for a war, whether to resist Cyrus or (...) to recover the newly-revolted Egypt'), 212 ('Abrocomas, who had an army in Phoenicia conventionally estimated at 300,000 men and was responsible for safeguarding it [the Syrian-Cilician Gates]').

⁵² Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.17-18.

⁵³ See Lee 2016, 112-116; cf. Rop 2023, 113, 114, 115-118, 119-120, 122.

of his utmost trust, and he seems to have held Abrokomas in such regard. The sources provide no information that might explain any reason for Abrokomas' alleged disloyalty to Artaxerxes.

Based on the above, it is hard to see Abrokomas' actions in the face of the struggle between Artaxerxes and Cyrus in terms of any duplicity tantamount to disloyalty to the Great King. Consequently, it is also hard to see him as the King's military commander with the mission of opposing Cyrus and his forces in the area between the Euphrates and the eastern Mediterranean, a mission which he did not undertake. It seems most likely, therefore, that he was then acting as the King's military commander tasked with putting down the revolt in Egypt. In the face of Cyrus' invasion, however, he and his troops were ordered to abandon this mission and engage in the war against the King's younger brother.

Abrokomas and his troops did not take part in the Battle of Cunaxa because they arrived from Phoenicia five days late.⁵⁴ This information seems surprising, since after leaving Phoenicia they reached the Euphrates and crossed the river before Cyrus and his army,⁵⁵ so one would expect them to have taken part in the battle along with the rest of the King's forces. S. Ruzicka has suggested that Abrokomas and his troops, on their way from Phoenicia to the Great King, crossed the Euphrates later than Cyrus and his army, and thus arrived too late to take part in the battle.⁵⁶ This suggestion, however, clearly contradicts Xenophon's claim that Abrokomas arrived at the Euphrates before Cyrus and then burned the boats to prevent the rebel from crossing.⁵⁷ According to S. Ruzicka, the burning could have been carried out by men sent from Artaxerxes' camp, which would not have required Abrokomas' presence on the Euphrates before Cyrus, and Xenophon's information on this point is incorrect.⁵⁸ However, this assumption does not explain why Xenophon attributes the act of arson precisely to Abrokomas and not to someone else, such as Belesys. Elsewhere, the Athenian historian states that Cyrus expected Abrokomas (and not someone else) to put up strong resistance on the Syrian side of the Syrian-Cilician Gates, but the latter, having learned of Cyrus' presence in Cilicia, moved from Phoenicia to join the Great King.⁵⁹ Both of these accounts of Xenophon show that Abrokomas moved before Cyrus, which does not allow the interpretation that it was Cyrus who preceded Abrokomas.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Xen. *Anab.* 1.7.12, see also 1.4.5, 1.5.18.

⁵⁵ Xen. *Anab.* 1.5.18.

⁵⁶ Ruzicka 1985, 210-211 with note 21; Ruzicka 2012, 39, 42; similarly Głogowski 2020, 168-169, 171-172 ('It is unlikely (...) that Abrokomas could have outrun Cyrus not only in encountering Artaxerxes in Babylonia but even in crossing the Euphrates' (172)), 190.

⁵⁷ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.18, see also 1.3.20.

⁵⁸ Ruzicka 1985, 210 with note 21; similarly Głogowski 2020, 168-169.

⁵⁹ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.5.

⁶⁰ As for counter-arguments to this interpretation, see also Lee 2016, 114-115.

The sources do not specify which way Abrokomas and his troops traversed after crossing the Euphrates to Cunaxa. Probably the destination of their march was Arbela, through which ran the main route from Syria to Babylonia. According to Diodorus (following Ephorus), Artaxerxes had pointed out Ecbatana as the gathering point for the King's forces for the war against Cyrus.⁶¹ These must have been only forces from Iran and satrapies further east. Plutarch, on the other hand, reports that during the march of Cyrus and his army news reached him that Artaxerxes was gathering his forces in Persis.⁶² These reports were probably false, however, planted in the enemy camp to spread disinformation.⁶³

In order to reach Babylonia after crossing the Euphrates, Abrokomas and his troops may have followed the route soon taken by Cyrus and his army, which led south down the Euphrates along its eastern bank. This route led to the Araxes River (an eastern tributary of the Euphrates, identified with the modern Khabur⁶⁴ or Balich⁶⁵), with many villages with supplies nearby, and from the Araxes through barren desert areas to the Maskas River (another eastern tributary of the Euphrates⁶⁶) and the city of Korsote, then on to the city of Pylai⁶⁷ and finally to Cunaxa in northern Babylonia. Traversing this route it took Cyrus and his army, moving by forceful march, thirty-nine days.⁶⁸ However, Abrokomas and his troops certainly did not follow this route, since after crossing the Euphrates at Thapsakos before Cyrus and his army they arrived at Cunaxa five days after the end of the battle.

Another option for Abrokomas and his troops after crossing the Euphrates was a route through Upper Mesopotamia towards the Tigris, via the so-called royal road connecting Sardis and Susa⁶⁹ described by Herodotus.⁷⁰ According to his account, this road crossed the Euphrates near the border between Cilicia and Armenia and then ran towards the Tigris, covering fifteen stages (*σταθμοί*),

⁶¹ Diod. 14.22.1; see also Briant 2002, 629, 739.

⁶² Plut. *Art.* 7.1.

⁶³ Podrazik 2022, 27-28.

⁶⁴ See Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 25 note 1.4.19a.

⁶⁵ Farrell 1961; Lendle 1995, 43-45, 46; Monerie 2019, 166.

⁶⁶ Farrell 1961 identifies this river with the Khabur; similarly Lendle 1995, 45, 46; Kuhrt 2007, 742 with note 1 (p. 743 ad loc.).

⁶⁷ The Arakeses: Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.19, the Maskas: Xen. *Anab.* 1.5.4, Korsote: Xen. *Anab.* 1.5.4, Pylai: Xen. *Anab.* 1.5.5.

⁶⁸ March of Cyrus and his army from the Euphrates crossing to Cunaxa: Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.19-1.8.1; see also Diod. 14.21.7.

⁶⁹ See Lendle 1995, 43-44, 59; Briant 2002, 628-629; Lee 2016, 115; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 25 note 1.4.19a; Thomas 2021, 453; Rop 2023, 117-118, 120, 122.

⁷⁰ Hdt. 5.52-54. For more information on this road, see Oates 1968, 7; Graf 1994, 167, 168, 171, 175, 177-180; Lendle 1995, 117-119; Briant 2002, 357-359, 362, 364, 366 (Map 2), 368, 374, 375, 376, 377, 380, 739, 927; Kuhrt 2007, 730, 731, 732, 738, 739; Huitink / Rood 2019, 188; Almagor 2020, 147-160 (a rather skeptical approach to Herodotus' description); Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 107 (Map 3.5.15); Marciak et al. 2022, 74-76.

which can be understood as a fifteen-day march,⁷¹ with a watchtower (φυλακτήριον) at each stage. It then crossed rivers such as the Tigris, the Great Zab, the Little Zab⁷² and the Gyndes (modern Dijala⁷³), the eastern tributaries of the Tigris. Then it passed through the land of the Matienoi (a people living in the Zagros Mountains, between Lake Urmia and the sources of the Little Zab⁷⁴), covering thirty-four stages, and then through the Kissian land, covering eleven stages, where it reached Susa. There were also other routes beyond the Tigris, not described by Herodotus. One of them ran towards Babylon.

On the eastern bank of the Tigris River, close to the southern border of the Kardouchoi territory and bordering Armenia to the north, there was a junction on the aforementioned royal road. This road led in several directions: eastward to Ekbatana, southeastward to Susa, southward to Babylon, westward to Sardis, and northward through the land of the Kardouchoi to Armenia.⁷⁵ It may be assumed that the route south to Babylon followed the eastern bank of the Tigris, crossing successively the Great Zab, the Little Zab and the Gyndes/Dijala, then across the Tigris and finally to Babylon. Going in the opposite direction, it probably coincided in part with the route of the Greek mercenaries of Cyrus (the so-called Cyreians or Ten Thousand) who, after the Battle of Cunaxa, were led by the King's forces from Cunaxa towards the Tigris and, after crossing the river, along its eastern bank to the north towards the land of the Kardouchoi, in 401/400 BC.⁷⁶ They first crossed the Tigris near the city of Opis, and then the Physkos River (possibly the same as the Dijala⁷⁷), an eastern tributary of the Tigris, which joined it near the city of Sittake.⁷⁸ Cyrus II (550-530 BC) and his forces had also crossed the Tigris near Opis, after crossing the Gyndes/Dijala from the north shortly before their conquest of Babylon in 539 BC.⁷⁹ It can be assumed that they partly followed the same route along the eastern bank of the Tigris, but from north to south, as did the Greek mercenaries of Cyrus the Younger.

⁷¹ See Almagor 2020, 153 (one σταθμός (stage) equals about one marching day).

⁷² Regarding the Great Zab and the Little Zab, see Marciak et al. 2022, 74 (there also further references).

⁷³ Kuhrt 2007, 85 and 86 (note 4).

⁷⁴ See Briant 2002, 927; Kuhrt 2007, 993; otherwise Almagor 2020, 158 ('It [Matiene] is thus made to be a huge area, which covers Assyria and Media, two names that are absent in Herodotus' account. (...) Herodotus' portrayal of the terrain of Persia (beyond the Zagros) appears to be imaginary, and this may apply as well to the territory of Matiene alongside the Zagros foothills').

⁷⁵ Xen. *Anab.* 3.5.14-17; see also Diod. 14.27.3-4; also Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 107 (Map 3.5.15), 108 (Figure 3.5.15). See also Briant 2002, 366 (Map 2); Huitink / Rood 2019, 188-189.

⁷⁶ See Briant 2002, 380.

⁷⁷ See Landle 1995, 117-118.

⁷⁸ See Xen. *Anab.* 2.4.13-25, with Lendle 1995, 115 and 117-118 (indicates that Xenophon most likely confused Sittake with Opis and Opis with Sittake); Monerie 2019, 161 with note 28; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 65-67 with notes 2.4.13b, 2.4.25b, and 59 (Map 2.3.14).

⁷⁹ Hdt. 1.189-192.

According to Diodorus, after leaving Babylon in order to reach Arbela in 331 BC, Darius III (336-330 BC) and his army were marching with the Tigris on their right and the Euphrates on their left.⁸⁰ Curtius writes similarly, with more about their crossing of the Tigris and then, after their arrival at Arbela, the Lycus River,⁸¹ the same as the Great Zab.⁸² He does not specify, however, where they crossed the Tigris. It is likely the same place where the river was crossed by the Greek mercenaries of Cyrus the Younger, and earlier by Cyrus II and his forces advancing in the opposite direction, that is, near Opis. When Diodorus and Curtius write that Darius III and his army had the Tigris on their right and the Euphrates on their left after leaving Babylon, they may have been referring only to the section of the route between Babylon and Opis. Indeed, Darius III and his army had the Tigris on their right and the Euphrates on their left while traversing this section. However, they might have crossed the Tigris near the Opis and then continued their march to the north along the eastern bank of the river towards Arbela, which was not reported by Diodorus and Curtius.⁸³ It can be supposed, therefore, that Darius III and his army crossed the Tigris near Opis on their way from Babylon to Arbela in 331 BC and then on to Gaugamela, where the famous battle soon took place. The Greek mercenaries of Cyrus the Younger had done the same, and still earlier Cyrus II and his forces, only in the opposite direction. Presumably, at the same place, near Opis, the forces of Artaxerxes II crossed the Tigris, advancing from their gathering point at Ecbatana towards Babylon and finally Cunaxa. From Ecbatana, they probably followed the royal road connecting Susa and Sardis to the junction, and then to the south along the eastern bank of the Tigris to its crossing near Opis. In this way they probably traversed along the Great Khorasan Road, which passed through Ecbatana and Babylon, among other places.⁸⁴

Xenophon does not record a crossing of the Little Zab by the Greek mercenaries of Cyrus, but he does recount a crossing of the Zapatas River,⁸⁵ likely the same as the Great Zab,⁸⁶ which suggests that the Little Zab must have been crossed as well.⁸⁷ The march continued from the Zapatas/Great Zab north along the eastern

⁸⁰ Diod. 17.53.3-4.

⁸¹ Curt. 4.9.6-9.

⁸² The Lycus the same as the Great Zab: Nawotka 2004, 323; Monerie 2019, 182; Marciak et al. 2022, 63.

⁸³ Otherwise Nawotka 2004, 303-304 (does not specify, however, where Darius and his army crossed the Tigris).

⁸⁴ Regarding this road, see Oates 1968, 7; Graf 1994, 179, 186; Briant 2002, 39, 358, 366 (Map 2), 739; Almagor 2020, 165-166; also Kuhrt 2007, 738.

⁸⁵ Xen. *Anab.* 3.3.6.

⁸⁶ The Zapatas the same as the Great Zab: Oates 1968, 60; Lendle 1995, 165-167; Huitink / Rood 2019, 42-43; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 94 note 3.3.6a.

⁸⁷ The reason why Xenophon does not record a crossing of the Little Zab might have been the low level of its waters (Huitink / Rood 2019, 42-43).

bank of the Tigris, passing cities such as Larissa (identified with the Assyrian Kalhu, also known as Nimrud) and Mespila (identified with the Assyrian Nineveh),⁸⁸ as well as the junction on the royal road connecting Susa and Sardis.⁸⁹ Then it led to the land of the Kardouchoi and subsequently to Armenia.⁹⁰ It took them twenty-nine days of marching (plus eight days of rest⁹¹) to cover this route, from the point where they crossed the Tigris near Opis to the junction. Part of the route, however, beginning with the crossing of the Zapatas/Great Zab, involved fighting which slowed their progress.⁹² Traversing the route from Cunaxa to the Tigris crossing near Opis, in turn, took eight days of marching (and twenty-six days of rest).⁹³

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the route between the junction on the royal road and Cunaxa could have been covered in about thirty-seven days, and this is probably the time Abrokomas and his troops needed to do so. Adding to this the approximately fifteen days needed to cover the section of the royal road running between the Euphrates and the junction gives a total of about fifty-two days. As mentioned above, Cyrus and his army reached Cunaxa in thirty-nine days after crossing the Euphrates at Thapsakos, forcefully marching along the eastern bank of the river. If Abrokomas' aim was to join the King's forces before the fight with Cyrus, he would probably have taken the faster route, down the Euphrates. The fact that he did not suggests he had a different orders.

It is most likely that neither Artaxerxes nor Abrokomas knew which way Cyrus would go after crossing the Euphrates, especially as he was very concerned about keeping his actions undercover. Most likely, he was considering the direction of the march would be to the east after crossing the Euphrates. In this case, the route might have run via Upper Mesopotamia. However, this route would probably have presented difficulties in the form of the watchtowers (φυλακτήρια) that Herodotus refers to, that is of course if they were still there in 401 BC. On the other hand, Cyrus' status and knowledge as a member of the royal family, and the support of the queen mother Parysatis for him,⁹⁴ may have to some extent facilitated his passage with his army past these watchtowers.

⁸⁸ Xen. *Anab.* 3.4.6-12, with Oates 1968, 60-61; Lendle 1995, 165-166, 172-177; Huitink / Rood 2019, 43, 147-153; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 98 notes 3.4.7a-3.4.7c, 3.4.10a-3.4.11a and 97 (Figure 3.4.7), 101 (Map 3.4.24).

⁸⁹ Xen. *Anab.* 3.5.15.

⁹⁰ Xen. *Anab.* 3.5.17.

⁹¹ Days of rest: Xen. *Anab.* 2.5.1, 3.4.1, 3.4.18, 3.4.31.

⁹² Xen. *Anab.* 2.4.13-2.5.42, 3.1.2-4, 3.1.11-3.5.15, with Lendle 1995, 115 and 117-118 (Xenophon most likely confused Sittake with Opis and Opis with Sittake); Monerie 2019, 161 with note 28; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 65-67 with notes 2.4.13b, 2.4.25b, and 59 (Map 2.3.14).

⁹³ Xen. *Anab.* 2.2.4-2.4.13, with Lendle 1995, 115 and 117-118 (Xenophon most likely confused Sittake with Opis and Opis with Sittake); Monerie 2019, 161 with note 28; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 65-67 with notes 2.4.13b, 2.4.25b, and 59 (Map 2.3.14). Days of rest: Xen. *Anab.* 2.3.17, 2.3.25-2.4.1 (three days mentioned, and also more than twenty).

⁹⁴ Parysatis' support for Cyrus: Xen. *Anab.* 1.1.4; Plut. *Art.* 2.2-3.

It is known that a route via Upper Mesopotamia was taken by Alexander of Macedon and his forces in 331 BC, shortly before the Battle of Arbela/Gaugamela. Coming from the Levant, they crossed the Euphrates at Thapsakos,⁹⁵ as Cyrus and his army did, and then headed towards the Tigris. There is no precise information in the sources about the route they took.⁹⁶ It is possible, however, that it coincided with the Persian royal road running via Upper Mesopotamia.⁹⁷ Once they reached the Tigris, a major challenge for them was to ford it by foot.⁹⁸ The location of this ford has not been specified by the sources. Perhaps it was in the vicinity of modern Mosul.⁹⁹ Having crossed to the other side of the Tigris, they proceeded down this river along its eastern bank to finally reach Gaugamela,¹⁰⁰ situated between the eastern bank of the Tigris and the western bank of the Great Zab.¹⁰¹

In connection with the war between Artaxerxes and Cyrus, Diodorus (following Ephorus) mentions Indian troops, as well as other unspecified peoples who were too far away to reach the gathering point at Ecbatana in time.¹⁰² There seems to be no doubt that this refers to peoples from the eastern parts of the Achaemenid Empire.¹⁰³ Ultimately, these eastern forces did not take part in the confrontation between Artaxerxes and Cyrus.

Taking into account the prospect of Cyrus and his army marching east after crossing the Euphrates, the use of the route via Upper Mesopotamia by Abrokomas and his troops can be perceived as an integral part of the King's strategy in the war against Cyrus. The point was to block Cyrus' potential march east of the Euphrates in Upper Mesopotamia, probably along the Tigris.¹⁰⁴ It is known that shortly before the Battle of Arbela/Gaugamela (331 BC), Darius III's forces were to take actions against Alexander and his army approaching the Tigris from

⁹⁵ Arr. *Anab.* 3.7.1-2.

⁹⁶ See Curt. 4.9.12-14; Arr. *Anab.* 3.7.3-5; also Plut. *Alex.* 31.1-2 (following Eratosthenes); also Olmstead 1948, 514; Nawotka 2004, 301-302, 312-313; Marciak et al. 2022, 62, 63. Broader discussion and possible course of the route: Engels 1978, 64-70, Map 8.

⁹⁷ See Monerie 2019, 160-161 with Fig. 3, 164-166 with notes 38 and 43, 173.

⁹⁸ Diod. 17.55.1-6; Curt. 4.9.15-24; see also Arr. *Anab.* 3.7.5; also Nawotka 2004, 313; Monerie 2019, 160-161, 173.

⁹⁹ See Engels 1978, Map 8; Nawotka 2004, 313; Monerie 2019, 160 with note 21; cf. Marciak et al. 2022, 63 with note 10, 75 with note 80, 78-79, 81.

¹⁰⁰ Arr. *Anab.* 3.7.6-3.9.5; see also Curt. 4.9.24-4.12.5; also Diod. 17.55.6; Plut. *Alex.* 31.3-5.

¹⁰¹ Regarding the location of Gaugamela, see Arr. *Anab.* 3.8.7, 6.11.5-6; Plut. *Alex.* 31.3-5; also Curt. 4.9.9-10 (the name of Gaugamela is not mentioned); also Olmstead 1948, 514-515; Oates 1968, 61 (the name of Gaugamela does not appear); Nawotka 2004, 313-315. Broader discussion: Marciak et al. 2022.

¹⁰² Diod. 14.22.1-2.

¹⁰³ Olbrycht 2010, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Farrell 1961, 154-155, who suggests a possible manoeuvre by Cyrus after crossing the Euphrates to confuse Abrokomas.

the west to hinder their river crossing.¹⁰⁵ Given the whereabouts of Abrokomas and his troops after their leaving Phoenicia and crossing the Euphrates, they were in good position to be directed by Artaxerxes towards the Tigris for such a task. The forces gathered by Artaxerxes, in turn, were to come out to face the rebel from the south, blocking the way to Babylon, which is known to have happened, resulting in the Battle of Cunaxa.

Xenophon's account suggests that the decision on the direction of Cyrus and his army's march beyond the Euphrates was made during their five-day stay at Thapsakos, just before they crossed the river.¹⁰⁶ It can be presumed that if Abrokomas and his troops followed to the south after crossing the Euphrates, Cyrus and his army would have taken the northern route, via Upper Mesopotamia. Given that the northern route was taken by Abrokomas and his troops, where Cyrus was expecting to encounter resistance, the latter followed the southern route.¹⁰⁷ On the one hand, this circumstances favored Cyrus by postponing Abrokomas and his troops joining Artaxerxes and their late arrival at Cunaxa. On the other, it gave the Great King an advantage by determining the direction of the rebels' march beyond the Euphrates (to the south), allowing him to better anticipate their further movements and prepare for the battle accordingly. After Cyrus and his army had crossed the Euphrates and taken the southern route, Abrokomas and his troops moved towards the Great King (presumably along the eastern bank of the Tigris) to support him in his fight with Cyrus. They were late, however, arriving on the battlefield five days after the battle had ended. According to Xenophon and Diodorus, after crossing the Euphrates Cyrus accelerated his march,¹⁰⁸ presumably aiming to prevent Abrokomas and his troops from joining the Great King.¹⁰⁹ In this point Cyrus succeeded, but ultimately at the Battle of Cunaxa Artaxerxes and his accordingly prepared army were the victors.¹¹⁰

Concerning the Battle of Cunaxa, Xenophon mentions Abrokomas as one of the commanders of the King's forces, as well as Tissaphernes, Gobryas and Arbakes.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ See Diod. 17.55.1-6; Curt. 4.9.7, 4.9.14-24; cf. Arr. *Anab.* 3.7.4-5.

¹⁰⁶ Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.11-13; see also Diod. 14.21.5-6.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Rop 2023, 117, who indicates that Abrokomas' actions '(...) forced Cyrus to march along a faster but more precarious route (...)'. He does not, however, fit these actions into the King's strategy in the war against Cyrus, including Abrokomas' expected resistance to Cyrus in Upper Mesopotamia, seeing Abrokomas' actions in terms of playing a double game.

¹⁰⁸ Xen. *Anab.* 1.5.7-9; Diod. 14.21.7.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Briant 2002, 628, 629, who indicates that Cyrus accelerated his march to prevent Abrokomas and his troops from joining Artaxerxes, but does not perceive Abrokomas' actions as part of the King's strategy, which was to block Cyrus' possible march in Upper Mesopotamia.

¹¹⁰ Artaxerxes' army at Cunaxa accordingly prepared: Xen. *Anab.* 1.8.1-2, 1.8.11, 1.8.14; Diod. 14.22.3-4; Plut. *Art.* 7.3-4.

¹¹¹ Xen. *Anab.* 1.7.12. For more information on Tissaphernes, Gobryas and Arbakes in the Battle of Cunaxa, with further references, see Lee 2016, 110-112; Brennan / Thomas (eds.) 2021, 34 notes 1.7.12a-b; Podrazik 2022, 28-29 with notes 8-10; Podrazik 2023, 752, 757-758, 759-763.

With regard to Abrokomas, however, he states that he and his troops did not take part in the battle, as they arrived from Phoenicia five days after the battle had ended.¹¹² Abrokomas' role as commander was to block Cyrus' possible march in Upper Mesopotamia, probably along the Tigris.

The actions of Abrokomas and his troops presented in this article provide a better understanding of the King's strategy in the war against Cyrus in 401 BC. The essential point of this strategy was to face the rebel and his army between the Euphrates and the Tigris. It is most likely that neither Artaxerxes nor Abrokomas knew where Cyrus and his army would march after crossing the Euphrates – south towards Babylon or east towards the Tigris. The King's strategy took both options into account. The effect of this was to divert Abrokomas and his troops from Phoenicia, where they were currently operating against rebellious Egypt, towards the Tigris, where they would oppose Cyrus and his army should they choose to march in that direction. The forces gathered by Artaxerxes, in turn, secured the southern direction, leading to Babylonia along the Euphrates. Thus, the actions of Abrokomas and his troops in 401 BC were not opportunistic acts of a duplicitous game of waiting for the resolution of the war between the Achaemenid brothers, but an integral part of the King's strategy, taking into account the different directions Cyrus and his army could have taken after crossing the Euphrates. It is known *post-factum* that they moved down this river, culminating in the Battle of Cunaxa and the victory of the Great King and his forces. However, the situation leading up to this battle was dynamic, with many variables, and events could have been very different had Cyrus and his army moved east towards the Tigris after crossing the Euphrates. This direction, however, was blocked by Abrokomas and his troops, forcing the rebel and his army to march south, where they were met by Artaxerxes and his forces.

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¹¹² Xen. *Anab.* 1.7.12-13.

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Abstract

This article analyzes the strategic role of Abrokomas, a commander in the service of Artaxerxes II (404-359 BC), during the revolt of Cyrus the Younger in 401 BC and the subsequent campaign in Syria and Mesopotamia. Focusing on the movement and actions of Abrokomas and his forces, the study re-examines ancient literary sources (notably Xenophon, Diodorus, and others) alongside recent scholarship and epigraphic data to clarify his position and function within the Achaemenid defense. The article challenges earlier views that saw Abrokomas as a disloyal or opportunistic actor and instead situates him as part of a deliberate royal strategy. Initially tasked

with military operations in Phoenicia and possibly Egypt, Abrokomas was redirected to Mesopotamia to anticipate and block potential routes of Cyrus and his army. The article reconstructs the routes taken by Persian forces, evaluates the debated positions of key satraps (notably the identification and role of Belesys versus Abrokomas as satrap of Syria), and situates these military maneuvers within the wider logistical framework of the Achaemenid Empire, including the use of the royal road network. Ultimately, the article argues that Abrokomas' movements were not marked by hesitation, but reflect the King's flexible and multi-directional strategy to contain Cyrus' advance, culminating in the confrontation at Cunaxa (401 BC). The actions and misdirections of Abrokomas contributed to shaping the campaign's outcome, and the article provides a reassessment of his reputation and of Persian defensive planning in the face of internal rebellion.

Map



The map illustrates the route taken by Cyrus and his army from Sardis to Cunaxa in 401 BC. It also details the path followed by Cyrus' Greek mercenaries after the Battle of Cunaxa, as they traveled north along the eastern bank of the Tigris toward the southern shores of the Black Sea, ultimately reaching western Anatolia from 401 to 399 BC. This map is based on F.G. Sorof's edition of Xenophon's *Anabasis* (Teubner), published in Berlin in 1898.