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Surviving Defeat: Battlefield Surrender in Classical Greece

Abstract: The fate of war captives has been extensively explored, as, indeed, has the way that fate affects both the conduct and course of hostilities. Nevertheless, little research has been conducted on the link that connects the two, namely the act of surrender, and this is especially true of classical Greece. This article seeks to remedy this situation by answering three interlinked questions, namely: how did men attempt to surrender on the battlefields of classical Greece?; in what tactical conditions did they do so?; and finally, what prospects did they have of surviving the process?

Keywords: hoplites, surrender, war, combat

1. Introduction

The fate of war captives has been extensively explored,[1] as, indeed, has the way that fate affects both the conduct and course of hostilities.[2] Nevertheless, as Cook observes, little research has been conducted on the link that connects the two, namely the act of surrender, and this is especially true of classical Greece, for which little is known beyond the mere fact that surrenders did sometimes occur.[3] If we are to believe Plato, however, surrender was a simple matter: all a defeated hoplite had to do to escape death is throw down his arms (ὅπλα

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[1] For scholarship focusing on classical Greece, see Ducrey (1968); Gaca (2010), 117-161; Jackson (1970), 37-53; Jones (1987), 139-155; Kapellos (2013), 464-472; Karavites (1982); Kelly (1970), 127-131; Krentz (1989), 179-180; Panagopoulos (1978); Pritchett (1991), 203-312; Rosivach (1999), 129-157; Strauss (1983), 24-35; Wolpert (2002), 4-9, 119-125; Wylie (1986), 125-41.
[2] Research on this subject tends to focus on more modern conflicts, particularly the First World War. For an overview, see esp. Cook (2006), 637-665; Dollery and Parson (2007), 499-512; Ferguson (1998), 367-394, (2004), 148-192; Grauer (2014), 622-655; Grossman (1996), 203-227.
[3] Cook (2006), 637-665; cf. Cartledge (2012),15-28. Cartledge's contribution, is, however, intended for a general audience and his examination is limited as a result.

ἀφεὶς) and supplicate his pursuers (καὶ ἐφ᾽ ἱκετείαν τραπόμενος τῶν διωκόντων).[4] This portrayal of battlefield surrender, of course, serves Plato's rhetorical strategy, which is to present his old teacher, Socrates, as the good philosopher, who, having received his mission from Apollo, stands fast in the face of overwhelming odds, like a hoplite placed in the ranks by his commander. In this metaphor, the hoplite-philosopher must hold his ground and, if necessary, die honourably, rather than abandoning his assigned position and incurring the disgrace of flight and surrender.[5] Thus, the emphasis Plato places on the simplicity of surrender is intended to highlight the courage of his mentor who refused to take this apparently easy way out.[6]

Plato's portrayal of surrender, therefore, serves an obvious rhetorical purpose, yet clearly, it would lose much of its appeal if it was not at least superficially plausible. To avoid this, Plato stays within the collective knowledge and experience of his audience, who knew that surrender was both possible and negotiated through the abandonment of arms and the actual or metaphorical supplication of the victor.[7] Plato's portrayal then, is plausible, but a modern example suggests that whilst surrender may have been simple on the rhetorical battlefield, it was far more complex in reality.

The case in question is infamous, primarily because of the controversy it created at the time. It occurred on the 28th of May 1982 during the British advance on Goose Green, when Lt. James Barry, the commander of 12 platoon, D company, of the 2nd battalion of the Parachute Regiment, apparently saw a white flag flying on an enemy position to the immediate south of the settlement. Witnesses agree that Barry went forward to accept the

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[4] Plat. *Apol.* 39a. This passage was brought to my attention by Nicolas Denyer, for whose kindness and intellectual generosity I remain grateful.

[5] For the normative expectation that a hoplite should hold his position, see Aeschin. 3.7; On. *Strat.* 6.1.3, 10.3, 27.1, 32.6-8; Plat. *Lach.* 190e-91e; Plut. *Cim.* 17.3-5; Soph. *Ant.* 640-81; Xen. *Anab.* 1.8.3, 4.3.28-9, *Cav.* 2.2-9, *Cyrop.* 2.1.25-8, 3.3.69-70, 6.3.25, *Ec.* 8.1-10, 14-15, 18-20, *Mem.* 3.1.9. For the offence of *lipotaxia*, see Aeschin. 3.175-6; Andoc. 1.74; Dem. 21.103; Lyc. 1.147; cf. Lys. 10.1, 9, 12, 21-4, 27-30, 14.5-8, 39.17; Plat. *Rep.* 5.468a.

[6] See esp. 28a-39e; cf. Aesch. *PB* 1002.

[7] For examples and discussion, see Section 2 below.

surrender, but despite good intentions, he was killed after a brief parley with the enemy. His death, inevitably, was presented in the popular press as a disgraceful murder committed by a dishonourable and perfidious enemy, but as Fitz-Gibbon demonstrates, this was simply not the case. His investigation, which builds on that of Benest (an officer who served with 2 Para) reveals a far more confused reality only imperfectly reconstructed by diverging first-hand accounts.[8]

Consensus exists in respect of two crucial details, namely that Barry moved forward as other members of 2 Para assaulted an enemy occupied schoolhouse to his left, and that, at some point during the incident, a burst of tracer rounds, perhaps from this engagement, passed over the apparently surrendering Argentine position. Accounts from Argentine troops, however, deny any white flag was flown and indicate that they thought Barry was trying to surrender to them, which may explain the demeanour of those involved in the parley, who retained their weapons and appeared to be trying to get Barry to lay down his rifle. What actually happened remains unclear, but it seems that this cross-communication ended when the tracers flew over the parley party, and thinking that they were being engaged, the Argentine negotiators, or those in nearby fighting positions, opened fire on Barry, killing him and precipitating an engagement in which both Argentine and other members of 2 Para were killed.[9]

This incident, then, took place in a tactical environment which was both confused and fluid, and whilst Barry's actions were both humane and heroic, as Fitz-Gibbon concludes, in moving forward to accept the enemy's surrender, he 'took a considerable and unnecessary risk'.[10] Indeed, this risk was so obvious to Barry's Company Commander, Major Phil Neame, that he tried to stop him approaching the enemy position, and one of Barry's immediate

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[8] Fitz-Gibbon (1995), 158-162.
[9] Fitz-Gibbon (1995), 158-162.
[10] Fitz-Gibbon (1995), 160.

subordinates was so shocked by his actions that he declared that "he must have gone mad!"[11] Barry's death, then, highlights the importance of the prevailing tactical environment as well as an aspect of the capitulation process that is often ignored by historians, namely the grave danger the victor often faces when attempting to accept an offer of surrender.[12]

Such complexities, naturally, are absent from Plato's rhetorically-determined vision of battlefield surrender. Nevertheless, the ancient battlefield was every bit as confusing and dangerous as its modern counterpart, and this begs an obvious and hitherto unanswered question, namely, on the battlefields of classical Greece, when the tide of battle turned and combat gave way to pursuit and slaughter, what realistic prospects, if any, did a defeated hoplite have of surrendering? Before this question can be answered, however, it is necessary to examine two subordinate and so far overlooked considerations: firstly, how did men attempt to surrender on the battlefields of classical Greece; and secondly, in what tactical conditions did they do so?

2. The Act of Surrender

As the incident discussed above suggests, modern combatants, despite the expectations of international law, tend to view surrender as a two part process: the enemy offers to surrender, and the victor, after performing a cost-benefit analysis, then decides whether to accept or reject that offer.[13] The Homeric heroes took a similar view, as the *Iliad* reveals. The poem contains five scenes in which defeated opponents attempt to save themselves by supplication: in book six, Adrastus attempts to supplicate Menelaus; in book

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[11] Fitz-Gibbon (1995), 159.

[12] See esp. Cook (2006), 637-665.

[13] Consider, for instance, J.S.P. (2004), 5.6-10, 10.5-39, which reflects both the position stipulated by the Hague Convention (namely that an enemy who lays down his arms and indicates his desire to surrender is categorised immediately as *hors de combat*, and as such, can no longer be attacked), and the realities of the battlefield (in that it accepts there is no obligation on the victor to expose himself to danger in order to accept a surrender). These two incompatible expectations, of course, produce a very obvious ambiguity that soldiers tend to interpret in the interests of their own safety. For further discussion, see Bourke (1999), 171-214; Cook (2006), 637-665; Dollery and Parson (2007), 499-512; Ferguson (1998), 367-394, (2004), 148-192; Holmes (2003), 360-393; Wallace (2012), 955-981.

ten Dolōn attempts to supplicate Odysseus and Diomedes; in book eleven, Peisander and Hippolochus attempt to supplicate Agamemnon; in book twenty, Tros attempts to supplicate Achilles; and finally, in book twenty-one, Lycaon attempts to supplicate Achilles.[14]

As is well known, the victors reject all these attempts and thereafter kill their defeated opponents,[15] and these deaths, combined with reported incidents in which protagonists indicate a newfound reluctance to take prisoners,[16] together emphasise the merciless nature of the Trojan War.[17] The scenes, in addition, also demonstrate three other aspects of Homeric capitulation: firstly, as is the case in modern warfare, it is a two part process; secondly, the victor is not obligated to accept; thirdly, rejection inevitably leads to the death of the defeated.[18] The situation then, in *The Iliad* at least, seems reasonably clear. This text, however, was composed much earlier than the period under consideration. Nevertheless, *The Iliad* played a central role in Greek education, and consequently, as Lendon has demonstrated, its values exercised an ongoing influence on Greek attitudes to war and combat, so the rules of epic could conceivably apply to the battlefields of classical Greece.[19]

Certainly, in the historical record, surrender was more than a theoretical possibility: the Greeks, and those non-Greeks they fought, were, despite the inconvenience prisoners often entailed, sometimes willing and able to take prisoners during open combat.[20] Herodotus, for instance, describes how the Spartans carried fetters when they attacked Tegea around 575 BC, but after they were defeated in battle, those Spartans who were captured

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[14] For a possible representation of this process in art, see Beazley 41058 (Boston Museum of Fine Arts, accession no. 1979.618), also 204505 (St. Petersburg State Hermitage Museum, accession no. B1542).

[15] Adrastus: Hom. *Il*. 6.37-71; Dolōn: 10.372-465; Peisander and Hippolochus: 11.122-150; Tros: 20.464-70; Lycaon: 21.64-135.

[16] See, for instance, Hom. *Il*. 2.229-31, 11.104-12, 18.336-7, 21.26-28, 34-135, 22.38-50, 23.22-3, 174-6, 24.746-55; cf. 16.330-2.

[17] For further discussion, see Goldhill (1990), 373-76; Gould (1973), 74-103; Kelly (2014), 147-67; Naiden (2006), 29-104; Parker (1983), 146, 181-6; Pedrick (1982), 125-40.

[18] Which explains why the defeated often promise a ransom, for which see esp. Pedrick (1982), 125-140; contra Gould (1973), 74-103. For a non-military example, see Lys. 1.25.

[19] Lendon (2005), *passim.*

[20] See, for instance, Hdt. 9.117.1-118.2; Xen. *Anab*. 1.6.2, 7.6.31, *Cav*. 8.13, *Cyrop*. 4.1.19, 5.1.28, 7.1.24-45, *Hell*. 7.4.26, *Mem*. 3.12.1-4; cf. Isoc. 14.18. For the problems caused by prisoners, see Section 4 below.

(ὅσοι αὐτῶν ἐζωγρήθησαν), ended up wearing their own chains (πέδας τε ἔχοντες τὰς ἐφέροντο αὐτοὶ).[21] Chains also feature in his account of an Athenian double victory in 506 BC at the Euripus Straits. The first engagement, fought on the Greek mainland, was against the Boeotians, from whom the Athenians took seven hundred prisoners. The second, after the Athenians crossed to Euboea later that same day, was against the Chalcidians, from whom an unspecified number of prisoners was taken. These men, together with the Boeotians taken in the first engagement, were then ransomed, and their fetters subsequently displayed on the acropolis.[22]

Thucydides also reports an engagement which took place in 447 BC, when Athenian-led forces were defeated by Boeotian exiles and their allies at Coronea, as a result of which some of their troops were killed (τοὺς μὲν διέφθειραν) and others taken prisoner (τοὺς δὲ ζῶντας ἔλαβον).[23] Later, he describes how, in 424 BC, during the Peloponnesian War, an amphibious assault led by Demosthenes against Sicyon was counterattacked by local forces, and in the subsequent pursuit, again, some men were killed (τοὺς μὲν ἀπέκτειναν) and others captured (τοὺς δὲ ζῶντας ἔλαβον).[24]

Xenophon, in addition to describing the occasions when the Ten Thousand set ambushes in order to gather intelligence from prisoners, also records incidents in which enemies were captured in open combat.[25] For example, he describes an incident which took place at the start of the Ten Thousand's retreat in which a Greek quick reaction force, made up of newly formed light infantry and cavalry, successful engaged the harassing Persians, killing many of the enemy infantry (τῶν τε πεζῶν ἀπέθανον πολλοὶ), and capturing some of

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[21] Hdt. 1.66.3-4; cf. Paus. 8.47.2-4.
[22] Hdt. 5.77.1-4.
[23] Thuc. 1.113.1-4; cf. Diod. Sic. 12.6; Paus. 1.27.5, 29.13; Plut. *Ages.* 19.2, *Per.* 18.1-3.
[24] Thuc. 4.101.3-4.
[25] Since they were retreating through unfamiliar territory, intelligence for the Greeks was at a premium, and the obvious source thereof was prisoners. See esp. Xen. *Anab.* 3.2.20, 4.1.22-5, 4.16-22, 6.17, 7.22; cf. *Cav.* 4.7-8, 7-12.15, *Cyrop.* 2.4.15-23, 6.1.25-6, 2.11, 3.5-12, also Hom. *Il.* 10.372-465. For further discussion, see Russell (1999) and (2013), 474-492.

their horsemen (τῶν ἱππέων… ζωοὶ ἐλήφθησαν).[26] Similarly, he relates how, as his army marched through Thessaly prior to the battle of Coronea in 394 BC, Agesilaus' engaged and defeated enemy cavalry, killing some enemy horsemen (οἱ μὲν ἀπέθνῃσκον αὐτῶν) and capturing others (οἱ δὲ καὶ ἡλίσκοντο).[27] Finally, he describes how, in 365 BC, the Eleans assaulted enemy troops who had taken refuge on a hilltop nearly Pylus, killing some (τοὺς μὲν αὐτοῦ ἀπέκτειναν) and capturing almost two hundred others (τοὺς δὲ καὶ ζῶντας ἔλαβον ἐγγὺς διακοσίων).[28]

Interestingly, the matter of fact way such incidents are reported suggest they are not particularly unusual, but they are, nevertheless, relatively rare, and rarer still are those which include a description of the surrender process.[29] Taking these in chronological order, the first is Herodotus' account of the Theban surrender at Thermopylae in 480 BC. There, the Thebans offer to surrender by approaching the Persians with their arms outstretched (χεῖράς… προέτεινον), and while some were killed before their offer was accepted, their surrender was nevertheless successful.[30]

Next, is Thucydides' description of the Theban surrender at Plataea in 431 BC. As Thucydides relates, after the failure of their attempted coup and having been assaulted, overrun and pursued, the surviving Thebans agreed to surrender (παραδοῦναι) both their arms and themselves (σφᾶς τε αὐτοὺς καὶ τὰ ὅπλα) to the Plataeans.[31] Further details then emerge during the 'trial' of the Plataeans, specifically that the Thebans had, apparently, offered to surrender by stretching out their hands (χεῖρας προϊσχομένους) and the Plataeans took them

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[26] Xen. *Anab*. 3.4.5. Given 3.5.14, these men too may have been captured for topographic intelligence.
[27] Xen. *Hell*. 4.3.3-9, see also *Cav*. 8.13.
[28] Xen. *Hell*. 7.4.26.
[29] This is sometimes omitted even when prisoners appear in historical narratives, as a result of which both their status and the circumstances of their capture remain unclear. See, for instance, Thuc. 5.35.4-5, 77.1, with more general discussion of prisoners in Plat. *Prot*. 326b-c, *Rep*. 5.468a-b.
[30] Hdt. 7.233.1-2; cf. Plut. *De Herodoti Malignitate* 33. The Greeks seem to have considered that this gesture transcended cultural boundaries. See, for instance, Hdt. 4.136.1; Xen. *Cyrop*. 4.2.17-19, 6.3.13.
[31] Thuc. 2.2.1-5.7.

prisoner (ζωγρήσαντες) as a result.[32] This description is then followed by Thucydides' account of the Spartan surrender on Sphacteria in 425 BC, which is especially notable, not least because it is the victorious Athenians who invite their defeated opponents to capitulate.[33] They, according to Thucydides, indicated their acceptance of this offer by dropping their shields (παρῆκαν τὰς ἀσπίδας) then raising and waving their hands (τὰς χεῖρας ἀνέσεισαν).[34]

Finally, two surrender accounts also appear in Thucydides' account of the Sicilian Campaign. In 413 BC, Demosthenes agreed, after the victorious Syracusans had opened a dialogue with his trapped and isolated contingent, to surrender his men (παραδοῦναι) on the condition that their lives be spared (μὴ ἀποθανεῖν).[35] Those men led by Nicias, however, were unprotected by such formal arrangements, and as a result, were not so lucky. They were caught crossing the Assinarus and massacred until Nicias surrendered himself to Gylippus (ἑαυτὸν παραδίδωσι) and asked the Spartan to stop the slaughter (παύσασθαι φονεύοντας). Thankfully, Gylippus agreed and immediately gave the order to take prisoners (ζωγρεῖν…ἐκέλευεν). Interestingly, however, as Thucydides reveals, not all prisoner taking was official: at the conclusion of hostilities, the number of prisoners who had become the illicit property of their captors exceeded those collected by the Syracusan state.[36]

Clearly then, there are important continuities between Homeric and historical depictions of surrender. Homeric protagonists appear to engage in a supplication ritual, a religiously governed procedure which features several successive phases. The process, as

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[32] Thuc. 3.66.1-3.
[33] Thuc. 4.37.1-38.5.
[34] Thuc. 4.38.1; cf. Pol. *Strat*. 4.9.3, also Plat. *Menex*. 242c-d. One of those shields (identified by the inscription 'The Athenians from the Lacedaemonians at Pylos', and currently located in the Agora Museum, Athens) has survived. Presumably, it formed part of the set displayed on the Painted Stoa described by Pausanias (1.15.4), where they served as a collective victory monument. Shields, naturally, suited this purpose admirably: the shield was the hoplite's defining item of equipment, and so its loss or surrender was an unquestionable marker of defeat (see for instance, Aristoph. *Birds* 1470-81; Xen. *Hell*. 1.2.3, also Thuc. 4.38.1, in which the Spartans indicate their willingness to surrender, in the first instance, by dropping their shields).
[35] Thuc. 7.81.1-82.3.
[36] Thuc. 7.84.1-87.6; cf. Dem. 20.42; Diod. Sic. 13.19-33; Plut. *Nic*. 27-29, also *IG* II^2 174. For the reflection of similar motifs, see Plut. *Tim*. 28.1-29.2; cf. Diod. Sic. 16.80.5.

Naiden sets out, is initiated by the defeated combatant. He approaches the victor and makes a symbolic gesture: stretching out his empty hands, and/or abasing himself before his opponent while making ritual physical contact with him. Then, the defeated combatant makes a request for mercy, usually sweetened with incentives such as the prospect of ransom. At this point, the victor considers the request, decides whether to accept or reject, and if his response negative, he must break any physical contact with the defeated combatant before killing him.[37]

This process is reflected to some extent in Herodotus and Thucydides: the gesture is present, as is the request and the response, but whether this makes surrender an actual act of supplication, a distinct type of supplication, an abbreviated form of supplication or a metaphorical supplication, remains opaque. Parker's opinion, however, is persuasive. He argues that acts of supplication fall into two categories, 'help me' and 'spare me', and since those who fall into the first have an absolute claim not to be harmed and the second do not, it seems likely that only the former qualify as actual supplicants, whereas the latter supplicate metaphorically in order to enhance the emotional appeal of their entreaties.[38] This distinction, according to Parker, is 'no mere linguistic quibble' since in means that 'the 'spare me' suppliant has no Zeus of Suppliants to invoke in his defence, and thus nothing like an absolute title to mercy.'[39]

In both epic and on the battlefields of classical Greece, then, it seems clear that in order to surrender, a defeated combatant generally had to make an offer to his victorious adversary. This evoked the language and symbols of supplication and was communicated by the abandonment of arms, the display of empty and outstretched hands, and, if possible, a

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[37] For discussion of this procedure, see esp. Naiden (2004), 71-91, (2006); Kelly (2014), 147-167; Parker (1983), 146, 181-186; contra Gould (1973), 74-103, whose view rejects this freedom to judge, and Philipson (1911), 272, who believes that killing a suppliant was forbidden.
[38] Parker (1983), 146, 181-186, and for a similar view, see Gould (1973), 74-103.
[39] Parker (1983), 182. See also Dayton (2006), 52-79; Kelly (2014), 147-167; Naiden (2006), esp. 135.

verbal entreaty.[40] The victor then had to decide whether or not to accept, and when making this choice, he was unconstrained both by the demands of piety, since his defeated opponent was not religiously protected, and empowered by 'τὰ νόμιμα τῶν Ἑλλήνων', that is the conventions of war,[41] since the Greeks took the view that the fate of the loser was determined by the winner.[42] The victor, then, was free to decide whether to accept or reject an offer of surrender. This freedom, however, was not exercised in a vacuum, and so next question to answer, then, is under what tactical conditions did Greeks attempt to surrender?

3. The Circumstances of Surrender

The best place to start is with those instances in which defeated Greeks surrendered successfully. These fall into three categories, namely siege warfare, naval operations, and land operations. In the first, despite the very real risk a siege might end in the massacre of defenders and the enslavement of their surviving dependents, successful surrenders are relatively plentiful.[43] For instance, in c.465 BC, when a dispute over mining and trading rights escalated into armed conflict and secession from the Delian League, Thasos was besieged by the Athenians, and although the Thasians stubbornly resisted for more than two years, they eventually negotiated relatively light terms of surrender with their imperial

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[40] For the use of similar symbols in the modern world see Cook (2006), 637-665; Holmes (2003), 360-393, and for their cross-cultural applicability in antiquity, see above, n.28.

[41] Thuc. 4.97.2, with additional discussion in Bederman (2001), 154-155, 174, 177; Lanni (2008), 469-489; Low (2007), 77-128; Mitchell (1997), 41, 44; Phillipson (1911), 28, 30, 32, 43, 58; Sheets (1994), 54-56, 62; cf. Herman (1990), 84; Koh (1997), p.2604.

[42] Aristot. *Pol.* 1.1255a; Xen. *Cyrop.* 3.3.45, 4.2.26, 7.5.73, *Hell.* 7.4.26. Once a surrender had been accepted, however, mistreatment was generally considered transgressive (see, for instance, Diod. Sic. 13.23.1-5, 30.18.2; Eur. *Heraclid.* 879-82, 928-74; Hdt. 1.165.1-67.4; On. 25.4-5; Plut. *Per.* 23.1-2; Thuc. 3.58.3; Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.32; cf. Thuc. 3.32.1-2). Nevertheless, even in such circumstances, the victor could still determine the fate of the vanquished. Consider esp. the killing of captives after the naval engagement at Leukimme in 435 BC (Thuc. 1.30.1-2), the fates of the Plataeans in 427 BC (Thuc. 2.71.1-78.4, 3.20.1-24.3, 52.1-68.5) and the Melians in 416 BC (Thuc. 5.116.3-4), as well as the apparent execution of those Athenians captured after Aegospotami, 405 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.31-2; cf. Plut. *Lys.* 9-11.6, 13.1, Paus. 9.32.9), all of which explain the desirability of terms (see esp. Thuc. 7.81.1-82.3). For further discussion, see Dayton (2003), 52-79; Ducrey (1986), 253-278; Karavites (1982), esp. 13-32; Kelly (2014), 147-167; Krentz (2002), 30-34; Lanni (2008), esp. 477-482; Naiden (2006), 171-218; Parker (1983), 146, 181-186; Philipson (1911), esp. 257-259; Sheets (1994), esp. 57-58; van Wees (2011), 69-110.

[43] See esp. van Wees (2011), 69-110, also Panagopoulos (1978), *passim*, with n.1 above.

hegemon.[44] Similarly, when Samos revolted in 440 BC, the Samians withstood siege for eight months before they also surrendered successfully on relatively light terms.[45] Nearly ten years later, Potidaea endured a similar fate: the Potidaeans revolted in 432 BC, but after they had been reduced to eating each other, they offered to surrender to the Athenians 430 BC, and since they were also suffering, particularly from exposure, plague, and the endless haemorrhaging of blood and treasure, they were glad to accept.[46] Finally, at the end of the Peloponnesian War, Athens was besieged by land and sea, and after the Athenians began to starve, despite all the brutalities they had perpetrated during the long war, they too successfully negotiated terms of surrender.[47] Surrenders were also possible during operations against forts and other fortified positions. Of course, given the nature of operations against fixed positions, the garrisons defending such places were often massacred,[48] but on some occasions, such as during the storming of the forts on Plemmyrium during the Sicilian campaign, prisoners were taken.[49]

Successful surrenders are also relatively common in the second category, namely naval operations.[50] Thucydides considered a sea battle that was not followed by pursuit or the capture of prisoners to be anomalous, and it is easy to see why.[51] After Phormio's famous victory off Patras in 429 BC, the Athenians captured twelve Peloponnesian ships along with

[44] Thuc. 1.100.2-101.3.
[45] Thuc. 1.115.2-117.1, also Aristoph. *Wasps*. 283; Diod Sic. 12.27-8; Plut. *Per*. 24.1-28.3.
[46] Thuc. 2.70.1-4. For the siege itself, see 1.57.1-67.1, 2.58.1-3, 3.17.2-3.
[47] Xen. *Hell*. 2.2.10-23.
[48] See, for instance, Notium, 428/7 BC (Thuc. 3.34.1-4); Torone, 424/3 BC (Thuc. 4.110.1-116.3); Labdalum, 414 BC (Thuc. 7.3.4-5).
[49] For examples, see Megara, 424 BC (Thuc. 4.69.1-4); Torone, 422 BC (Thuc. 5.3.1-2); Plemmyrium, 413 BC (Thuc. 7.22.1-24.3); Polichnē, 411 BC (Thuc. 8.23.6); Methymna, 406 BC (Xen. *Hell*. 1.6.12-15); Cromnus, 365 BC (Xen. *Hell*. 7.4.20-5, 27).
[50] See, for instance, Hdt. 6.93.1, 8.4.1-21.2; Thuc. 1.55.1, 2.83.1-84.5, 4.37.1-38.5, Xen. *Hell*. 1.5.11-14, 6.15-38, although massacres are common too, for which see Hdt. 8.75.1-97.2; Thuc. 2.86.1-92.7, 7.52.1-54.4, 8.95.1-7, with Hanson (2005), 235-269; van Wees (2011), 69-110. Quite why some crews are taken prisoner and others are killed remains opaque: the mood of the victors, the demeanour and status of the defeated, the nature and course of the conflict, and the prevailing logistic situation all no doubt play a part, but sadly, the sources are largely silent about such factors.
[51] Thuc. 7.34.6.

most of their crews.[52] In 409 BC, an Athenian squadron at Methymna intercepted twenty-five Syracusan ships and captured four of them along with their crews.[53] In 407 BC, the Athenians were defeated by Lysander's fleet at Notium and lost fifteen ships, and whilst most of the crews escaped, others were captured.[54] The Peloponnesian War, of course, produced other similar incidents, as did the triangular conflicts of the fourth century.[55] For instance, in 377 BC, in a minor action off Pagasae, the Spartans engaged a two Theban triremes and captured both along with their crews.[56] Finally, in 373 BC, on Corcyra, Iphicrates' superbly drilled fleet caught twelve Syracusan triremes with their crews on shore, and captured both ships and men.[57]

How then, do these incidents compare with those in the third category, namely operations on land? Sadly, most of the evidence is presented without supporting narrative,[58] but where sufficient detail is provided, it is clear that successful surrenders in all three categories share a common denominator, namely, when Greeks allow an enemy to surrender, they do so only when they exercise control of the tactical situation, and as a result, are able to accept a surrender without endangering themselves. This is obvious in siege warfare, where the victor surrounds and controls the physical location, and thus the people therein,[59] and similarly, in naval warfare, since a crew is easily contained and dominated whilst aboard ship and helpless when ashore, since they typically lack the weapons required for close combat.[60] This common denominator, however, is less obvious in those surrenders on land already

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[52] Thuc. 2.83.1-84.5.
[53] Xen. *Hell*. 1.2.11-14.
[54] Xen. *Hell*. 1.5.11-14.
[55] Consider, for example, the captures at Andros, in 406 BC (Xen. *Hell*. 1.5.18-19), and in the same year, Mytilene (Xen. *Hell*. 6.15-38).
[56] Xen. *Hell*. 5.4.56-7.
[57] Xen. *Hell*. 6.2.32-36.
[58] See Section 2 above.
[59] For this principle in medieval warfare, see Gillingham (2012), 55-72.
[60] See, for example, Cyzicus, 410 BC (Xen. *Hell*. 1.1.11-18); cf. Xen. *Hell*. 1.2.1, which describes how ships' crews must be armed before they can be expected to fight as light infantry.

discussed, but where there is sufficient narrative to sustain analysis, its presence is still detectable.

Consider, for instance, the Theban surrender at Thermopylae in 480 BC.[61] Whilst not strictly an example of Greek battlefield practice, the incident remains instructive, especially because the Greeks considered both sides bound by the same principles.[62] Of course, the initial killing of the surrendering Thebans may still reflect different cultural expectations,[63] but it seems more likely that this was the product of the tactically confused and emotionally charged circumstances in which the surrender took place: the Persians were still facing organised resistance from the Spartans, and they may have been reluctant to spare their enemy after suffering so many casualties assaulting the pass.[64] What is clear, however, is that the Persians exercised tactical control over the battlefield: once they had infiltrated forces to the rear of the Greek position via the Anopean Path, they had, effectively, surrounded the Greeks.[65]

The same is true of the Theban surrender at Plataea in 431 BC. Leaving aside isolated stragglers, the main concentration of Thebans was safely contained within a large building. The victors, then, exercised tactical control over the situation and as such, they were able to accept the surrender of the Thebans without exposing themselves to further risk.[66] Similarly, when the Spartans surrendered on Sphacteria in 425 BC, they did so on an island effectively isolated by Athenian naval dominance and, in addition, they had been corralled onto a small part of that island and were on the verge of total defeat and massacre. These circumstances granted the Athenians such complete tactical control that they were able to delay their final

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[61] Hdt. 7.233.1-2.

[62] For collected evidence, see esp. Hunt (2010), 72-107; Low (2007), 77-128.

[63] Consider, for instance, the fate of the surrendering Macedonians at Cynoscephalae (197 BC), whose symbolism, according to Polybius, was initially lost on the victorious Romans (Polyb. 18.24-27).

[64] Hdt. 7.202.1-238.2, with additional evidence in ns.124-5 below.

[65] Hdt. 7.213.1-223.4.

[66] Thuc. 2.4.5-8.

assault in order to initiate the parley that eventually led to the Spartan surrender.[67] Comparable conditions prevailed on Sicily in 413 BC. Demosthenes' men were fixed in position and trapped within a walled enclosure surrounded by enemy forces. This, again, granted the Syracusans such complete tactical control that they too were able pause their operations and initiate the parley that led to Demosthenes' surrender.[68]

The situation, however, that led to the eventual capture of Nicias and his men was more fluid. They were trapped at the crossing of the Assinarus and were in the process of being massacred when Nicias initiated a parley with his counterpart, Gylippus, who was able to stop the killing and get the men under his command to take prisoners. Again, the incident is instructive. The Athenians and their allies had lost their capacity for resistance and were trapped in a location controlled by the victors. This probably accounts for their ability to eventually surrender, yet, it is clear nevertheless, that for many Syracusans, faced by chaos and confusion, their first instinct was not to capture, but to kill.[69]

Finally, similar circumstances pertain to both cavalry captures described by Xenophon. The first, recounted by Xenophon in his *Anabasis*, occurred at the start of the long march when the Greeks ambushed harassing light infantry and cavalry. As Xenophon relates, some of these troops fled into a wadi, and while the infantry were killed during the pursuit, no less than eighteen cavalrymen were captured.[70] Again, although it is clear that the Greeks did not control the entire battlefield, they did control the situation in the wadi, and as such, they could take prisoners.[71] The second took place during the run up to the battle of Coronea in 394 BC, when Agesilaos had his horsemen counter-attacked harassing enemy cavalry. Some of these men, according to Xenophon, were caught with their horses half-turned, and

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[67] Thuc. 4.37.1-38.5.

[68] Thuc. 7.81.1-82.3.

[69] Thuc. 7.84.1-87.6.

[70] Xen. *Anab.* 3.4.4-5; cf. 1.6.2, which details deliberation on the subject of prisoner taking.

[71] Tellingly, none of the infantry survived the encounter, perhaps because they were worth less to the Greeks than the cavalrymen (consider esp. Xen. *Cyrop.* 4.1.11, and for discussion of ransom, see below, n.119). This, certainly, was the case in the medieval period, for which see Gillingham (2012), 55-72.

they were captured rather than killed.[72] Once more, while the victors did not control the entire battlefield, tellingly, the capture occurred very near to Agesilaos' army, so prisoners could be taken in relative safety and thereafter easily secured.[73]

These episodes suggest, therefore, that the Greeks were sometimes willing to accept a surrender and take prisoners, but only when they are able to do so without unduly risking themselves in the process.[74] The incidents discussed above, however, are in many respects idiosyncratic, most pertinently because they do not feature the most dangerous phase of battle, namely the point at which organised combat gives way to the pursuit and slaughter of an atomised and rapidly dispersing enemy force.[75]

4. The Purpose of Pursuit

This phase of battle was not only the most dangerous phase for defeated troops, it was also the most obvious situation in which they might attempt to surrender.[76] This, of course, was impossible during close quarters battle between opposing phalanxes, and unsurprisingly, there is no evidence of capitulation in combat.[77] When, however, one phalanx broke another, and the defeated side turned to flee, then, according to Plato at least, all a man had to was throw down his arms and supplicate his pursuers.[78] The pursuit phase of battle, however, is a distinct tactical context, and this raises an obvious question: is capitulation in such circumstances likely or even possible?

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[72] Xen. *Ages*. 2.2-5; cf. Xen. *Cyrop*. 1.4.21.

[73] It is interesting that Agesilaos (Xen. *Ages*. 2.3) explicitly ordered his troops to pursue determinedly and not to let the enemy rally, but, in these circumstances at least, such instructions did not preclude the taking of prisoners.

[74] Sometimes, however, they were not so inclined, as the Spartan massacre described in Xen. *Hell*. 4.4.11-12 reveals. See also Section 5 below.

[75] For the dispersal of defeated combatants during pursuit, see Plut. *Pel*. 32.7; Xen. *Hell*. 5.3.3-7, with Vaughn (1991), 8-62, also Hanson (2000), 171-184, 197-209.

[76] See Section 1 above.

[77] Hoplite combat, of course, is subject to competing interpretations, but close-quarters battle is common to all. For a summary of the debate, see Crowley (2012), esp. 54.

[78] Plat. *Apol*. 39a; cf. Xen. *Cyrop*. 4.2.21.

The first step in answering this question is to consider why, and indeed, to what extent the Greeks pursued their defeated enemies. Hanson, for instance, believes that the Greeks found the slaughter of defeated men unpalatable, and Ober, albeit for less moralistic reasons, argues that their pursuits were generally limited.[79] Support for this view is provided by Thucydides' account of 1st Mantineia, 418 BC: in a rare authorial interjection, he observes that while the Spartans fight long and hard, once the enemy break, their pursuits are limited in both time and distance (βραχείας καὶ οὐκ ἐπὶ πολὺ τὰς διώξεις).[80] Other evidence bolsters Ober's opinion,[81] but as Krentz observes, this also relates to the Spartans, and as he concludes, their concerns are not moral but tactical, that is to say, they preferred to maintain concentration of force and the mutual protection afforded by formation rather than risk their troops in a dispersed and scattered pursuit of beaten enemies.[82]

Avoiding this risk, of course, is not the only advantage of such a policy. For hoplites, rout is more dangerous than battle, and so their best hope of salvation was victory. As Krentz notes, however, the Spartan policy of limited pursuit modifies this battlefield dynamic, allowing them to face opponents who fight in the knowledge that flight is safer than combat.[83] The temptation to run would also be augmented by another deliberate Spartan practice, namely their slow and orderly advance, and it is unsurprising to see, when facing Spartans, that many opponents fled at or even before first contact.[84] The limited pursuit, then, was a tactically determined Spartan idiosyncrasy, and Krentz is correct to conclude that Thucydides' observation implies that, for the rest of the Greeks, an unlimited pursuit was

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[79] Hanson, (1995), 219-286; Ober (1996), 53-71, with similar views in Hammond (1978), 136-140.
[80] Thuc. 5.73.4; cf. Hdt. 9.77.1-2.
[81] See, for example, Hdt. 9.77.1-2; Paus. 4.8.11; Thuc. 5.41.2.
[82] Paus. 4.8.11, with Krentz (2002), 30-31. See also Dayton (2003), 52-79. For dispersal during pursuit, see n.75 above.
[83] Krentz (2002), 30. See also Plut. *Lyc*. 22.5.
[84] See, for instance, Plut. *Ages*. 33.3-8; Thuc. 5.10.1-9, 5.72.1-4; Xen. *Hell*. 3.2.17, 4.3.17, 7.1.28-31. For more extended discussion of Sparta's use of military psychology, see Millender (2016), 162-194, also Konijnendijk (2017), esp. 178-81.

actually the norm.[85] Part of the explanation for this is what van Wees describes as the ethic of 'conspicuous destruction'. As he argues, instead of exercising restraint, the Greeks often slaughtered their enemies not just because they derived personal and collective *kleos* from such killing, but also because a high body count deterred future aggression and reduced a rival state's capacity for combat.[86]

Such motives, no doubt, encouraged the Greeks to pursue their enemies, but they also pursued for more immediate reasons. Casualties were relatively light during the combat phase of battle, and that meant that the core strength of a hostile army remained relatively undiminished as it quit the field.[87] What that army lost, however, was its will to fight and its tactical order (εὐταξία).[88] This deficit, of course, was a mere function of time and morale, that is to say, if a beaten enemy army was allowed sufficient time, it might regain its will to fight, reform its ranks and re-engage its ostensibly victorious opponent.

Greek troops, admittedly, were generally untrained amateurs, but many had years of practical experience, and their ability to reform and re-engage was far more than a theoretical possibility.[89] For instance, at Solygeia in 425 BC, the Corinthian left wing was initially defeated by the Athenian right, but it was allowed to retire upon high ground, whereupon it reformed, re-engaged, routed and then pursued its initially victorious opponents all the way to

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[85] See esp. Xen. *Anab.* 3.4.4, *Cav.* 3.11; Thuc. 5.41.2, 6.70.3, with Krentz (1985), 13-20, (2002), 30, also Dayton (2003), 52-79; Rawlings (2007), 81-103; cf. Philipson (1911), 234-268. For examples of merciless pursuits, see Marathon, 490 BC (Hdt. 6.109.1-115.1), Plataea, 479 BC (Hdt. 9.68.1-70.5), Delphi, 480 BC (Hdt. 8.35.1-39.2), Aetolia, 427/6 BC (Thuc. 3.94.1-98.5), Ambracia, 426 BC (Thuc. 3.110-113.6), Delion, 424 BC (Thuc. 4.89.1-101.2; cf. Plat. *Symp.* 221a-c), Abydus, 409 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.15-17), Haliartus, 395 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.19-20), Cremaste, 389 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.35-39), Olynthus, 381 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.3-7); Cynoscephalae, 364 BC (Plut. *Pel.* 32.7). Consider also Xen. *Cyrop.* 1.4.23, 3.3.65-66, 5.4.1-9.

[86] Hdt. 6.75.1-84.3, 7.148.1-4; Paus. 2.20.8-10; van Wees (2004), 118-38, (2011), 69-110. Interestingly, van Wees does not feel this imperative precludes capture ((2004), 135, with some support in n.73 above). See also Lanni (2008), 480; Kelly (2014), 157; Naiden (2006), 136; Worley (1994), esp. 83-122. For this principle in modern warfare, see Wallace (2012), 955-981.

[87] Krentz (1985), 13-20.

[88] As is the case in the modern world: as both Wesbrook and Cook observe, battles are primary won by breaking the enemy's will to fight rather than by annihilation. See Cook (2006), 637-665; Wesbrook (1980), 244-78, also Ferguson (2004), 148-192. For the importance of εὐταξία, see Crowley (2012), 49-68.

[89] See esp. Xen. *Hunt.* 12.5-6, also *Anab.* 6.5.28. For Greek military training, or the lack thereof, see Crowley (2012), 2-3, 25-26, 34, 50, 70, 81, 117, 123-124, with extended discussion in Konijnendijk (2018).

their ships.[90] Similarly, during the Sicilian Campaign, as the Athenians were assaulting the Syracusan counter-wall, they engaged and defeated a Syracusan force but effective pursuit was prevented by proximity of Syracuse and the bold action of the Syracusan cavalry. The defeated Syracusans then reformed opposite the ostensibly victorious Athenians (ἀντετάξαντο πρὸς τοὺς κατὰ σφᾶς Ἀθηναίους) and despatched an assault force against Athenian fortifications on Epipolae, which Nicias held only after he employed the desperate expedient of setting fire to his own timber supplies and siege engines (τὰς μηχανὰς).[91] Even more famously, at Coroneia in 394 BC, the Spartans allowed the defeated Thebans the opportunity to re-dress their ranks and re-engage. Worse still, since they had put themselves between their enemies and safety, they suffered the humiliation of having their apparently defeated opponents smash through their ranks, almost killing their king, Agesilaos, in the process.[92]

Such incidents were unusual, but they unequivocally demonstrate that a beaten army remains a threat even after it quits the field.[93] Consequently, since no victorious army wishes to re-fight a battle it has just won, the safest and most sensible thing to do when an enemy force breaks is to ensure it is never given the opportunity to reform.[94] Of course, keeping a beaten enemy under pressure, as the concerns of the Spartans demonstrate, was not primarily a job for hoplites.[95] Certainly, hoplites could be and were used in pursuit,[96] but this task was more suited to cavalry and light infantry whose tactical mobility left them less reliant on

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[90] Thuc. 4.42.1-44.6. It seems that the Athenian right may also have reformed after its rout and continued to play a part in this confused engagement but, unfortunately, this is not entirely clear from Thucydides' condensed narrative.

[91] Thuc. 6.101.1-102.4. For a similar incident during the battle of Syracuse, 415 BC, see 6.67.1-70.4.

[92] Xen. *Hell*. 4.3.13-21.

[93] Consider also Thuc. 6.101.1-6; Xen. *Anab*. 6.5.28, 7.3.47, *Hell*. 3.5.19-20, 6.4.8-15, *Hunt*. 12.5-6, with further discussion in Dayton (2003), 52-79.

[94] As Hammond (1978), 140, observes, successful pursuits rely on the speed of the pursuers.

[95] See above, n.82, with Xen. *Cyrop*. 4.3.5-23; Anderson (1970), 141-164; Bugh (1988), 65-66, pp.79-107; Spence (1993), 157-163.

[96] Xen. *Hell*. 1.2.16, *Hunt*. 12.3-4, with additional discussion in Dayton (2003), 52-79.

εὐταξία.[97] Such troops, when deployed, generally played a subordinate role in combat, guarding the flanks and rear of friendly forces or attacking those of the enemy.[98] These tasks, admittedly, were important, but mobile forces, particularly cavalry, contributed most at the conclusion of combat, when the enemy turned to flee.[99]

Xenophon, himself a cavalryman, is particularly instructive on the role of the cavalry during pursuit. In his *Anabasis*, he emphasises how worried the Greeks were by their initial lack of cavalry, since, without horsemen, they would not be able to survive defeat (ἡττηθέντων δὲ αὐτῶν οὐδεὶς ἂν λειφθείη), and if they won, they would not be able to kill any of the enemy (νικῶντες μὲν οὐδένα ἂν κατακάνοιεν).[100] What he means by this, if there can be any doubt, is confirmed elsewhere, particularly in his *Memorabilia* and, of course, his *Cavalry Commander*: during pursuit, the role of cavalry is to ride down and kill as many men as possible (τοῦ βάλλειν ὡς πλείστους ἀπὸ τῶν ἵππων ἐπιμέλειάν τινα ποιήσει),[101] and by doing so, to exploit a victory to the fullest extent by inflicting maximum losses on the enemy (βλάπτειν δὲ τοὺς πολεμίους μάλιστα δύναιντ' ἄν).[102] To be able to do this, Xenophon stresses that cavalrymen should know their horses,[103] how long it takes to ride down a running man,[104] and since men flee into broken ground,[105] how to traverse any kind of terrain.[106]

The pursuit, therefore, was a tactical environment determined by the victor's need to keep the defeated enemy running, and this objective was primarily achieved by the enemy's

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[97] See above, n.88.
[98] See, for instance, Thuc. 4.89.1-101.1 (Delium, 424 BC) and 5.66.1–74.3 (1st Mantineia, 418 BC).
[99] Spence (1993), esp. 151-163; Worley (1994), esp. 83-122.
[100] Xen. *Anab.* 3.1.2.
[101] Xen. *Mem.* 3.3.7.
[102] Xen. *Cav.* 1.6, also *Mem.* 3.3.7, with additional discussion in Spence (1993), esp. 157-163; Worley (1994), esp. 83-122.
[103] Xen. *Cav.* 5.4.
[104] Xen. *Cav.* 5.1.
[105] Xen. *Anab.* 3.4.24, also Thuc. 7.5-6.
[106] Xen. *Cav.* 1.18-20, 2.1, 2.9, 4.4, 6.5, 8.3, with Spence (1993), esp. pp.48-49.

fear of pursuing light infantry and cavalry.[107] In such circumstances, then, would a pursuer be willing to pause long enough to take prisoners? Certainly, prisoner taking during the pursuit was not impossible, but prisoners were a significant drain on the resources of a victorious army: they had to be placed in a secure area, fed, watered, and guarded.[108] Worse still, they were an ongoing security threat to their captors, and as such, they constituted an impediment to further combat operations.[109] Xenophon describes how, in 410 BC, the Athenians captured four Syracusan ships with their crews off the coast of Methymna on Lesbos. They then had to transfer their these prisoners all the way back to Athens and where they were subsequently imprisoned in quarries in the Piraeus, but, embarrassingly, after all this effort, the captured Syracusans tunnelled their way out and escaped.[110] He also relates how, in 377 BC, the Spartans at Oreus captured around three hundred Theban sailors in a minor naval engagement. These men were imprisoned on the acropolis, but they were improperly guarded, and they not only escaped, they seized the acropolis, after which, to add insult to injury, the whole city then revolted.[111]

Prisoners, then, are an annoyance, and during operations on land, transferring them from the place they were captured back to the location of friendly forces presented their

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[107] Xen. *Cyrop.* 2.1.9, *Ages.* 2.2-5.
[108] Arrington (2015), 103, 107 argues that the relief crowning the Athenian casualty list commemorating the dead of the Corinthian War (currently in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens, accession no. 2744) depicts prisoner taking. Certainly, his interpretation may be correct, but the defeated hoplite's retention of his shield argues against this, as does the tendency to show cavalry killing hoplites (for which see Arrington (2010); Low (2002), 102-22). Other evidence is just as ambiguous. for instance, the scene which appears on a red-figure calyx-krater by the Painter of the Berlin Dancing Girl (Davis Museum at Wellesley College, accession no. 1976.42), which shows a Spartan hoplite confronting a charging cavalryman, may depict the moment before he is taken prisoner or a fight to the death which, at the moment of depiction, remains undecided.
[109] Xen. *Anab.* 4.1.12-14, *Cyrop.* 4.4.1, 6-13, *Hell.* 1.6.15-38, 3.2.3-4, 4.5.6; Thuc. 1.29.1-30.1, 1.45.1-55.2; cf. Ps. Xen. *Const. Ath.* 3.4-5, with Tritle (2013), 279-293; van Wees (2011), 69-110. For similar concerns in the more modern world, see Best (1980), esp. 125-126; Bourke (1999), 171-214; Cook (2006), 637-665; Ferguson (1998), 367-394, (2004), 148-192; Grauer (2014), 622-655; Grossman (1996), 203-213; Holmes (2003), 360-393. This fact also explains the killing of French prisoners at Agincourt, for which see Keegan (1976), 85-86, 107-112.
[110] Xen. *Hell.* 1.2.112-14.
[111] Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.56-57.

captors with obvious problems.[112] Unfortunately, however, how this potentially dangerous procedure was achieved in antiquity remains opaque. Diodorus imagines Gelon's cavalrymen, in 480 BC, capturing over ten thousand Carthaginians, with each trooper taking as many of the enemy as he could drive before him (τοσούτους ἀνῆγον αἰχμαλώτους ὅσους ἕκαστος ἄγειν ἠδύνατο).[113] Prisoners, however, are rarely as docile as those imagined by Diodorus,[114] and leaving aside the historicity of this incident, it is clear that prisoner handling was a potentially dangerous activity, and as such, it was one that required the participation of significant numbers of pursuers if it was to be conducted in relative safety.[115] If then, men stopped to take and escort prisoners to the rear, they not only put themselves at unnecessary risk, they also reduced the force and momentum of the pursuit. Furthermore, since both of these variables are inversely linked, any increase in prisoner taking progressively weakened the pursuit and increased the risk of counter-attack.[116] Thus, whilst pursuit and slaughter were mutually reinforcing activities, pursuit and prisoner taking were functionally incompatible.

5. Kill or Capture

There were, nevertheless, some incentives to take prisoners, the most obvious of which was the prospect of financial reward.[117] This, however, was not quite as tempting as it might seem. As Rosivach argues, the fact that Greek men made problematic slaves depressed their market value,[118] and while ransom was potentially profitable, it was more a medium to

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[112] The Spartans captured on Sphacteria, for instance, had to be split up into batches and distributed among various Athenian ships, for which see Thuc. 4.37.1-38.5; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.20-5, 27.

[113] Diod. Sic. 11.21.1-3, 25.1-5; cf. Xen. *Cyrop*. 5.3.1.

[114] For an obvious exception, consider the surrender of Iraqi soldiers to coalition forces in 1991.

[115] Wylie (1986), 125-41, suggests a hoplite could escort one prisoner, and a cavalryman three, and these low ratios accord well with the escort of Greek art's most popular prisoner, Silenus (for which see, for instance, Beazley 6908; 9990; 202854; 303453). Modern firearms, of course, increase efficiency: as Ferguson (2004), 148-192 notes, in modern warfare one or two soldiers would be expected to escort as many as ten prisoners.

[116] For this principle in modern warfare, see Cook (2006), 637-665; Ferguson (2004), 148-192.

[117] For the operation of incentives in modern warfare, see Ferguson (2004), 148-192.

[118] Rosivach (1999), 129-157. In some circumstances, however, the sale of prisoners could provide a welcome bonus for the victors, see, for instance, Xen. *Anab*. 5.3.4, also 4.1.12.

long term investment rather than one which offered immediate gain.[119] Prisoners were also a potential source of intelligence, although the value of their knowledge peaked prior to battle and declined sharply after the conclusion of combat.[120] More enduring, however, was the strategic value of prisoners: after the battle of Sybota, 433 BC, the Corinthians cultivated two hundred and fifty captured Corcyraeans for later use as a fifth column,[121] and after Sphacteria, 425 BC, the Athenians threatened to kill their Spartan prisoners if Attica were invaded, and thereafter used those same individuals in the negotiations that led up to the Peace of Nicias.[122]

Such strategic concerns, however, were remote from the immediate issues facing pursuers.[123] They, of course, were cutting down men who had, prior thereto, been killing their comrades and attempting to kill them, and even if they were willing and able to stop killing under such circumstances,[124] they were often disinclined to do so because of their desire for revenge and hatred of their enemy.[125] Even more pressing were concerns about their own safety, which, as they knew, was best preserved by maintaining the pace of the pursuit.[126] This, as discussed, was directly threatened by prisoner taking, and if, therefore, pursuers were faced with the choice of compromising their safety in order to capture enemy combatants, or

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[119] See, for example, Aeschin. 2.100; Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* 1134b21-2; Dem. 18.268, 19.166-71, 20.42, 53.6-11, 57.18-19; Hdt. 5.77.1-4, 6.79.1; Is. 5.43; Justin 9.4.1-10; Lys. 12.20, 19.59, 20.24-5; Paus. 9.15.4; Thuc. 3.70.1, 4.69.3, 6.5.3; Xen. *Hell.* 6.2.35-6, with additional evidence and discussion in Ducrey (1986), 233-251; Kelly (1970), 127-131; Rosivach (1999), 129-157; Sternberg (2006), 42-75; van Wees (2004), 145-150.

[120] See above, n.25.

[121] Thuc. 1.55.1.

[122] For the strategic use of prisoners (incl. those captured on Sphacteria) as hostages or in prisoner exchanges, see Thuc. 2.103.1, 4.117.1-119.3, 5.3.4, 18.7, 21.1, 35.5, 77.1; Xen. *Cyrop.* 3.2.10-13, 4.4.1, 6-13; Kelly (1970), 127-131; Panagopoulos (1978), *passim*; Pritchett (1991), 297-299; Rosivach (1999), 129-157.

[123] For this situation in modern warfare, see Ferguson (2004), 148-192.

[124] Tyrt. fr. 11.17-18; Xen. *Hiero* 2.15-16; cf. Thuc. 4.130.6, also Cook (2006), 637-665; Ferguson (1998), 367-394, (2004), 148-192; Grauer (2014), 622-655; Halsall (2003), 211; Holmes (2003), 360-393; Keegan (1976), 46-54; Konstan (2001), 75-104; Parker (1983), 184; Tritle (2013), 279-293. According to Holmes (2003), 360-393, in modern close combat, only half of those who try to surrender will survive.

[125] Consider, for example, the killings that took place after the battle of Sybota, 433 BC (Thuc. 1.45.1-55.2) and the night assault on Epipolae, 413 BC (Thuc. 7.43.2-45.2), as well as the desire of the Syracusans not to let the Athenian expeditionary force escape. For further discussion, see Ducrey (1986), 233-251.

[126] For the entirely reasonable fear of dying in the moment of victory, see Thuc. 7.81.5. Hence, as Cook (2006), 637-665, observes, modern soldiers generally refuse to take prisoners until victory is certain, something also reflected in Xen. *Cyrop.* 4.2.24-28.

safeguarding their safety by slaughtering them without mercy, it seems reasonable to conclude they would choose to kill rather than capture.[127]

Certainly, the evidence suggests that once the pursuit was underway, both sides operated on the assumption that surrender was no longer a realistic option. When ranks broke, and men turned to flee, they often entered a state of blind panic. Thucydides describes men trampling each other in their haste to escape the victorious Spartans at 1st Mantineia in 418 BC.[128] He describes men leaping from cliffs to escape the rampaging Syracusans after the failed night assault on Epipolae in 413 BC, and with good reason, since every straggler caught when the sun came up was ridden down by cavalry and killed.[129] Similarly, Xenophon, in his account of the Corinthian War, describes a stampede so severe that men not only climbed fortifications and leapt to their deaths, others were trampled and died by suffocation.[130] Other authors describe defeated men running in headlong panic, and a wide convergence of evidence confirms that, as the desire to escape overrode all else, men abandoned their shields in order to facilitate their uncontrolled flight.[131]

The reason for such panic, of course, is simple: fleeing men expected to be killed if they were caught.[132] According to Xenophon, chasing and killing the enemy, was, for the pursuers, a source of almost indescribable pleasure (οὐ ῥᾴδιον εἰπεῖν ὅσην… ἡδονὴν), a task they could take pride in (ὡς δὲ γαυροῦνται ἐπὶ τῷ ἔργῳ), and one that bestowed a shining reputation (δόξαν λαμπρὰν) on participants. Revealingly, Xenophon, imagines men deriving so much social capital from killing their enemies that they would exaggerate their personal

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[127] Xen. *Cyrop*. 4.2.24-28, *Hunt*. 12.5-6. For the operation of this principle in modern warfare, see Section 1 generally, also n.126 above.

[128] Thuc. 5.72.1-4.

[129] Thuc. 7.43.2-45.2. See also, 2.4.4, which describes fleeing Thebans leaping to their deaths at Plataea in 431 BC.

[130] Xen. *Hell*. 4.4.11-12.

[131] Xen. *Hell*. 1.2.3, also Alc. fr. 428a; Archil. fr. 5; Aristoph. *Birds* 1470-80, *Thes*. 825; Hdt. 5.95.1; Lys. 9.1, 8-9, 12, 21-5, 30; Plat. *Symp*. 221b; Plut. *Nic*. 21.9; Thuc. 7.45.2.

[132] Archil. fr. 59, 101; Hdt. 4.136.1; *IG* II² 6217; Plat. *Lach*. 182a-b, *Laws* 4.706c-707a, *Symp*. 221b; Tyrt. 10.21-7, 11.17-20; Xen. *Ages*. 1.32, *Anab*. 6.5.23, *Cyrop*. 3.3.45, 4.2.39, *Hell*. 5.3.2; cf. Plat. *Prot*. 326b-c, *Rep*. 5.468a-b. It is revealing that after Coronea in 394 BC, enemy survivors sought refuge as suppliants in a nearby temple rather than surrender to the victorious Spartans (see Xen. *Hell*. 4.3.20; *Ages*. 11.1).

tallies beyond the total number actually killed (πλέονας φάσκοντες ἀπεκτονέναι ἢ ὅσοι ἂν τῷ ὄντι ἀποθάνωσιν).[133]

In such circumstances, men ran to survive, and since the primary point of pursuit was to deny them pause, they were often pursued for as long and as far as possible, sometimes all the way to friendly territory or until night covered their escape. Those who were cut off or trapped by terrain were, as van Wees observes, often annihilated.[134] For example, after their defeat in the Battle of the Oldest and Youngest in 458 BC, the Corinthians, mocked by their fellow citizens, re-engaged the Athenians and were defeated for a second time. Worse still, during the subsequent pursuit, a sizeable contingent blundered into a field surrounded by a large ditch, at which point the Athenians blocked their escape, surrounded their position with light infantry and stoned all the trapped Corinthians to death.[135]

Even more disturbingly, the Greeks had ugly penchant for killing trapped enemies with fire. For instance, in 431 BC, when many of the Theban infiltrators had fled into a large building, the first thought of their Plataean pursuers was to burn the place down with their enemies inside.[136] Mercifully, they did not, but in c.494 BC, those Argives who had been defeated by the Spartans at Sepeia and who had subsequently sought safety in sacred space,[137] namely a grove dedicated to Argos, were not so lucky. According to Herodotus, the Spartans, who had surrounded the Argive position, at first killed those they tempted out by falsely declaring their ransom had been paid, but then, after this disgraceful ruse had been uncovered, they compounded their transgressions by burning the grove down around the

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[133] Xen. *Hiero* 2.15-16. See also *IG* I³ 1353/ML 51/Fornara 101/Tod 41, with additional discussion in Crowley (2014), 105-130. For such imperatives in the modern world, see Bourke (1999), 13-43.

[134] van Wees (2011), 69-110. For attempts to cut off an enemy's retreat, see Marathon, 490 BC (6.109.1-115.1), Syracuse, 414 BC (Thuc. 6.101.1-6), Sicily, 413 BC (Thuc. 7.78.1- 87.6).

[135] Thuc. 1.105.3-106.2; cf. Diod. Sic. 11.79; Lys. 2.48-53.

[136] Thuc. 2.4.4-7.

[137] Seeking safety in sacred space was a poor second to that offered by friendly or home territory. It entailed being trapped by victorious forces, who could then determine the fate of their defeated adversaries. Of course, Agesilaos, after the battle of the Coronea in 394 BC, allowed 80 Theban hoplites who had reached the temple of Athena safe conduct (Xen. *Hell*. 3.4.20, also *Ages*. 11.1, with n.132 above). Piety, then, offered some protection but this was not always the case. For further discussion, see Naiden (2004), 71-91, (2006); Nevin (2017); Parker (1983), 146, 181-6, with n.138 below.

Argives, killing all those trapped inside.[138] Similarly, in 427/6 BC, during the denouement of Demosthenes' doomed Aetolian expedition, some of his defeated troops fled into a wood to escape pursuing light infantry and died when it too was burned down around them.[139] Such indirect methods, of course, were undeniably cruel, but missiles and fire offer the pursuers one signal advantage: they provide a safe means of removing the potential threat presented by concentrations of enemy troops without the need to face trapped and desperate men at close quarters.[140]

6. Conclusion

Four conclusions, then, follow from the argument offered above. Firstly, the harsh imperatives of the battlefield help to explain why, for the Greek historians, there were only two categories of people generally left after a battle: the living and the dead,[141] whose silent ranks would include any individual whose offer of surrender was rejected.[142] They also help to explain why it was only the dead who were exchanged after the conclusion of combat.[143] Secondly, whilst the Greeks understood the concept of surrender, they considered it a two part process: an offer of surrender was made, usually by the defeated, and until that offer was accepted, the victor could continue killing without quibble or qualm. Thirdly, despite this, the

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[138] Hdt. 6.76.1-82.2. Naturally, given that this story is related by Herodotus in order to explain the madness of the Spartan King, Cleomenes, some caution must be exercised. However, the tale is not contradicted by Thucydides, whose other examples of similar incidents offer a degree of corroboration. For further discussion, see esp. Karavites (1982), 112-113; van Wees (2011), 69-110.

[139] Thuc. 3.94.1-98.5.

[140] The killing of the surviving Spartans at Thermopylae with missiles (Hdt. 7.225.3), often taken as a marker of cultural inferiority, accords closely with this imperative.

[141] There are, of course, exceptions (see, for example, Xen. *Anab*. 7.6.31, *Cav*. 8.13, Xen. *Cyrop*. 4.1.19, 5.1.28, *Mem*. 3.12.1-4) but the convention is persuasive enough to be followed by modern historians such as Krentz ((1985), 13-20), for whom casualties are the dead, and Hanson (2000), whose canonical work makes no mention of prisoners or surrender. The wounded are likewise occluded, and it is often thought they would be killed by the victors rather than captured. This certainly appears to be expectation on Sicily in 413 BC (Thuc. 7.75.1-7, 80.1; cf. Isoc. 19.39), but it is not always the case (see, for instance, Hdt. 7.179-82; Thuc. 4.57.3, 7.87.2). For further discussion, see Krentz (2007), 180-185; Law (1919), 132-147; Lazenby (1991), 87-109; Sternberg (2006), 104-145; Ma (2008), 72-91; Salazar (2013), 294-311; Tritle (2013), 279-293; van Wees (2004), 145-150. For a similar situation in the medieval period, see Gillingham (2012), 55-72.

[142] Anderson (1969), 263-265, with the methodological implications of their opacity discussed in Grauer (2014), 622-655, also Cook (2006), 637-665.

[143] Prisoners, of course, lack the religious protection afforded to the dead, and even when they are taken (as in Thuc. 4.101.3-4), they are ignored at the point of exchange and their ransom generally seems to have been a private affair. See Kelly (1970), 127-131; Pritchett (1991), 245-288, also n.119 above.

Greeks we not unduly cruel. When they dominated the battlefield and could, as a result, accept a surrender in relative safety, they were often willing to take prisoners.[144] Fourthly, such positive conditions, however, did not prevail in the most dangerous phase of battle, namely the pursuit, the primary point of which was to avoid further danger by keeping the enemy running. Pausing to take and transfer prisoners, naturally, weakened the pursuit and risked the lives of those still pursuing, not to mention those of other friendly forces. Consequently, the Greeks killed their enemies without mercy, not out of bloodlust or wantonness, but because it was the safest and most sensible thing to do.[145] This is not to say that the surrender envisaged by Plato was an absolute impossibility, but mercy was not something a defeated Greek could expect. In short, once combat ended and the pursuit began, those who wished to survive their defeat had to run.[146]

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[144] Especially when capture entailed other positive incentives, for which see above, ns.117-122.

[145] The Greeks, of course, understood that atrocities increase an enemy's resistance and are therefore counterproductive, but they took the view that killing during pursuit was no different to killing in combat. See esp. On. 25.4-5; Thuc. 3.32.1-3, 4.19.1-3, with van Wees (2011), 69-110.

[146] As Grauer (2014), 622-655, observes, combatants are unlikely to attempt to surrender if they expect to be killed, and it is revealing that when Greek contingents are fixed in place by the enemy, they make desperate and hopeless last stands rather than attempt to surrender. See, for example, Aetolia, 427/6 BC (Thuc. 3.94.1-98.5), Amphipolis, 422 BC (Thuc. 5.6.2-11.3), Lechaeon, 390 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.7-8, 11-17), and Oeum, 370 BC (Xen. Hell. 6.5.23-27).

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