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The battlefield role of the Classical Greek general.

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The Battlefield Role

of the Classical Greek General

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STATEMENT 1

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2

This work is dedicated to Michael Foreman, author of *War Game*, and to my parents,

for giving it to me many, many years ago.

Acknowledgements

Summary

Modern studies of Classical Greek battle devote little attention to the role and importance of the general in achieving battlefield success. As a result of this the general is reduced to a simple leader of men whose only influential decision was where and when to fight, and whose major role was to provide inspiration by fighting in the front ranks. A modern conception of Hellenic fair play in warfare has further limited the importance of the general to Greek armies: apparently advanced manoeuvring and tactics were deliberately rejected in favour of a simple and direct test of strength and morale. I do not believe this to be the case, and in this study I demonstrate the importance of the general to Greek armies by offering a new analysis of his role in hoplite battle.

Contents

<u>Figures</u>

Figure 1: Drawing of the principles behind the Judo throw *Ippon Seio Nage* -
http://www.judo-tao.com/gokyo/NAGE-WAZA/Ippon-seoi-nage.gif

Figure 2: Picture of two *Judoka* performing an *Ippon Seio Nage* -
http://www.treklens.com/gallery/Europe/Denmark/photo225754.htm

Figure 3: Vase painting of two Greek wrestlers, one is being thrown with *Ippon SeioNage*. Taken from Manjo (1975) 163.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Warfare in the Classical Greek world was chaotic and bloody. Its central importance to Greek self-identification is evident from the shared Greek heritage of the *Iliad* and by the choice of the great fifth and fourth century historians to frame their work within a military context; warfare and struggle were at the very heart of Greek culture.[1] In this study I examine the surviving battle descriptions in order to present a new analysis of the battlefield role of the general; in this I do not wish to present an encomium of 'good' generalship or 'effective commanders', instead my focus is on demonstrating what was *possible*, and what was *believed to be possible*, for average Classical Greek generals to achieve on the battlefield. Common modern views regarding the battlefield role of the general include his being little more than a first amongst equals, an individual who led from the front and inspired his men to greater efforts, and fought until he fell; a man whose role as commander was greatly diminished after the signal to advance was given, this signal representing a switch from an organiser of men to an inspirational figurehead.[2] A detailed survey of the evidence is required in order to see if these views can be considered to be accurate, and an effective framework is needed if this survey is to be relevant and useful. For this framework I have chosen the familiar structural progression of a hoplite battle, namely: the advance to battle, fighting, *ôthismos*, and pursuit.

This breakdown of a hoplite battle is recognisable in most battle descriptions, and represents a logical analysis of the action and shifting circumstances of combat.

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[1] Vernant (1990) 29, 47; Hanson (2000a) 22, 219; van Wees (2001) 38-9; Hornblower (2007) 22-3, 28.
[2] Hanson (2000a) 107-8; Schwartz (2009) 180-1.

By approaching each stage and discussing evidence which indicates the presence, or absence, of a role for the general it will be possible to bring together an overall image of the breadth of possibilities open to Classical Greek generals. This approach requires not just an analysis of the surviving evidence for the battlefield role of generals, but also a detailed examination of the scholarship, evidence, and progression of each of the four elements identified. Understanding the battlefield environment of hoplite engagements is necessary for understanding the potential and actual role of the general, and the extent of current misunderstanding of Greek battle goes some way to explaining the relative lack of attention that has been paid to the battlefield role of generals. If we do not have a clear or realistic understanding of how hoplite battles progressed from advance to pursuit then we cannot gain an accurate image of what the battlefield role of the general was.

This thesis is necessary as most modern scholarship pays relatively little attention to the battlefield role of generals and subordinate commanders, focusing instead on the physical conditions of warfare,[3] the nature of hoplite equipment,[4] the connection between competition, culture, and warfare,[5] or a combination of all four.[6] While the study of the battlefield role of Classical Greek generals *per se* has been largely passed over by modern scholarship, several highly useful studies of individual generals have been published. Cartledge's exhaustive study of Agesilaus offers a detailed chapter on his generalship and command style, as well as offering insightful comment on the importance of the Theban general Epaminondas to the

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[3] A trend begun by Kegan (1974) and taken up in Hanson (1991) and (2000). See also Cartledge (1977); Salmon (1977); Cawkwell (1978) (1989); Lazenby (1991); Krentz (1995); Schwartz (2009); Matthew (2009.)
[4] See, e.g. Snodgrass (1964), (1967); Jarva (1996.)
[5] Garlan (1975); (Dawson (1996); Santosuosso (1997); Lendon (2005.)
[6] van Wees (2004); Rawlings (2007).

development of heavy infantry tactics.[7] In 1993 Roisman published an innovative study of the Athenian general Demosthenes and his use of surprise in battle; Roisman briefly expanded on Best's 1969 analysis of light infantry in Greek battle, before coming to the conclusion that Demosthenes was too fond of taking extreme risks to be considered one of the 'great' commanders of the time.[8] Wylie and Hanson have offered useful investigations into the careers of Brasidas and Epaminondas respectively, while Pritchett, Bianco and Konecny give detailed accounts of Iphicrates.[9] In 2000 and 2006 Hutchinson published monographs on various aspects of command and specific commanders in Classical Greece, including chapters examining Brasidas, Demosthenes, and Jason of Pherae; his works are useful but do not really break any new ground.[10] The focus of other scholars has, for the past century, been mostly on the socio-political roles of Athenian generals as agents of the state, rather than as individual military commanders, or as commanders *per se*.[11] None of these works analyse the broader theme of generalship, and an analysis of the battlefield role of the general throughout Classical Greece is needed.

The modern study of ancient Greek warfare really began with Anderson's classic *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon*.[12] Anderson devoted a

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[7] Cartledge (1987) 203-242.

[8] Roisman (1993) 72-5; Best (1969.) For Demosthenes see also Woodcock (1928); Wilson (1979); Strassler (1990); Wylie (1993).

[9] Whiley (1992); Hanson (1988); Bianco (1997); Pritchett (1974) 117-125; Konecny (2001.) See also, though with less focus on tactical matters, Kallet (1983) and Harris (1989)

[10] Hutchinson (2000); (2006.)

[11] Hence the preponderance of material regarding generals in politics, rather than the military: E.g. Mayor (1939); Pritchett (1940); Ehrenberg (1945); Jameson (1955); Lewis (1961); Frost (1964a), (1964b), (1968); Hammond (1969); Jordan (1970); Baidan (1971); Hansen (1975); Salmond (1992); Hamel (1995); Salmond (1996); Bryant (1990); Hamel (1998); Runciman (1998); Berent (2000); Bekker-Nielsen & Hannestad (eds) (2001.)

[12] Although the contributions of Tarn (1930); Lorimer (1947) and Adcock (1957) all played an important role in the development of arguments and controversies regarding Greek warfare none is as comprehensive or detailed as Anderson.

chapter to 'The General and his Officers' but his focus was primarily on leadership rather than generalship, and while his recognition of the importance of officers, and his analyses of various battles are useful, his work is limited to the Fourth century.[13] Pritchett devoted a significant part of his second volume examining *The Greek State at War* to the hoplite general, but his concern was to highlight the connection between general and state rather than to investigate the battlefield role of generals; two other chapters examine the mercenary captains of the fourth century, again with socio-political, rather than military, goals in mind.[14]

In *The Western Way of War* Hanson attempted to create an image of the hoplite general as a figure of morale and inspiration than of tactics and strategy; this general was a solid individual whose role was to fight, be seen to fight, and die on the battlefield if he could not return victorious.[15] His chapter is tellingly entitled 'A Soldier's General', and it plays an important role in his overall conception of hoplite warfare being a deliberately 'simple' system. Hanson selects several excellent sources which all speak to the need for practical, hardy individuals able to share in the suffering of their men, and exceed them in drive, determination, and example. Thus Archilochus spoke of his desire for a stolid commander, uninterested in good looks or fashionable trinkets, while we are reminded that there appears to have been a fine tradition of generals falling on the battlefield; the Athenian general Lysicles had the gall to survive the battle of Chaeronea, being executed for his troubles.[16] This tradition is central to Hanson's conception of generalship, according to him

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[13] Anderson (1970) 67-83.
[14] Pritchett (1974) 4-125.
[15] Hanson (2000a) 107-116.
[16] Hanson (2000a) 110-1. Archilochus 114; Diodorus 16.88.2. See chapter 2 for more detail.

"...all believed that their supreme commander could best further his army's cause by leadership through example..."[17] This may have been true; leadership by example was, and remains, an important aspect when leading any group of people, especially soldiers. However Hanson is at risk of over-simplifying here; just because various sources complement the hardy, inspirational leader does not mean that generalship was limited to fighting, and being seen to fight. Indeed numerous examples of generals influencing the course of battles during actual combat exist, from picking the right moment to attack, to initiating flanking cavalry attacks mid-battle, to restraining an entire army once the battle had been won; it is the central aim of this study to bring these incidents to the forefront, in an attempt to demonstrate that the role of the general was not as limited as Hanson and others suggest.

The most recent treatment of hoplite battle, that of Schwartz, offers four pages on the role and position of the general within the phalanx, and gives a list of those generals who were killed in battle between 512 and 323.[18] He points out that there was an expectation that the general would join in the fighting, and even lead the phalanx in the front ranks, but does not offer any analysis to extend or complement Hanson's brief chapter in his *Western Way of War*.

An alternative view to Hanson's was presented by Wheeler, who contributed a chapter dealing with the 'General as Hoplite' to *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience* in 1991. Wheeler summarised the then *communis opinio* thus:

[17] Hanson (2000a) 107.
[18] Schwartz (2009) 179-183.

"The Homeric warrior converted to phalanx commander retained his role of physical leader in battle and stationed himself in the front ranks of the phalanx. Indeed, given the limited tactical manoeuverability of the phalanx once battle was decided upon and the army was deployed as desired, the commander could do little to influence the battle and thus took his place in the ranks to aid the physical effort of combat. In this view the high fatality rates of generals and the types of wounds received confirm the commander's station in the front ranks."[19]

Wheeler expressed dissatisfaction with this model, and offered criticism regarding the supposed simplicity of the role of the general, pointing out that the death of a general did not always result in defeat for his army, that the evidence does not prove that all generals inevitably fought in the front ranks, and that any search for a 'typical' hoplite battle is fraught with difficulty.[20] Wheeler centred his discussion on the changing role of the general that he described as transitioning from 'Homeric warrior-chief' to 'battlefield-manager'; from an individual who *always* entered combat to one who *sometimes* did so.[21] His point is well made, although it does not amount to a 'demolition' of Hanson's conception of the hoplite general, as Wheeler claimed in the introduction to a recently published collection of articles.[22] Wheeler's discussion was brief, and although he pointed out that "A number of anecdotes relate commanders making tactical decisions at the beginning or in the middle of battles" he cited few examples and did not offer any detailed discussion of them.[23] Wheeler expanded his ideas regarding the hoplite general in his contribution to the *Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, in a sub-section entitled,

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[19] Wheeler (1991) 124.
[20] Wheeler (1991) 125-6
[21] Wheeler (1991) 124; Keegan (1987) 315-38. Pritchett offered a brief response to Wheeler's argument in his *Essays in Greek History* published in 1994 in which he essentially reaffirmed the position of the general as a hoplite fighting in the front ranks. Pritchett (1994) 111-44.
[22] Wheeler (2007b) xxi.
[23] Wheeler (1991) 148-9.

perhaps ironically, 'The Emergence of Generalship'.[24] He stressed the teaching of

hoplomachia, fighting with hoplite equipment, in the fourth century as an indication

of increased awareness of the need for tactical flexibility and competent troops,

although the main thrust of his argument was that the real, and piecemeal,

development in Greek warfare during the Fifth and Fourth centuries was in strategy,

not battlefield command.[25]

The scholarship discussed above represents the extent of discussion regarding

the *battlefield* role of the hoplite general; a clear position is yet to emerge, and a

detailed study of the extent to which generals could influence the course of battles,

whether from the front ranks or within the phalanx itself, is required. I do not deny

the importance of the social, political, and cultural aspects of generalship in Classical

Greece, especially for Athenian commanders, but a great deal of excellent

scholarship has examined these elements during the past forty years and I do not

wish to follow like with like; while a new study examining the political and social

power of generals would be useful, it is not needed nearly as much as an attempt to

demonstrate the limits and possibilities of the general's influence of battle.[26] Modern

scholarship has also long focused on 'face of battle' or socio-anthropological studies,

and while both of these approaches have yielded fascinating results, they have

resulted in a distinct lack of attention being paid to the role of the general on the

battlefield itself.[27]

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[24] Wheeler (2007a) 213-223.
[25] Wheeler (2007a) 222.
[26] See Fornara (1971); Pritchett (1974); Lenaguer (1979); Hamel (1995), (1998.)
[27] See Wheeler (2007b) xx-xxv for criticism of the 'face of battle' approach, and the danger of
pushing modern theories of battle onto ancient armies. See Hanson (2007) 16-18 for the importance of
'face of battle' studies and his opinion that no particular school currently dominates the field, and 19-

The notion of an 'emergence' or 'development' of generalship during the fifth century, and especially after the Peloponnesian war, is something which would benefit from re-examination. Is this a result of the nature of our surviving sources, or a reflection of reality? The chronological progression from Herodotus to Thucydides to Xenophon is accompanied by a progression from the militarily interested amateur to the intellectual ex-general with some experience of warfare within Greece to the professional general with experience of warfare from mainland Greece to the middle of Mesopotamia; it is only natural that each of these sources will present a different version of battle and warfare as a whole, as such we must be very careful in ascribing to reality something that may be nothing more than a reflection of these authors' principal areas of interest and expertise.

The modern study of Greek warfare has focused largely on the fundamental elements of battle, the hoplite and the phalanx, with good reason: it was heavily armed hoplites fighting in phalanx formation who resisted the Persian invasions at Marathon, Thermopylae and Plataea, and hoplites, not peltasts, cavalry, or light infantry, who took centre stage in the many small clashes and occasional great land battles of the Peloponnesian and Theban wars.[28] Modern scholarship has followed this ancient concentration on the hoplite and has created an image of warfare in which the hoplite reigned supreme, and where the 'hoplite ethos' pervaded both warfare and society as a whole; some scholars have even praised the way the Greeks made war upon each other, seeing in it a form of honour and glory sorely missing

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20 for the overspecialisation and narrow focus of military history as a whole.

[28] Cavalry has also received detailed treatment during the past twenty years: Bugh (1988) Spence (1993); Worley (1994); Gaebel (1994.) The battlefield role of light infantry has received little to no detailed examination since Best (1969), although modern attitudes to how the Greeks viewed missile weapons appear to be slowly changing: Krentz (2002); Hornblower (2007) 40-2; Wheeler (2007a.)

from the sometimes faceless and detached warfare of the industrial age. Thus Hanson commented on the "...wonderful, absurd conspiracy..." of hoplite battle, a system of warfare which he viewed as operating not to end lives, but, paradoxically, to save them.[29] The concentration on frontal defence by individual hoplites– a concentration magnified greatly by the phalanx formation as a whole – the limited use of advanced tactics, command structure, and effectively integrated mixed forces, resulted in a system that was appreciated and understood by all 'true' Greeks, with the opprobrium attached to departures from the norm being enough to ensure the system survived and endured. This is an attractive notion, for many different reasons. What better justification for the continued study of the ancient world, and Greek warfare in particular, than if we can claim that it was imbued with something that we have lost, an ethereal quality or different worldview that is worthy of rediscovery and detailed contemplation? Something that would make this world, edging inexorably towards catastrophe and conflict, a 'better place' if we could truly understand it? Worthy reasons indeed to attempt to 'decode' the Greek attitude towards, and methods of undertaking, warfare.

A contrasting approach has appeared over the last decade which seeks to analyse Greek warfare and hoplite battle in particular as a form of warfare that was grounded in practicality and only limited by the inventiveness of those who fought within it. Thus in 2000 van Wees contributed a chapter to his own edited volume *War & Violence in Ancient Greece* in which he questioned many of the most influential theories at that time; this argument was greatly expanded in his *Greek*

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[29] Hanson (1991) 6.

Warfare: Myths and Realities, published four years later.[30] Meanwhile in 2002 Peter Krentz suggested that Josiah Ober's 'Rules of war' could not stand as a pseudo-legal, or even pseudo-moral, framework with which to analyze and understand Classical Greek warfare.[31] Krentz pointed out that most of the twelve rules suggested by Ober were frequently broken, and concluded that they were a matter of military tactics, rather than set protocol.

The debate has continued to rage; 2007 saw the publication of the *Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, with contributions from many of the leading authorities on Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman warfare. The two edited volumes are excellent pieces of scholarship; they summarise many of the on-going arguments and offer some new approaches and insight into the way the ancients waged war, however they are, by nature, limited, and some topics that need serious consideration are largely passed over.[32] Excellent though it is the *Cambridge History* has not settled the matter of how to approach or understand Greek warfare, with monographs published since from Rawlings and Schwartz, and articles from Matthew and Krentz, raising new points and offering new interpretations of the surviving ancient evidence.[33] There are contrary opinions on the nature of every element of Greek warfare, from the development of hoplite equipment through to whether or not hoplites would, or indeed could, pursue a defeated army. By approaching Greek warfare from the head of a general down, rather than from the feet of a hoplite up, I

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[30] van Wees (2000) 125-66, (2004.)
[31] Ober (1996) 53-72; Krentz (2002.)
[32] Most notably that of *óthismos*.
[33] Rawlings (2007); Schwartz (2009); Matthew (2009); Krentz (2010.)

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will shed new light on these issues, and add another piece to the puzzle of warfare in the Classical Greek world.

This is primarily a literary study, one that is based on the main historical sources surviving for the Fifth and Fourth centuries BC. Thus there is extensive reference to Herodotus' *Histories*, Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and Xenophon's *Hellenica*, collected minor works and *Anabasis*.[34] Other contemporary sources such as the dramatists, as well as the Attic orators and the *Hellenica Oxyrynchia*, are cited when and where they are appropriate, but they do not, collectively or individually, contain much information regarding the battlefield role of the general. Equally epigraphic and archaeological sources are of relatively little use when determining the role, and possible role, of the Greek general. Where these other forms of literary evidence offer descriptions, discussions, or dramatic incidents that relate directly to the topic then I offer analysis. Thus Euripides is of great use in attempting to understand the amount of space available to individuals in the phalanx; his description of a fight between two brothers equipped as hoplites is illuminating, especially his, and the scholiast's, reference to the 'Thessalian trick'.[35] The plays of Aristophanes frequently complement information from the historical sources relating to military matters or procedure, while his occasional *ad hominem* jokes and barbs are of great use when attempting to understand the popular view of battle and indeed war itself. His unrelenting mockery of Cleonymus for throwing

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[34] Although the title *History of the Peloponnesian War* does not appear in Thucydides' work, it is a much more agreeable title than 'the war of the Athenians and Peloponnesians' or 'the Atheno-Peloponnesian War,' and is commonly used by all modern translators. Hornblower (1987) 7-8,13; (1991) 5.
[35] Euripides *Phoenicians* 1404-13. See Chapter 4 a.

away his shield,[36] his shots at Lamachus in the *Acharnians*,[37] and his attack on an unnamed officer in the *Peace*[38] are all indications of common feeling towards certain behaviours in battle, although they must be treated with a great deal of caution.[39] Indeed Lamachus was perhaps undeserving of such harsh treatment, and is certainly not deserving of the judgment that Hanson gives him as a ridiculous figure of ostentation, detached from the troops and so concerned with self-image that his commitment to enter battle can be doubted.[40] Lamachus, it is to be remembered, met his death on the island of Sicily when he went to the aid of an Athenian force being routed by Syracusan infantry and cavalry; as a result of this became cut off from most of his men, being killed along with five or six others.[41] He was certainly willing to enter combat, and was praised by Plato as being wise and courageous.[42]

This study is primarily based on the evidence found in contemporary Classical texts, and the evidence of Homer, Tyrtaeus, Plutarch, Diodorus and Polybius is generally only used in support of points or evidence that can be found in the more reliable or contemporary sources, while the evidence of the tacticians Polyaenus, Arrian, Asclepiodotus and Aelian is used sparingly. My justification for this methodology is simple: we have a wealth of surviving contemporary evidence from individuals who had, if not direct experience of hoplite battle, then at least grown up and lived in a society whose military focus was that of the hoplite. While the *Iliad* contains many vivid, even disturbing, battle descriptions, and there are

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[36] Aristophanes *Birds* 1473-81.
[37] Aristophanes *Acharnians* 1069-1226.
[38] Aristophanes *Peace* 1171, 1295-1304.
[39] Discussed further in chapter 3.
[40] Hanson (2000a) 110.
[41] Thucydides 6.101-103.
[42] Plato *Laches* 197C.

occasional glimpses of a concern for organised formation, it is difficult to detect a concern for the organised phalanx of the fifth and fourth centuries. In this I do not mean to trivialise the importance of Homer to the cultural, social, and military history of Greece, rather I do this to ensure a sharp focus can be maintained.

My reliance on the three main historical authors of the Classical period is, in part, forced, as many battle descriptions, discussions of warfare, and portraits of generals survive only in the works of these three, however this reliance is also embraced thanks to the varying levels of personal knowledge and experience of warfare that each one possessed. Problems still remain though: none of these 'big three' actually directly describes or discusses the basic building blocks of Greek warfare: they generally assume knowledge on the part of the reader as to the methods and techniques of warfare, while only offering comment on incidents that their audience may not have understood. Hence Thucydides remarks that the Spartans advance to the sound of the flute in order to keep in step rather than for religious reasons, but makes no mention of *how* hoplites actually fought, and offers very little information or comment regarding what generals could do while on the battlefield.[43] Equally Herodotus reports the presence of a 'special unit' of hoplites and archers that were used to good effect at the battle of Plataea, although he does not describe how the unit operated or how it was formed.[44] To a certain degree this is not surprising: none of the ancient authors wrote in order to preserve the Hellenic martial arts. Indeed their goals were generally loftier, being concerned with warfare as a historical, political, and social construct with which to analyse other, more

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[43] Thucydides 5.70.
[44] Herodotus 1.82. Whitby (2007) 64-5.

fundamental, topics. As such we must look to the battle descriptions that they offer, and attempt to build an image of generalship, and warfare, from a collage of vignettes, anecdotes, and remarkable incidents.

This collage is made up of information that, in the majority of cases, would have been passed on to the author verbally, and in some cases after a considerable amount of time had elapsed. This is a concern considering the difficulties of extracting reliable information from those who witnessed, or participated in, traumatic events; such difficulties formed the opening arguments of Whatley's classic paper examining the difficulties of reconstructing ancient battles.[45] Anybody who has witnessed or been part of a stressful and traumatic event will be aware of the difficulties associated with accurate memory recall: events move forwards and backwards in time, 'tunnel vision' results in misidentification of individuals and the unconscious ignoring of the most basic information, simple and vital actions are attributed to incorrect or even absent individuals, and particularly traumatic events can even result in physical or mental damage.[46] Whatley provides an example in which he explains what happened when a Fellow of his college decided to investigate the value of the testimony of first-hand participants in battle; it is to be remembered that although Whatley's paper was published in 1964, it was first delivered in 1920, two years after the end of the First World War. Whatley wrote that this Fellow:

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[45] Lazenby (1985) 3-5; Whatley (1964) 119-121. Shrimpton (1997) 245 for the view that Herodotus does not cite his sources when he is satisfied of their authenticity. Hornblower (2000) 373-386
[46] Herodotus 6.117. Krentz (2010) 157 for the suggestion that this was a case of conversion disorder or hysterical blindness.

"...asked each man how many bombs he had thrown. The total of the answers came to 21: the correct total was 7. The N.C.O. was positive that the officer had recharged his revolver and that he and the officer between them had fired at least 12 shots. Really only 3 had been fired and the officer's revolver had not been recharged."[47]

Thus the confusion of battle would have been such that individuals would have had little conception of anything beyond their immediate surroundings; the information available to an individual hoplite in battle was also limited to his immediate surroundings, thus if an ancient author wished to fully reconstruct a single large engagement his information would come in the shape of accounts from men of differing mental ability, who were stationed at different parts of the line, and whose overall image of the battle may have differed greatly.[48] The ancient source material is also complicated by the passage of time, which would have further distorted the memory of even these events.[49] Little wonder that even Thucydides found describing large battles difficult. Authors also had their own, personal, reasons for supplying the information they did: Thucydides could surely have given more detail regarding the battle of Amphipolis,[50] while the fine details that he provides regarding the Pylos campaign may have been included in order to present a damning image of the Athenian general Cleon, rather than out of concern for true accuracy.[51]

This lack of detailed information is unfortunate, but it can be overcome by the intelligent use of sources *as a whole*, rather than trying to over-analyse individual

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[47] Whatley (1964) 121.
[48] Keegan (1976) 103; Tritle (2006) 219.
[49] Whitby (2007) 54-5.
[50] Thucydides 5.10: Thucydides was in command of a small squadron of triremes near Amphipolis at the time.
[51] Thucydides 4.27-38, esp 28.

battles in an attempt to make sense of, or recover, *specific* information pertaining to that particular battle. The information contained in the battle descriptions of the three main historical authors allows for an overall image of generalship in the Classical Greek world to be generated, even if it does not allow for the reconstruction of specific generals' careers or actions in battle.

Herodotus' accounts of the battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, and Plataea are referred to in the following chapters; each of these battle descriptions contains valuable information regarding the Greek experience of warfare and the battlefield role of the commander. While it is almost certain that Herodotus had some familiarity with the use of weapons, and may have had direct experience of conflict in the overthrow of Lygdamis, the tyrant of Halicarnassus,[52] we have little information regarding his military experience. He does not inform us of any command position he may have held, and does not relate personal experiences of warfare in the way that Thucydides and Xenophon did in their texts.[53] However while Herodotus may not have been an experienced military authority, his descriptions of the two Persian invasions were almost certainly based on information learnt from actual participants, direct descendants, or friends of such.[54] This information, some of it discovered "...in the taverns, on the quay side..."[55] of the scattered Greek states would have exposed him second-hand to the gruesome reality of the battles of the Persian Wars.[56]

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[52] Suda *s.v. Herodotus*. Tritle (2006) 209-10.
[53] Possibly because he did not himself have the experience of generalship, or access to the ready thoughts of those generals who fought in the Persian Wars: Burn (1984) 5; Tritle (2006) 210.
[54] E.g. Herodotus 2.123, 4.195, 7.152. Tritle (2006) 210; Krentz (2010) 12.
[55] Myres (1953) 212.
[56] Burn (1984) 5; Schepens (2007) 44-5.

In this regard Herodotus' evidence is difficult; he was not old enough to take a direct role in the Persian Wars, while many of those who fought in them, and certainly most of those who held a command position, would have been very old indeed when Herodotus came to make his enquiries of them: memories would have faded, glory intensified in the retelling. This much is suggested by Aristophanes' amusing portrayal of the 'Marathon-men' in the *Wasps*: irritated by the softness of the current generation, the veterans emphasise how they overcame the Persians at Marathon, despite the size of their army, and eventually chased them off, skewering them like tuna – an image of grumpy old men passing on tales made larger with each telling is difficult to escape![57] An image made all the more powerful by its reliance on the *memory* of such men in contemporary citizens' minds, as it is unlikely that many survivors of Marathon were still alive. However, despite our difficulties in using Herodotus, we ignore or denigrate him at our peril; the scale of his work and the place of warfare within it are such that if we reject his evidence "...we are cutting off the branch on which we sit..."[58] His battle accounts, and the many asides and anecdotes contained in them, are of fundamental importance when attempting to construct a battlefield environment for the hoplite general and the hoplite, and while he may not have been as rigorous as Thucydides in his selection of evidence, it is this very quality which occasionally makes him of much greater value.[59]

Thucydides held the office of *strategos* at least once in his life, and his descriptions of the battles of Corinth, Aetolia, Sphacteria, Delium, Mantinea and

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[57] Aristophanes *Wasps* 1081-85. Discussed below.
[58] Lazenby (1993) 15
[59] Schepens (2007) 47.

Syracuse, as well as various small skirmishes, are of great use.[60] His claim to have started his work at the very beginning of the Peloponnesian War lends his work even greater authority; he lived through, spoke to direct participants in, and possibly even witnessed some of the greatest battles fought during the Classical period.[61] It is true that he was not a notably successful general, indeed the only time he mentions his command is when he informs us that he could not save Amphipolis from Brasidas, being exiled from Athens as a result.[62] However being outmanoeuvred by Brasidas is less of a judgment on Thucydides' ability as a general than it is a demonstration of Brasidas' superiority as a general.[63] Indeed in many ways we are lucky that Thucydides lost Amphipolis to Brasidas; his interest in, and contrast of, Brasidas and Demosthenes, perhaps even his ability to write his account, may have been generated by the nature of his defeat and his subsequent exile from Athens.

Thucydides' authority as a reliable and informed source is undoubted, but his work is not a military history or handbook, indeed at times it is frustratingly light on the practical details of both hoplite battle and the role of generals. Thucydides himself explained that this was deliberate, that his work was not a story designed to excite his contemporary audience but rather a creation for all time.[64] In Thucydides' case this has resulted in a preponderance of material regarding the planning, political motivations, and social implications of strategy, rather than specific details of

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[60] Thucydides 4.104-5. Croix (1972) 7-11; Hornblower (1987) 157, 184; (1996) 331-334.
[61] Thucydides 1.1. Hornblower (1987) 39-40 for the suggestion that many aspects of Thucydides' style could be due to his reading, and indeed writing, of military reports.
[62] Thucydides 4.104-5. Hornblower (1987) 3; (1996) 331-4.
[63] Thucydides tells us he was in command of a squadron of seven ships and arrived too late to save the city: 4.104.
[64] Thucydides 1.22. Flory (1990) 85; Hornblower (1991) 59-62. Hornblower (2000) 375-6 for the conjecture that this may be a criticism of Herodotus.

individual engagements.[65] However, his battle descriptions remain of great interest and occasionally contain easily overlooked, but vitally important, pieces of information. Thus in his description of the battle of Sphacteria in 425, we learn, almost *en passant*, that Spartan hoplites were used to shouting and hearing commands during battle, while in his description of the build-up to the battle of Mantinea we learn that Peloponnesian phalanxes could withdraw, in good order, while within javelin range of an enemy occupying a strong and elevated position.[66] In these examples, and many more, we begin to see Thucydides' concern for technical detail, and it is these details that I will focus on as well as large controversial issues, such as the famous 'drift to the right'.[67]

A potentially significant problem when dealing with Thucydides is the nature of his most famous literary device: the speeches. Thucydides himself offers some explanation as to how his audience should interpret these accounts:

> καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοί τε ὧν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθέν ποθεν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγγέλλουσιν· ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ' εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται.

> "Of the various speeches made either when war was imminent or in the course of the war itself, it has been hard to reproduce the exact words used either when I heard them myself or when they were reported to me by other sources. My method in this book has been to make each speaker say broadly

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[65] Hanson (2000a) 44-5.
[66] Thucydides 5.65. Discussed in more detail below.
[67] Thucydides 5.71. Discussed in more detail below.

what I supposed would have been needed on any occasion, while keeping as closely as I could to the overall intent of what was actually said."[68]

In this study I make use of three speeches by Thucydides: Brasidas' speeches to his troops in 423 and 422, and the Syracusan general Hermocrates' speech to the Syracusan assembly in 415. While the speeches may not be exactly what these generals said on the occasion, they are still of great value as they still reflect the opinions of a Greek general: Thucydides.[69] Thus the speeches highlight the advantages that Thucydides considered could be gained from strategic thought, and what generals could achieve on the battlefield, while the speeches he has Brasidas deliver indicate an awareness of the strength of light infantry and the need for a general to adapt to changing tactical circumstances.[70] The speeches primarily deal with military matters, and the information they contain can be verified, indeed enhanced by other authors – especially Aeneas Tacticus.[71] They do not form a central part of any of my arguments, and are only used to back up points which can be found in narrative sections of Thucydides and other authors. As such I take some of the information they contain at face value: Thucydides makes Brasidas stress the noise and power of light infantry because light infantry could be very noisy, and very powerful, as the Spartans had discovered to their cost two years previously.[72] Equally Hermocrates was able to advise sailing from Syracuse to meet the Athenians in the Gulf of Taras because Thucydides considered such an aggressive defence to

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[68] Thucydides 1.22 (trans Hammond.)

[69] The bibliography for speeches in Thucydides is massive. In 1972 Ste Croix remarked that "Thucydides 1.22.1, dealing with the speeches, has evoked an enormous amount of discussion, which is still going on, with little sign of agreement." For interesting and relevant discussions see Clark (1995) 375-6; Morrison (2006) 251-277; and, most recently, Harding (2011).

[70] Especially the speech at 4.126. Barley (forthcoming) on the power of Classical Greek light infantry and new thoughts regarding its rejection in favour of hoplites.

[71] On whom see Chapter 4 and Pretzler (ed) (forthcoming).

[72] Thucydides 4.126, 4.34.

have been both logical, and possible, given the amount of information available to the Syracusans at the time.[73]

Thucydides did not live to complete his work, leaving us with a *History of the Peloponnesian War* that breaks off abruptly in 411, although it is most likely that he lived to see the end of the Peloponnesian War.[74] Fortunately the Athenian writer, philosopher, and soldier Xenophon began his narrative where Thucydides' ends; his *Hellenica* represents an attempt to continue the work of Thucydides, although in style and form it is now generally considered to be inferior.[75] However he remains the best literary source for the end of the Peloponnesian War, and the machinations behind, and the military encounters of, the Corinthian War and other conflicts of the fourth century; he is perhaps best known to military historians for his accounts of the battles of Leuctra in 371 and Mantinea in 362, while his description of the second clash at the battle of Coronea in 394 has become something of a favourite for scholars of Classical Greek battle to quote.[76] Wheeler credits Xenophon with founding the genre of military history, a worthy epithet given the scope of his interest and experience. However, none of his surviving works deals exclusively with the battlefield role of the hoplite general, and as such my use of his material is episodic. Indeed, this is a necessary methodology for every source I use; as Wheeler stated: "an argument must be pieced together from episodic anecdotes of what a general did or did not do in a particular situation."[77]

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[73] Thucydides 6.33-4.
[74] In the 'Second Preface' Thucydides describes how he continued his work up until the Long Wall and the fortifications of Piraeus were destroyed: 5.26.
[75] Grey (1989) 1-2, 27; Dillery (1995) 9-11.
[76] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.19; *Agesilaus* 2.12.
[77] Wheeler (1991) 148.

Xenophon's interests and experience led him to write on many different topics, from the best way to train dogs to a detailed and personal description of the *Anabasis* of the Ten Thousand. Shared themes that run through his works are those of leadership, the virtues of leaders, and the way leaders interact with those around them.[78] Thus the *Agesilaus* and the *Cyropaedia* present Xenophon's conception of an ideal commander, while the *Anabasis* is littered with conspicuous examples of inspiring leadership or innovative tactical decisions.[79] However my study is not one aimed at analysing the 'perfect' commander or soldier, nor is it concerned with leadership in the broad sense of encouragement and example; that Xenophon apparently began to chop firewood while both naked and in the middle of a snowstorm may have been inspiring, but it has little bearing on the battlefield role of generals.[80] Of more use are the occasions where Xenophon describes skirmishes, pitched battles, and complicated engagements such as those around Athens and Piraeus in 404/3; his accounts allow a great deal of information regarding the potential role of the general to be extracted, information the provenance of which is strengthened by the extent of Xenophon's own military experience.

Xenophon was probably the most qualified of all the surviving Classical Greek writers to comment on and analyze military matters; his time with the Ten Thousand and his direct experience with Agesilaus, amongst others, demand that his works form a significant part of any investigation into warfare in Classical Greece. This military experience followed an education in which Socrates was one of his

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[78] Wood (1964) 33-66; Anderson (1974) 120-133; Due (1989) 147-206; Hutchinson (2000) 18; 51-63; 130-137; Grey (2007) 1-14; (2010) 6-12.
[79] On which see Anderson (1974) 120-133; Hutchinson (2000.)
[80] Xenophon *Anabasis* 4.4.11-12.

teachers, and Plato a fellow student, an environment which gave him the tools to write on, and offer analysis of, the major political and cultural events of his time.[81] However, Xenophon's works are not without their difficulties; some have detected an overt bias against the Thebans, and he gives the battles of Leuctra and Mantinea, and the Theban generals Epaminondas and Pelopidas, suspiciously little attention.[82] This is unfortunate for our knowledge of the politics and personalities of these two energetic men, and Xenophon gives just enough information to allow a basic idea of how the generals present influenced the course of the Leuctra and Mantinea engagements. More useful information regarding generals and generalship can be found in many other, smaller, accounts of battles in Xenophon's works, and by paying close attention to these I believe a more realistic image of generalship can be constructed from his testimony.

There is one ancient source which appears in this work a great deal more than it does in most other military studies of Classical Greece: Aeneas Tacticus, the fourth century Peloponnesian author of the *Poliorcetica*. His tactical manual on how to survive while under siege offers a systematic and practical response to the impending or continuing invasion of a state and, unfortunately, has been largely neglected by modern scholarship on battle. Aeneas Tacticus' work has much broader application than siege warfare, being a systematic account of how best to go about organising military forces as a whole.[83] Aeneas Tacticus' conception of warfare is complex, involving the effective use of communications, scouting, and mixed forces, as well as placing a heavy reliance on ruse, ambush, and tactical advantage. His advice also

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[81] Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.3.9-13; Anderson (1974) 20-33; Gray (2010) 8-10.
[82] Marincola (1997) 175-216; Cawkwell (2004); Stylianou (2004).
[83] Barley (2012.)

calls for an unprecedented role for the general; one of strategist and controller rather than tactician and fighter. Aeneas Tacticus' general does not enter the fighting unless absolutely essential, instead he should act as a focal point for information and co-ordination; his ideas are not presented as new or ground-breaking, and there is scope to compare, and apply, his theories and philosophies to the rest of the Classical period. Indeed the central tenant of Aeneas Tacticus' advice is that the link between general and subordinate commanders, and between subordinate commanders and soldiers, is vital, and if exploited correctly allows a flexible, tailored, and devastating response to an enemy force in the field to be mounted. The extent of Aeneas Tacticus' military knowledge and practical experience lends his work great authority; he appears to know his Thucydides and may even have had personal contact with Xenophon,[84] while his observations on the nature of large groups of men under pressure, as well as his concentration on organisation and calmness, fits ill with the orthodox image of generalship in the Classical Greek world.

The *Poliorketika* is the only work of Aeneas Tacticus that survives; it is complete in that the subject of how to survive under siege, or, more properly, how to survive when the state is threatened, appears to be fully addressed, with the text breaking off at the beginning of a discussion of how to equip naval fleets.[85] However a number of points are addressed only by way of reference to other works which Aeneas Tacticus had previously published. Thus the reader of the *Poliorketika* who wishes to discover the best way to send fire signals is directed to the *Paraskeuastike biblos*, or *Preparations*, where Aeneas Tacticus had previously set down advice to

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[84] See chapter 4.
[85] Although this is unlikely to indicate that a work on 'The Organisation of a Fleet' was written as a separate piece, and has been lost. Whitehead (2002) 14-5, 207.

his reader in this area.[86] Other works which Aeneas Tacticus refers to include his

Poristike (*Procurement*) and his *Stratopedeutike* (Encampment).[87] Aelian records

that Aeneas Tacticus wrote 'a considerable number of military books', one of which

may have been a work on the science of military manoeuvers, while other internal

references in the *Poliorketika* itself indicate that Aeneas Tacticus may have written a

work on *Akousmata*, or *Addresses*.[88] The loss of these works is regrettable; indeed

Aeneas Tacticus' surviving work is such an invaluable collection of advice,

anecdote, and practical theory, all presented as 'standard' responses to invasion or

threat, that his evidence has the power to dramatically change the way we view

Classical Greek warfare. Regarding the man himself it is possible, indeed probable,

that he was the Aeneas of Stymphalos, a general of the Arcadian League in 366

mentioned by Xenophon.[89] His writing certainly indicates a man with experience of

dealing with people in times of crisis, and of the organising and leading of large

groups of people. His concern for the maintenance of morale and the prevention of

treachery, as well as the establishment of a chain of command and rapid signaling

procedures, indicates a man aware of the importance of reconnaissance, information,

and flexibility to a force in the field; three factors which are emphasised in the

following chapters.

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[86] Aeneas Tacticus 7.4. He remarks that he will not repeat his material concerning fire-signals. Fortunately Polybius may have read the *Preperations* and recorded some of it at 10.44. Whitehead (2002) 13-4, 111-2.
[87] 14.2, 21.2. Whitehead (2002) 13-4.
[88] Aelian *Tactics* 1.2; Aeneas Tacticus 38.5. Whitehead (2002) 13-4.
[89] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.3.1. Whitehead views the identification as *probable*, as does Lesky (1996) 629; Ste. Croix (1981) 298; Wheeler (1983) 8-9. Other scholars have viewed the identification as only *possible*: Tarn (1927) 227 and (1970) 14; Delebecque (1957) 430; Ober (1985) 7. I favour a strong *probable* view: his practical and detailed knowledge indicates an individual with direct experience of command, and I find the temporal and geographical connection to this Aeneas most convincing. Xenophon's mention may also have been based on personal contact: Aeneas Tacticus knew his Thucydides, and it is not too far-fetched to suggest that two like-minded individuals such as Aeneas and Xenophon would have had some degree of contact.

This is significant; here we have an ancient author, probably an experienced general, offering his own thoughts regarding military matters. True, the *Poliorketika* is a work of the mid-fourth century, but Aeneas does not present any of his advice as being innovative or part of some technical or intellectual 'revolution' of warfare or generalship, the existence of which is frequently advanced by modern scholarship.[90] Aeneas' definition of 'siege' is very broad, and his advice should be read as a commentary on the art of warfare in general. The roles of the general, and subordinate commanders, is of great importance to Aeneas, as is the systematic and effective use of reconnaissance, manoeuvre, and communication. Aeneas Tacticus advises that all these things be done, as well as constantly emphasising the importance of both 'supreme' command, and subordinate officers. Indeed his advice is down-to-earth and practical, indicating those pointers a professional, or at least highly experienced, soldier considered most vital to give to his audience; his is not a historical work, but a guide, as such we must pay close attention to his specific advice regarding generalship, and the overall conception of warfare that his text generates.

This thesis begins with an analysis, in chapter 2, of the ancient evidence for the ability of generals to communicate mid battle, the place of the general in the phalanx, and the deaths of generals in battle. The chapter is important as it seeks to dispel the notion that generals were more important for the morale of their army than for its tactical flexibility and effectiveness. The connection between army and general is analysed, as are those occasions when generals were killed in battle, in an attempt to demonstrate the true importance of generals to Greek armies, to

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[90] As summarised by Wheeler: (2007) 213-223.

emphasise the ability of generals to influence battle, and to highlight the strategic and tactical sophistication of Greek warfare. I conclude by suggesting that generals were able to communicate on a local and 'phalanx-wide' scale, that generals did not always fight in the front ranks, and that casualty rates for Classical Greek generals were not 'astonishingly' high.[91] Further conclusions are that battles where generals of the losing side were killed are not indicative of a desire or necessity on the part of generals to die on the battlefield, and that the Greeks recognised the importance of generals and command positions by deliberately targeting them.

Chapter 3 is a systematic review and analysis of the evidence for subordinate commanders in Classical Greek warfare. These men have been largely ignored by modern scholars, yet they are directly attested in all of the major contemporary sources, and their presence and influence in battle can also be inferred from various battle descriptions. In these descriptions subordinate commanders are found leading small, occasionally 'elite' units, 'stepping up' to take command when their general was killed, and also ensuring that 'pockets' of command, beyond the general's personal influence, existed throughout the phalanx. Official systems of subordinate command existed in Athens and Sparta in Herodotus' time, with the Spartan system becoming more complicated and integrated as time went on: by Thucydides' time it was possible to describe the whole Spartan army as a chain of command, and I suggest it was this, more than superiority in physique, fitness, or weapons training, that was responsible for Spartan success on the field of battle. Subordinate commanders were a vital element of Greek battle, and the role and importance the

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[91] See, e.g. Hanson (2000a) 112.

ancient sources attach to them suggests that any investigation into generalship, or indeed any aspect of warfare, in Classical Greece must take them into account.

In Chapter 4 I examine Aeneas Tacticus' advice to generals regarding how best to withstand a siege, and argue that his definition of 'siege' is so broad that his work should be read as a commentary on the art of warfare in Classical Greece as a whole. The role of the general, and his ability to communicate with subordinate commanders in order to attack the enemy with multiple small units, is of great importance to Aeneas. His conception of warfare as a whole is one of victory by any and all means, with the general and his subordinates being vital elements. I conclude by arguing that this conception can also be found in the surviving works of the Classical historians, and that Aeneas Tacticus' surviving work is a vital and rich resource for the study of Greek warfare.

Chapter 5 is a review and alaysis of the four recognised 'phases' of hoplite combat: the advance, fighting, and retreat/pursuit. In the first section of this chapter I examine the ancient evidence for the ability of generals to influence the advance into combat, the nature of this advance and how it affected command, and also discuss the most influential modern reconstructions and interpretations regarding this advance. I conclude that hoplite generals could exercise influence over their troops during this phase, and demonstrate that a running charge directly into combat was unlikely.

I follow this with an examination of the fighting that took place once two phalanxes had come into contact with each other, in order to determine if it was conducive to the continued exercise of command and control, or whether the situation descended into such chaos that generals were unable to influence battle. My focus here is on the following factors: the distance between individuals in the phalanx, the ability of hoplites to fight in single combat, and the various passages which indicate the ability of individuals to work in small teams during the fighting. I do not attempt to demonstrate the presence of definite techniques, or to state that there was a 'standard' way of fighting; such a discussion would be highly conjectural and is, I believe, the wrong approach to understanding hoplite battle. Instead I use the ancient evidence to place limitations on what appears to have been possible for hoplites to do while fighting, which allows the construction of a realistic environment to place the general in: if there was little space between individuals and hoplites were unable to operate effectively outside a static phalanx then there can have been little scope for generals to influence battles. This involves making logical inferences from various incidents that took place during the battles of the fifth and fourth centuries in order to construct an overall image of what the ancient historians and their audiences considered possible. I suggest that hoplites, and indeed the phalanx formation itself, were a great deal more flexible than new orthodox thought accepts, and conclude that the general could influence this phase of combat, both on a local scale and, occasionally, on a phalanx-wide scale.

After this I examine the controversial *ôthismos*, or push, discussion of which has played a significant part in the modern reconstruction of hoplite battle, a reconstruction which severely limits the extent to which generals could influence

battle and which is challenged and rejected here. I begin with a brief outline of the two current competing interpretations and then give a modern literature review that traces the argument over *ôthismos* from the start of the 20th century to the latest discussion in Peter Krentz's book on the battle of Marathon, published in 2010. I then move onto a detailed analysis of *ôthismos*, *ôtheo*, and *exôtheo* in Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. I examine the instances where these words are used in a battlefield context and conclude that, in most cases, the word is used in either a technical or a psychological sense. I do not refer to this as a 'phase of battle' because the evidence suggests that when a 'push' occurred in battle it was not a separate event, distinct from the fighting, but was a consequence of that fighting, thus one phalanx was slowly pushed back while fighting. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that the notion of *ôthismos* as a mass push is false and, as a result of this, something other than numbers and the ability to 'push' with one's shield was the deciding factor in battle: I suggest instead that generalship was the deciding factor. I also argue that it should not be considered a phase of battle, but have included it in this chapter both because it sheds light on the battlefield environment generals found themselves in, and in order to give a complete analysis of both ancient and modern scholarship.

The final part of chapter 5 examines the pursuit that sometimes took place once a battle had been won or lost. Here I analyse the source material which describes how battles ended, how far defeated armies were pursued, and what reasons were given for armies either not pursuing, or doing so for a limited amount of time. Several incidents in which generals demonstrated their influence, or lack thereof, over their troops are analysed, and I conclude by suggesting that generals

could exert significant influence during this final phase of battle, and also emphasise the continued importance of local command, control, and leadership.

The true importance of generalship and subordinate command to Classical Greek armies of all size and ability has not been fully appreciated by modern scholarship, and by examining these topics in the context of a hoplite battle, and as stand-alone topics, a realistic and complete image of command can be created. This image has significant consequences for our understanding of the practice of Greek warfare, as well as forcing a fundamental re-examination of the purpose and nature of the Classical Greek way of war, which itself impacts on our understanding of Greek society as a whole. The battles and wars of the Classical Greeks were not simple, phalanxes of hoplites were not rudderless unguided masses of men, and generals were capable of influencing battle from beginning to end. The Greeks also recognised the importance of command and subordinate command, resulting in a system of warfare with a focus on flexibility, organisation, and teamwork. The importance of these three factors has not been fully appreciated by modern scholarship, and the following chapters present a new image of both the Classical Greek general, and the system of warfare within which he operated.

Chapter 2A: The ability of generals to communicate

The issue of if, and if so how, generals were able to communicate orders to parts of the phalanx is vital to this study and is a difficult one to address; the ancient authors do not explicitly discuss the workings, or even the presence, of a 'standard' or common system of communication, and many of the smaller battle accounts are not sufficiently detailed to posit a reconstruction of the orders that may have been issued and the means by which they were transmitted. Fortunately there are a number of accounts of larger battles which contain relatively detailed and important information regarding the ability of generals to issue orders and to have these orders communicated to the whole, or specific parts, of the phalanx. These examples span the range of this study's timeframe and indicate that it was possible for generals to send messages and orders mid-battle, as well as, occasionally, receive replies. Connected to the issue of communication is one of physical positioning – where did generals usually stand in the phalanx, and how did this affect issues such as casualty rates of generals and what happened when generals were killed? Consideration of these issues will allow me to give an overview of some of the essentials of generalship, setting up the discussion, in later chapters, of the ability of generals to influence the course of battles both on a local and a wider scale.

The most important work regarding the transmission of orders in Classical Greek warfare is Peter Krentz's chapter in *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience*, where he analyses the surviving information regarding the use of the *salpinx*, an ancient brass instrument similar to a trumpet, in ancient military

contexts.[92] The instrument appears to have been fairly limited in its range, perhaps

being able to produce only one or two distinct notes, although numerous references

from several sources indicate that it was a fairly ubiquitous presence in the Classical

Greek military mindset. Thus Homer was able to compare Achilles' shouting to the

sound of the salpinx, a reference that also makes clear its distinctive sound and

emphasises the fact that audiences would be familiar with this.[93] Similar sentiments

can be found in Aristophanes' *Peace*, where a 'Maker of War Trumpets' is told that

his instruments are essentially useless in times of peace, and that he must find

alternative uses for his wares, such as converting them into scales to weigh figs.[94]

The sound of this particular instrument was so closely associated with military

matters and the passing of orders that when news reached Athens that Philip II had

captured Elateia the *prytaneis* summoned the generals *and* the *salpinktes*, while

Aeneas Tacticus recommended that, in an ideal response to siege, the general would

be stationed in a safe place along with trumpet players and runners.[95] These

examples relate to the *battlefield* use of the *salpinx* only indirectly, and there are few

direct examples of it being used to relay orders once battle had begun, with these

generally being signals to begin the charge or the retreat. The most famous examples

of its use in these situations are found in the *Anabasis* of Xenophon, with one in

particular demonstrating the advantages and disadvantages of the instrument's use.

Xenophon, aware that the enemy would hear the trumpet signal and recognise its

importance, reversed the meanings of the calls for 'charge' and 'retreat' to effect a

safe river crossing.[96] During battle or skirmish this was probably the extent of the

'messages' that the *salpinx* could send; sending complicated messages involving

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[92] Krentz (1991) 110-120.
[93] Homer *Iliad* 18.219; c.f. 21.388.
[94] Aristophanes *Peace* 1240-50.
[95] Demosthenes *On the Crown* 169; Aeneas Tacticus 22.2-3.
[96] Xenophon *Anabasis* 6.5.27; also 1.2.17 where it is used as the signal to begin the advance.

multiple notes or patterns would have been dangerous given the noise of battle and the changing circumstances of different parts of the line, thus the more complicated the message the greater the chance of it being misinterpreted. Krentz's discussion was centred on the scattered and occasionally obscure references to the *salpinx*, but he also offered a brief analysis of other forms of communication which we know the ancients to have used, noting that Arrian considered verbal orders to be the clearest possible system.[97] Verbal orders seem to have comprised an important part of the ability of Greek generals to communicate their orders to parts of their commands, and their use can be found in many different battle accounts, from the Persian Wars to the Corinthian War, with both direct references and reasonable inferences being found. One of the strongest examples can be found in Herodotus' account of the battle of Plataea in 479. During the opening engagement of the campaign the Persian cavalry was engaged in constant harassing operations against various sections of the Greek line, with the attack falling hardest on the Megarians, who were stationed on the most vulnerable part of the Greek line. According to Herodotus the Megarians sent a messenger to the Greek commanders stating:

> Μεγαρέες λέγουσι: ἡμεῖς, ἄνδρες σύμμαχοι, οὐ δυνατοί εἰμεν τὴν Περσέων ἵππον δέκεσθαι μοῦνοι, ἔχοντες στάσιν ταύτην ἐς τὴν ἔστημεν ἀρχήν: ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐς τόδε λιπαρίῃ τε καὶ ἀρετῇ ἀντέχομεν καίπερ πιεζόμενοι. νῦν τε εἰ μή τινας ἄλλους πέμψετε διαδόχους τῆς τάξιος, ἴστε ἡμέας ἐκλείψοντας τὴν τάξιν.

> "I bear a message from the Megarians to their allies: "We do not have the resources to resist the Persian cavalry unassisted here in the position we took up at the start of the battle. So far, despite the pressure, we have held out, although it has taken perseverance and courage. But now, unless you send further troops to relieve us at our post, we will abandon it."[98]

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[97] Arrian Tactica 27.
[98] Herodotus 9.21 (trans Waterfield.)

The message was sent in enough time, and in enough detail, for reinforcements to be organised and sent from the Athenian contingent.[99] While the Megarians were not engaged in a pitched battle with another hoplite force, they were clearly under direct attack and were able to communicate with elements of the allied army that were stationed some distance away; it is reasonable to posit that the Megarian general would also have been able to use a messenger to communicate with parts of his own phalanx, should he have had the need. A similar situation occurred at the battle of Sphacteria in 425: the Athenian general Demosthenes was able to receive information and issue orders, although he was not actively engaged in the fighting at that time.[100]

A useful and important example of a hoplite general communicating directly with his army during actual combat can be found in Thucydides' account of the battle of Delium in 424.[101] According to Thucydides the Theban general Pagondas, worried that his left wing was being defeated by the Athenians, sent two squadrons of cavalry to its aid. The effect of the new deployment was to cause panic in the Athenian right wing, which imagined the cavalry to indicate the presence of another enemy army, and further pressure the beleaguered Athenian left. The Athenian left was unable to resist the concentration of numbers to the front, cavalry to the flank, and fleeing troops to the side, and broke.[102] We are not told how the orders were conveyed or, indeed, what Pagondas was doing when the information arrived; Thucydides' account is brief and lacking the necessary details. However we do know

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[99] Herodotus 9.21-2.
[100] Discussed in more detail below.
[101] Thucydides 4.96.
[102] Thucydides 4.96.

that the decision to send this aid was made mid-battle, suggesting that Pagondas was somehow informed, or could himself see, the plight of the left wing, and that he was able to issue orders to send aid, orders which were communicated quickly enough to have the desired effect. It is reasonable to posit the existence of a system of runners here: indeed, given the specific nature of Pagondas' orders, and the fact that total surprise was achieved, it is difficult to see how any other form of communication could have been used.

While Delium is an important example of direct communication from a general resulting in a change of tactical circumstances, two powerful and striking examples of the use of messangers can be found in Thucydides' account of the battle of Mantinea, six years after Delium.[103] Thucydides' full account of the battle covers two days, and includes the manoeuvring of the opposing armies in the day before the engagement actually took place. During this day the Argive force occupied an easily fortifiable and elevated position, which the Spartan King, Agis, nonetheless resolved to assault. When the Peloponnesian phalanx was within javelin range, one of the Spartan veterans shouted to Agis that he was leading the army on an unadvisable course of action. Thucydides records that either Agis was convinced by this advice or had independently realised the danger at the same time; regardless of the reason the end result was the same, with the attack being called off immediately.[104] The incident has an important bearing on two aspects of communication in Greek warfare, demonstrating the ability of generals to issue commands to an entire army and expect them to be followed, as well as the ability of individuals to make themselves heard

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[103] Thucydides 5.65-74.
[104] Thucydides 5.65. Lazenby (2004) 120; Hornblower (2008) 171-2.

and influence events before combat began. The importance of effective communication is highlighted here; whether a veteran shouted the advice, Agis realised the danger himself, or this was all pre-planned, the Peloponnesians were able to hear the commands that were issued.[105] The *pilos* helmet, being lighter and open-eared, allowed for greater communication between individuals and may well have introduced as a result of changing tactical necessity and the Spartan concern for effective battlefield command and communication, with the ability to hear and react to commands being deemed more important than massive defence.[106] This much is surely suggested from Thucydides' account of the battle of Sphacteria, where he describes the difficulty the Spartans had in responding to skirmishing attack due to the amount of noise the enemy were making.[107]

A second vital example of the ability of generals to issue orders occurred during the actual battle of Mantinea that took place the following day. According to Thucydides the advance of the Peloponnesian phalanx was slow and steady, however it was not without incident, with Agis ordering a significant tactical shift during the advance, discussed below. During the advance into combat the Peloponnesian line overlapped the enemy line on the right flank, thus the Tegeans and part of the Spartan phalanx were on course to outflank the enemy left; however, this situation was mirrored by the enemy line, whose right flank, made up of Mantinean and Argive troops, threatened to flank the Peloponnesian left wing.[108] In an attempt to counter this, while advancing, Agis ordered the regiments on his extreme left, those of the Sciritae and Brasideioi, to match the Mantinean and Argive line, with further

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[105] Hornblower (2008) 171.
[106] Anderson (1970) 30-1; Hanson (2000a) 57-5; van Wees (2004) 48; Schwartz (2009) 57-9.
[107] Thucydides 4.34.
[108] Thucydides 5.71.

orders being sent to two Spartan *polemarchoi* to spread their line in order to cover the resulting gap in the formation.[109] The end result would have been to extend the Peloponnesian line to match the allied army's outflanking attempt, while allowing the Peloponnesian right to continue its own flanking manoeuvre. This shows a considerable degree of both tactical awareness and communication skills while on the move.

Thucydides states that the reason for Agis' orders is the now famous 'drift to the right'; the passage is important and bears quoting in full:

> τὰ στρατόπεδα ποιεῖ μὲν καὶ ἅπαντα τοῦτο· ἐπὶ τὰ δεξιὰ κέρατα αὐτῶν ἐν ταῖς ξυνόδοις μᾶλλον ἐξωθεῖται, καὶ περιίσχουσι κατὰ τὸ τῶν ἐναντίων εὐώνυμον ἀμφότεροι τῷ δεξιῷ, διὰ τὸ φοβουμένους προσστέλλειν τὰ γυμνὰ ἕκαστον ὡς μάλιστα τῇ τοῦ ἐν δεξιᾷ παρατεταγμένου ἀσπίδι καὶ νομίζειν τὴν πυκνότητα τῆς ξυγκλήσεως εὐσκεπαστότατον εἶναι

> "As they engage, all armies tend to the right, pushing out their right wing with the result that both sides then outflank their opponent's left wing with their right. This is because each individual hoplite is anxious to bring his own undefended side as close as possible to the shield of his colleague on the right, and reckons that tight locking is the best protection."[110]

The hoplite on the far right of the formation was the initiator of such a drift; he was the most vulnerable individual in the formation, and it would have been in his own interest to ensure he did not make initial contact with the enemy due to his vulnerability to being flanked.[111] If the extent of the Peloponnesian or Argive drift was greater than expected then the potential for the Peloponnesian left wing to be flanked would increase; while this would also allow the Peloponnesian right wing to

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[109] Thucydides 5.72.
[110] Thucydides 5.71 (trans Hammond.)
[111] "In this case, the hoplite's fear of personal injury overcame his interest in the success of the army, and left the men on the extreme left of the army exposed." Goldsworthy (1997) 11.

flank the Argive left, Agis deemed the risk too great and issued his orders in an attempt to balance his line. While the orders were obeyed by the Brasideoi and the Sciritae, the polemarchs refused to move to cover the gap;[112] Thucydides states this was because the order was given too late in the advance, an important point when it is remembered that in order to accomplish the manoeuvre the polemarchs would have to have marched their formations to their left, thus exposing their 'naked' right sides to the enemy.[113] The issuing of the original order indicates the ability of the general to communicate with his wings while on the move. Indeed, according to Thucydides Agis not only issued the original orders, but was informed that they had been disobeyed by the centre in enough time to issue new orders to the left wing to close up, in an attempt to reduce the gap in the formation.[114]

The battle of Cyzicus in 410 was a lengthy and complicated engagement, however once the Peloponnesian commander Mindarus was killed, his army fled in panic and the Athenians pursued the fleeing Peloponnesians, but this pursuit was abandoned when the threat of Persian cavalry to both the army and the attendant fleet was realised.[115] Two options present themselves: firstly, the threat of the Persian

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[112] Anderson (1970) 72 suggests that the orders were disobeyed because they arrived by runner and were "...without the authority of the king's person to back them..." While sending such orders by runner seems to be the most likely method (see, e.g. Aeneas Tacticus 22.2-3) it is more likely that the orders were disobeyed because they would have placed the Peloponnesian centre and mid-left wing in great danger. Lazenby (2004) 120 for the observation that Agis "...was a man given to sudden changes of mood."

[113] Thucydides 5.72 – they were later exiled, although for cowardice, not insubordination. Lazenby (2004) 123; Hornblower (2008) 189;Tritle (2010) 124. Wheeler (2007a) 215 for the Spartan "...perfection of the phalanx." Was this a case of professional pride or military indoctrination ("Never show the blind side to the enemy!") overriding the orders of Agis? See Thucydides 5.10 for the impact that marching while presenting the right flank to an enemy could have.

[114] Thucydides 5.72. Anderson (1970)

[115] Xenophon *Hellenica* 1.1.14-18; Diodorus 13.51.5-8. Diodorus' detailed account, probably based on the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, is difficult to reconcile with Xenophon's compressed attempt at describing the run up to, and course of, the battle. Littman (1968) 265-272 prefers Diodorus' account, although see Grey (1987) 72-89 for a contrasting view. Sense can be made of Diodorus here though, especially in light of those battle descriptions of Xenophon where Thrasybulus appears as a general:

cavalry was known before the engagement began, the Athenian troops were warned of this but began a pursuit of the defeated Spartan infantry anyway, with the Athenian commanders being unable to immediately restrain their troops after a lengthy and hard fought battle. Secondly, the threat of the Persian cavalry was not known until after the Spartan infantry had been defeated, at which point this information was relayed to the Athenian force and the pursuit was abandoned. The second option is supported by Diodorus' account, and also appears more likely given the lengthy and complicated nature of the battle; however we have no evidence as to how this information was relayed. An aural signal would be possible, but such signals are limited due to their relatively short range and the fact that their meanings must be agreed upon beforehand; equally a visual signal would be unlikely given the need to maintain either a chain of static messenger posts or a direct line of sight to the fleet.[116] A runner or cavalry messenger would be the most likely means of relaying messages and orders while in neutral or unfriendly territory and also allows for the scouting of the Persian cavalry. The restraint of pursuit at Cyzicus, then, most likely came about as a deliberate decision based on information communicated to the army via messenger.[117] This incident hints at the level of tactical and strategic sophistication which was at play; the Athenian commanders were able to maintain control over their army despite winning a hard and significant victory, and were aware of remaining threats still in the field.

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his use of retreat/pursuit in the battles of Munychia and Piraeus indicate that the pursuit described by Diodorus could well be accurate.

[116] Krentz (1991) 110-8 for discussion of the use of the *salpinx* in warfare – it is possible that a pre-arranged signal existed which could recall the army to the fleet, but this does not account for the spotting of the danger posed by the cavalry.

[117] See Aeneas Tacticus 4.1-12; 6.4-7; 7.1-4; 15.5-7; 16.16-7; 22.21-4; 26.12-14; 27.1-4 for the importance of communications between various contingents of an army, and how these communications can be optimised.

The previous examples have involved the attempted, and sometimes successful, use of battlefield communication via messenger. This communication could originate from elements of a very large army experiencing difficulties (Megarians communicating with the supreme commander of the Greek force) or from a smaller army's general who spotted a problem with his phalanx's deployment (Agis at the battle of Mantinea). These examples demonstrate the desire and ability of fifth century Greek generals to maintain control over their forces and to react to changing circumstances, two factors which can also be seen in the way individual hoplites, and phalanxes as a whole, operated in the field. A third category can be seen in Thucydides' reporting of the aftermath of the first large battle of the Sicilian Expedition. This engagement was a decisive victory for the Athenian force, ending with the Syracusan army being forced to retreat behind the walls of the city. Thucydides offers a number of interesting reasons for the defeat of the Syracusan force, such as the experience of the Athenian force and the sudden onset of a violent thunderstorm, however the most important reason he gives, for my purposes here, is that of the multiplicity of commanders in the Syracusan army. Thucydides writes:

μέγα δὲ βλάψαι καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν στρατηγῶν καὶ τὴν πολυαρχίαν (ἦσαν γὰρ πέντε καὶ δέκα οἱ στρατηγοὶ αὐτοῖς) τῶν τε πολλῶν τὴν ἀξύντακτον ἀναρχίαν. ἦν δὲ ὀλίγοι τε στρατηγοὶ γένωνται ἔμπειροι καὶ ἐν τῷ χειμῶνι τούτῳ παρασκευάσωσι τὸ ὁπλιτικόν, οἷς τε ὅπλα μὴ ἔστιν ἐκπορίζοντες, ὅπως ὡς πλεῖστοι ἔσονται, καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ μελέτῃ προσαναγκάζοντες, ἔφη κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς κρατήσειν σφᾶς τῶν ἐναντίων, ἀνδρείας μὲν σφίσιν ὑπαρχούσης, εὐταξίας δ' ἐς τὰ ἔργα προσγενομένης

"The major problems were the number of generals (there were fifteen of them) and the multiplicity of command, together with the lack of systematic response to command among the troops. If they confined authority to just a few generals of experience, and spent the winter organising the hoplite forces – maximizing numbers by providing arms for those without their own, and introducing compulsory training as well – they would have a good chance, he

said, of overcoming their opponents. They already had the courage, and discipline would follow."[118]

The inference is that Syracusan generals *could* be expected to exercise battlefield control, but a clear chain of command was lacking, resulting in many different orders coming from up to fifteen different men.[119] The confusion that would result from fully fifteen different sources of 'primary' authority can easily be imagined, especially when combined with the relative inexperience of the Syracusan force compared to the Athenians, and the fact that the Athenian force had, at that time, only two commanders. That the Syracusans recognised the danger of having too many generals is reinforced by the further reduction of their command system to a single individual, the Spartan Gylippus, when reinforcements from the Peloponnese arrived, a change which turned the Syracusan defence into a focused and effective effort. Thus Thucydides considered the initial defeat of the Syracusan army to have been because it lacked a clear system of command and control, and was made up of inferior fighters. Here we see Thucydides, an experienced general, emphasizing the need for generalship and fighting ability by having another experienced general, Hermocrates, advise his city to concentrate upon these qualities in order to match the Athenian army in the field. This is because generalship, communication, and fighting were the fundamental elements of hoplite battle, and weakness in all three resulted in the defeat of the Syracusans: the death toll of about 260 Syracusan dead to the Athenian 50 indicates the extent of the Athenian superiority.[120]

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[118] Thucydides 6.72 (trans Hammond.)
[119] Kagan (1991) 243.
[120] Thucydides 6.71.

Examples and incidents which emphasise the ability of generals to communicate with their phalanx, and for hoplites to communicate with each other, are less prevalent in the battle accounts of the fourth century. Iphicrates' victory over a Spartan mora in the battle of Lechaeum was a similar situation to Demosthenes' victory at Sphacteria: Iphicrates' attack relied upon constant attacks from his peltasts combined with the threat of an intact phalanx which remained close to, but uncommitted to, the attack.[121] A degree of communication between the two elements would have been essential if the plan was to be effective, although Xenophon is silent on the matter.[122] Equally Xenophon records details of a number of engagements where phalanxes did not advance despite holding a significant advantage or being very eager for combat. Such examples suggest that the troops present were restrained or 'talked down' by, presumably, their generals, again suggesting that communication with the entire phalanx was possible in highly charged and stressful situations, although admittedly before battle was actually joined. These examples are analysed in more detail in Chapter 5.

An interesting historical example is that of the second battle of Mantinea in 362, a useful engagement for directly demonstrating the ability of information to be distributed throughout a phalanx, and for, potentially, demonstrating the importance, and hence the presence, of a general's commands mid-battle. The attack of Epaminondas' deep column resulted in the flight of the opposing army, but his death in the fighting appears to have robbed his whole force of initiative, direction, and

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[121] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.5.13-18.
[122] Xenophon tells us some of the peltasts had been caught, and presumably killed, by pursuing Spartans in a previous engagement – maintaining a safe distance from the Spartans was just as important for the hoplites. Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.4.16-17.

drive.[123] Various elements of the Beoetian force slipped away and failed, or refused, to capitalise on their advantage by pursuing the broken enemy.[124] This situation, though exceptional, still provides important information regarding communication in battle and the role of the general in combat. The breakdown of the Theban force and its failure to finish off the Peloponnesian army could indicate two things: firstly that the commanders of the various Theban and allied units present were awaiting orders from Epaminondas that never arrived because he was killed; secondly, that news of Epaminondas' death spread very quickly and was such a shock to morale that the Theban army was no longer capable of undertaking a pursuit, orders or not. Either possibility assumes information, either specific or general, could be communicated rapidly during battles.

A passage from the 2nd century AD author Polyaenus can also be deployed to shed light on the ability of generals to communicate mid-battle, although given his distance from the events he describes we must approach his evidence with caution. The contents of the passage actually appears three times in Polyaenus' work, being attributed to Iphicrates, Epaminondas, and Alexander the Great, three of the greatest tacticians and generals of Greek history. In each passage the general is reported as stating:

ἐν βῆμα χαρίσασθέ μοι, καὶ τὴν νίκην ἕξομεν

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[123] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.5.24-5.
[124] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.5.25.

"Favour me with one step and the victory is ours."[125]

The passage suggests it was the uttering of these words that inspired the army to victory, a scenario which relies upon the ability of that general to have his words and wishes heard and understood, indeed heard and understood quickly, given the intense situation the passage suggests.

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[125] Polyaenus *Strategems* 2.3.2; 3.9.27; 4.3.8.

An important issue regarding the ability of generals to issue orders and communicate mid-battle is where generals were usually located in the phalanx, and, indeed, if such a position can be consistently found in the source material, an issue closely connected with the idea of generals as figureheads for their phalanxes. The connection between general and morale has fascinated modern scholars, several of whom have framed the Greek art of generalship as the creation, strengthening, and maintenance of bonds between individuals and groups and the moulding of an army's morale, all factors closely associated with the need for all generals to fight, and be seen to fight, in the front ranks of the phalanx.[126] Thus the prevailing image of a Classical Greek general is one of a man who decides the depth of his phalanx, attempts to aim it in the right direction, gives an inspiring speech, then lends his spear and shield to the effort, the technical part of his job as general virtually complete and the physical, inspiring part just beginning.[127] Hanson wrote that "Our sources indicate that there was a general desire on the part of the general to fight and risk death alongside his men."[128] He presents this as a 'novel' ideal of the Greeks, one which remained at the core of Western warfare until the beginning of the First

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[126] Most strongly by Hanson (2000a) 108-116. Wheeler (1991), reacting to the first edition (1989) of *The Western Way of War* attempted to demonstrate that generals did not *always* stand in the front ranks, but nonetheless based his theory on leadership by example and the emotional link between general and army. Anderson (1970) 70-1. Schwartz (2009) 180-183 follows Hanson closely, stating that "The best way a general could exert himself was...by being among his men and setting a good example in order to boost morale and fighting spirit." See also Paul (1987) 307-8.

[127] Wheeler (1991) 121-3 where he also first discusses the concept of a 'transition' from warrior to general; Hanson (2000a) 108-110; Schwartz (2009) 180-1. Krentz (1985), (2002), (2010) and van Wees (2004) do not directly discuss the battlefield role of the general as a subject, but their overall image of warfare allows for such individuals to contribute with significantly more than just their weapons, strength, and inspiring qualities.

[128] Hanson (2000a) 108.

World War, and attempts to explain this desire as a function of generalship itself, i.e. generalship and leadership were synonymous, and generals lead from the front because, once battle began, their ability to do anything other than fight was ended.[129] Hanson's chapter is full of romantic and idealised images of generalship such as this, images that seem influenced more by his knowledge of, and constant comparison with, the American Civil War and the two World Wars than by any connection with the relevant ancient material.[130] Indeed the notion that generals must have fought and inspired their men with their physical deeds in battle is apparently based on what he views as an otherwise unexplainably high casualty rate for generals throughout the Classical period.[131] Hanson seems to view this as an honourable thing, and points out that "…there seems not to have been a single instance in some six hundred years of warfare of any Spartan king's surviving the defeat of his men on the field of battle – that is, until the king Kleomenes III in the twilight of the Spartan state deserted his overwhelmed troops at Sellasia in 222."[132] This puts the proverbial horse before the cart: you simply cannot state that generals from all states rarely survived the defeat of their armies and then make a special case out of Spartan kings *also* not surviving defeat.[133]

Wheeler disagrees with some of Hanson's conclusions regarding generalship, but agrees that morale played an important part, remarking that by the fourth century: "…an army was inoperative without its general – its metaphoric, spiritual,

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[129] Hanson (2000a) 110; Van Wees (2004) 108-113.

[130] E.g. Hanson (2000a) 108-9, 115-6. Comparisons and analogies with other, later, 'forms' of war play a large part in Hanson's methodology.

[131] Hanson (2000a) 113-4.

[132] Hanson (2000a) 113-4.

[133] See also Schwartz (2009) 149 for the view that "A lapse of over a century between royal deaths in battle…would also suggest the absence of Spartan kings from the phalanx's front line." It seems to me that this suggests nothing more than the fact that for over a century no Spartan king died in battle.

and physical head."[134] It is interesting to note that Wheeler does not describe the general as the *tactical* head of the army, surely the point Iphicrates was making when he introduced his simile comparing an army to the human body: it was quite possible for a person's body to be strong and prepared for war, but if that person could not make rapid and correct decisions regarding where and how to apply this strength, then they were ineffective in battle.[135] The discussion of communication during battle, found above, demonstrates that generals *could* issue commands and expect them to be followed, however *where* the general was during battle has an important bearing on our overall image of generalship during the Classical period. If the sources show he was always in the front ranks and always fighting then the case for an almost purely leadership role is strengthened, however if the evidence shows that sometimes generals were absent from the front ranks, perhaps throughout the fighting, then a more sophisticated role for the general can be found, one involving information, communication, and decision making, rather than just inspirational action. A third option also presents itself: generals usually fought in the front ranks but could withdraw to the rear when exhausted, injured, or wanting to get a sense of how the battle was going in order to issue appropriate commands.

The accounts of various battles can be found to back the position that generals fought in the front ranks of the phalanx, thus at the battles of Marathon, Potidaea, Olpai, Pireaus, Nemea, Coronea, and Leuctra the ancient authors inform us that generals were stationed in the front ranks, indeed Epaminondas' tactics at Leuctra relied upon being able to crush the Spartan 'command position' at the very

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[134] Wheeler (1991) 145.
[135] Polyaenus 3.9.22.

beginning of the engagement, something that would have been very difficult had it been located in the rear ranks of the phalanx.[136] These battles, while large and important ones, represent only a small fraction of those fought, and scholars have generally sought corroborating evidence from other sources which discuss attitudes or ideals regarding generals and the theory that an inspirational presence was the most important aspect for Greek generals to possess.[137] Thus we have numerous exhortations from various sources for generals to be hard, practical men who were quick and capable with their weapons rather than their minds and tongues, and this points to a number of shared characteristics that seem to have made up an 'ideal' general. Archilochus observed that:

> "I don't like the towering captain with the spraddly length of leg, one who swaggers in his lovelocks and clean shaves beneath his chin. Give me a man short and squarely set upon his legs, a man full of heart, not to be shaken from the place he plants his feet."[138]

Thus overbearing confidence or the impetuosity of youth were not qualities desirable in a general, indeed the very opposite is suggested: a general should be experienced, solid, and capable. This point may be supported by Aristophanes' caricature of Lamachus and his insults, directed at an unnamed captain, about colourful and over-the-top crested helmets; an absurd image of an individual overly concerned about his image rather than his ability to command men springs to mind.[139] It is worth pointing out, however, that the ability to identify a general, or subordinate officer, quickly could have been vital to hoplite battle, and a crested

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[136] Herodotus 6.111; Thucydides 4.62, 3.107; Xenpohon *Hellenica* 2.4.30, 4.2.9-19, 4.3.16, 6.4.13; Plutarch *Pelopidas* 23. Wheeler (1991) 145.

[137] See, e.g. Wheeler (1991); Hanson (2000a); Schwartz (2009.)

[138] Archilochus 114.

[139] Aristophanes *Acharnians* 1071-1234, *Peace* 1171. Hanson (2000a) 110 comments that the point of Aristophanes' barbs is that these individuals "…might not be eager to charge with their soldiers into the faces of the enemy." Lamachus seems to have been a solid and effective commander, and, indeed, died while marching with his soldiers into the faces of the enemy, so I feel the charge is unwarranted.

helmet would certainly achieve this: Aristophanes' exaggeration makes for an amusing scene, however it must have some basis in reality for it to have been relevant to a contemporary audience.[140]

Archilochus and Aristophanes' points highlight the qualities, desired in a general, emphasised in various other works such as hardiness[141], the ability to keep discipline[142], and the ability to simply project competence.[143] While there are examples of generals suffering personal hardship these refer to the maintenance of an army's morale and discipline *off* the battlefield: tales such as Iphicrates walking barefoot and wearing summer clothes in the winter, and Agesilaus' ability to withstand extreme temperature and go without sleep, have no bearing on where they could be found once the fighting started, or how they conducted themselves in battle.[144] Despite this Hanson felt able to state that "…all believed that their supreme commander could best further his army's cause by leadership through example, by fighting in the ranks on the right wing of the phalanx where his hoplites might be buoyed by his personal display of courage…"[145] It is difficult to view the remark as accurate, indeed Xenophon does not record any instances of Iphicrates actually fighting with his men, although there are many examples of his ability to inspire men to great efforts when training, or to impose strict discipline and unusual methods of ensuring the loyalty and effectiveness of mercenary forces.[146]

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[140] Hanson (2000a) 73-4 is sceptical regarding the presence of crests on Corinthian helmets.
[141] Xenophon *Agesilaus* 5-6.
[142] Xenophon *Anabasis* 2.6.9-14, 20. Cartledge (1987) 207.
[143] Plutarch *Moralia* 231F4.
[144] Polyaenus 3.9.34.
[145] Hanson (2000a) 107.
[146] Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.2.32; Polyaenus 3.9.35.

The majority of the surviving battle descriptions do not indicate which rank the generals of either phalanx were stationed in, however some do offer hints. The Spartan King Agis at the battle of Mantinea was, according to Thucydides, present in the centre of the Peloponnesian line and surrounded by a bodyguard of 300 *hippeis*, however we are not told whether Agis was actually in the front rank.[147] An incident the day before the battle when a veteran called out to Agis that his tactics were dangerous may suggest that Agis had an obscured view of the situation and that he was therefore not in the front rank.[148]

In Thucydides' account of the battle of Amphipolis we are told that Brasidas led a small force in a rapid strike against the Athenian centre while Cleon, the Athenian general, fled at the first opportunity and was killed by a peltast.[149] A reasonable inference may be that Brasidas was literally leading the advance of his hoplites from the front rank while Cleon, whose flight does not seem to have disrupted the Athenian phalanx, was not in the front ranks, however the evidence is clouded by Thucydides' apparent dislike of Cleon and the lack of detail, thus we cannot make too much of it.

A vital example is that of the battle of Delium, the details of which have been discussed above, and which serves as evidence for generals either *not* being present in the front ranks throughout a battle, or for their ability to communicate with their

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[147] Thucydides 5.72.
[148] Thucydides 5.65.
[149] Thucydides 5.10.

army *despite* being actively engaged in the fighting.[150] It is to be admitted that Thucydides does not give details about where Pagondas was at any point in the engagement, however his description of Pagondas' speech as being very short, perhaps in an attempt to catch the Athenians off guard, suggests that Pagondas may have at least *started* the battle in the front ranks, as, presumably, did Hippocrates, who was forced to cut his speech short and quickly join the ranks.[151] It is possible that Pagondas issued his order for a cavalry attack while still fighting in the front ranks, however this seems unlikely:[152] the stress and potential confusion involved with undertaking these actions simultaneously suggests that Pagondas withdrew from the fighting, either into the very rear ranks or even out of the phalanx altogether, to allow him to receive information regarding the plight of his left wing and to issue appropriate orders to address it. Note that I do not suggest that Pagondas represents a transition from 'general' to 'battle-manager', rather that his role as general did not bind him to the front ranks for the entire battle. Frontinus and Polyaenus record an incident that supports this interpretation, although it is not found in Thucydides' account of the battle: at the battle of Tanagra in 457 an Athenian commander was apparently able to launch an attack with his left flank before running to his right flank and declaring that the attack had met with success:[153] it is unlikely he was in the front rank throughout this stratagem.

Two of the most tactically interesting and well documented battles of the Classical period contain important information regarding the *absence* of the general

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[150] See above.
[151] Thucydides 4.95-6.
[152] Thucydides 4.96.
[153] Frontinus Stratagems 2.4.11; Polyaenus 1.35.1. Wheeler (1991) 149-50.

from the front ranks, those of Sphacteria and Lechaeum. It is to be admitted that in neither of these battles are the hoplite forces present actually engaged, however they are useful for making a general point regarding the ability of generals to 'direct' battles. At Sphacteria we are told that Demosthenes, having organised his light infantry into multiple units of around 200 and sent them to attack the Spartan hoplites, was approached by the captain of one of these groups who had important information regarding a weakness in the Spartan position.[154] It appears that Demosthenes, along with the Athenian hoplites, was stationed some distance from the fighting, possibly in an elevated position, and was deliberately avoiding combat.[155] Xenophon's account of Laecheum is less detailed but suggests a similar situation: Callias, the commander of the hoplites, did not engage with his hoplites, instead allowing Iphicrates' peltasts to engage the Spartan force; we do not know exactly what Iphicrates was doing during the fighting but given the need for a flowing system of constant attacks it is likely he was fulfilling a similar role to Demosthenes at Sphacteria.[156] Both engagements show that there was no overriding inspirational or tactical need, or doctrinal imperative, which required generals to be present for the fighting. Indeed, one of the most impressive Spartan generals of the fourth century, Agesilaus, does not seem to have been stationed in the front ranks at the battle of Coronea: Xenophon tells us that it was Herippidas that led the initial advance, while Plutarch's account states that Agesilaus was wounded during the second clash *despite* the presence of a royal bodyguard 50 men strong.[157] There is no justification to state that "Along with regimental spirit, an even better incentive for hoplites to stand firm was the sight of their own commanding officer...fighting

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[154] Thucydides 4.36.

[155] Athenian hoplites were present: Thucydides 4.31.

[156] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.5.13-18.

[157] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.17; Plutarch *Agesilaus* 18.

alongside them in the very front ranks of the army"[158] when on some occasions the general was not even taking part in the fighting, and on those occasions when he was, only those physically close were able to see him in the first place![159]

The ancient evidence does not permit a definite conclusion to be reached regarding the position of the general in a phalanx; the relevant information is missing from many battle accounts, and the information that does survive does not point to a single, 'standard' position that all generals adopted. This is to be expected for two reasons: 1) not all generals shared identical character traits, thus some may well have preferred to lead from the front ranks while still others would have preferred a less direct role, 2) not all battles and phalanxes demanded a general leading from the front ranks, hence Demosthenes' decision not to engage in the fighting at all during the battle of Sphacteria. Taking all the evidence together, as well as the conclusions of later chapters of this thesis which deal with the possibility of command during battle, I conclude by affirming the third option given at the beginning of this section, namely that generals usually fought in the front ranks but could withdraw to the rear when exhausted, injured, or wanting to get a sense of how the battle was going in order to issue appropriate commands. However a final aspect of generalship which sheds light on the ability of generals to communicate and their position in the line remains to be investigated, this being the deaths of generals in battle.

In his contribution to *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience* Wheeler examined various aspects of generalship in Classical Greece, paying

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[158] Hanson (2000a) 107.
[159] Due to the confusion and intense fighting in the front ranks. Schwartz (2009) 181.

particular attention to a factor of Greek battle which Hanson emphasised in *The Western Way of War*: the supposed 'shockingly high' casualty rates for generals. Wheeler pointed out that the battles of Tegyra, Leuctra, Mantinea, and Olynthus were all lost because the death of the Spartan general, or generals, in command resulted in such moral panic that their army was unable to continue fighting.[160] Far too much has been made of this. Indeed no contemporary source explicitly states that the death of a commander was the cause of such panic that the phalanx collapsed, while there are several examples of commanders being killed and their phalanx continuing to fight.[161] Why should we assume that all phalanxes were led by individuals who commanded such respect and admiration that the mere possibility of their death was enough to spread panic? A different explanation presents itself: if the death of a general resulted in defeat then it may have been because the phalanx was now literally 'out of control.' This explanation does not deny the possibility that a general 'going down' in combat could have a severe impact on a phalanx's morale, indeed I believe it simply completes the picture, allowing a balanced view of a general's importance to his army to be presented.

One aspect of generalship that has not yet been discussed is the impact of its *absence* to hoplite forces, i.e. how often were generals killed, why were they killed, and what were the consequences of the loss of a general during battle? Hanson came to the conclusion that defeated Greek generals were almost inevitably killed during battle, that victorious generals were also often killed, and that this resulted in

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[160] Wheeler (1991) 145.
[161] E.g. Herodotus 7.224-5; Thucydides 5.10; Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.13-14, 7.5.23-5.

"...astonishing, high mortality rates among battlefield commanders."[162] This notion is closely attached to Hanson's overall conception of hoplite battle as a simple affair, devoid of tactics or trickery, a conception that also includes a form of combat so restrictive that it would actually prevent generals from exercising influence during battle, as a result of which they were reduced to providing an inspiring example to their men.[163] Hanson takes this idea one step further in the concluding paragraph of his analysis of generalship, where he offers a comparison to the generals of the American Civil war, professing that "...the general in the field, like his hoplite predecessor, was obliged not only to fight, but more importantly, to die beside his men.[164] Thus the conspicuous display of 'shared risk' by generals was deemed by Hanson to be more important than any ability they may have had to influence the course of battle. However the following chapters demonstrate that the opposite is the case: hoplite battles were not simple fights, but involved the use of tactics, which were able to be used as a result of the flexibility of the phalanx formation and, hence, the ability of the general to influence battle. The issue of casualty rates for generals has not been addressed though, and remains of importance to the image of generalship that this study is presenting: if rates were 'astonishingly' high then this may well lend credence to the image of generals fighting harder, closer to the enemy, and with conspicuous bravery in order to inspire their men; to get them to follow and fight by way of example and the shame of being 'outdone'. We would naturally expect many more to be killed in battle than if they were relatively inconspicuous, or, indeed, were directing the action from some nearby hill.[165] However, high

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[162] Hanson (2000a) 112.

[163] Indeed, how could a general do *anything else* if he was pushing his comrades from behind, being pushed from behind, or standing in line attempting to cover his neighbor's shield-less side with his shield?

[164] Hanson (2000a) 115.

[165] See Wheeler (1991) and (2007) for the view that generals did not *always* enter combat, and that

casualty rates could also point to a second option: generals were viewed as targets of high importance, either as a result of their ability to inspire their men, or because of their ability to influence battle.

The sentence from Hanson quoted above highlights the approach that modern scholars have taken to Greek generalship: one fascinated by the frequency with which generals were killed and the need to lead by example, rather than the impact those generals could have on battle itself. The two points are closely related, indeed concentration on the deaths of generals and the importance of leadership by example is a position that is almost inevitable given the restrictive battlefield environment those same scholars advocate and which is analysed and rejected in the following chapters.

Schwartz provides the most complete list of deaths of generals, a list which spans from the death of Anchimolius at Phaleron in 512[166] to Leosthenes at Lamia in 323[167] and takes up some one and a half pages of his book.[168] The list is visually impressive, however Schwartz does not offer a conclusion regarding its contents, and simply states that: "The high mortality rate among generals in Archaic and Classical times speaks volumes."[169] Does it? If the point being made is that serving as a general in Classical Greece was a dangerous activity then this is surely correct, as is

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while a close connection existed between army and general, this was not so powerful as to break the army if the general was killed. Thucydides 4.96: the ability of the Theban general Pagondas to launch a cavalry attack mid-battle suggests he was not directly involved in the fighting *at that moment*, but does not indicate he was privy to a 'bird's eye view' of the engagement:.

[166] Herodotus 5.63.
[167] Diodorus Siculus 18.13.3-5
[168] Schwartz (2009) 181-2.
[169] Schwartz (2009) 182.

the assertion that serving as a hoplite was a dangerous activity, and the assertion that serving in the front rank was more dangerous than bringing up the rear. However referring to 'high mortality' rates is difficult to justify: we simply do not have sufficient information to make a comparative claim such as this, especially as the claim also treats all battles as of equal importance regardless of size and does not make allowances for the nature of hoplite battle itself or to the difference in command between states. For example, Schwartz points out that the Athenian generals Callimachus *and* Stesileus were killed at the battle of Marathon, and that Laches *and* Nicostratus were killed at the battle of Mantinea.[170] However pointing to just these facts and not examining them in context leads us to false conclusions, especially when there is no mention of those generals who were *not* killed. Thus at Marathon eight of the ten Athenian generals survived, as presumably did the Plataean general or generals, giving us a total of two out of (at least) eleven, or an 18% fatality rate.[171] Herodotus records that both of these generals were killed during the extended pursuit of the Persians after the Athenians had broken their formation,[172] i.e. *after* there would have been a pressing need for the sort of inspiring leadership that Hanson, Lazenby, Schwartz *et al* insist was vital for generals to display. Thus they fell, somehow, in the melee that occurred after the battle proper had been decided, and it is worthwhile to note that although Herodotus' account of Marathon contains evidence of Athenian generals exercising tactical and strategic thought[173], as well as influencing battle directly[174], there is no evidence to suggest

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[170] Herodotus 6.112; Thucydides 5.74. Schwartz (2009) 181 – his emphasis.
[171] Herodotus 6.114. The Plataean general(s) did not take part in the 'commander's conference' at 6.109, but given around 1,000 Plataeans fought it is reasonable to assume they were led into battle by their own leaders.
[172] Herodotus 6.114.
[173] Herodotus 6.109. Krentz (2010) 137-143.
[174] Herodotus 6.114. Krentz (2010) 157-9.

that they took greater risks, or displayed conspicuously greater valour, than any of the hoplites under their command.

Marathon is the first battle involving hoplites for which we have detailed information, and to see whether it is representative we can compare it to another, though larger, engagement, that of the battle of Plataea, where Herodotus does not record the death of a single Greek general although he does describe a 'commander's conference', indicative of the number of contingents and, hence, generals that were present.[175] That two battles of such size could take place only ten years apart and have such different consequences for those generals who fought indicates the difficulty of examining bare statistics and arriving at valid conclusions, as is also demonstrated by the battle of Mantinea. While Thucydides records the death of both Athenian generals at Mantinea, he gives no information regarding the fate of the generals in command of the contingents from Mantinea, Argos, Cleonae, Orneae, Tegea or Maenalia, although it is clear that Agis, the Spartan general, survived.[176] Whether Thucydides did not know if the other generals survived, or did not consider it worthwhile reporting, cannot be determined, however the death of the Athenian generals, along with 200 other Athenian hoplites, is directly reported, and is not surprising *given the circumstances*. The Athenians held the left wing of their allied phalanx and were not only opposed by the main body of Spartan troops, but, once Agis had extended his line, were also outflanked by the Spartans and Tegeans who

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[175] Herodotus 9.50-1.

[176] Thucydides 5.67 for the list of states present. 5.72 for Agis' potential involvement in the fighting itself – had he been killed then Thucydides would surely have mentioned it. Wheeler (1991) 148-9 for the observation that the 300 *hippeis* fight as a bodyguard to the Spartan King, and that several battle descriptions have the king placed *behind* other troops.

made up the right wing of the Spartan phalanx.[177] As such the Athenians were outnumbered, outmanoeuvred, and outclassed, and were only able to escape without further casualties due to the presence of their cavalry, which prevented a concerted pursuit by the enemy, and by Agis' decision to march to the aid of his beleaguered left wing.[178] The deaths of both Athenian generals at Mantinea was a result of the immediate tactical circumstances of their section of the line, and does not aid the case for a 'high fatality rate' amongst Greek generals. The next entry in Schwartz's list is the first battle of the Sicilian expedition, where the Syracusan general Diomilos died: at least eighteen generals fought in this battle, and Thucydides records no other deaths, thus we get an overall fatality rate of 5.5%, again, not a figure that appears to be astonishing.[179] The list goes on, but all it demonstrates is that in *some* battles *some*, occasionally *all*, of the generals of *some* contingents present, were killed, with the losing side usually suffering more casualties than the winners.[180]

There is an important distinction that needs to be made between those generals who apparently deliberately chose to die on the battlefield rather than escape and live, and those about whom all we know is the fact that they died at some point during battle. If the majority of generals willingly died rather than escape, or if the source material indicates that such was the expected behaviour of generals, then a number of options present themselves: 1) generals genuinely led from the front, and

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[177] Thucydides 5.72-3. Lazenby (2004) 124-5.
[178] Thucydides 5.72. Also 6.69-70 for cavalry preventing pursuit, and Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.22-3 for the Spartan restraint of pursuit at the Nemea.
[179] Thucydides 6.69-73. The Athenians were led by three generals while the Syracusans had fifteen! Schwartz (2009) 181.
[180] Mirrored by casualties amongst the hoplites as well: see appendix 1. Hamel (1998) 204-9 and Paul (1987) 307 also give lists of generals killed. Again the lists are visually impressive but, because of the fragmentary nature of the evidence, they do not allow solid conclusions to be drawn.

believed that their presence could bolster their troops to greater efforts, thus they deliberately placed themselves in the place of greatest danger, or stood their ground or advanced when their phalanx was in danger of being defeated, 2) the stigma and embarrassment of defeat was such that generals preferred to die fighting rather than live under the shadow of failure, which suggests that this was the best, or only, way for generals to influence battle 3) generals were so afraid of the potential repercussions should they return home in defeat that they would fight to the death rather than be directly punished for their failure.

The first category is small, but appears to have had a disproportionately large impact upon the study of Classical Greek generalship, given the insistence on the importance of generals fighting, and dying, in battle.[181] Indeed only two explicit examples survive, both of them Spartan.[182] The death of Leonidas is discussed elsewhere in this study, suffice to say that he chose a course of action which placed him in great danger, and during which he certainly led from the front, not out of a need to inspire his men but because he was relying on flexible tactics and manoeuvre.[183] Hanson uses Leonidas to illustrate what he views as a "…genuine desire on the part of the general to fight and risk death alongside his men."[184] Attributing motives or emotions to all generals, hailing from disparate parts of the Greek world, is even more dangerous than doing so to individuals: we do not know if generals *desired* to fight alongside their men, we do not even know if their *men* desired to fight, but what we do know is that Thermopylae was no ordinary battle,

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[181] Hanson (2000a) 115-6.

[182] Although the men of Thespiae fought to the death *three* times in the Classical period, the surviving source material does not allow a comment regarding the desire, or otherwise, of their generals to do this to be made. See Chapter 2.

[183] Herodotus 7.112.

[184] Hanson (2000a) 108.

and Spartans were no ordinary Greeks. Indeed given that the entire Spartan contingent present was wiped out at Thermopylae because they were surrounded and could not escape, and that the battle came to be viewed as the epitome of Spartan bravery, it cannot be used to identify a particular trend amongst Greek generals as a whole.[185] Spartan generals in particular do not seem to have conformed to the 'inspiring example' type: Thucydides' description of the battle of Mantinea has the Spartans sitting quietly and talking amongst themselves while generals from other states were inspiring their men with speeches; Spartans, it seems, did not need generals to inspire them to greater efforts.[186]

A century separates Leonidas from the only other surviving example of a general apparently deliberately placing himself in more danger than his troops and being killed, that of the Spartan Anaxibius, whose army was ambushed by the Athenian mercenary general Iphicrates in 379. According to Xenophon Anaxibius, whose army was caught marching in column and halfway down a mountain, recognised the hopelessness of the situation and sacrificed himself to allow the rest of his army to escape.[187] The incident may be evocative and appealing, it certainly conforms to the Spartan stereotype, but there is no need to reduce it to an emotional decision by Anaxibius to prefer honourable death over dishonourable flight.[188] Indeed Xenophon remarks that the majority of the Spartans were ordered to flee from the ambush, but were pursued and killed until they reached the safety of

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[185] See, e.g. Thucydides 4.36.
[186] Thucydides 5.69.
[187] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.8.38.
[188] So Hanson (2000a) 108, 178, 193.

Antandrus; if Anaxibius' intent was to make a 'last stand' in order to draw attention to himself then he failed. Scholars are fond of quoting his reported last words:

ἄνδρες, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἐνθάδε καλὸν ἀποθανεῖν· ὑμεῖς δὲ πρὶν συμμεῖξαι τοῖς πολεμίοις σπεύδετε εἰς τὴν σωτηρίαν.

"Men, it is honourable for me to die here, rush to safety before coming to close engagement with the enemy."[189]

Thus Xenophon's reporting of this engagement is used to demonstrate the heroic qualities of Spartan generals, rather than the ability of Iphicrates to outclass Anaxibius with a combination of misdirection and ambush; a situation possibly brought about by Xenophon's pro-Spartan bias, and reinforced by modern misconceptions regarding the inability of generals to influence battle, and the role of the general on the battlefield itself. Indeed, although Xenophon's description of Anaxibius' 'last words' suggests he deliberately chose to sacrifice himself to allow his men to live, Xenophon also writes that:

ὁ δὲ Ἀναξίβιος ἄρτι κατέβαινε σὺν τοῖς Λακωνικοῖς, ἐν τούτῳ ὁ Ἰφικράτης ἐξανίστησι τὴν ἐνέδραν καὶ δρόμῳ ἐφέρετο πρὸς αὐτόν.

"...and Anaxibius with his Lacedaemonians was just beginning the descent, at this moment Iphicrates started his men up from their ambush and rushed upon him on the run."[190]

Anaxibius' position was deliberately targeted by Iphicrates, presumably because Iphicrates was aware of the importance of the general to the effective deployment and tactical management of an army.[191] Anaxibius did not necessarily choose the

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[189] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.8.38 (trans Brownson, modified.)
[190] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.8.37 (trans Brownson.)
[191] C.f. his remarks regarding the general as the head of the army: Plutarch *Moralia* 187b; Polyaenus

nature of his death, and statements such as Wheeler's that "No wonder that the Spartan Anaxibius, the victim of his own carelessness and an ambush of Iphicrates, opportunely chose ... death in battle"[192] focus too much on the supposedly heroic nature of his *decision* to stand and fight, rather than his recognition that it was an impossible situation for him, personally, to escape from: the implication in Xenophon's description is that Anaxibius was unable to retreat as a result of the completeness of Iphicrates' ambush.[193] His 'final order' to his men to retreat highlights the point made at the beginning of this chapter that Greek generals were capable of communicating with their commands, and that Anaxibius could do it at short notice to an allied hoplite force in an ambush situation strengthens the case for communication as an essential part of Greek battle. It is perhaps too much to deny Anaxibius any aspect of heroism or self-sacrifice here; had he survived the initial ambush he may have lived through the entire engagement, however I believe he recognised his own situation was impossible as Iphicrates had targeted him directly. His order to retreat, though given in an attempt to save as many of his men as possible, was not followed by a suicidal and deliberate 'last stand' to give his men time to get away, but by his rapid death at the hands of Iphicrates' mercenaries who proceeded to catch and slaughter his men.

3.9.22. l.

[192] Wheeler (1991) 151. Schwartz (2009) believes that Anaxibius "...demanded to be left alone with a few troops, trying to make good an escape for his men" and uses this as an exemplar of the general setting a good example by his actions. This does not account for the context of the ambush or the deliberate targeting of Anaxibius' position by Iphicrates, and elevates the engagement to something it was not: an example of the superiority of Spartan character.

[193] It is also telling that Wheeler brings up Iphicrates' ambush *after* calling Anaxibius careless, it reads like an apology on behalf of the Spartans, or an attempt to place the blame on a Spartan's failure rather than an Athenian's success.

The two Spartan examples discussed above are the only surviving historical examples of generals 'choosing' heroic death over survival, they are not typical battles and, indeed, they do not represent individual generals doing nothing other than providing leadership through personal example.[194] Other, less detailed accounts of generals leading 'from the front' survive, however these do not demonstrate an overriding *need* for generals to provide inspiring examples, indeed they show something quite different: a need for generals to be in such a position, and with such troops, that the best advantage of changing situations could be gained. Thus Brasidas personally commanded the rearguard at the battle of Lyncus and an ambushing force at Amphipolis, where he was killed: both occasions when the actions of a small group of chosen men were key to his overall plan, and so were commanded by him personally.[195] Lamachus was killed in Sicily leading reinforcements from the Athenian left wing to resist a Syracusan attack on the right wing and was killed, not as a result of a need for him to personally inspire his men, or because he fell while allowing others to escape, but because he, and several others, became cut off from the main body of troops, possibly because of inadequate Athenian battlefield intelligence and scouting.[196]

Pelopidas commanded the Sacred Band at Tegyra and Leuctra, and was killed at Cynoscephalae during a tactical struggle over elevated positions, all occasions when the forces he led were operating alone or in direct support of the main phalanx,

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[194] While there are other examples of generals, Spartan and non-Spartan, getting themselves *into* unsurvivable or seriously dangerous situations, these do not indicate that they were 'prepared', 'willing', or 'eager' to die fighting, just that they had no other option but to try and fight their way out of the mess they got themselves into. E.g. Mnasippos: Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.2.16-23.
[195] Thucydides 4.124-9, 5.7-10.
[196] Thucydides 6.101. Hornblower (2008) 531. Wheeler (1991) 146 states that Lamacus was "...too boldly trying to exploit a Syracusan rout..." however Thucydides states that Lamachus was moving to support the Athenian right wing, a tactical decision, not chasing after fleeing enemies.

and thus needed to be able to respond to changing circumstances. Indeed, his input was expected and needed in order for the formation to be effective; he was not simply acting as a conduit for morale.[197] The behaviour that led up to his death is the very antithesis of that which the source material suggests was desirable in a general: Pelopidas let his emotions get the better of him, broke ranks, and whether he was dreaming of performing heroic deeds or simply enraged, his actions endangered his entire army rather than providing an inspiring example.[198] Generals were not limited to providing an inspiring example for their men to see, nor was their role limited once battle had actually began, indeed those occasions when a general fought "...with such contempt for death that he was actually killed..."[199] were occasions when he was not faced with a choice: Leonidas and Anaxibius could not get away, thus they died, along with the majority of their commands.

There is some evidence to suggest that generals were ashamed of returning home in defeat or afraid of the consequences that could follow if they did so, however this evidence does not amount to a solid conclusion that generals would fight to the death rather than accept a single defeat. Wheeler believes that "...failure demanded the ultimate sacrifice to avoid ignominy for the commander and to appease his city. Although defeated, the general could still claim a hero's status."[200] In support of this assertion he offers Epaminondas' opinion that death in war was *kalliston*, that Leonidas thought a glorious death in battle a gift to *aristoi*, and that

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[197] Plutarch *Pelopidas* 17, 32; Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.11-14.
[198] Plutarch *Pelopidas* 32. C.f. Herodotus 9.71: fighting out in front of the phalanx, or charging on ahead against superior numbers, was not recognized as good, or brave, behaviour for hoplites and, presumably, generals.
[199] Schwartz (2009) 180.
[200] Wheeler (1991) 151.

Agesilaus thought a quiet death for himself to have been unworthy.[201] These thoughts were all recorded by Plutarch and are thus both not contemporary and tainted by his desire to offer moral exemplars, indeed the three individuals are among the most extraordinary men of their time, and we must be careful with applying the principles and thoughts which Plutarch has them expound to Greek generals as a whole. More reliable and pertinent are the worries of the Athenian generals Demosthenes and Nicias, who, according to Thucydides, were both afraid of returning to Athens in defeat.[202] That both had *been* defeated and survived to fear the reaction of the Athenians contradicts Hanson's assertion that the Athenians 'to their credit' were so taken with the notion of generals dying before surviving defeat that all Athenian generals did so until Andocides had the gall to survive Chaeroneia.[203] We have no direct contemporary evidence to the effect that generals *preferred* death to survival in defeat: Demosthenes, Nicias, and Andocidies clearly did not, while the mere fact that generals of *some contingents* of defeated armies often died does not prove that they deliberately chose to 'go down fighting' rather than face the possibility of prosecution or execution on returning home. Indeed to state such is to overlook a simpler explanation that accords with the findings of the following chapters regarding the ability of generals to influence the course of battles, and emphasises the importance of generals throughout the Classical Greek period: generals of defeated armies died in battle because they had been targeted.

In suggesting this I do not mean to propose that *all* generals who ever died in battle did so because they were identified and systematically targeted by the enemy

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[201] Plutarch *Moralia* 192, 225D; *Agesilaus* 36.
[202] Thucydides 3.98, 7.14-15.
[203] Hanson (2000a) 114. Diodorus Siculus 16.88.2.

general, or that no generals ever died while attempting to hold off an enemy push or because they pursued a defeated enemy force too far. Instead I propose that the Greeks recognised the importance of generals to the continued effective operation of a phalanx and thus took pains to "chop off the head of the snake" whenever they could. This principle can also be seen in various engagements of the Peloponnesian War: at the battle of Olpae Demosthenes placed an ambush to counter the outflanking manoeuvre of the enemy right wing, which resulted in the death of the general Eurylochus, the destruction of the best troops in the Peloponnesian force, and the defeat of the rest of the army.[204] By engaging the expected position of the enemy general directly Demosthenes protected most of his left wing and centre, allowing his right wing, which he led in person, to defeat the enemy left and occupy the battlefield. Thus the enemy general and his best troops were tied up in combat and unable to come to the aid of their left wing, with Demosthenes' recognition of the importance of command mid-battle being at the very core of his tactics.[205] This recognition was shared by Epaminondas and put into practice in his victories at Leuctra and Mantinea.

A desire or demand for generals to willingly expose themselves to greater danger than their troops cannot be consistently found in the source material, indeed the placement of the general on the right wing with the best troops indicates quite the opposite: generals usually occupied that part of the army which was least likely to be outflanked, most likely required direction in order to control the drift to the right, and most likely to outflank the enemy, therefore being least exposed to danger, and most

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[204] Thucydides 3.107-9.

[205] See also the battles of Sphacteria, Munychia, and Coronea for possible examples of generals being deliberately targeted.

in need of a controlling presence.[206] However notable exceptions exist: at the battle of Delium the Athenian general Hippocrates was placed in the centre, while at the battle of Mantinea Agis held the centre of the allied army.[207] Neither of these represents a general deliberately accepting a greater degree of risk in order to inspire his men: Hippocrates was caught out of position by the early advance of the enemy, Thucydides explains he was walking the line offering encouragement while his opposite number only gave a short speech, and Agis was accompanied by the 300 *hippeis*, elite troops whose presence caused many of the enemy to flee before contact was even made.[208] Generals placed on the right wing were also in such a position as to direct the best troops in the phalanx in person, or, in the case of an allied army where the men from the *polis* under threat occupied the right wing, were stationed with troops who needed little further encouragement to fight as hard as they could. Generals were not hoplites whose only role was to act as a conduit and catalyst for their army's morale, they were not *expected* to perform glorious or exceptionally brave acts to inspire their men, and they were certainly not unable to influence battle once it had begun. The notion of the hoplite general as *primus inter pares* and symbolic figurehead on the battlefield must be rejected – it is a simplistic view based on fundamental misunderstandings of the nature of Classical Greek battle, reinforced by misguided attempts to draw parallels with completely different forms of warfare. Instead the evidence suggests that while generals did fight alongside their men in the majority of cases they did so in order to ensure advantages could be rapidly exploited

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[206] *Contra* Hanson (2000a) 110 who writes that the general would be the first to make contact with the enemy. I cannot see how he can be correct.

[207] Thucydides 4.96, 5.67. At the battle of Syracuse the Athenians held the centre of the phalanx while the Argives and Mantineans held the right. Thucydides does not state where the Athenian generals were stationed. 6.67.

[208] Thucydides 4.96.

by being well placed to issue orders, not so that they could inspire their men to greater efforts.

The surviving primary material suggests that the role of a Classical Greek general was more complicated than current orthodox thought suggests. His was a role which was not limited to providing an inspiring and physical example to his men, but was one which encompassed the receiving and sending of messages, the issuing of orders, and the exercise of discretion in deciding where and when to fight in the front ranks of the phalanx. I do not suggest that there was a desire on the part of generals to avoid combat altogether, rather that there was no need for them to be constantly present in the front ranks fighting for their lives; the source material directly, and indirectly, suggests that generals were capable of much more.

Chapter 3: Small units and subordinate commanders

An important 'offshoot' of this investigation has been the discovery of the importance of other levels of command, formal and informal, in hoplite armies. These secondary levels of command are rarely discussed directly by the surviving sources; however their presence, and their importance, can be inferred from a number of incidents which can only be explained by the ability of individuals to react rapidly, and in an organized fashion, to changing events. These events, from a rapid dash out of the phalanx to strike down a Persian general,[209] to the disabusing of a Spartan King's battle plan,[210] and the ability of phalanxes to continue operating after the death of their general,[211] all indicate that individuals other than the general were able to, and indeed expected to, exercise leadership and command functions during battle. This is a vital point that has not been fully recognized by modern scholarship, but it is a point that changes our understanding of the battlefield environment of hoplite engagements, the nature of the phalanx, and the very purpose of Classical Greek battle by further shifting the emphasis from the 'wonderful absurd conspiracy'[212] of a system of battle that deliberately limited the possibility of generalship, and hence casualties, to one which concentrated on the engineering of advantage through any means possible. Indeed, the presence of subordinate commanders within phalanxes highlights the importance the Greeks attached to organization and leadership in battle, and reinforces the image of the phalanx as a

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[209] Herodotus 9.22.
[210] Thucydides 5.65.
[211] E.g. Herodotus 7.224-5; Thucydides 5.10; Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.13-15.
[212] Hanson (1991) 6. Hamel (1998) 59-75 has an interesting chapter on Athenian subordinate commanders and the extent to which they could influence generals regarding discipline, awarding of prizes, and strategic decision-making, however she does not consider their battlefield role.

flexible formation, as developed in previous chapters, and changes the focus of hoplite combat from *solidarity* to *teamwork*.

The importance of subordinate commanders to Classical Greek armies is evident in the structure of Spartan and Athenian armies, both of which had various formal levels of command below the general. The Spartan system was rather more complicated than the Athenian, and allowed Spartan phalanxes to exercise an impressive degree of battlefield adaptability and survivability in the face of concerted attack, or in the event of their general being targeted and killed. This system evolved during the fifth and fourth centuries,[213] and we are fortunate that a number of excellent sources contain information regarding the levels of command and organisation within the Spartan army at that time. The oath of the Greeks apparently sworn before the battle of Plataea, and preserved in a mid-fourth century inscription from Acharnae, contains a sentence which is vital to our understanding of both Spartan and Athenian approaches to command at all levels:

> "I shall not desert my *taxiarchos* or my *enômotarchês*, whether he is alive or dead, and I shall not leave unless the *hêgemones* lead us away, and I shall do whatever the *stratêgoi* command..."[214]

The oath may refer to a mixture of Spartan and Athenian military officers:[215] the position of *enômotarchês* was solely Spartan;[216] the Athenians elected their

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[213] See, most recently, van Wees (2006.)

[214] Tod II.204, 21-29. The oath is partially reproduced in various literary sources: Lycurgus *Against Leocrates* 81; Diodorus Siculus 11.29.31; FGrHist 115 F 153. van Wees (2006) 125 for a summary of the arguments regarding the inscription's authenticity; he regards it as an "...exact copy of the real thing" 153.

[215] Suggested by van Wees (2004) 244. Lazenby (1993) 220 n.15 is sceptical.

[216] Herodotus 1.65. van Wees (2006) 127.

stratêgoi each year but the word is not used to describe Spartan officers; the Spartans referred to their Kings as *hêgemones*;[217] both states had a subordinate officer known as a *taxiarchos*.[218] Or it may refer to a purely Spartan system of command, in which the *hêgemones* refers to their position as leaders of the alliance against Persia,[219] and the *strategôi* refers to a 'council of the allies' generals', presumably dominated by Spartans, and not the Athenian office.[220] Thus the oath possibly reflects a joint effort by Spartan and Athenian individuals to create an oath suitable for all the states present at the battle, or is an indication that Spartan command and control of the allied army was stronger than previously thought, with the allies swearing not to abandon the battlefield before the Spartans, or to disobey any orders which the 'council of generals' issued. The latter suggestion has the benefit of avoiding the need to imagine Spartans and Athenians swearing loyalty to each others' officers and leaders,[221] while highlighting the importance of the basic tactical unit used by the Spartans, the *enômotia*. The 'Oath of Plataea' can be compared with the 'Oath of the Ephebes', found on the same inscription, to highlight the primary difference between Spartan and Athenian forces. The Ephebic oath stresses loyalty to one's neighbour in line and the obligation to defend and strengthen the state: obedience to officers does not feature, although obedience and loyalty to *all* loyal soldiers does.[222] The generic tone of the oath, and its function in the 'coming of age' of Athenian youths, reduces its impact as a reflection of Athenian military practice, and it does not indicate that a

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[217] Herodotus 9.53
[218] Herodotus 9.53; Aristotle *Athenian Constitution* 61.1-3; Aristophanes *Acharnians* 575. van Wees (2006) 127-8, n.10, 11.
[219] As at, e.g. Herodotus 7.149, 159, 204, 208, 8.2-3.
[220] As at, e.g. Herodotus 8.49, 56-9, 78, 9.21. Siewert (1972) 60-61, 95-6, now followed by van Wees (2006) 131.
[221] van Wees (2006) 131. 127 for the point that an Athenian *taxiarchos* commanded large units, while an *enômotarchês* commanded the smallest unit possible in the Spartan system: the two are not comparable, and the most plausible explanation is that the oath refers to two Spartan positions, rather than an Athenian and a Spartan.
[222] Lines 5-20.

chain of command, or subordinate officers, were not important to Athenian military thought and practice.

Despite uncertainty regarding its specific details the oath remains useful as it still sheds light on, at least, the levels of Spartan command present at the battle of Plataea, and also because it suggests that the 36 states present at the battle would have understand and appreciated the position of *taxiarchos* – if it was shared by the Spartan and Athenian military systems then it is fair to assume that others also used it, or were at least familiar with the concept. Also the oath makes it clear that the Spartan command system was more integrated than other states, with another level of command existing between the general's immediate subordinate and the rest of the men.[223] This level, the *enômotarchês*, was the commander of the 'sworn band' to which he belonged, a unit which, by Xenophon's time, also had six file leaders, adding a further level to the Spartan system.[224]

Within each *enômotia* of about 40 men there were thus seven officers, a level of organisation increased by the ability of Spartan generals to direct 'year-classes' to undertake specific actions.[225] The flexibility of this final element of the Spartan system was demonstrated by its use at times when Spartan phalanxes found themselves under attack by light infantry; these were dangerous situations which required an immediate response from the general, and having the ability to direct specific groups of men, all of whom had gone through the *agoge* together, was a

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[223] Van Wees (2004) 100.
[224] Herodotus 1.65; Xenophon *Spartan Constitution* 11.4-8. van Wees (2006) 125.
[225] Thucydides 5.68; Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.12, 17. Van Wees (2004) 98, 277.

significant advantage.[226] These additional levels of command created an environment in which each individual Spartan was aware of his, and his immediate neighbours', position in the chain of command, and was thus able to take, or give, orders as and when required. It is important to note that this not only gave Spartan forces the ability to respond to changing tactical circumstances quickly, but may also have been the foundation for their effectiveness as *fighters* as well: having such a system of command would allow those involved in the actual fighting to direct their efforts more effectively as part of a group. Thus the strength of the Spartan 'cutting edge' was in its organisation and its capacity for teamwork, not just any physical superiority the Spartans enjoyed, a point emphasised by Plutarch:

> καίτοι πάντων ἄκροι τεχνῖται καὶ σοφισταὶ τῶν πολεμικῶν ὄντες οἱ Σπαρτιᾶται πρὸς οὐδὲν οὕτως ἐπαίδευον αὐτοὺς καὶ συνείθιζον, ὡς τὸ μὴ πλανᾶσθαι μηδὲ ταράττεσθαι τάξεως [p. 396] διαλυθείσης, ἀλλὰ χρώμενοι πᾶσι πάντες ἐπιστάταις καὶ ζευγίταις, ὅποι ποτὲ καὶ συνίστησιν ὁ κίνδυνος, καταλαμβάνειν καὶ συναρμόττειν καὶ μάχεσθαι παραπλησίως

> "And yet the Spartans, who were of all men past masters in the art of war, trained and accustomed themselves to nothing so much as not to struggle or get into confusion upon a change of formation, but to take anyone without exception as neighbour in rank or in file, and wheresoever danger actually threatened, to seize that point and form in close array and fight as well as ever."[227]

The importance of teamwork and the 'onion layer' system of subordinate command to the continued effectiveness of Spartan forces is further demonstrated by Thucydides' description of the Spartan response to the appearance of an Argive-led army on the day of the battle of Mantinea:

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[226] E.g. Thucydides 4.125-7; Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.5.14-16.
[227] Plutarch *Pelopidas* 23 (trans Perrin.) Lazenby (1985) 160; Wheeler (2007a) 215.

βασιλέως γὰρ ἄγοντος ὑπ᾽ ἐκείνου πάντα ἄρχεται, καὶ τοῖς μὲν πολεμάρχοις αὐτὸς φράζει τὸ δέον, οἱ δὲ τοῖς λοχαγοῖς, ἐκεῖνοι δὲ τοῖς πεντηκοντῆρσιν, αὖθις δ᾽ οὗτοι τοῖς ἐνωμοτάρχοις καὶ οὗτοι τῇ ἐνωμοτίᾳ. καὶ αἱ παραγγέλσεις, ἤν τι βούλωνται, κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ χωροῦσι καὶ ταχεῖαι ἐπέρχονται· σχεδὸν γάρ τι πᾶν πλὴν ὀλίγου τὸ στρατόπεδον τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων ἄρχοντες ἀρχόντων εἰσί, καὶ τὸ ἐπιμελὲς τοῦ δρωμένου πολλοῖς προσήκει.

"When the king is in the field he is in complete command. He personally determines the requisite orders and gives them to the polemarchs; they pass them on to the divisional commanders, and then in sequence the orders are transmitted from divisional commander (*lochagos*) to company commander (*penteconter*) to unit commander (*enômotarchês*) to unit. Any subsequent instructions needed follow the same route and arrive quickly. Virtually the whole of the Spartan army is a system of command within command, and responsibility for action is widely shared."[228]

Thucydides most likely gave this description of the Spartan officer system as an introduction to, or pre-emptive explanation of, the refusal of Agis' orders by two subordinate commanders which occurred later in the battle, and it reinforces the point made above about the complexity of the Spartan command structure.[229] Thucydides does not explain the purpose behind this structure, or directly compare it to that of any other state, but the implication is relatively clear: other states used their own systems of subordinate command, but the Spartan system was quicker, more effective, and more professional.[230] Indeed such was the importance of the subordinate command structure to Spartan armies that each of the seven divisional commanders present at the battle of Mantinea decided upon the depth of his own formation.[231]

Thus each division of the Spartan army was able to arrange its ranks according to the nature and size of the enemy force directly opposing it while also

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[228] Thucydides 5.66 (trans Hammond.) Anderson (1970) 71-2; Cawkwell (1989) 382.
[229] Hornblower (2008) 174.
[230] Lazenby (2004) 121.
[231] Thucydides 5.68.

adhering to the overall formation structure and battle plan, decided upon by Agis. However at Manintea this battle plan was changed by Agis at the last minute when he attempted to shift two divisions to the left in order to match the enemy line; Agis' orders were refused by the polemarchs of the divisions, and a hole was left in the Spartan phalanx as a result.[232] The polemarchs were later exiled for cowardice, but their decision, indeed their *ability*, to refuse a direct battlefield order indicates the importance of subordinate commanders to the Spartan army, the close connection between the polemarch and his division, and the difference in experience and ability between the polemarchs present and Agis, in overall command. Indeed, Agis does not seem to have been a particularly gifted commander: his order would have resulted in the two divisions presenting their unshielded side to an advancing enemy in close proximity, a potentially disastrous situation that the two polemarchs flatly refused to be drawn into.[233] This tactical mistake can be added to the one he nearly made the day before the battle which was only avoided by the shouted advice of a 'veteran'[234], and his earlier decision to agree to a peace treaty with Argos when he could have crushed their army in the field, a decision he took without consultation and for which he was heavily criticised.[235] On each occasion Thucydides directly or indirectly implies that Agis' authority was challenged or defied by subordinates – men who were narrowly able to prevent the King leading them into dangerous situations thanks to their official authority within the Spartan system and, presumably, their influence over, and loyalty with, the men in their division.

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[232] Thucydides 5.71.
[233] Thucydides 5.71-2. 5.10 for the danger of marching with the unshielded side to the enemy. Tritle (2010) 124, who also comments that this has factor has, hitherto, been unrecognized by modern scholars. Lazenby (2010) 123-5.
[234] Thucydides 5.65.
[235] Thucydides 5.61-3. Hornblower (2008) 167-8: Agis was fined and could no longer withdraw an army from enemy land unless he had the support of ten appointed Spartiates, however his ability to otherwise command the army was not reduced.

The nature of their equipment ensured that hoplites were difficult to kill or injure from the front, while the nature of phalanx combat ensured that relatively few casualties were taken during the actual fighting, with most taking place during the retreat. Because of this, the ability to call and direct specific and highly localised efforts to penetrate the enemy formation would be important: Xenophon mentioned the fall and recovery of Cleonymus three times in one battle because it demonstrated his bravery and was also unusual – perhaps such a fall was usually fatal if the enemy was alert to its occurring, and was able to force their way into the brief gap thus created. Incidents like this, and the nature of the fighting in the front ranks of two engaged phalanxes, further highlight the importance of subordinate commanders and veterans; these were men who could control and command on a local scale, pushing their hoplites into aggressive action where possible, organising defensive measures where required, as well as functioning as 'nodes' of communication in some situations.[236]

This does not deny a role for the general during this phase of fighting, indeed he could engage in exactly the same kind of local scale command, as well as controlling the overall tactical situation if necessary. The presence of official and organised systems of subordinate command in the armies of Classical Greece emphasises the importance of command and control to hoplite forces; just because generals could not micro-manage their entire phalanx throughout an engagement does not deny them an important role!

The fighting in the front ranks of an engagement between two phalanxes was

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[236] Discussed in chapter 2.

a matter of local advantage and disadvantage, of tentative advance into the face of a resisting enemy, or a rapid surge over the body of a fallen hoplite.[237] Once two phalanxes met, the battle did not descend into a blurred frenzy of frantic stabbing and hacking between two phalanxes, neither of which was operating under direction. Rather the shouted commands and messages of the general, some of which were relayed down the line, the steady heads of experienced front rankers, and the shouted warnings of watchful second rankers, would result in a flowing and responsive combat, with both side searching for the slightest advantage to exploit. This does not require prodigal martial skills or the ability to communicate complicated orders rapidly. All that is required is the knowledge of how fast you can cover ground, the striking distance of your weapons, and the disposition of the immediate enemies, as well as the support of surrounding friendly hoplites should you attempt to push forwards, of fall back. This style of combat allows for, indeed demands, local-scale leadership, and accounts for those incidents discussed below which indicate a 'loose' formation, the flexibility of hoplite equipment, and the military superiority of Spartan and mercenary forces. These forces held the advantage in organisation and command structure backed up by physical strength and endurance, *not vice versa*.

The sole surviving work of the fourth century Peloponnesian author Aeneas Tacticus contains a great deal of information regarding the importance of generalship, subordinate commanders, and effective organisation if a state was to resist an attack effectively, and is included here because I view his work as a commentary on Greek warfare as a whole, not just on siege situations in particular.[238] For Aeneas Tacticus, the advantages offered by familiar terrain, coupled with the risk

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[237] See Chapter 5c.
[238] See chapter 4.

of betrayal or panic if an enemy army managed to march up to the city walls, meant that an organised resistance should initially be offered as far away from the city as possible.[239] As a result of this his work is not just a guide on how to survive while the town itself is under siege, but also a significant source of information and advice on how to engage enemies in the field, with the most important theme, for my purposes here, being that of the link between general and subordinate commanders in charge of small units. This link lies at the very core of Aeneas Tacticus' conception of warfare, and he directly explains its importance several times, while we can also impute the link at various other points in his narrative.

Throughout his work Aeneas Tacticus constantly emphasises the need of the state's general to remain in overall command of the defence of the city and to engage in a proactive defence of the state. However he does not expect the general to act alone, and offers a significant piece of advice to his audience which would effectively increase their ability to command the defence, and control their forces: the creation of street level commanders.

The discussion of these commanders comes in the second half of an analysis of how best to post guards; Aeneas first advises that in the event of a panic or an unexpected attack the tribes of the city should be assigned by lot a section of wall to guard.[240] The need for an immediate response and for the population to be occupied in the event of a siege is something emphasised several times in the work; the authorities must take control, energise, and disperse the people if disorder was to be

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[239] Aeneas Tacticus 8.1; 16.16. By doing so it would also be possible to use naturally occurring boundaries, such as rivers and mountain passes, as defensive features: e.g. Xenophon *Anabasis* 2.3.10-14.
[240] Aeneas Tacticus 3.1.

avoided.[241] Although this would seem an adequate initial response to an unexpected attack, Aeneas points out that a well prepared general would have gone one step further and, in peacetime, would already have appointed the most competent and judicious men of each street to act as local commanders.[242] Thus, in the event of enemy forces being spotted entering the outer territory, the men of each street would be able to rally around a central and well-known figure before making their way to a previously determined location; those from the streets close to the agora would congregate there, those close to the theatre would congregate there and so on. This system would be effective in the initial, potentially panicked, response to an invasion as citizens would rapidly find themselves under authoritative local command.[243] It is unlikely that this initial organisation would be by street, unless the citizens of the street in question were actually working together during the time the threat was detected, however the existence of these street commanders would allow a recognised system of command to exert itself until the initial ad-hoc units could be re-organised into the units within which the citizens were used to fighting. Aeneas Tacticus advises that this system be adopted as it provides an immediate and effective response should anything occur during the night, a time when street-level command is an obvious choice, however it is clear that it would be effective at other times, and also carries with it several other distinct advantages which fit well with Aeneas Tacticus' view of how to resist enemy aggression.

By taking command down to the street level the general could organise armed forces, undertake military action, maximise the advantage to be gained from

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[241] E.g. Aeneas Tacticus 3.1; 8.1; 9.1; 10.13; 15.2; 16.2-9 (where Aeneas qualifies his advice by reminding the reader that although speed is of the essence, organisation and preparedness remain more important); 26.1
[242] Aeneas Tacticus 3.4-6.
[243] C.f. Xenophon *Hellenica* 1.1.23.

local geographical knowledge, and could gain a simpler and more accurate count of his military forces. Street-commanders also highlight the level of preparedness, caution, and attention to details which Aeneas Tacticus recommends; the general should do his utmost to keep the enemy away from the walls of the city, but should also be realistic and have procedures in place in case the walls are breached, a situation where the ability to effectively organise and command a 'rolling' system of street fighting would be vital.[244] The response of the Plataeans to the Theban incursion into their city in 431 is a fine example of how effective this could be, and while it is not an example of a 'pitched battle', it provides useful evidence for the possible existence of a pre-existing system of subordinate command, further highlighting the importance of command and control to Greek forces. Thucydides wrote:

> ἐδόκει οὖν ἐπιχειρητέα εἶναι, καὶ ξυνελέγοντο διορύσσοντες τοὺς κοινοὺς τοίχους παρ' ἀλλήλους, ὅπως μὴ διὰ τῶν ὁδῶν φανεροὶ ὦσιν ἰόντες, ἁμάξας τε ἄνευ τῶν ὑποζυγίων ἐς τὰς ὁδοὺς καθίστασαν, ἵνα ἀντὶ τείχους ᾖ, καὶ τἆλλα ἐξήρτυον ᾗ ἕκαστον ἐφαίνετο πρὸς τὰ παρόντα ξύμφορον ἔσεσθαι.

> "They gathered together by digging through the party walls between their houses, to avoid being seen on the move in the streets; they dragged carts without their draught-animals into the streets to act as a barricade; and they made all other arrangements which seemed suitable in the circumstances."[245]

This was a complicated, but effective, response to the Theban attack; Thucydides gives no clue as to how it was organised, but the principles behind it are the same as those that Aeneas Tacticus advocates: local knowledge of terrain and geography was combined with a surprise attack, resulting in the Thebans being surrounded and unable to escape.[246] The level of coordination that must have been

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[244] Aeneas Tacticus 1.4-9.

[245] Thucydides 2.3 (trans Hammond.)

[246] Aeneas Tacticus clearly knew of Thucydides' account of the siege of Plataea, and comments on the

required is impressive; perhaps the Plataeans already had a system of street-commanders in place, or the Plataean military authorities deferred to the knowledge of those citizens whose houses and streets were on the 'front-line'; regardless, the presence of effective command and control, tied to the exploitation of local terrain, can be found in this attack, as, indeed, it can be found in the entire Plataean resistance to the siege.[247]

Although the break out was successful it caused a minimum of damage to the Peloponnesian force, so perhaps something similar to Brasidas' ambush of Cleon at Amphipolis is a more appropriate example.[248] The battle is analysed in detail in the previous chapters, suffice to say here that constant observation of the enemy, combined with Brasidas' desire to engage an army that was light on morale and effective leadership, resulted in a comprehensive Peloponnesian victory.[249] Before the engagement Thucydides has Brasidas deliver a speech, of which Aeneas Tacticus would undoubtedly approve, in which he praises the use of unorthodox methods and distances himself from any set 'form' of engagement, stating that:

καὶ τὰ κλέμματα ταῦτα καλλίστην δόξαν ἔχει ἃ τὸν πολέμιον μάλιστ' ἄν τις ἀπατήσας τοὺς φίλους μέγιστ' ἄν ὠφελήσειεν.

"These are the tricks of war, and win great acclaim when the enemy is completely fooled to the maximum benefit of one's own side."[250]

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effectiveness of the Plataean response in 2.2-6, however his detail regarding the Plataean authorities delaying and distracting the Theban incursion force is not found in Thucydides. Hornblower (1991) 240-3; Whitehead (2002) 102-3

[247] Thucydides 2.3-5, 75-8; 3.21-4.

[248] Thucydides 5.8-11.

[249] See Anderson (1965) 1-4 and Best (1969) 29-35. Aeneas would probably prefer the general to survive such actions however.

[250] Thucydides (trans Hammond) 5.9. However see 4.126 where Brasidas suggests the skirmishers his army faces are cowardly and undisciplined; his speech appears more motivational than rhetorical as he closes with the warning that the enemy still pose a significant threat if they are underestimated.

Later in the speech Brasidas points out that reinforcements are more formidable to the enemy than those soldiers already fighting, a point reproduced, in very similar language, by Aeneas Tacticus.[251] Hornblower recognises the importance of this however he does not comment on the military significance;[252] clearly Aeneas Tacticus knew his Thucydides, but Thucydides, like Aeneas Tacticus, also recognised the importance of communication, ruse, subordinate commanders, and mixed forces to effective generalship.[253] Indeed, the sentiments expressed by Brasidas, and the attack that followed, are so close to Aeneas Tacticus' overall conception of warfare that we must credit Thucydides as being, if not a significant influence, then at least a significant source of information for him.[254]

A vital element of Aeneas Tacticus' advice is the use of small units, and an important point regarding the effectiveness and importance of subordinate commanders, and the flexibility of hoplites themselves, can be made by examining the evidence for small phalanxes and elite units in the contemporary historians of Classical Greece.[255] These units can be found in the pages of all the major contemporary historians, where they operate independently and in conjunction with other phalanxes, and also appear to have been highly flexible. They are examples of hoplites undertaking specific 'missions' in, usually, highly dangerous situations

[251] Aeneas Tacticus 38.2.
[252] Hornblower (1995) 53; (1996) 444. Whitehead (2002) 201.
[253] Thucydides also has Lamachus make a variation on this point at 6.49, where he advises that the Athenians must attack Syracuse sooner rather than later, as the longer an army remains on enemy soil without attacking, the less fearful it is to the enemy.
[254] Hornblower (1996) 444 describes the similarity of Aeneas Tacticus 38.3 and Thucydides 5.9 thus: "This shows that one not very famous or obvious bit of Th. was known to one not specially intellectual reader, and this has implications for our view of the reception of Th." However it also has great implications for our understanding of the development of warfare, and surely indicates that Aeneas Tacticus cannot be fairly described as 'not specially intellectual'!
[255] Van Wees (2004) 57-60. See also Pritchett (1974) 221-5; Lazenby (1985) 54-6; Trittle (1989) 55-6; Hutchinson (2000) 100-1;Hunt (2007) 144-5; Wheeler (2007a) 220-1.

which required the ability to react to changing circumstances; as such they are vital to any discussion of generalship or hoplite fighting in Classical Greece.

Of great interest is the fact that many of these units were 300 strong, a number which does not allow for a phalanx of the 'standard' eight ranks to be formed, and which is found so often in the pages of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon that it must have some significance.[256] There are three possible explanations for this: a unit size of 300 this was either 1) the minimum effective unit size for a phalanx, however this seems unlikely given the numbers of small *poleis* which sent correspondingly small numbers hoplites to the battle of Plataea, and would have been generally concerned with (relatively) small scale warfare.[257] 2) 300 hoplites was the maximum effective unit size which could be easily manoeuvred on the battlefield. This is more likely than the previous option, however larger units are commanded by individuals in the surviving battle descriptions, and expecting any 'specially formed' unit to have its focus on maximum numbers, rather than maximizing its other qualities such as speed and flexibility, seems to miss the point. 3) A unit size of 300 balanced striking power with ease of command and the ability to manoeuvre effectively. This seems the most likely option, indeed many of these units were created to fulfill specific roles which required them to respond, sometimes independently of external orders, to changing tactical circumstances. As such they were not usually commanded by a general, but by an experienced subordinate who the general trusted, such as Pelopidas' leading of the Theban Sacred Band, although

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[256] The 1,000 strong Argive 'special' unit seems to have been unusually large: Thucydides 5.67, 5.81; Diodorus 12.3.75-7, 12.79.4-6; 12.80.2-3.

[257] It is, of course, important to distinguish between permanent units and those formed on the spot for specific purposes, however it is the number in the unit and the unit's ability to function on the battlefield, rather than the socio-political purpose of the unit, that I wish to emphasise here. Van Wees (2004) 58-60.

they were occasionally commanded in person by generals, with the main force under the command of a subordinate.[258] The Spartan elite unit of 300 *hippeis* maintained the Spartan concern for organisation and the chain of command, having three *hippagretai*, one of whom was senior, a factor which also allowed the *hippeis* to be deployed as three units 100 strong.[259]

The most famous example of a unit of 300 is, of course, that of the 300 Spartans who fought to the death at Thermopylae.[260] While Leonidas' death marked the 'beginning of the end' for the Spartans, their phalanx appears to have remained under control during this time. [261] This leadership may have been provided by a designated second-in-command, by a veteran or other notable individual, or it could have been a natural and organic response by the entire phalanx, with each individual knowing what to do in the event of the King going down.[262] Regardless of where this leadership came from, the ability of the Spartans to withdraw in good order once Leonidas' body had been secured suggests that it was effective.

The flexibility and power of small units were also used by both Thebes and Athens during the battle of Plataea and although little information regarding the Thebans survives, beyond their fighting to the death, we are better informed about the Athenian unit.[263] According to Herodotus, the Megarian contingent of the allied

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[258] Plutarch *Pelopidas* 17-18.
[259] Xenophon *Constitution of the Spartans* 4. Figueira (2006) 58-9.
[260] These were *not* the *hippeis* though: Herodotus describes them as older men, all of whom had children. Herodotus 7.205. Figueira (2000) 61-2.
[261] Herodotus 7.112; Thucydides 5.72.
[262] C.f. Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.13-14. Also his *Spartan Constitution* 11.6.
[263] Herodotus 9.67: the 300 Thebans are described as πρῶτοι καὶ ἄριστοι and, given the existence of

Greek army was under heavy cavalry attack, and sent a message threatening to abandon their position if help was not forthcoming; a contingent of 'picked' Athenian hoplites and archers, under the command of the previously unmentioned Olympiodorus, volunteered to help.[264] The description of the men as 'picked' (λογάδες) raises the question 'picked by whom?' No elite body of Athenian hoplites existed at this time, and Diodorus' assertion that they were the bodyguard of Aristides is difficult to accept as no other source supports a tradition that Athenian generals were assigned a bodyguard as a matter of course.[265] Indeed, the assignation of such a bodyguard seems very unlikely for Athenians in this period given the tradition concerning Peisistratos' bodyguard and the imposition of tyranny.[266] The unit of 300 in question may have been picked on the spot by Olympiodorus himself, or may have been pre-selected as a 'rapid-reaction force.' The latter seems more likely given the need for a quick and effective response, which may not have been possible had an *ad hoc* unit been assembled.[267] Regardless of why and how the unit was formed, the principle remains the same: the Athenian response to an urgent request for help was to send a unit of 300, led by a subordinate commander, *not* to march with a large force under the command of a general.

Herodotus reports that the new Athenian deployment was effective, the

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Theban units of 300 in Thucydides and Xenophon, it is reasonable to assume they were a distinct group. Van Wees (2004) 59. Herodotus also reports that 300 Spartans, commanded by one Arimnestus, fought to the death when they took on the entire Messenian army at the battle of Stenyclerus: 9.64.

[264] Herodotus 9.21-3. How & Wells (1912) 295; Lazenby (1993) 222-3; van Wees (2004) 181.

[265] Diodorus 11.30.3. Diodorus may have confused the Spartan institution of *hippeis* with the force that Herodotus describes. Lazenby (1993) 222; Hunt (2007) 144.

[266] Herodotus 1.59; Aristotle *Constitution of the Athenians* 14.1.

[267] E.g. while the mercenaries of the 10,000 formed a unit of slingers to counter the range of Persian archers, they did so *after* they had escaped the ambush – if professionals could not form such a unit on the spot it seems unlikely that amateur Athenians could. Xenophon *Anabasis* 3.3.6-20.

Persian cavalry commander Masistius' horse was hit by an arrow, and Masistius himself was immediately set upon and killed.[268] The account of this incident suggests the Athenian force was flexible and under effective command; in order to take out Masistius individual hoplites would have had to leave the formation and engage him in combat, while the order to do so must have come quickly if Masistius was dead by the time the Persian cavalry came around for another pass.[269] The conspicuous glory of the Athenian force could suggest a potential difficulty with the account, however the Athenians seem to have been the only contingent to have brought an organised force of archers to the battle, and therefore their deployment against cavalry would have made a great deal of sense.[270]

Subordinate commanders leading small units were vital to the ability of the Greeks to effectively resist the Persian invasions; that they were used during moments of crisis by both Athens and Sparta suggests they were not a new or innovative response, while their ability to move rapidly, to resist both infantry and cavalry attack, and to operate with archer support indicates they were flexible and under effective command. These qualities remained central to Greek military thought throughout the fifth century, and a number of 300-strong units played important, illuminating, and generally underappreciated roles, for several different states, in the Peloponnesian War.

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[268] Herodotus 9.22; Plutarch *Aristides* 14.5. How & Wells (1912) 295.

[269] Herodotus 9.20-4. Burn (1984b) 517-8; Lazenby (1993) 222.

[270] Burn (1984a) 424 for the suggestion that this force was a "... 'task force' specially adapted for advanced guard action..." The suggestion is sensible, especially given the later Spartan request for their deployment to a different section of the line: Herodotus 9.60. Green (1996) 246 refers to them as "...a special Athenian commando force...which had been posted well ahead of the main line, perhaps as shock troops" which seems a bit much. See also Lazenby (1993) 222.

The first notable battle descriptions of the Peloponnesian War were not hoplite engagements, but rather city-fighting, siege breaking, and clashes between hoplite forces and light infantry. The initial response of the Plataeans to the Theban incursion into their city is discussed above, but the break *out* of the city by Plataean forces after nearly two years of siege has not yet been analysed. This break out was innovative and effective and was designed to limit the impact that that a unit of 300 Peloponnesians could have on the escape; clearly the Plataeans regarded the speed and flexibility of this small unit as a significant threat.[271] Thucydides gives little information regarding this unit, but it seems likely that it was created as a 'rapid reaction force' for just such a scenario, and would have been led by a subordinate commander detailed to respond to emergencies.

Thucydides does not record any details regarding who was in command of the breakout, however the response of the Plataean state indicates that a significant degree of command and control was in place.[272] The force made use of scouting and intelligence by observing that the Peloponnesian guards withdrew to the towers of the circumvallation wall during inclement weather and the Plataeans exploited this by making their breakout during a stormy and moonless night. Stealth and surprise were vital if the force was to be successful, so each man was only lightly equipped, while the force as a whole was spread out in order to prevent weapons from clashing and alerting the guards.[273] The advantages that scouting, stealth, and surprise offered the Plataeans were increased by the effective use of ruse: as the breakout force

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[271] Thucydides 3.23 See also 7.43 where the Syracusans form a unit of 600 hoplites to guard Epipolae.
[272] Although he does mention that it was originally suggested by Theaenetus, a seer, and Eupompides, a general: Thucydides 3.20.
[273] Thucydides 3.21-2. Lazenby (2004) 52.

approached the Peloponnesian wall, the remainder of the Plataeans launched an overt

attack on the section of wall directly opposite and lit a number of beacon fires in

response to a Peloponnesian fire signal to Thebes indicating enemy action.[274]

> φρυκτοί τε ᾔροντο ἐς τὰς Θήβας πολέμιοι: παρανῖσχον δὲ καὶ οἱ ἐκ τῆς πόλεως
> Πλαταιῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ τείχους φρυκτοὺς πολλοὺς πρότερον παρεσκευασμένους ἐς αὐτὸ
> τοῦτο, ὅπως ἀσαφῆ τὰ σημεῖα τῆς φρυκτωρίας τοῖς πολεμίοις ᾖ καὶ μὴ βοηθοῖεν,
> ἄλλο τι νομίσαντες τὸ γιγνόμενον εἶναι ἢ τὸ ὄν, πρὶν σφῶν οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ ἐξιόντες
> διαφύγοιεν καὶ τοῦ ἀσφαλοῦς ἀντιλάβοιντο.

> "Beacons were lit to send the signal of enemy action to Thebes, but the
> Plataeans in the city countered by lighting several beacons on their own walls
> (they had prepared them in advance for this very purpose) to confuse the
> beacon-signals received by the enemy, in the hope that they would
> misinterpret that was happening and not arrive in support until their own
> escapees had got clear and reached safety."[275]

So the Plataean breakout was supported by intelligence regarding the

probable Theban response, and a method to counter this was devised. Finally the

breakout force carried a mixture of weapons, with archers and javelin throwers

proving their worth by engaging the enemy at a distance.[276] The initial Plataean

resistance, discussed above, and this breakout, could not have been achieved without

several subordinate commanders being in place to offer advice or take control of

confusing and dangerous situations that occurred in darkness, while the

Peloponnesian unit of 300 represents a concern on their part for the ability to respond

to any aggression from the city rapidly and effectively, and the unit was most likely

under the command of a subordinate officer.

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[274] Thucydides 3.22.
[275] Thucydides 3.22 (trans Hammond.)
[276] Thucydides 3.23-4.

Thucydides' account of Sphacteria contains a great deal of useful information regarding the power and flexibility of small units, the role of subordinate commanders, and the role of the general himself. He compares the battle to that of Thermopylae, and it is clear that at Sphacteria the Spartan forces were initially mobile and flexible.[277] This response to ranged attack required the same attributes of command, communication, and flexibility that the Spartan forces at Thermopylae demonstrated so effectively, however the importance of these attributes were known to the Athenian general Demosthenes, who directed the Athenian effort at Sphacteria.[278] Thucydides states that the Athenian forces included 800 archers, a similar number of peltasts, and the crews of 70 ships, variously equipped; these men were organised into units of around 200, occupied the high ground, and constantly harassed the Spartan hoplites; their missiles were highly effective, and they appear to have remained under command and control by their own commanders throughout the engagement.[279] Local knowledge was also important: the commander of the Messenian contingent requested that he be given a unit in order to find a path behind the Spartan position, while the Spartans themselves were unaware of the vulnerability of their position until it was too late.[280]

ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἀπέραντον ἦν, προσελθὼν ὁ τῶν Μεσσηνίων στρατηγὸς Κλέωνι καὶ Δημοσθένει ἄλλως ἔφη πονεῖν σφᾶς: εἰ δὲ βούλονται ἑαυτῷ δοῦναι τῶν τοξοτῶν μέρος τι καὶ τῶν ψιλῶν περιιέναι κατὰ νώτου αὐτοῖς ὁδῷ ἣ ἂν αὐτὸς εὕρῃ, δοκεῖν βιάσεσθαι τὴν ἔφοδον.

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[277] Thucydides 4.32-3. In the fourth century Spartan hoplites caught enemy peltasts at least once: Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.4.16. See chapter 5 for discussion regarding the flexibility of hoplites in Greek warfare. C.f. Herodotus 7.112.
[278] On whom see Woodcock (1928); Treu (1956); Best (1969) 18-20; Roisman (1993); Wylie (1993.)
[279] Thucydides 4.31-2. Hornblower (1996) 189.
[280] Thucydides 4.36. Thucydides compares the Spartan situation to that of Thermopylae, however it is likely that this is as a result of the encirclement which ended the engagement, rather than the significant role of any path. Hornblower (1996) 32-4, 191-2. Connor (1984) 118 for the comment that Thucydides' comparison is designed to enhance the shock of the Athenian victory as the Spartans would have been expected to fight to the death.

"With no end in sight, the commander of the Messenians came up to Cleon and Demosthenes and told them that they were wasting their efforts: if they were prepared to let him have a section of the archers and the light infantry he would go round behind the Spartans by any route he could find, and he thought he could force the approach."[281]

The allusion to chance or luck (...any route he could find...) here is suspect, indeed Thucydides credits the Athenian general Demosthenes with so much luck during the Pylos/Sphacteria campaign that his account has been doubted in this regard: Messenian reinforcements just happen to arrive before the engagement,[282] and the Athenians accidentally burn down the woodland on Sphacteria, thus revealing the Spartan positions.[283] It would be fair to state that the Messenian commander knew of, or had been told about, a path behind the Spartan position, and suggested to the Athenian commanders that an attack be launched to exploit it.[284] The whole engagement epitomises the combination of qualities and techniques which Aeneas Tacticus advises are most important: the Athenians scouted the terrain, removed obstacles, occupied high ground, attacked with a mixed force, and used ruse and surprise to their advantage. The Athenian general, Demosthenes, does not appear to have joined in the fighting, instead he appears to have taken on the role of director, as Aeneas Tacticus advises: the fact that the Messenian commander sought out Demosthenes and Cleon to request forces for his flanking attack indicates that both were distant from the front line, perhaps they remained with the hoplites on an elevated position and let subordinates carry out the attack as previously planned – Thucydides does not say. The Athenian attack relied upon several units of light

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[281] Thucydides 4.36 (trans Hammond, modified.)

[282] Thucydides 4.9.

[283] Thucydides 4.29-30. I find it entirely unlikely that the fire was accidental: Thucydides himself points out the importance of fire to Demosthenes defeat in Aetolia only the year before. See also Woodcock (1928) 101; Best (1969) 21-4; Wilson (1979) 103; Roisman (1993) 33-41. Also Miller (1998.)

[284] Thucydides 4.36.

infantry attacking simultaneously, these units were under the command of subordinate officers who appear to have been aware of an overall strategy, but who had to request permission to deviate from this strategy from Demosthenes. The victory on Sphacteria was not lucky, or based solely on a mis-match between light infantry and hoplites fighting on difficult terrain, rather it was based on intelligent generalship and the effective use of multiple subordinate commands.

The use of subordinate commanders by the Spartan general Brasidas in engagements in 423 and 422 differed significantly from that of Demosthenes. At the battle of Lyncus in 423 Brasidas commandied a phalanx of 300 hoplites as a 'flying rearguard' and left the command of his main phalanx to a subordinate.[285] This battle was not a pitched battle, but it is of central importance to this discussion as a Spartan subordinate commander, Clearidas, is directly mentioned by Thucydides, and the presence of such commanders in the Athenian army can also be inferred. The engagement is also vital to my purpose as it demonstrates that armies could survive the death of their general if a clear chain of command existed and could continue the engagement with little interruption. Indeed, the Peloponnesian force was able to make a significant tactical shift during this final phase of battle, a shift which resulted in a comprehensive victory and which is all the more significant when it is remembered that Brasidas' mortal wounding occurred early in the battle.[286] The existence of an *authoritative* and *immediate* source of orders and authority appears to have been more important than the continued existence of the *ultimate* source of orders and authority as vested in Brasidas. The ability of the pursuing army to break

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[285] Thucydides 5.9-10.
[286] Thucydides 5.10. He was carried from the fighting back to the city, apparently expiring shortly after being told his attack had been successful.

the elevated Athenian position successfully can safely be attributed to the continuing issuing of orders, and the continuing existence of command and control.[287]

Brasidas was aware that Cleon was advancing on Amphipolis, but decided to withdraw rather than risk a pitched battle; Thucydides reports that Brasidas regarded the Athenians as being superior troops, although given Brasidas' previous experience it is more likely that the expertise of his troops lay in methods of engagement other than pitched battle, such as ambush, ruse, and shock attacks.[288] This expertise was to be demonstrated with a planned assault from two city gates, although Cleon was able to deduce such an attack was imminent and passed orders to begin an immediate withdrawal to the nearby port of Eion.[289] This order resulted in the Athenian right flank marching parallel to the city, thus presenting their shield-less side to attack, an opportunity that Brasidas seized immediately, leading 150 hoplites directly against the Athenian centre.

This advance was supported by the rest of his forces, led by his subordinate Clearidas, who led the main phalanx from a different gate. The charge met with instant success, indeed Brasidas had chosen the perfect moment to attack - the Athenian forces were disorganised and out of position thanks to Cleon's order, and

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[287] See also Xenophon *Hellenica* 3.5.17-20 where a Spartan force was able to rally and counter attack, despite having lost their commander – a subordinate or other influential individual must have played an important role.

[288] Thucydides 5.8. Gomme (1962) 116 describes Brasidas' admission as a "...notable tribute to the Athenian hoplite..." Hornblower (1996) 440 agrees, describing the "...reference to Peloponnesian inferiority in quality (as) remarkable..." However see Lazenby (2004) 101-2 for the opposing view.

[289] Anderson (1965) 1-4 suggests the signal was given by trumpet but was not immediately obeyed by the whole army; Krentz (1991) 116-7 suggests a trumpet signal in such a scenario is insufficient given the complicated nature of the command. Cleon would have had to make several manoeuvres if he was to withdraw without presenting his phalanx's shield-less side to the city. Lazenby (2004) 103 suggests the order could have meant 'retreat in good order', given that Thucydides has Nicias believe he had plenty of time to make his reconnaissance and withdraw. See also Kagan (1974) 327-9; Hornblower (1996) 446-7.

offered little serious resistance to the surprise attack: Thucydides states that Brasidas' force suffered only seven casualties, although Brasidas himself was one of these.[290]

The Athenian force was pursued and harried for some distance, although the right wing offered some resistance and was able to retreat to a nearby hill.[291] Thucydides does not comment on how this retreat was organised, but given that Cleon had been killed it is reasonable to assume that subordinate commanders or experienced individuals, perhaps ex-generals themselves, were able to rally the wing and establish some sort of order. From this hill the Athenians were able to repulse two or three attacks from the main body of Peloponnesian hoplites before being surrounded by cavalry and peltasts and broken by a hail of javelins.[292] The marshalling and effective use of cavalry and peltasts by the Peloponnesian force also points to an important role for Brasidas' subordinate commander, Clearidas.[293] Realising the strength of the Athenian position, and the danger of continuing to attack with his hoplites, Clearidas was presumably the source of the orders which resulted in the cavalry and light infantry surrounding and attacking the Athenians from range.[294] Brasidas' command style certainly seems to have been innovative and very much 'hands on': he was wounded at Pylos, displayed impressive coolness and clarity of thought in Macedonia, and is even credited by Thucydides for being not bad at speaking, for a Spartan.[295]

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[290] Thucydides 5.10.
[291] Thucydides 5.10.
[292] Thucydides 5.10.
[293] Thucydides 5.8.
[294] Thucydides 5.8. Hornblower (1996) 440; Lazenby (2004) 102. Gomme (1966) 116 considers this a "...notable tribute to the Athenian hoplite", however Brasidas' remark is less a tribute to the quality of the Athenian troops than a realisation that his own troops were unaccustomed to fighting pitched battles versus hoplites. Lazenby (2004) 102 makes the valid point that if Brasidas felt his troops to be inferior in every respect then one has to wonder why he attacked at all .
[295] Thucydides 4.12, 4.84.

Thus far we have seen units of 300 forming 'flying reserves' and rapid reaction forces, as well as a unit of 150 forming a 'shock' phalanx used in an ambush which, although led by a general, not a subordinate, was based on the same principle: a small, manoeuvrable and flexible force with which to disrupt and distract the enemy. Two other uses remain to be analysed: small units led by subordinates on the battlefield, and the use of such units in integrated phalanxes. In 414 a unit of 300 Athenians hoplites was created in order to secure a section of the Syracusan wall, which they captured with the aid of an unspecified number of light infantry.[296] Thucydides describes the light force as 'picked' (λογάς) and explains that the rest of the army was divided into two, each half commanded by a general, which suggests the picked force was under the command of at least one subordinate.[297] A comparison to the picked force of hoplites and archers which the Athenians deployed at the battle of Plataea can be made: both were used to solve particular problems, both involved the combined use of hoplites and light infantry, and both operated under the command of a subordinate. Some 66 years separates the engagements and as such I am reluctant to describe this as a specialist 'Athenian tactic', however the similarity is so striking that the possibility Olympiodorus' command survived in the

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[296] Thucydides 6.100-101.

[297] The Athenian force had been reduced to two generals after the arrest of Alcibiades: Thucydides 6.62. Nicias and Lamachus had , after this, split the army between them by lot, and so were presumably familiar with the men under their direct control. One of the Athenian responses to Nicias' letter in book 7 was to 'promote' two officers, Menandrus and Euthydemus, to act as co-commanders. It is possible one, or both, of these individuals was in charge of the unit of 300 – Develin (1989) suggests, plausibly, that they had been *taxiarchs* up to the point they were promoted. They appear to have been promoted to 'full' command (στρατηγοί) but do not feature in the discussion between Nicias and Demosthenes after the failed attack on Epipolae (7.47), hence they may only have acted as generals when Nicias required assistance and before the reinforcements arrived. Dover (1988) 392; Hamel (1998) 196-200; Hornblower (2008) 569-70.

collective Athenian military memory, or was an ingrained or 'default' response to emergencies, cannot be dismissed.[298]

So small units under subordinate commanders could also be used as striking forces on the battlefield, as also demonstrated by Pelopidas' command of the Theban Sacred Band at the battle of Leuctra, discussed above. Small units can also be found as part of larger formations, where they acted either as a bodyguard to an important figure, or formed the 'cutting edge' of a phalanx, and in both of these cases there must have remained some element of subordinate command.[299] This element of command may only have been an increased ability to work together, or a familiarity with, and understanding of the need for, continual communication, however it remained the primary reason why such units distinguished themselves. The 300 Spartan *hippeis* demonstrated this at the battle of Leuctra, a battle where the Theban Sacred Band also played an important part. .

The opening stage of the battle was complex; Epaminondas stacked the Theban ranks some fifty deep and placed them directly opposite the Spartan contingent, thus preferring a direct confrontation with the Spartan right wing instead of overlapping their left. Pelopidas and the Sacred Band were stationed on the

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[298] Yaginuma (1990) 281-5 for the observation that this sentence contains 137 words, compared to an average in Thucydides of 25.3, because of the scale of Athenian action in the build-up to the capturing of the wall. The situation was certainly complex, involving numerous units and phalanxes all working to one goal, but semi-independently of each other, another reason to compare this engagement with that of Plataea.
[299] E.g. 300 Thebans at the battle of Delium, and 300 *hippeis* at the battle of Mantinea: Diodorus Siculus 12.70; Thucydides 5.72.

extreme left, possibly to act as a deliberate check to the 'predictable' Spartan attempt at outflanking.[300]

Epaminondas' phalanx engaged and defeated the section of line where Cleombrotus was stationed, however the Spartan phalanx was not totally broken, and was able to retreat, slowly back to camp, despite the death of Cleombrotus and several other prominent Spartans.[301] Xenophon does not directly comment on how the Spartans were able to achieve this 'fighting withdrawal', but he does report that the *hippeis* were placed around Cleombrotus. These men were able to carry the mortally wounded King from the phalanx and continued fighting until several other important Spartans were killed, at which point the withdrawal began.[302] The sources differ in their descriptions of the withdrawal – Xenophon's text suggests it was undertaken in good order, while Diodorus and Plutarch suggest it was more a rout than an organized retreat.[303] If the reported casualties can be trusted it appears the *hippeis* were almost wiped out during the retreat: Xenophon reports that of about 700 Spartiates present, 400 were killed, which, given the Theban attack fell directly on the position of the King, would account for the entire unit along with 100 others.[304] Three options present themselves: 1) the *hippeis* refused to retreat and were wiped out while holding off the Thebans, allowing the rest of the Spartiates to retreat in safety; 2) the mortal wounding of Cleombrotus occasioned such shame for the

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[300] Buckler (1980) 63; Hutchinson (2000) 163. Cawkwell (1979) 261 for the suggestion that the deep ranks played a role other than reserves and replacements for the front rank.

[301] Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.13-14.

[302] Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.13-14.

[303] Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.15; Diodorus 15.56.2; Plutarch *Pelopidas* 23.

[304] Lazenby (1985) 156-7, although see Figuera (2006) 73-4 for the conjecture that 100 of the *hippeis* were stationed with the king with the other 200 forming the front rank of the phalanx. If this was the case then my point still stands – these men were the first in contact with the enemy, least likely to flee, and would have accounted for the majority of the casualties taken.

hippeis that they lost their discipline and died in the same manner as Aristodemus at Plataea: fighting out in front, seeking to perform heroic deeds to make up for his failure;[305] 3) the *hippeis* attempted to keep the majority of the Thebans engaged while also withdrawing in good order.

The first and second possibilities seem less likely than the third, which best accords with the evidence of previous Spartan units operating under subordinate officers, and also best matches the primary skills of Spartan forces: organization and discipline. Thus the 300 *hippeis*, at the 'cutting edge' of the Peloponnesian phalanx and without the guidance of their King or the Polemarch Deinon, were able to continue operating as a cohesive unit while fighting the enemy to their front, backing off slowly to their camp, and possibly even watching their allies turn to flight. That Xenophon does not describe a total rout can best be explained by the ability of Spartan forces, the *hippeis* especially, to fight in formation without the direction or presence of a 'supreme' commander; the Spartan system of official subordinate command ensured that the loss of a king or general did not result in the loss command, rather its transfer to those next 'in line', whether that be a *polemarchos*, a *lochargos*, a commander of fifty, a commander of 16, or a file leader. Leuctra was undoubtedly a disaster for Sparta, yet it also teaches us a great deal about the Spartan system of subordinate command, a system that can also be seen in battle descriptions of Herodotus and Thucydides.

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[305] Herodotus 9.71.

Conclusion

Subordinate commanders were a vital element of Classical hoplite armies,

and played a significant role in battle. Their presence in Athenian and Spartan armies

is attested, or can be inferred, in every major Classical historical source, and in the

phalanxes of other states through the actions they performed in various battle

descriptions. The presence of these subordinate commanders adds an important level

of sophistication to our understanding of Classical Greek battle, and puts the lie to

the view that battle was simple because generalship could not be exercised, or

because the Greeks did not want to win battles through its use. Indeed, the very

opposite is now suggested: battle was complicated and commanders could influence

it from beginning to end, but the Greeks recognised that in order to maximise the

offensive and defensive qualities of the phalanx a great deal of direction, battlefield

control, and micromanagement was needed. This control came in the form of

subordinate commanders, individuals with recognised authority who were present to

ensure that sections of the line did not descend into chaos and confusion when

decisions needed to be made. These decisions may have been as simple as 'should

we push or defend?' but they were nonetheless vital and needed to be made quickly:

a poor choice enacted rapidly and with purpose can result in a better outcome than if

no choice is made at all, and a dithering or hesitant section of a phalanx represented

a significant weak point.[306] While the general was able to influence matters on the

large scale, he was simply unable to have a direct presence in every clash and

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[306] The moral fortitude of phalanxes was something that Thucydides recognized as being vital: Brasidas, probably the most vibrant and effective commander he describes, described an Athenian army as being one which would not stand up to an attack, based upon observations of their body language. Thucydides 5.10. The opposite could also hold true: Agesilaus was dissuaded from attacking Chabrias' mercenaries by the ease and smoothness with which they followed commands: Diodorus Siculus 15.32-33. See also Polyaenus *Stratagems* 3.9.8.

flourish of fighting that took place along the line; this does not diminish his importance to the army as a whole, but it does significantly increase the importance of subordinate commanders at every level.

Thucydides remarked that the entire Spartan army was a system of command and control, down to the youngest and most inexperienced hoplite.[307] This system ensured that each individual knew his place in the chain of command, Spartan forces were thus totally integrated, capable of responding quickly to changing events, and capable of maintaining discipline and cohesion even after a direct and successful attack against the 'command position' of the line: it was the Spartan system of subordinate command that was responsible for her dominance on the battlefield.

The importance of small units and subordinate commanders is also connected to the model of hoplite combat that has been presented in the previous chapters of this thesis. This model has a 'loose' formation at its very core, a formation which accords with the presence of subordinate commanders, the mechanics of fighting with shield and spear, and the bloody nature of hoplite combat. The image of fighting in the front ranks presented here is one of a highly fluid situation: different sections of the line advanced and retreated according to their immediate situation and the ability of subordinates or alert individuals to recognise advantageous or dangerous situations. Fighting continued across the line until an attack met with such success that it allowed the attacking hoplites to penetrate the front ranks of the enemy phalanx, spreading chaos, confusion, and death through the rear ranks.

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[307] Thucydides 5.66.

Subordinate commanders are found in many different situations in the source material, from leading small 'picked' or elite phalanxes, to being placed across the line in command of divisions or regiments, to commanding phalanxes when the supreme commander had been killed. They are also discussed in detail by a much underused source – Aeneas Tacticus. That Aeneas Tacticus assumed even small states would be able to organise their armed forces into small units commanded by a recognisable individual;[308] recommended the use of semi-independent and vitally important scouting parties;[309] and also advised using coordinated attacks using mixed forces,[310] indicates the extent to which his conception of warfare relied upon subordinate commanders. This reliance is not presented by Aeneas Tacticus as a new or radical idea, indeed although he is the first of the ancient authors to directly *advise* that subordinate officers be used this is to be expected given his status as the first known author of a military manual; other authors were writing for very different reasons, and so only recorded fine details of military structures when necessary, as Thucydides did regarding the Spartan army at Mantinea. Aeneas Tacticus' work represents a superbly detailed account of Greek attitudes and approaches to warfare, and his focus on the need to organise men, prevent panic, and, micromanage strike forces can be detected in the pages of all the historians who came before, and were contemporary with, him. All of these sources describe a form of warfare and combat that relied heavily upon generalship and subordinate commanders to be effective, was flexible and limited only by the imagination of the individual in command, and which was focused upon a single goal: defeat of the enemy by whatever means necessary.

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[308] Aeneas Tacticus 1.4-7.
[309] Aeneas Tacticus 6.
[310] Aeneas Tacticus 16.

Chapter 4:

Aeneas Tacticus and the Practicalities of Generalship

The arguments presented in the previous chapters rely on pieces of evidence scattered throughout the main literary sources of the fifth and fourth centuries, about which logical inferences and conclusions regarding the ability of generals and subordinate commanders to influence battle have been made. This ability is rarely directly expounded by these sources, however one ancient author, already introduced and discussed to some extent, makes frequent and direct reference to the ability, indeed the necessity, of generals and subordinate commanders to influence battle. Aeneas Tacticus' advice regarding how to resist invasion is comprehensive and systematic, and relies on generals utilising communication, organisation, reconnaissance, and coordination to craft an appropriate and powerful response to enemy forces which should be met *in the field*, not from the walls of the city. The command style of Aeneas Tacticus' general, and his subordinate officers, is versatile and flexible, and perfectly encapsulates the *Jiu*, or 'soft', element of *Jiu Jitsu*: withdraw when the enemy pushes, strike when he retreats. As discussed in the introduction the modern reception of Aeneas Tacticus has been narrowly focused on the information he provides regarding siege situations, as per the title of his work, *Poliorketika*. While his work contains much valuable information directly relating to a besieged city, it also contains a great deal of information and advice which relates to engagements in the field, many of which shed light on the extent and importance of battlefield command, commuication, and organisation. These examples do not directly deal with the minutiae of battlefield command, however they do represent strong evidence for Aeneas' conception of generalship and his emphasis on the

importance of *avoididing* a siege by meeting the enemy in battle. His work is not a treatise limited to a direct siege situation, but can be viewed as a commentary on warfare as a whole.

Aeneas Tacticus recognised that a siege is a matter of mentality rather than physical structure; an army in the field could be besieged as readily as a city, and he advises that combined forces which made use of the advantage of local terrain were required: a form of ancient 'guerrilla' warfare. An invading force would thus find itself being delayed, distracted, and under attack from the moment it entered the very outer territory of the city; if they sought a direct and 'pitched' confrontation then their desire would be frustrated, while small groups of men, operating under their own subordinate commanders but also receiving orders and information from the supreme commander in the city, harassed and attacked them. Aeneas Tacticus advises that an organised display of resistance at on the borders of territory could prove valuable, demonstrating to the enemy that the city was prepared, willing to resist, and with its armed forces under the direction of a man who will not simply march out and meet the enemy in 'pitched' battle. However the objective here was not to defeat the enemy utterly or to risk friendly forces in non-essential engagements; rather the objective was to inflict sufficient damage, and offer sufficient resistance - or *give the impression of an ability to do so* - to make the enemy withdraw.[311]

The nature of this initial resistance, and Aeneas Tacticus' concern for contingency plans, means that his text contains a great deal of information and advice regarding the ability of the general and subordinate officers to influence both

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[311] Aeneas Tacticus 1.6-8. Ober (1985) 77-86; Whitehead (2002) 22-4.

strategic and tactical thought. A clear concern of Aeneas Tacticus is that this general be intelligent, and have the capacity to organise, and keep safe, several lines of communication, combined with the imagination to engage in an energetic defence of territory using a mixed force.[312] According to Aeneas Tacticus the general should plan, organise, analyse information, and prepare the countryside and city for enemy incursion; he should not move to engage until he has secured an advantage, and he should certainly not risk his life in combat unless part of the city is directly threatened and his presence would bolster the defences.[313] As such Aeneas Tacticus is concerned for the safety of the general and suggests that he should be stationed at the *agora*, or, if this is a weak position, at the most defensible position of the city and have easy access to runners and a trumpeter.[314] An image of a 'command centre' immediately springs to mind, a place where the general would receive information from scouts and reports from subordinate commanders, and then issue basic orders via trumpet, while sending more complex orders to the scouts and subordinate commanders in the outer territory via runner. The main concern is on the engineering of advantage and the avoidance of an unwise engagement through the intelligent use of information and reconnaissance; a concern that can also be found in the accounts of large battles found in the Classical historians.[315]

In addition to the creation of a 'command post' and street-commanders, Aeneas Tacticus recommends that a rendezvous point should be established to which friendly units can retreat in the event of a surprise attack or storming of the walls.[316]

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[312] Communication: Aeneas Tacticus 4, 6-10, 22, 26, 31. Importance of mixed forces: 6, 16-18.

[313] Aeneas Tacticus 38.2; nowhere else in the text does Aeneas advocate the general actually joining the combat.

[314] Aeneas Tacticus 22.2-3. C.f. Xenophon *Anabasis* 7.4.16. Anderson (1970) 81.

[315] See, e.g. the battles of Marathon, Plataea, and Leuctra.

[316] Aeneas Tacticus 39.5

This rendezvous point would serve to prevent friendly forces being mistaken for invading forces: again, a contingency is in place for unexpected events which would disrupt the normal chain of command.[317] Should the general be killed or his runners be intercepted, then a recognised chain of command still existed, a factor shown to be vital to the ability of Spartan forces to withstand the death of their general and, indeed, to their basic approach to battle. If the enemy penetrated the walls or routed the defenders, then resistance could still be offered after rendezvousing at the prescribed place, where a new chain of command could be established amongst those surviving street-commanders.[318] These three factors: command post, street-commanders, and an organised rendezvous point, all combine to form a sophisticated system that would allow the effective collating of information and passing of orders, as well as having an inbuilt failsafe.

The system outlined above relied on a final factor that Aeneas Tacticus regards as essential for effective generalship: the ability for subordinate commanders to communicate rapidly and effectively, with the general. This communication ensured that the general could remain updated on the movements of the enemy, and that the various elements attacking or scouting the enemy could be coordinated from a central point.[319] Thus Aeneas Tacticus emphasises the importance of maintaining communications between different battlefield elements while in the field, and makes frequent reference throughout his work to the use of scouts and the various ways in which swift and reliable messages could be sent between the general and his subordinate commanders.[320] This focus on scouting and information gathering is an

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[317] See also Aeneas Tacticus 4.
[318] Thucydides 5.66 for the Spartan system of command.
[319] Aeneas Tacticus 4.1-12; 6.4-7; 7.1-4; 15.5-7; 16.16-7; 22.21-4; 26.12-14; 27.1-4.
[320] Aeneas Tacticus 15.4

essential element of Aeneas Tacticus' conception of warfare: he advises that outposts should be placed on strategic high ground around the city, and in the absence of such ground a system of runners should be set up to allow messages to reach the city in good time.[321] The accuracy and reliability of the information thus transmitted is of great concern to Aeneas Tacticus and he advises that these stations should be manned by at least three experienced men, who should be able to recognise and report on enemy dispositions and movements, be able to recognise feints and diversionary tactics, and be able accurately to judge the strength of the enemy force and their line of march.[322] We can consider each of these outposts to be a subordinate command, and their ability to effectively judge and transmit information is central to Aeneas Tacticus' recommendations.

This concern for strategic awareness is constantly emphasised, indeed Aeneas Tacticus assumes both that the presence of enemy forces will be reported *before* they reach the borders of the territory, and that the enemy will have an equal, if not greater, concern and capacity for information.[323] A further, and equally important, assumption is that the state will have a ready supply of men with the tactical and strategic knowhow to recognise the important movements and actions undertaken by an invading force. The natural consequence of this, combined with Aeneas Tacticus' frequent allusions to the advantage of knowing the local terrain, suggests that the city would have a pool of experienced individuals and subordinate commanders who could be trusted to perform the vital roles of scouting, and information gathering as

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[321] Aeneas Tacticus 6.1-6. Pritchett (1971) 127-33; Ober (1989) 197. Xerxes' scouts occupied elevated positions on Euboia: Herodotus 7.183, 192, 219. Whitehead (2002) 109-10.
[322] Aeneas Tacticus 6.1-3.
[323] Aeneas Tacticus 9.1. The enemy's *capacity* for gathering such information would be increased due to the presence of informers and malcontents within the city itself.

recommended.[324] The emphasis on experience suggests that these scouts were not hoplites serving in a scouting capacity, but were perhaps specialists; we can certainly assume that they were familiar with the local terrain, and may also posit that they were lightly equipped. This accords with the importance Aeneas Tacticus attaches to rapid communication combined with strategic and tactical flexibility; such a force could respond rapidly to a threat, could skirmish and harass the enemy, and would be able to operate unsupported by heavy infantry or cavalry if necessary: further emphasis of the reliance Aeneas Tacticus places on subordinate commanders.[325] These qualities all contribute to the overall image of generalship that Aeneas Tacticus' text generates: a 'tailored' resistance to invasion or threat, not on a standard 'invitation' to pitched battle.[326]

Perhaps this form of warfare is representative of warfare between smaller states, a form that is the very opposite of the large pitched battles that dominate the pages of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon; small engagements involving multiple and mixed forces, ambushes, and delaying tactics were all to be aggressively undertaken, and a full attack should only be launched if a distinct advantage in information, terrain, and organisation was held. The ability of small units, led and directed by subordinate commanders, to improvise and react to changing situations, while communicating with other units and the general himself, is key to Aeneas Tacticus' broad conception of warfare.

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[324] The frequent references to the advantages of intimate local geographical knowledge would seem to discount the possibility of these scouts being exclusively mercenaries.

[325] See below for the importance of hoplite phalanxes accompanying lightly armed forces but not engaging the enemy. Although effective this was not an essential element in the use of light infantry; the Athenian general Demosthenes was defeated in 426 by an Aetolian force which lacked heavy infantry support. Thucydides 3.97-98; see Roisman (1993) for a detailed discussion of Demosthenes' military capabilities, or lack thereof. Also Best (1969) 188-9.

[326] Thucydides 2.81 for a prime example of this.

In chapters fifteen to sixteen Aeneas Tacticus presents an outline of what he considers an 'ideal' attack upon invading forces. This outline is useful as it involves an important role for subordinate commanders,[327] indicates the scale of organisation and coordination that would be required,[328] is presented as a realistic response to a hostile force in the field, and is based upon the effective use of communication, intelligence, local knowledge, and leadership.[329] First of all, cavalry and lightly infantry should march in the vanguard of any force in order to scout the ground ahead, occupy suitable elevated positions, and function as a screening force to prevent enemy units from scouting or attacking the hoplites, who would be following behind.[330] A high degree of organisation and caution is advised; the various elements must be constituted rapidly but not at the expense of good order, and should remain close enough to each other for quick communication and physical assistance to be rendered when necessary.[331] Caution on the march is emphasised, with Aeneas explaining that intelligent enemies will not simply march into a territory expecting a pitched battle, but will have been vigilant in their reconnaissance and will most likely have sent peltasts in advance to stage ambushes.[332] This last point adds further weight to the image of 'typical' Greek warfare as being more mobile, vicious, and intelligent than has previously been imagined; it explicitly denies that an invading army would march, openly and brazenly, into enemy territory and invite attack.[333]

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[327] Aeneas Tacticus 15.3, 16.7.

[328] Aeneas Tacticus 15.1-5

[329] Aeneas Tacticus 16.4-22.

[330] Aeneas Tacticus 15.5. Also 27.15 and 28. 5 where Aeneas advises that reconnaissance should be undertaken before the night-time guards are stood down and that nobody should be let out of the town before reconnaissance of the immediate neighbourhood had been undertaken. See Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.1.15-17 for an example of an attack timed to coincide with the end of the night watch and the rousing of the army.

[331] Aeneas Tacticus 15.4.

[332] Aeneas Tacticus 16.4. The peltasts are likely those referred to as the 'strongest forces' in the next paragraph. Whitehead (2002) 141.

[333] The large Peloponnesian invasions that occurred during the Archidamian War were probably not serious attempts to draw the Athenians into battle. By sending armies which so heavily outnumbered

Aeneas Tacticus recognises the folly of such an action, and is at pains to ensure that his putative general does not underestimate the capacity of his enemy to gather intelligence, set traps, and coordinate a mixed force. Indeed, although Aeneas Tacticus views this sort of enemy as both intelligent and knowledgeable, he advises us that they can, indeed should, still be attacked: in order effectively and safely to engage a force such as this he advises stealth and patience – two attributes rarely associated with Greek warfare by modern scholars.[334] The general should wait until the enemy became complacent (and preferably drunk!) before setting his own ambushes with picked units of light infantry, and engaging with the remainder of his light forces.[335] Of note is Aeneas Tacticus' observation that the advantage gained by attacking an army which has been eating and drinking is that the ability of its officers to control the men would be diminished. He is not concerned with the slowing of reflexes and thought-processes that the consumption of alcohol would bring about, but with the increased belligerence which would also occur. This belligerence would reduce the ability of the enemy force to organise an effective response, further emphasising the importance of generalship to the form of warfare he is discussing.[336] While it is true that there are no known instances of troops getting drunk on the march in the historical sources, it seems unlikely that Aeneas Tacticus would make his observation had this not occurred, and even less likely that it is a joke or flippant

the Athenians the Spartans could not have expected to have encountered serious resistance, see Krentz (1997).

[334] Although several battle descriptions imply a great deal of both: see, e.g. the battles of Marathon, Plataea, Sphacteria, and Piraeus.

[335] Aeneas Tacticus 16.5-7.

[336] Hanson (1988) 206 and (2000) 126-131 discusses the consumption of alcohol by hoplites. While it is likely that some diluted wine would form an important part of everyday rations, I find no justification for the remark that hoplites advanced into battle 'almost' drunk, or that Xenophon "…acknowledges that the prebattle ration of wine might have aroused the (Spartan) troops a little too much…" before the battle of Leuctra. Why on earth would Spartan hoplites need to find courage in their cups? Indeed, Plutarch *Lycurgus* 23 recorded that one of the ways in which the Spartans oppressed the helots was to force them to get drunk and sing common songs, a practice that also served to demonstrate to the younger Spartans the folly of imbibing too much wine. A long tradition of Spartan professionalism in combat, combined with recognition of the danger of too much wine, cannot be moulded, via one very ambiguous reference, into an excuse for their defeat at Leuctra.

comment of some sort.[337] Whitehead suggests that this is a reference to a force that is not on the march, but is 'off-duty': a sensible suggestion. The point that Aeneas Tacticus is putting across can be seen to be a general one: he refers to launching the attack at night when the enemy is unprepared and when the attacking forces have every possible advantage, a drunk enemy would obviously be a further advantage, although not an essential one! The infantry used in the ambush would most likely have been peltasts – they held an advantage over other forms of lightly armed due to the nature of their style of engagement; they were more flexible and probably much more damaging than other forms of light infantry because they operated so close to the enemy and, thanks to their shield and skirmishing nature, were potentially able to enter close combat.[338]

To complete his outline of this attack Aeneas Tacticus assigns a role to the heavy infantry. The hoplites should move up behind the light elements, although a direct combat role is not specifically assigned to them; perhaps Aeneas has a 'checking' role in mind for them.[339] This involved hoplites acting as either bait or a constantly threatening, but never engaging, strike force, while other contingents under subordinate commanders engaged the enemy from range. A high degree of coordination and communication between all the elements involved was necessary, and each contingent needed to respond to changing circumstances rapidly; such attacks are the epitome of an experienced and integrated force led by a general confident of the ability and skills of his subordinates. An Athenian hoplite force was

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[337] Hunter & Handford (1927) 151.
[338] Best (1969) 19-20.The equipment and style of engagement of peltasts did not preclude them from fighting hand-to-hand. Indeed, if individual hoplites could be drawn far enough away from the protection of the phalanx then the peltasts' advantage in speed and numbers would best be expressed in a rapid switch to close-quarters battle.
[339] Aeneas Tacticus 16.7.

present on the island of Sphacteria in 425 and was never actually engaged in close combat; instead it served as a lure to the Spartan hoplites and as a checking force, preventing the Spartans from being able to pursue the light infantry too vigorously.[340] A hoplite force commanded by the Athenian general Callias accompanied Iphicrates' peltasts when they attacked a Spartan *mora* near Laecheum in 390. Callias did not engage, but remained close enough to the Spartan phalanx to limit their response to the skirmishing attacks of the peltasts; the *mora*, having retreated to a hill, was finally broken at the sight of Callias' phalanx advancing.[341] These checking forces will have operated in a fine envelope; they would have to be close enough to the enemy phalanx to pose a threat, yet far enough away to avoid being targeted over the attacking light infantry. Aeneas Tacticus seems to have a similar role in mind for the hoplites in his attack; he does not give them a direct combat role, but seems to view them as a bastion to which the light infantry and cavalry could retreat to, or as a force 'in being' which would limit the actions the enemy could undertake without actually being engaged.[342]

Aeneas Tacticus has presented us with a highly organised and sophisticated method of engagement which relies upon the ability of subordinate commanders to work and communicate together, and which makes use of all the major unit types of the day: cavalry, heavy infantry, and light infantry. This force must not rush to engage but should be cautious, gather information, and attack on its own terms, preferably when the enemy is dispersed and lacking in discipline; communication,

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[340] Thucydides 4.32-9.

[341] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.5.13-18.

[342] That is, a phalanx which the enemy knows is in the immediate area, but whose precise location is unknown. The phrase is adapted from the naval term 'fleet in being', meaning the ability of a technically inferior fleet or vessel to 'tie up' much greater resources by refusing to directly engage. Maltby (1994) 160.

intelligence, and strong leadership are all required, and advice is given regarding how these factors can be strengthened. A further level of sophistication is added when Aeneas discusses the use of naval transport to aid attacks on an enemy force.

The *Poliorketika* ends with the enigmatic statement that "A fleet may be equipped in two ways...",[343] suggesting that his work moved on to discuss either how to utilise naval forces to defend the state, or to naval matters in general. However Aeneas Tacticus also discusses the use of naval forces in three passages of the *Poliorketika* that survive, two of which emphasise his advice, given throughout the text, that the general is better off relying on speed and surprise than brute force and that forces should not be committed unless they have an advantage. First we are advised that if boats are available then they should be used to transport troops behind retreating enemies, thus both reducing the possibility of the pursuing troops being ambushed and ensuring that they arrive fitter and fresher than those retreating.[344] Secondly a fleet of boats should be used to deposit troops behind the enemy in order to ensure complete surprise and maximum impact when the enemy forces are finally engaged by the mixed force Aeneas Tacticus advises be used.[345] So in addition to the other troop types outlined above we see marines being put to use; the hypothetical enemy is now being shot at from range by light infantry, ambushed by peltasts, chased down by cavalry, threatened by hoplites, and attacked from behind by marines – a flowing melange of styles and equipment that is a stark contrast to the pitched battle, and one which relied upon generalship and subordinate command in order to be effective.

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[343] Aeneas Tacticus 40.8.
[344] Aeneas Tacticus 16.13.
[345] Aeneas Tacticus 16.21-2.

Should it prove impossible to engage the enemy at a distance from the city then the physical structure and immediate terrain features of the city itself come into play, with Aeneas Tacticus recommending that advantageous positions be occupied and used as bases for attack and retreat.[346] The emphasis remains on attack, although with the city in such close proximity Aeneas Tacticus seems to be recommending a shift from the flowing counter-attack useful in the outer territories to a relatively compact attempt to draw the enemy into position and attack them from the city. Aeneas Tacticus concentrates heavily on the advantages to be gained from local knowledge and familiarity with terrain, so it would seem he still regards this position as a flexible one; perhaps he is thinking of a situation such as the Plataean break out in 428, except on a larger scale and with the focus on causing the enemy to withdraw, not on escape to a friendly territory.[347]

Aeneas Tacticus seems to present three more levels of proximity and danger to the city which should be considered: defence of the city walls, internal defence, and factors regarding the mental health and morale of the city. Regarding the first two he has little extra to say about generalship beyond what has already been discussed, and his comments regarding maintaining the morale of citizens all focus on ensuring that discipline and morale remain high by becoming actively involved with the everyday tasks of the guards, patrols and gatekeepers. This system of increasing proximity and danger to the city is logical and systematic: the general's first concern should be to organise and co-ordinate the defence of the outer territories by sending and receiving messages and building up an overall image of the invading forces and their strategy. If the outer territories cannot be blocked or the attempts at

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[346] Aeneas Tacticus 16.18.
[347] Thucydides 3.20-24.

delay or dissuasion fail then the general should prepare for a defence of the local territory.

The rings of danger and proximity to the city I have identified demonstrate that Aeneas Tacticus recognises at least three phases of an invasion during which a city should mount a highly active external defence. This point is forcefully made by Aeneas in his preface, where he states that:

Ὅσοις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκ τῆς αὐτῶν ὁρμωμένοις χώρας ὑπερόριοί τε ἀγῶνες καὶ κίνδυνοι συμβαίνουσιν, ἄν τι σφάλμα γένηται κατὰ γῆν ἢ κατὰ θάλασσαν, ὑπολείπεται τοῖς περιγιγνομένοις αὐτῶν οἰκεία τε χώρα καὶ πόλις καὶ πατρίς, ὥστε οὐκ ἂν ἄρδην πάντες ἀναιρεθείησαν."

"When men leave their country and engage in warfare and encounter perils beyond their own frontiers, and disaster occurs by land or sea, the survivors still have their own country and city and fatherland between them and utter destruction."[348]

By engaging the enemy at the greatest possible distance from the city itself, it was still possible to have native soil, however little, between the soldiers and utter extinction, and Aeneas Tacticus recommends that the general make the most of this window of opportunity by undertaking an aggressive defence. This defence should not consist of a challenge to or acceptance of any form of 'pitched battle', but should be multifaceted, utilising naturally strong defensive points, constant skirmishing operations, and retreat to the next ring if the enemy is determined enough to try and force the matter; indeed, the last thing the general should do is seek a direct and final confrontation as the loss of such an event could lead to an immediate physical siege

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[348] Aeneas Tacticus Preface 1 (trans Whitehead.)

of the city itself.[349]

The image of command, and warfare in general, which Aeneas Tacitcus' text generates are well illustrated by two apothegms regarding the Athenian mercenary commander Iphicrates. In the first:

Ἰφικράτης τὴν σύνταξιν τῶν στρατοπέδων εἴκαζε τῷ σώματι. θώρακα ἐκάλει τὴν φάλαγγα, χεῖρας τοὺς ψιλούς, πόδας τὴν ἵππον, κεφαλὴν τὸν στρατηγόν. Ἰτὰ μὲν δὴ ἄλλα ὅταν ἐπιλείπῃ, χωλὸν καὶ πηρὸν τὸ στρατόπεδον· ὅταν δὲ ὁ στρατηγὸς ἀπόληται, τὸ πᾶν ἄχρηστον οἴχεται

"Iphicrates likened the formation of armies to the body. He called the phalanx the trunk, the light-armed the hands, the cavalry the feet, and the general the head. "When the other parts are missing, the army is lame and disabled. But when the general is killed, the entire army is useless."[350]

Aeneas Tacticus' advice requires all of these body-parts to be deployed in concert, and his concentration on the gathering of information, the issuing of orders, and the physical safety of the general illustrates the importance he attached to the 'head' of this figure. Indeed, the head should only be exposed to danger once all other possibilities have been exhausted, indicating the ability of generals to coordinate skirmishes and engagements from a central position, some distance from the action. Although Polyaenus has created a convincing simile here, he has left out one vital component, blood, which could be categorized as the overall morale of the army or state. If the general was unable to mount the visible and energetic defence that Aeneas Tacitcus recommends, and the enemy were allowed to begin an active siege, then the possibility of the figure bleeding to death before taking any significant wounds comes into play, hence Aeneas Tacticus' other main concern that

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[349] Whitehead (1991) 24: "He is certainly no prisoner of the pitched-battle mentality..."; van Wees (2004) 123-4.

[350] Polyaenus 3.9.22 (trans Krentz & Wheeler.)

the enemy should be met in the field at some distance from the walls of the city.

Plutarch records a second valuable insight into Iphicrates' thoughts on command:

ῥήτορος δέ τινος ἐπερωτῶντος αὐτὸν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, 'τίς ὢν μέγα φρονεῖς; πότερον ἱππεὺς ἢ ὁπλίτης ἢ τοξότης ἢ πελταστής;' 'οὐδείς,' ἔφη, 'τούτων, ἀλλ' ὁ πᾶσι τούτοις ἐπιστάμενος ἐπιτάττειν.'

A certain speaker interrogated him in the Assembly: 'Who are you that you are so proud? Are you cavalryman or man-at-arms, archer or peltast?' 'None of these,' he replied, 'but one who understands how to command all of them.'[351]

Aeneas Tacticus would most likely approve of this, indeed it closely matches the overall image of command and control that his text generates: the general should understand the advantages and disadvantages of the various troop types, and be able to effectively direct and coordinate them – he does not just take his place in the ranks and fight. The sentiment recorded by Plutarch can also be found in many of the battle descriptions taken from the historical sources: the Athenians and Spartans at the battle of Plataea apparently knew how to coordinate archers and hoplites, as well as being aware of the danger posed by cavalry, and how best to counter it. Similar knowledge can be imputed to the generals involved in the vast majority of battles found in Thucydides and Xenophon, from Hippocrates launching a cavalry strike during the battle of Delium to Nicias commenting on the Sicilian Expedition's need for a mixed force of hoplites, light infantry, and cavalry, to the victories of Iphicrates over Spartan hoplites, and the ability of Epaminondas to manoeuvre a large army so well that even Spartan observers were fooled as to his intentions. Indeed these

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[351] Plutarch, *Moralia*, 187B (trans Babbit – modified.)

engagements conform to the advice that Aeneas Tacticus gives – all had their focus on the creation of advantage through generalship, manoeuvre, and the aggressive use of mixed forces.

Aeneas Tacticus does not appear concerned with received standards of glory or heroism; he does not want the city to go 'all in' and invite the enemy to engage in combat, rather the city's forces should harass, annoy, and fall back to prepared positions if necessary. Indeed, there is no hint of moralising, rules, or anything regarded as 'acceptable' behaviour in Aeneas Tacticus' text: the enemy must be confronted and defeated by any and all means possible, and a good general is one who can recognise their weaknesses and respond appropriately, however this may be. This image of the Greek general is one that clashes strongly with current scholarship regarding command and control in amateur Greek armies, and the 'agonal' element of Greek warfare: Aeneas Tacticus advises that the general should not strike until he has secured a significant advantage, indeed he should lure the enemy into a false sense of security, and allow them to become drunk, before attacking and, presumably, massacring them.[352]

Aeneas Tacticus is not the first of the Greek writers to suggest that generals should do everything in their power to achieve victory, but he is the first to suggest it directly, unapologetically, and plainly. The Athenians at Marathon attacked at a moment, and in a manner, which gave them all the advantage they could get; the Athenians commanded by Myronides in 457 who surrounded and stoned to death some Corinthian hoplites did the same, as did the Spartans at Nemea and the

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[352] Aeneas Tacticus 16.5.

Thebans at Leuctra. However the accounts of these battles are not straightforward, they are not neutral, and they are certainly not direct or plain with regard to tactical, strategic, or personal motive; as such they invite various interpretations. Aeneas Tacticus does not, and his message is simple: a good general can kill many of the enemy without placing his own troops at risk. In advocating this Aeneas Tacticus demonstrates his military credentials and gains entry into a supposedly select club of individuals from antiquity: those who were concerned with outcomes rather than methods and who were able to see beyond the supposed limitations of the hoplite way of war to the usefulness of combined forces. From Aeneas Tacticus' treatise we can reconstruct a relatively detailed picture of the importance of generalship, subordinate commanders, and organisation to 'everyday' warfare between average sized *poleis*. This picture demonstrates that a notion of generalship as somehow simple or limited, and a narrow focus on the hoplite and the pitched battle, is one that is simply not representative of warfare in Greece, and that by engaging with this unfairly ignored source our understanding of the techniques, purpose, and remarkable sophistication of Greek warfare can be greatly improved.

Chapter 5: Phases of Battle

Most recorded hoplite battles fought in Classical Greece followed a recognisable pattern: advance, fighting, pursuit/retreat. The following sections analyse these 'phases' of battle, as well as the controversial *ôthismos*, and highlight the ways in which Greek generals could influence them.

Section A: The Advance to combat

The first identifiable combat stage of a hoplite engagement was the advance into combat. Although the advance features in most modern accounts of hoplite battle, it has not been the subject of a single detailed investigation;[353] this is surprising and unfortunate given the possibility for tactical innovation it represented, and the influence that it had in determining the length, nature, and intensity of the stages that followed. In this chapter I shall give a detailed analysis of the ability of generals to influence the advance into combat, and will also offer a discussion of how these advances would have taken place. This is necessary because currently the model most scholars prefer is a charge of around 200 yards 'at the run' directly into combat, a relatively simple scenario which requires little to no action on the part of the general, and has serious implications for the course of battle. If the evidence suggests that different battlefield considerations and terrain resulted in different forms of advance, then our understanding of the ability of generals to influence battle needs modifying accordingly.

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[353] Indeed the majority of scholarship has focused on aspects of fighting and *ôthismos*. The lack of attention paid to the advance has resulted in the important tactical and organisational mechanics that determined a successful advance, and influenced the ensuing combat, being passed over by much scholarship.

As with the other phases of battle, there are currently two opposing theories about how the advance occurred: an advance 'at the run' over the final 200 yards or so which resulted in two phalanxes crashing directly into each other, or a more cautious and slow advance into combat from spear-range. An advance 'at the run' directly into combat, as advocated most prominently by Hanson would result in a head-on clash of phalanxes.[354] According to Hanson, this collision could result in an almost immediate victory, as one side literally crashed through the other, or it could result in an almost immediate transition to *ôthismos,* with the primary concern being the maintenance of *momentum* rather than *formation.*[355] An alternative view centres around the physical and psychological problems associated with charging directly into combat against an almost identically equipped enemy; van Wees and Lazenby have suggested that the charge did not actually result in a collision, rather in a tentative advance into, and beyond, spear range.[356] The following analysis of the surviving source material will indicate that the latter position is to be preferred but requires some modification to take into account the variety of evidence that is presented. This analysis is split into four sub-sections, each of which contains direct and indirect evidence regarding the battlefield role of generals.

Theoretical objections against an advance 'at the run' into combat.

A number of practical points raised by modern commentators need to be examined before we approach the ancient evidence in detail. These points reinforce the impression found in the sources that a charge 'at the run' over the final 200 yards

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[354] Hanson (2000a) 135-159.
[355] Hanson (2000a) 156-162.
[356] Lazenby (1991) 90-91; van Wees (2004) 188-89. See also Keegan (1976) 71. Wheeler (2007a) 205-6 offers a summary of the evidence and modern positions but does not give a firm conclusion.

was not the 'standard' beginning to a hoplite battle, which itself leaves open the possibility for battlefield command.

The first of these points is Hanson's assertion that an advance 'at the run' during the final 200 yards and leading directly into combat would result in the immediate infliction of a number of fatal and disabling wounds, due to the extra power such a charge would apparently lend the opening blows.[357] Given the strength of frontal defence offered by hoplite equipment, he argued that such a strong initial blow would be vital if a protracted fight was to be avoided; perhaps this blow would even be able to penetrate directly through the shield.[358] However, this scenario presents a number of physical and ergomonic problems. A mass charge leading to a direct collision with an enemy phalanx of approximately equal size would result in the front ranks coming to an abrupt and incredibly violent halt. Assuming that spears had been carried in an underarm position (the most logical for a 'charge' of any sort) this would result in the second, and possibly even third, ranks having to take action to avoid the suddenly static row of butt-spikes they would be running into.[359]

While ranks two and three would have to avoid the butt-spikes of friendly hoplites, the front rank was faced with the even more dangerous scenario of charging directly into the weapons of the enemy front rank; such a scenario simply cannot be reconciled with the low casualty figures attested for hoplite battle.[360] Those who did

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[357] Hanson (2000a) 135-159.
[358] Hanson (2000a) 140-2, 162-4; Matthews (2009) 411.
[359] Goldsworthy (1997); Schwartz (2009) 91-2; Matthews (2009).
[360] On which, see Appendix 1.

make direct contact with an enemy were unlikely to come away unscathed or be able to continue fighting immediately; the physical shock of the collision would be such that they would most likely end up "...sprawling on the ground."[361] Even those who managed to retain their footing would be highly vulnerable for a vital few seconds as they took in their immediate environment and perhaps struggled to adjust their equipment, or even identify friend from foe: the nature of the hoplite panoply, especially the helmet, ensured that even this was not a simple matter.[362]

Finally, there was no need for a lengthy or rapid advance in order to give extra strength to a blow; a few metres would suffice to generate additional power, with any extra distance only serving to tire the hoplite for no additional benefit. Van Wees suggests a maximum distance of 15 metres, which is a sound figure, if maybe slightly too long; a few strong steps would be enough to gain the maximum power for an accurate thrust from the shoulder.[363] This principle is evident in many athletic events: athletes are not able to generate more lift or power the further they run; rather there is an optimum distance at which their speed and strength can be used to full effect, and beyond which diminishing returns set in. Besides the length of this optimum distance, the ability to retain balance and control remains essential; this would be very difficult indeed if running downhill or over uneven terrain, trying to maintain formation, and carrying hoplite equipment, and not to mention the psychological impact of the enemy phalanx at which they would have been charging.[364]

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[361] van Wees (2004) 188.
[362] Hanson (2000a) 71-76. Schwartz has recently re-affirmed the impact that a hoplite helmet of any style Schwartz (2009) 55-66, esp 62. See also Hanson (2000a) 71-74.
[363] van Wees (2004) 188.
[364] Donlan & Thompson (1976) and (1979) for the difficulty of running and keeping formation. Also Goldsworthy (1997).

Battles where armies did not advance 'at the run'

Those occasions when armies did not advance 'at the run', but advanced slowly instead, indicate that the respective generals were not concerned with the generation of momentum or psychological shock, but placed greater value on other attributes. Advancing at a pace less than a run would allow changes of formation and direction, and also ensured that a phalanx did not become totally committed to an attack once it had begun. Such advances could indicate that Greek generals recognised that their role did not end with the signal to advance, and also suggest that hoplite battles were more sophisticated than simply lining up, advancing at a run, and hoping for the best.

The first battle where there was no advance 'at the run' is the justly celebrated engagement at the pass of Thermopylae. The battle was not fought between two phalanxes of hoplites, but Thermopylae remains of great use in helping to discover the influence that a general could exert during an advance, how flexible a phalanx formation could be, and the ability of hoplite forces to respond to their tactical and geographical environment. While the battle is important for demonstrating these key features it is to be remembered that the engagement involved elite Spartan troops, not ordinary Greeks, and as such we must be careful not to generalise from it; I analyse the engagement because it goes some way to showing us the 'upper ceiling' of command and control in Greek armies. A further problem regards the nature of the very formation the Spartans fought in as there is still controversy regarding when hoplites began to fight exclusively in phalanx formation, other troops having been excluded from the formation. The continuing

argument over when a 'true' phalanx formed is not the subject of this thesis; suffice to say here that I consider Marathon to represent the first appearance of a recognisable phalanx, although the formation did not reach its final form until later in the fifth century, during the *pentecontaetia*, a form which remained essentially unchanged until Philip's reforms of the Macedonian infantry.[365]

The Greek tactics at Thermopylae relied on baiting Persian troops into a pursuit by pretending to flee, and then at some point about facing in order to engage the Persians in close combat.[366] This appears simple: the Spartans ran away, and then turned around. However these actions imply that the Spartan phalanx possessed a number of vital attributes, most notably the ability to hear and obey the commands of their general.[367] Indeed, precise timing and clear communications would have been vital in order for this tactic to have been effective; if the order was given too late, or could not be heard and acted upon immediately, then the Persians might not have been fooled into pursuing as the distance would have been too great, or may have launched a pursuit, but abandoned it for the same reason. Equally, if the order was given, or heard, too late, then the phalanx would not have had time to pretend to flee, and would have been forced to meet the advancing Persians head on.[368] The transformation of the 'fleeing' hoplites into an intact phalanx must have been a terrifying sight to behold, especially if it was achieved with a single shouted command, issued at just the right time and with all the authority and power of a

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[365] See Schwartz (2009) 102-146 for the most recent analysis of the development of the phalanx.

[366] Herodotus 7.211.

[367] See chapter 2 for the importance of the Spartan chain of command, and for the impact that a noisy and disruptive enemy could have on the ability of Spartans to communicate mid-battle. This ability to communicate information and call for defensive or offensive measures was the greatest advantage Spartan forces held over the other, amateur, armies of Greece.

[368] Herodotus 7.211. Anderson (1970) 41; Lazenby (1985) 88-96; van Wees (2004) 180-1 – although he focuses on the heroic nature of the Spartan's death, rather than their effective tactics. See also Schwartz (2009) 138.

Spartan king behind it. The chasing Persian troops would have crashed into the Spartan phalanx in disarray,[369] while the Spartans themselves were most likely advancing slowly given they seemed to preserve and maximise the discipline and teamwork that Herodotus emphasises so strongly. Thermopylae was not just a demonstration of the strength, endurance, and self-sacrifice of the Three Hundred and their allies, but was a display of manoeuvre, communication, and effective command that is not matched in the sources until Brasidas' fighting withdrawal from Macedonia in 423.[370]

After the engagement at Thermopylae we come to the battle of Plataea, a more recognisable 'pitched battle' during which one significant advance into combat took place. This occurred several days after the death of the Persian cavalry commander Masistius, and began the final engagement of the campaign. The Tegean contingent of the Greek line advanced first, quickly followed by the Spartan contingent.[371] Up to this point Pausanias, the Spartan general, had been holding his phalanx in place while waiting for favourable omens, despite the Persian archers being in range and inflicting casualties.[372] Pausanias' role should not be underestimated here, indeed his ability to hold the line and restrain the advance was a vital one; his delay may have allowed the advancing Persian line to become so committed, and grow so deep, that its ability to retreat or otherwise manoeuvre was

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[369] How & Wells (1912) 224.
[370] Thucydides 4.125-7: Discussed in more detail in chapter 4.
[371] Herodotus 9.62.
[372] Herodotus 9.60-1. The Persian archers were causing damage to the Greeks at this point: Herodotus mentions the Spartan Callicrates was struck in the side and died shortly after. Herodotus describes him as the handsomest man of his generation, which leads one to wonder how many less-blessed Greeks were struck down by Persian arrows, but not mentioned by Herodotus, while waiting for Pausanias to discover good omens. Anderson (1970) 69 remarks that "Unfavourable omens seem sometimes to have been used as an excuse for not doing something..." A powerful means to hold a position when 'ordinary' soldiers may not have understood the need to do so.

compromised.[373] This would account for the Persians' laying down of their bows and attacking the phalanx in close combat: they were unable to withdraw or otherwise avoid the advancing Greeks due a lack of space caused by the number of friendly troops present.[374] This indicates a concern for tactical circumstances beyond lining up his phalanx and advancing; Pausanias may well have been waiting for the omens to be auspicious before engaging, but an equally possible explanation is that he was able to hold his forces in position despite the presence of other, perhaps lesser, commanders who wished to advance.[375]

Thucydides' account of the battle of Mantinea in 418 is one of the most detailed accounts of a pitched battle between hoplites that survives to us, and it contains much useful information regarding the battlefield role of the general during the advance.[376] I begin with an examination of the events which occurred on the day *before* the actual engagement; these events are, if anything, even more useful for my purpose here than the account of the battle itself, and have been largely passed over by modern scholarship investigating Classical Greek battle.

The day before the battle of Mantinea proper the Spartan King Agis attempted to lead a Peloponnesian phalanx against an Argive-led force that had taken up a strong elevated position in the territory of Mantinea.[377] Details of the battle can

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[373] Burn (1984) 538; Lazenby (1993) 242.
[374] Speed and manoeuvrability were required if light infantry was to effectively engage an intact phalanx.
[375] A comparison to the delay at Marathon can be made: neither is explained as being due to tactical or strategic circumstances, however both delays seem to have allowed the Greeks to attack at a time which suited them best. I would suggest that Herodotus was not aware of, or did not understand, the tactical decision making behind both delays. Lazenby (1993) 228.
[376] Thucydides 5.64-73.
[377] Thucydides 5.64-5. Lazenby (2004) 119 views this as an attempt by the Argives to counter the Spartan expertise in pitched battle by forcing them to attack an elevated position. He describes the Spartans as "…taking the bait." Gomme, Andrewes & Dover (1970) 97 suggest that Agis may never

be found in Chapter 2 so I will be brief here, suffice to say that the Spartan King Agis was able to halt and withdraw his entire force, made up of allied Peloponnesian contingents, from within javelin range of the enemy, and was able to do so safely, rapidly, and in such order that his army was left untouched. This suggests that the Peloponnesian phalanx was not advancing 'at the run', but that it was doing so at a slow and steady pace. Regarding the withdrawal Thucydides remarks:

οἱ δ' Ἀργεῖοι καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι τὸ μὲν πρῶτον καταπλαγέντες τῇ ἐξ ὀλίγου αἰφνιδίῳ αὐτῶν ἀναχωρήσει οὐκ εἶχον ὅτι εἰκάσωσιν

"The Argives and their allies were at first astonished at the sudden Spartan withdrawal from so close, and did not know what to make of it."[378]

The astonishment of the Argives rapidly turned into anger at the inactivity of their generals; the hoplites appear to have viewed this as an exploitable situation, and berated their generals for not ordering an advance to take advantage of the Spartan withdrawal. This anger is a clear indication that the generals *could* have ordered an advance upon the Spartan army, yet chose not to, and is perhaps an example of the phenomenon known as looking at something through 'rose-tinted glasses'. The Argive hoplites, buoyed with adrenalin following their near-engagement, were convinced they 'could have taken them', had already forgotten the danger of the situation and the casualties that would have ensued had they engaged, and so blamed their generals for not ordering the advance. However the reluctance of the generals was well founded, as demonstrated by the professionalism of the Spartan withdrawal, and the inability of the Argives to match Spartan hoplites in the field the

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have intended to attack the Argive position, but may have been hoping that the advance and retreat of his army would allow his baggage train to withdraw in safety, in which case the veteran's role in the encounter may be doubted. However this does not significantly weaken my main point: the withdrawal still took place in very close proximity to the enemy, and was undertaken in such a manner that it dissuaded the Argives from attack. Hornblower (2008) 170.

[378] Thucydides 5.65 (trans Hammond.)

following day. This encounter also demonstrates the ability of the general to influence a fluid situation, and the first phase of an engagement; Agis was able to halt and withdraw his phalanx while in close proximity to the enemy, while the Argive generals were able to hold their phalanx, in good order and in advantageous terrain, until the Spartan phalanx had passed out of sight.[379]

Most modern commentators have pointed out the unsolicited advice of the older man who called out to Agis that his position was dangerous and the implications this has for the nature of the Spartan command system, however the halting and withdrawal of the entire phalanx has largely passed without comment.[380] This will not do, indeed, the passage is of vital importance to understanding the nature of the advance to battle in Greece. If events occurred as Thucydides describes them, and there are no compelling reasons why his account should be doubted here, then this is strong evidence for a slow and tentative advance into combat, based on practical reasons, as well as indicating that, at least amongst the Spartans, the general retained control over an advancing phalanx.

The day after this aborted engagement the actual battle of Mantinea took place. Thucydides describes the build-up to, and progression of, this battle in some detail, and his account is of great use when attempting to understand both the first phase of battle, and the general's role in it. The first notable incident Thucydides records is that the Spartans were unaware of the Argive advance until the very last

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[379] It is *possible* that the Spartan advance was a feint designed to get the Argives to move from their elevated position and into combat. If this is true then the point remains the same: the Peloponnesian army was able to withdraw in order while in close proximity to the enemy, and while its being planned in advance may detract from the impressiveness of the manoeuvre, it adds to our understanding of the ability of generals to decide on various tactics before battle.
[380] E.g. Lazenby (1991) 98; Hanson (2000a) 94, 137; van Wees (2004) 111.

minute, being shocked beyond anything they could remember at the appearance of an army in battle formation, indeed the very army that they had refused to engage only the day before.[381] Lazenby believes this is the real reason for the Spartan surprise; not that the Argives literally 'caught them napping', but that they had voluntarily moved from their strong, elevated position, and moved to engage in a pitched battle: "One can imagine one of them telling Thucydides: 'There they were, ready for battle – most astonishing thing I ever saw.'"[382] This may have been the cause of the Spartan surprise, however a failure of Spartan scouting and intelligence is just as likely: such a failure may have been responsible for the previous day's abortive attack, while it could also account for Agis' worry regarding his left flank – he did not have sufficient information about the enemy position to match it adequately, and was forced into a last-minute change of formation.[383] Thucydides stresses the speed at which the Peloponnesian line was formed, a speed that was forced due to the sudden appearance of the Argive army, and which indicates that Peloponnesian forces, at least, did not simply line up and immediately charge. The build up to the battle of Mantinea proper tells us a great deal about the importance of generals and their ability to influence even large allied armies while in close proximity to the enemy.

Thucydides' account of the battle of Mantinea contrasts the professional nature of the Peloponnesian army with the largely amateur nature of their opponents. He also ascribes the tactical manoeuvres of the Peloponnesian army to their general,

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[381] Thucydides 5.66.

[382] Lazenby (2004) 120-1; Hornblower (2008) 173. .

[383] Tritle (2010) 124. Hornblower (2008) 170, 173 for discussion of the presence, or lack thereof, of a wood mentioned by Pausanias (8.2.1), that could have obscured the Argive army. At the battle of Nemea the Spartan army only became aware of the enemy phalanx when it raised the paean: Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.19. See also *Hellenica* 3.2.14-15.

Agis, and gives no detail of the actions of the allied army's generals, except to state that both Athenian generals were killed.[384] Regarding the Peloponnesian advance Thucydides states that it was calm and steady, and was made to the tune of pipers; these pipers had no religious significance, but were present to help the ranks keep in step.[385] Perhaps the majority of Thucydides' audience would not have understood the need to keep in step to such a specific degree of accuracy, or were not familiar with the intricacies of Spartan military practice. The need to maintain formation while on the move was vital if a phalanx was to remain effective and make contact with the enemy with its discipline and ranks intact; it is to be remembered that one of the reasons Herodotus offers for the Persian defeat at Plataea was that they attacked the intact Spartan phalanx individually or in small groups.[386] Thucydides contrasts the advance of the Peloponnesian phalanx with the violence and fury of the Argive advance, emphasising the difference between how the two armies prepared: the generals of the allied army gave rousing speeches to their soldiers, while the Spartans simply reminded each other that their long service in action would serve them better than some few words of encouragement.[387] Further evidence for the ability of Agis to influence the advance of the Peloponnesian phalanx, and the fact that this phalanx was advancing slowly, can be found in Thucydides' account of Agis sending a message to extend his flank, discussed in Chapter 2.[388]

It is clear that although Thucydides considered Mantinea to be a complete

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[384] Thucydides 5.71-4.

[385] Thucydides 5.70. Hornblower refers to the passage as "…obviously polemical…" against popular superstition: (1996) 394.

[386] Herodotus 9.62. Anderson (1970) 41; Lazenby (1985) 110; van Wees (2004) 181. While the heavier armour of the allied Greeks paid dividends, their ability to maintain formation and respond rapidly to a changing situation also played an important role.

[387] Thucydides 5.69-70. Anderson (1970) 78-9; Lazenby (2004) 123; Hornblower (2008) 183-5; Tritle (2010) 124.

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failure of technical manoeuvring by the Spartans, their courage and ability to maintain discipline allowed them to be victorious regardless; the steady advance of the Spartan *hippeis* was a terrifying sight on the battlefield, with most of the opposing hoplites fleeing before contact was even made.[389] This calm advance contrasts with the fury of the Argive advance in another part of the line, however this charge was not 'at the run' directly into combat, but was an advance undertaken to exploit the gap in the Peloponnesian line. Thucydides' account of the battle of Mantinea highlights the ability of a general to influence the course of the advance after it had started, as well as showing the flexibility, and some of the limitations, of the phalanx formation. Agis' orders were transmitted and received but were ultimately not appropriate to the situation and so they were ignored, with the sheer size of the engaged sections of his phalanx, coupled with his indecisiveness, resulting in the Peloponnesian left wing being in a highly undesirable position when battle was joined

The battle of Nemea was fought in 394, was a large, 'pitched' battle, and is useful in determining what was possible for generals to achieve during the advance. The advance by both phalanxes at the battle of Nemea presents a stark contrast between the professional, or at least highly experienced, Peloponnesian troops, and the largely amateur allied forces which opposed them.[390] The Peloponnesian advance was more ordered that the allied attempt, although it was organised at the last minute due to the sudden appearance of the allied army, another indication that Peloponnesian forces lacked scouting capabilities. Xenophon gives no explicit details regarding the roles of the opposing generals, although his account does

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[389] Thucydides 5.72. Figueira (2006) for a fascinating discussion of this Spartan institution.
[390] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.18-22.

indicate that there was not an advance 'at the run' directly into combat during the battle. The two opposing phalanxes planned to outflank each other, and advanced into battle either with a pronounced veer to the right, or having extended their line by facing right and marching some distance; this outflanking manoeuvre may have been undertaken at some speed, but it was not directly into combat.[391] Good order and marching discipline were vital to accomplish this; indeed Xenophon's account suggests that this was an engagement won and lost by tactics, and while the role of the generals during the advance, beyond deciding upon rank depth and initial marching direction, is hidden, their presence is more obvious during the other phases of this battle.[392]

Between the battles of Leuctra, which is discussed elsewhere in this thesis, and the second battle of Mantinea there are two battles of note recorded by Xenophon: the so called Tearless Battle in 368, and an engagement at Thyamia on the borders of Sicyon; both are of interest in that they highlight the need for restraint and control in the advance. Details for the Tearless Battle are few, but it appears that the majority of the Argive and Arcadian phalanxes broke and fled before Archidamus' Spartans came within spear-thrust.[393] No mention of an advance 'at the run' is made, indeed Xenophon stresses that although the Spartans were difficult to restrain due to favourable omens, their leaders were able to maintain control; a poorly co-ordinated or unruly advance could prove disastrous, and the ability to *prevent* an advance was an important skill for the general, and subordinate officers,

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[391] Lazenby (1985) 139-40.
[392] See below.
[393] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.1.29-32; Diodorus 15.72.3. Buckler (1980) 107.

to possess.[394]

The final event to be discussed in this section the second battle of Mantinea; the battle proper was preceded by much manoeuvring by Epaminondas, in order to convince the enemy that he would not seek battle that day, but was planning to retire to nearby heights in order to encamp.[395] The desired effect was achieved and when Epaminondas finally launched his attack it was against an unprepared and panicking army. The advance itself was undertaken in force on the left wing, which does not appear to have advanced 'at the run': indeed it is very difficult to see how a phalanx some 50 men deep could hope to do anything 'at the run' and expect to arrive in the sort of order needed to take advantage of their ranks. Epaminondas did not attempt any tactical manoeuvring once the attack had begun; the size of his force, and his desire to prevent the weaker elements from engaging, meant he had few options once his initial deception had developed into the advance to combat.

The above battles emphasise the ability of generals to influence the advance into combat, and the importance of advancing at a slow or steady pace; this pace ensured that generals could react to changing circumstances, and also allowed a coherent phalanx formation to be maintained up to, and after, contact with an enemy phalanx. A clear concern for the maintenance of command, order, and discipline is evident, three factors closely connected with the ability of generals to influence battle. However I do not claim that an advance 'at the run' was impossible or tactically unwise in all situations, and the next section examines those occasions when an advance 'at the run' is described, or implied, in the source material.

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[394] Lazenby (1985) 167. Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.1.30-32; *Anabasis* 1.8.19.
[395] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.5.19-23.

Probably the most famous example of hoplites advancing 'at the run' into battle is the charge by the Greeks at the battle of Marathon in 490, where the allied Athenian and Plataean phalanx charged directly into the Persian army.[396] This is also the earliest battle of the Classical Greek world for which we have a detailed, and contemporary, account; although the battle is not a 'pitched battle' between opposing phalanxes of hoplites, its influence has been strong in the modern reconstruction of Greek warfare, and it remains valuable as an indicator of what was *possible* for generals, and a phalanx, to do.

Herodotus' description of the legendary charge has had a profound impact on the study of Greek warfare, not least in the development of a charge over the final 200 yards 'at the run' into combat as the standard opening to battles. The battle is also of great importance for our understanding of the battlefield role of the general; according to Herodotus Callimachos led the attack from the position of honour on the right wing and was killed, along with another general, Stesilaus, during the fighting at the water's edge.[397] Herodotus does not describe the actions of the other eight generals present during the engagement, although a distinct role for at least one more can be found in his narrative, and is discussed below.[398] The 'meeting of the generals' that resulted in the Athenians deciding to fight, but waiting up to nine days to do so as command was passed to a different general each day, does not shed light

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[396] Herodotus 6.112.
[397] Herodotus 6.110-4. Plutarch is also of use: he states that *Aiantis*, the *phyle* to which Callimachus belonged, was placed on the right of the Greek line. *Moralia* 628D. Plutarch cites 'the elegies of Aeschylus' as his source: Aeschylus supposedly fought at Marathon alongside his brother, who was killed: Pausanias 1.21.2; Justin 9.2.17-18. How & Wells (1912) 111. Krentz (2010) 159-9.
[398] Herodotus 6.113.

on the battlefield role of any of the generals present.[399] However the delay may have

been deliberate, rather than forced due to the multiplicity of command, with Krentz

positing that the Athenians observed Persian troop and cavalry movements in order

to determine when best to attack.[400]

According to much modern scholarship the charge by the Greeks at the battle

of Marathon was necessary due to the danger posed to the phalanx from Persian

archers, and was begun not from 8 stades distant, as reported by Herodotus, but

when the Greeks found themselves within bowshot, i.e. around 150 metres.[401] Thus,

depending on the modern commentator, the Greeks faced a "...hail of Persian

arrows..."; a "...barrage of arrows..."; or a "...murderous hail of arrows..." and were

compelled to charge 'at the run' in order to limit the damage these archers would

have caused.[402] In the event the Greek charge was highly successful, with the Persian

army being taken by surprise while still preparing its ranks; only 192 Greeks fell,

with the majority of these casualties probably having occurred when the centre was

broken.[403] Herodotus makes no mention of the charge as a means of avoiding

casualties from missiles; indeed although he mentions that this was the first occasion

on which a Greek force began a battle with such a manoeuvre, he gives no

information regarding the theory or motivation behind it.[404] While an advance 'at the

run' would have reduced the phalanx's exposure to Persian missiles, other

possibilities present themselves; Storch thought that the Greek charge at Marathon

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[399] Lazenby (1993) 56-9.
[400] Krentz (2010) 142-3. This explanation also helps account for the absence of Spartan and other reinforcements: "Miltiades must have seen an opportunity to exploit – an opportunity that would not wait for the Spartans."
[401] How & Wells (1912) 112.
[402] Hammond (1968) 46; CAH IV 511; Green (1996) 36. However see Gabriel & Metz (1991) 68-72; Hunt (2007) 122.
[403] Herodotus 6.117.
[404] Herodotus 6.112. Lazenby (1993) 67; Krentz (2010) 151-2.

was simply an attempt to take the Persian forces by surprise, something they were able to do due to the lightness of the Athenian panoply by 490.[405] In the most recent work on the battle of Marathon Krentz rejects modern assertions that a charge of around a mile in the full panoply was physically impossible, because the overall burden placed on the hoplite by his panoply was around half that previously taken as standard.[406] Thus he views Herodotus' figure of eight stades as an entirely possible distance for hoplites to run, and then fight. He concludes by suggesting that the charge was a deliberate ploy by Miltiades in an attempt to "…get inside his enemy's decision cycle…" by launching an attack at speed the Greeks could engage the enemy infantry before the Persian cavalry had deployed.[407] In his view the charge at Marathon made sense not because it allowed a powerful impact with the enemy formation, nor because the threat of Persian archers demanded it, but because the Greeks needed to neutralise the threat of the Persian cavalry.

The first large hoplite engagement for which Thucydides records details is the battle of Delium in 424, where an Athenian army of around 7,000 hoplites faced off against a Boeotian army of similar size but which was superior in light infantry.[408] The battle was initiated by the Boeotian general Pagondas, who began his advance while Hippocrates, the Athenian general, was still haranguing his troops; Thucydides tells us that the Boeotian army advanced downhill and the Athenian army responded by advancing at a run.[409] This is the only instance in Thucydides

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[405] Storch (2002) 390-2.

[406] Krentz (2010) 50, 147-50.

[407] Krentz (2010) 143, 151-2. Lazenby (1993) 62 for the observation that the Athenian line was formed in response to the Persian infantry, hence the Athenians were not completely taking the initiative.

[408] Thucydides 4.93-4. Lazenby (2004) 88-9; Hornblower (2007) 68 refers to the battle of Delium as "…our clearest account of a hoplite battle"; Wheeler (2007a) 190.

[409] Thucydides 4.96. Hornblower (1996) 303-4 for the observation that the subject of δρόμος is the Athenians, *not* both armies. Hanson (2000a) 138; Hutchinson (2006) 48.

where δρόμος is used in relation to a charge in a pitched battle, and such an action by the Athenian army is indeed puzzling. This advance 'at the run' could have been a deliberate decision based on tactical circumstances, as with the advance at Marathon; it could indicate standard practice, although if this is the case then one wonders why Thucydides made the remark; or it could indicate a lack of preparation and discipline on the part of the Athenian force. The fact that Pagondas caught Hippocrates still addressing his troops suggests the Athenian advance was a 'knee-jerk' response to an unexpected circumstance; perhaps it was a desperate attempt to scare off the Boeotian army, or hope for the spirit of Marathon to carry the Athenians through the battle.[410] Equally it could indicate a habitual or doctrinal response, however such a judgement seems unlikely given the weight of evidence against a phalanx advancing 'at the run' directly into combat as the standard opening to hoplite battle, indeed, this is the only secure reference in Thucydides to such an advance being made.

Hanson refers to the Athenians' advance as being a "...misguided attack...against Boeotian hoplites, men who already were running *downhill*..."[411] However there is no evidence that the Boeotians were running at all, indeed Thucydides' contrast of the advance suggests they were doing quite the opposite: advancing in good order, albeit downhill, against an enemy whom they had taken by surprise. The argument for a disciplined Boeotian advance is strengthened if we can believe Diodorus' evidence for the presence of the Theban Sacred Band, or a

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[410] Tritle (2010) 100 writes that the Athenian charge "...demonstrated great courage and discipline." Courage can certainly be imputed to the men who fought at Delium, but I do not see the discipline of the Athenian army present here, especially given Plato's discussion in *Symposium* 221B-C, where he emphasises the courage of Socrates in retreating slowly and in good order, remarking that he survived because others were fleeing in panic.
[411] Hanson (2000a) 138 his emphasis.

precursor of that institution;[412] this group of 300 soldiers would probably have formed the front rank of the Theban contingent (making up the right wing of the Boeotian phalanx), which would have lent the "...already formidably deep Theban phalanx a real cutting edge", as well as potentially aiding the maintenance of discipline and formation.[413] Even if Diodorus' evidence is to be rejected, it is possible that part of the Boeotian army was made up of veterans who had enjoyed success against the Athenians in the past as Pagondas' first speech encouraged the older men to emulate their earlier deeds, presumably a reference to the Theban victory at Coroneia in 447.[414] The presence of such veterans would have provided a substantial psychological boost to the younger members of the phalanx, as well as helping to calm and restrain any youthful impetuosity that could have disrupted a calm and disciplined advance.[415]

A distinct role for the general is difficult to discern for either side; Pagondas' brief exhortation before the battle proper, delivered "...there and then..." was presumably short because he wished to take the initiative and advance on the Athenians immediately, a point supported by his earlier, and lengthier, speech, which Thucydides has him deliver while still at Tanagra.[416] There is no surviving information regarding Pagondas' role during the advance, although his ability to order a cavalry attack during the fighting suggests he could have been absent the ranks altogether by the middle of the battle, perhaps having retired wounded,

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[412] Diodorus 12.70.2; Thucydides 4.93.

[413] Lazenby (2004) 88. Diodorus refers to 'charioteers and sidesmen' here, however this is no indication of their battlefield function in the Fifth century, c.f. Spartan *hippeis*. Van Wees (2004) 57-60.

[414] Thucydides 1.113, 4.92. Hornblower (1996) 296; Hanson (2000a) 93. Details for this battle do not survive.

[415] Hanson (2000a) 89-95.

[416] Thucydides 4.92. Hornblower (1996) 290-7.

exhausted, or specifically in order to launch the use his cavalry. Hippocrates did not

survive the battle and Thucydides does not report that he attempted any tactical

manoeuvres, possibly because he was unwilling to risk disrupting his phalanx by

issuing orders in the face of an unexpected enemy advance.[417] If this is the case then

the tactical simplicity of the Athenian advance could have been deliberate, a

recognition that they had been caught off-guard and would have to settle for a

'straight fight', although it is conceded that Hippocrates may not have planned to

undertake any tactical shift or manoeuvre during the advance. Indeed this last point

seems most likely, given Thucydides' comment that the extreme wings of both

phalanxes did not make contact due to the geography of the plain of Delium itself; as

such Hippocrates may not have had any tactical options other than to trust in his

hoplites.[418] Unfortunately for Hippocrates Pagondas was able to call upon his

cavalry, a factor which ultimately broke the Athenian ability to resist.

The battle of Delium was a disaster for Athens; nearly a thousand hoplites

were killed, as well as numerous light infantry and baggage-handlers.[419] However

while it marked the end of large-scale Athenian intervention on the mainland for the

next six years, it also marked the rise to prominence, in Thucydides' narrative, of the

Spartan general Brasidas. The first notable instance of Brasidas' leading or

commanding an infantry formation occurs in Lyncus in 423, when he found his

phalanx under attack by Illyrian light infantry; the engagement is more appropriately

described as being 'countermeasure taken on the march' rather than a charge,

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[417] Thucydides 4.96.
[418] Thucydides 4.96. Pritchett (1969) 32; (1980) 297; Hornblower (1996) 304; Hutchinson (2006) 48.
[419] Thucydides 4.101. Lazenby (2004) 90 observes that this represents 14% of the total Athenian hoplite force becoming casualties: "...perhaps the worst ever suffered by a hoplite army in a pitched battle."

however I include it here because it shows the level of influence a general could exert before battle was actually joined.[420] Brasidas' response to the attack was to form his phalanx into a square, within which he placed his light infantry and baggage-handlers, and advised his hoplites that good order was vital if they were to survive.[421] He then ordered the youngest members of the phalanx to rush out between the ranks and meet the enemy if they attacked, and finally organised a rear-guard of 300 picked hoplites which he led in person.[422] His orders to the youngest members of the phalanx are of great interest here, and represent the first recorded instance of direct orders for what appears to have later become standard Spartan practice: the sending out of year-groups to chase down attacking light infantry.[423] The response was effective, with the attacking Illyrians switching their attention to Brasidas' Macedonian allies, who were fleeing the battlefield in disarray.[424] This engagement highlights the ability of a hoplite general to react to new and changing circumstances 'on the fly'; Brasidas' rearguard was able to defeat an attack and then launch a rapid assault against an enemy position on a nearby hill, all the while being aware of developing threats and the progress of the main phalanx.

The level of control that Brasidas had over his troops is impressive, as is the amount of tactical information available to him and his ability to recognise that a fighting withdrawal was more appropriate than trying to resist the enemy attacks

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[420] Thucydides 4.124-8.

[421] Lazenby (2004) 97-8. Most of the hoplites were Chalcidian mercenaries.

[422] Thucydides 4.125-7.

[423] Thucydides 4.125. Although this appears to have been the initial Spartan response to the Athenian light infantry during the battle of Sphacteria, Thucydides does not record an order from the Spartan commander to that effect. Lazenby (2004) 98. Wylie (1992) 86 refers to the tactic as "...orthodox Spartan tactics."

[424] Thucydides 4.127. Hornblower (1996) 400 describes this as "A first-class piece of professional soldiering under pressure."

with his own light infantry. This force was placed inside a protective square of hoplites and played no role in the engagement, with Lazenby suggesting that this was because they "...could engage the enemy over the heads of the hoplites forming the square."[425] The contrast between this battle and that of the battle of Aetolia in 426 when the Athenian general Demosthenes found himself in a similar situation is stark: Demosthenes' response was largely passive, with his static ranged troops putting up most of the resistance; as a result of this his main force was unable to effectively manoeuvre or escape, being destroyed as a result.[426] Brasidas' response was active, with his focus being on constant movement in order to occupy advantageous terrain; multiple small charges by defined groups allowed his main body to continue marching in the knowledge that they would be covered while doing so. Brasidas' plan worked, Demosthenes' did not; the decision to leave the light infantry inside the phalanx was not just to allow them to shoot over the heads of the hoplites, but to allow the entire force to withdraw as rapidly as possible. That this was successful demonstrates the importance of the general in rapidly and effectively organising an appropriate response to changing events, as well as the ability of hoplites to undertake running charges.

The first part of Xenophon's *Hellenica* records a particularly turbulent time in Athenian history; he gives details of the eventual fall of the Athenians to the Peloponnesian League, and brings to life the internal strife that ravaged Athens after her capitulation. The first land engagements for which Xenophon records sufficient details are those that occurred during the rule of the Thirty, and all involve the

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[425] Lazenby (2004) 97-8; Wylie (1992) 86-7.
[426] Thucydides 3.97-8.

Athenian general and statesman Thrasybulus.[427] Thrasybulus, having occupied the stronghold of Phyle, set out with a force of around 700 men to ambush the forces of the Thirty which were guarding the land near Phyle.[428] This first engagement relied on a rapid and stealthy night march in order to catch the enemy at their most vulnerable. Xenophon records that Thrasybulus halted his troops three or four stadia away from the enemy camp, and rested until daybreak before attacking, with his reference to the grounding of arms indicating this was a force equipped as hoplites.[429]

The final advance was 'at the run' but not directly into combat with an enemy phalanx, indeed the enemy were emerging from tents, preparing horses, and generally preparing themselves for the day ahead. Xenophon records no specific details regarding Thrasybulus' role during the charge, beyond stating that he chose the moment to attack; however it was presumably also Thrasybulus' decision to begin the engagement 'at the run', just as it had been his decision to set up the ambush and to undertake a risky night march.[430] The engagement appears to have been highly professional and well planned; it cannot have been easy to get a mix of mercenaries, foreigners, and Athenian citizen-hoplites, to ground their arms while so close to the enemy, even harder to restrain them until the right moment to attack, however Thrasybulus appears to have had the personality and experience to ensure that the element of surprise was not lost. His role during the actual advance is

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[427] On whom see Ste Croix (1981) 605; Krentz (1982); Hammond (1986) 464; Cartledge (1987) 367; Kagan (1987) 115; Hornblower (1994) 76; Seager (1994) 114; Buck (1998) Reception has generally been negative, although Buck's monograph presents him in a very good light.
[428] Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.4.4-5. Diodorus 14.32.6-33.1 does not accord well with Xenophon's account, Buck (1998) 75 suggests it is based on Ephorus, not the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchus,* and so should be ignored.
[429] Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.4.5-6.
[430] Xenophon obviously approved of such tactics: Krentz (1995) 141.

invisible, but the decision of when to attack, to emphasise speed and surprise over formation, and the ability to approach undetected indicates Thrasybulus held a significant advantage in intelligence gathering and scouting ability; his decision to advance 'at the run' was a sound tactical response to the disposition of the enemy.[431] The composition of Thrasybulus' force may also have contributed to his tactics; while the 700 men may have been equipped as hoplites they appear to have been something of a mixed force, with some being Athenians, others mercenaries, and others unpaid foreigners.[432] Numbers were, therefore, rather limited, and there is no suggestion that an organised force of light infantry or cavalry was present, hence Thrasybulus was unable to set ambushes behind the enemy as Demosthenes did in 426, or to engage the enemy with a mixed force in the manner that Aeneas Tacticus suggests.[433] As such Thrasybulus' decision to advance 'at the run' was also a sound tactic given the limitations of his force; it may well have been a case of 'going all in', but it was the right choice.

Two examples of phalanxes advancing 'at the run' can be found in Xenophon's *Anabasis*: at 1.2.17-18 the mercenaries are deployed in formation to allow the Cilician queen to review Cyrus' army. The Greeks formed up 4 deep and, at a trumpet signal, charged, finally breaking into a run on their own accord.[434] As this was an army review rather than an actual battle there was no enemy force present, and so no pressing need for the Greeks to remain a tight formation, perhaps explaining their depth of 4, rather than the standard 8 or 12. The sight of the

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[431] Aeneas Tacticus would have strongly approved of this engagement: See chapter 4.

[432] Krentz (1982) 83, (1995) 141 suggests there were slightly over 100 Athenian hoplites out of a total force of 700, based on a remark by Aeschines that 1,000 drachmas divided between those who were besieged at Phyle resulted in each man receiving less than 10 drachmas. Buck (1998) 75 does not approve, but offers no alternative numbers.

[433] See chapter 4.

[434] Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.2.16-18.

advancing phalanx struck such fear into the barbarians and the Cilician queen that

they fled, much to the Greek's amusement.[435] The advance of the Greeks at the later

battle of Cunaxa struck a similar chord of fear into the opposing Persians:

> ὡς δὲ πορευομένων ἐξεκύμαινέ τι τῆς φάλαγγος, τὸ ὑπολειπόμενον ἤρξατο δρόμῳ
> θεῖν· καὶ ἅμα ἐφθέγξαντο πάντες οἷον τῷ Ἐνυαλίῳ ἐλελίζουσι, καὶ πάντες δὲ ἔθεον.
> λέγουσι δὲ τινες ὡς καὶ ταῖς ἀσπίσι πρὸς τὰ δόρατα ἐδούπησαν φόβον ποιοῦντες τοῖς
> ἵπποις. πρὶν δὲ τόξευμα ἐξικνεῖσθαι ἐκκλίνουσιν οἱ βάρβαροι καὶ φεύγουσι. καὶ
> ἐνταῦθα δὴ ἐδίωκον μὲν κατὰ κράτος οἱ Ἕλληνες, ἐβόων δὲ ἀλλήλοις μὴ θεῖν δρόμῳ,
> ἀλλ' ἐν τάξει ἕπεσθαι.

> "And when, as they proceeded, a part of the phalanx billowed out, those who
> were thus left behind began to run; at the same moment they all set up the
> sort of war-cry which they raise to Enyalius, and all alike began running. It is
> also reported that some of them clashed their shields against their spears,
> thereby frightening the enemy's horses. And before an arrow reached them,
> the barbarians broke and fled. Thereupon the Greeks pursued with all their
> might, but shouted meanwhile to one another not to run at a headlong pace,
> but to keep their ranks in the pursuit."[436]

The charge was 'at the run' but not directly into combat; indeed Xenophon's

account, when taken with the earlier incident, indicates that the Greeks were aware

of the impact their loud and rapid advance would have on their opponents, while also

ensuring that they would be minimally exposed to missiles should the Persians have

stood their ground, while Xenophon's reporting of the mercenaries' concern for the

maintenance of formation indicates they were aware of the difficulties they would

experience should they reach combat with disrupted ranks.[437] The charges may thus

have been a response to the deployment and equipment of the Greek's immediate

opposition, rather than a reflection of doctrine, and indicate some degree of pre-

battle planning. While there is little in Xenophon's accounts that indicates the

presence or influence of a general *during* the charge, the incidents are useful in

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[435] Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.2.17
[436] Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.8.17-18.
[437] Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.8.19-20; also at 1.10.11-12. C.f. Aristotle *Politics* 1297b.

highlighting the tactical possibilities of this phase of battle, as well as the importance, and presence, of battlefield communication.

Similar tactics to those used by Thrasybulus, discissed above, were used by a mixed Phliasian and mercenary force in 366. The engagement was not a pitched battle, but was a surprise attack upon a force of Sicyonians who were fortifying the area; indeed Xenophon points out that there were more Sicyonian builders than hoplites present, so it is little surprise that the attack by Philasian cavalry and infantry, supported by the Athenian general Chares' mercenaries, was successful.[438] The advance of this mixed force was rapid, with Xenophon stating that

τέλος δὲ οἱ μὲν ἱππεῖς κατὰ κράτος ἤλαυνον, οἱ δὲ πεζοὶ κατὰ κράτος ἔθεον ὡς δυνατὸν ἐν τάξει

"...finally, the horsemen were riding at the top of their speed and the foot-soldiers were running as fast as it is possible for men in line to do."[439]

While Xenophon uses πεζοί here rather than ὁπλίτης, the reference to τάξις and his earlier mention of Phliasian hoplites being present indicates that hoplites are being referred to here.[440] The run was not directly into combat, but was a tactical advance designed to catch the enemy off guard while ensuring that cohesion was maintained should a battle ensue; the enemy were caught preparing dinner, bathing and making their beds, and fled in terror.[441]

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[438] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.2.1, 21.
[439] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.2.22 (trans Brownson.)
[440] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.2.21.
[441] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.2.22.

Although a 200 yard advance 'at the run' directly into combat was not the standard case for hoplite battles, there was a scenario in which such a charge would be possible, and indeed useful. This is when such an action would limit the phalanx's exposure to missiles; by advancing as quickly as possible the window of opportunity for missiles to damage the phalanx would be reduced, as would the chances of inflicting damage due to the rapidly advancing formation. In such a situation the need to get to grips with the enemy quickly became more important than the maintenance of formation; the need for cohesion was doubly reduced due to the lightly-armed nature of the soldiers being charged. According to Xenophon:

σὺν μὲν γὰρ ἄλλῃ δυνάμει μάλα ἔστιν ἔνθα ἰσχυρῶς ὠφελοῦσι σφενδονῆται παρόντες, αὐτοὶ δὲ καθ' αὑτοὺς οὐδ' ἂν οἱ πάντες σφενδονῆται μείνειαν πάνυ ὀλίγους ὁμόσε ἰόντας σὺν ὅπλοις ἀγχεμάχοις.

"For in conjunction with other forces there are occasions when the presence of slingers is of very effective assistance, but by themselves alone not all the slingers in the world could stand against a very few men who came into a hand-to-hand encounter with them with weapons suitable for close combat."[442]

Xenophon's exaggeration makes his point all the stronger: although ranged troops could inflict damage from a distance, they were less useful once that distance had been fully closed. Such a charge could also unsettle the missile troops and perhaps even cause them to panic, especially if they themselves were the target of the charge. Spartan forces in particular appear to have been trained to deal with the attacks of light infantry by running from the phalanx in an attempt to scare off or cut them down. The various examples of this technique being used all demonstrate that generals were capable of issuing orders mid-engagement; indeed their orders were being given and transmitted while the phalanx was under direct attack from missiles

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[442] Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 7.4.15 (trans Miller.)

and, on other occasions, while under threat of attack by an intact enemy phalanx at the same time. The orders are not being given *before* the engagement itself, although some degree of preparation seems likely; rather the sending out of specific year classes to deal with specific situations suggests that generals were able to have their commands heard and understood, and that hoplites were able to run and operate as individuals or small groups when required.

The battle of Coronea: Two different types of advance

The battle of Coronea is of great interest in determining the ability of generals to influence the first phase of combat, and the nature of the advance itself. There does appear to have been a charge 'at the run' once the opposing phalanxes were close to each other, culminating in a head-on collision, as well as a second advance into combat which was not made 'at the run.' The two can be treated as separate engagements, of the first clash Xenophon states:

> συνιόντων δὲ τέως μὲν σιγὴ πολλὴ ἀπ' ἀμφοτέρων ἦν: ἡνίκα δ' ἀπεῖχον ἀλλήλων ὅσον στάδιον, ἀλαλάξαντες οἱ Θηβαῖοι δρόμῳ ὁμόσε ἐφέροντο.

> "Now as the opposing armies were coming together, there was deep silence for a time in both lines; but when they were distant from one another about a stadium, the Thebans raised the war cry and rushed to close quarters at the run."[443]

The Theban advance 'at the run' is only the second unambiguous reference to a hoplite force in a pitched battle undertaking such an action. It is also puzzling considering the Theban advance at Delium, which was not 'at the run', and the

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[443] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.17.

Theban advances at Leuctra and Mantinea in 362, which were also not 'at the run.'[444]

Regardless of the reasoning behind this advance 'at the run', the evidence of earlier and later battles, and the second clash of Coronea itself, suggests it was undertaken for a specific reason, not that such a charge was standard practice.

The right flanks of both armies were victorious during the first engagement of Coronea, however neither army seems to have been aware of the defeat of their left flank, with the Thebans continuing their advance to the Spartan baggage train, and Agesilaus being garlanded in the field. The two phalanxes wheeled and met each other head-on in the second engagement, in what Hanson regarded as "Perhaps the most notorious case..." of two phalanxes crashing together at speed.[445] Xenophon himself stated that Coronea was a battle like no other of his time; I would suggest, with Wheeler, that the reason for the uniqueness of this engagement was the fact that there *does* seem to have been a deliberate head-to-head collision between two phalanxes, neither of which attempted to outflank or otherwise seek an advantage.[446] But even in this second clash there is no specific detail regarding a charge 'at the run', Xenophon simply states that Agesilaus' phalanx

ἀλλ' ἀντιμέτωπος συνέρραξε τοῖς Θηβαίοις

"...crashed against the Thebans front to front."[447]

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[444] Thucydides 4.96; Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.4-7, 7.5.19-23; Plutarch *Pelopidas* 20.
[445] Hanson (2000a) 157.
[446] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.16, *Agesilaus* 2. Wheeler (2007a) 209. Pelopidas, in command of the Sacred Band, fought his way directly through a Spartan phalanx at the battle of Tegya, so the Thebans fighting their way through the Spartans at Coronea cannot be what moved Xenophon to consider the engagement 'unique.' Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.5.23-5.
[447] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.19 (trans Brownson.)

If the Theban advance 'at the run' in the initial battle was an attempt to gain a tactical advantage then it suggests a battlefield decision, since such an action could not be undertaken before knowing the exact disposition of the enemy line.[448] Equally, Xenophon's remark, and implied criticism, that, in the second clash, Agesilaus did not have to engage the Thebans in a frontal attack but could have simply let the Theban phalanx pass, suggests that Agesilaus had the ability to direct and manoeuvre his phalanx mid-charge, but decided against doing so.[449] Xenophon was an experienced hoplite and general who was present on the day; his observation that Agesilaus could have taken a 'safer course' but chose to face the Thebans head on emphasises not only Xenophon's admiration for Agesilaus, but also indicates what Xenophon may have considered the more 'usual' tactic given the situation: allowing the enemy to pass and then striking them in the side or the rear.[450] The second phase of the battle may also have influenced Epaminondas and Pelopidas' tactics at the battle of Leuctra; a massed attack, with deep ranks, directly against the position of the enemy general, a tactic that surely suggests the perceived importance of the general on the field as more than a figurehead for morale. This was partially successful at Coronea, with Agesilaus being wounded and carried from the phalanx, and some Thebans breaking through the Spartan line to Mount Helicon; it was to prove much more successful at Leuctra.[451]

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[448] As at the battle of Mantinea: see above.

[449] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.19. Cartledge (1987) 221 suggests this was down to Agesilaus' hatred of the Thebans, rather than a calculated decision. While the direct engagement was dangerous, despite the superior Spartan numbers, it did make sense; if Agesilaus could complete his victory by destroying the Thebans, whose Argive allies were watching from Helicon, then Theban power and influence would have been even further reduced. Lazenby (1985) 146.

[450] Cartledge (1987) 221; Hutchinson (2000) 155.

[451] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.20. Although the Thebans did take casualties; 600, according to Diodorus 14.84. Lazenby (1985) 146. Plutarch *Agesilaus* 18.3-4 claims the Spartans opened their phalanx to let the Thebans through, but also claims they then struck the Thebans in the flank, with Frontinus *Strategemata* 2.6.6 and Polyaenus 2.1.19 stating that the Spartans then struck the Thebans in the rear. This is the opposite of what Xenophon, who was present at the battle, states the Spartans did; his account is surely to be preferred.

The battle of Coronea was unlike any other of Xenophon's time not because of the eerie silence he reports, but because it covered the whole gamut of hoplite tactics during the advance: phalanxes ran to gain position, charged to frighten enemies off, outflanked each other, and, remarkably, marched head-on into a second, and final, clash.[452] The breadth of tactics used highlights the ability of generals to respond to immediate tactical circumstances and to adjust the nature of their advance accordingly.

Conclusions

There are three main types of advance in the battle descriptions of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon: firstly rapid charges over the final 200 or so yards, sometimes 'at the run' as part of an attempt to either launch a surprise attack or exploit circumstances to tactical advantage. These charges could bring about a decisive advantage if they were undertaken at the appropriate time and in good order. However, if they were attempted during a 'pitched battle' then only part of the phalanx, or a specialised group, did so. The second type of charge was also 'at the run', being a response to the attacks of light infantry; Spartan hoplites were able to catch and kill skirmishing peltasts, but were not always successful, while the predictability of this response could be used to bait hoplites into an ambush. Finally there is the 'standard' charge, more properly referred to as an 'advance', which appears to have been relatively slow and measured. There is no indication that any of

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[452] Cawkwell (1979) 204 stresses the fighting of two separate battles as the reason for this remark. Cartledge (1987) 220; Schwartz (2009) 249 suggests the 'unlike any other in my time' remark is due to the "...unnatural silence from the hoplites on both sides." However Xenophon also reports that the Thebans raised the war cry when they began their advance; the battlefield cannot have been eerily silent throughout the entire engagement!

the battles discussed above involved two phalanxes advancing 'at the run' at each other; this points towards a more complicated and controlled opening phase of battle than is commonly accepted. Alongside this controlled opening of battle is the evidence for the ability of generals to do more than aim their phalanx like a missile and hope for the best; it is to be admitted that much of this evidence is lateral or inferred, but it is not *ex silentio*, and the evidence suggests that hoplites could be directed during the advance to battle, with such direction ranging from large-scale attempts to extend the line to smaller, but still vital, attempts to exploit local circumstances to tactical advantage.

There was no driving necessity for hoplite forces to charge into combat; there was no rule, written or otherwise, that dictated that the only response open to a phalanx was that of acceptance, and rapid advance into, combat. Indeed the evidence suggests that quite the opposite occurred, with the unique circumstances of each individual battle determining if and how a charge was begun; in some cases phalanxes preferred to maintain their position on advantageous ground in the hope that the enemy was unaware of the strength of their position, inexperienced, or simply over-confident. This much is suggested by Thucydides' report of the encounter between the Peloponnesian and Boeotian forces on the day before the battle of Mantinea in 418BC, where the Argive phalanx maintained its elevated position, while Agis retained the ability to command his phalanx, even when the enemy was within javelin range.[453] Not all armies will have possessed this ability, equally not all armies will have had the discipline to even maintain their formation

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[453] Thucydides 5.65.

during the advance into combat; the Argive phalanx defeated at the battle of Miletus serves as a brutal demonstration of the consequences that could result from a careless and rash advance into combat.[454] The ancient material makes it clear that generals *were* able to influence the advance, with the only limiting factor being their own imagination: generals ordered extensions of their line, ordered unexpected and sudden advances, and were expected to engineer an advantage before leading the phalanx into battle; so ingrained was this to the Greek psyche that Xenophon was able to write critically of a time when a general, a Spartan general no less, chose direct and head-on confrontation, rather than attempting to manoeuvre to ensure his forces held an advantage.[455]

There are other, practical, reasons why the advance to combat was not undertaken 'at the run' as a matter of course. Most important is the impact this would have on the integrity of the phalanx formation; as the phalanx charged different sections of the line, which were made up of men of differing fitness and motivation, would encounter different terrain, with the result being that the phalanx would enter combat as a disorganized mob, rather than a recognizable formation. Xenophon makes the concern of the 10,000 to maintain their formation while advancing at speed obvious.[456] I do not mean to suggest that any attack on the run, no matter how far the distance charged, was always fatal to a phalanx's cohesion, rather that the disadvantages to be gained from a running charge over the final 200 yards directly into combat outweighed the advantages. An advance 'at the run' would also have unfortunate effects for the rear rank when the nature of the spear is considered; the

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[454] Thucydides 8.25 – The Argives advanced in disorder, believing that the Ionian Milesians they faced would not withstand their attack. They were defeated with the loss of 300 men.
[455] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.19.
[456] Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.8.19.

presence of the butt-spike would be a serious threat if the phalanx came to an abrupt halt after crashing into an enemy formation. Finally there was no need for a lengthy run-up in order to generate momentum for an initial spear-strike.

Most telling of all against an advance 'at the run' into combat is that we are told, by Thucydides, that Spartan armies did not usually do so, and while this may indicate that other, less professional armies, *did* do so, this is not supported by the surviving evidence. Indeed there are relatively few surviving examples of a battle between phalanxes beginning with an advance into combat 'at the run', and even in these cases only one of the armies present did so; an indication of either a loss of control by the general, or a deliberate ploy or tactic appropriate to the circumstances.[457] While other examples of phalanxes or special units advancing 'at the run' exist, these indicate rapid manoeuvres designed to take advantage of changing tactical situations or to chase down attacking light infantry, rather than attempts to literally smash through an intact enemy formation. Examples from the Persian Wars, that of Marathon in particular, belong to this category of advance: while the advance at Marathon may have been 'at the run' directly into combat, this was a deliberate tactical decision, a response to knowledge of the Persian strength in archers and cavalry.[458] An advance 'at the run' was the logical and most tactically appropriate opening to this particular engagement; that few hoplite battles begin in this manner indicates that there were tactical and practical reasons not to do so. The phalanx was an inexorable, grinding formation, not one which was suited to crazed

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[457] Athenians run at Marathon: Herodotus 6.112. Athenians run at Delium: Thucydides 4.96. Thebans run at Coroneia: Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.17. Other examples of hoplites running in battle refer to attempts to chase down attacking light infantry, e.g. Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.15-17.
[458] Krentz (2010) 137-143.

charges and rushes into combat; its purpose was to maximise individual protection through cohesion and teamwork, two qualities that would be lost if a charge 'at the run' directly into combat was made.

A charge 'at the run' over some 200 yards by opposing phalanxes directly into combat may seem more exciting and evocative than a tentative advance into combat, but the surviving evidence demonstrates that the maintenance of formation and discipline offered greater advantages to a phalanx than any advantage that could come about through a charge 'at the run'; the (small) additional power that such a charge would give to spear-thrusts was more than offset by the corresponding loss of formation. The nature of the charge depended on the immediate battlefield conditions, the number and quality of troops present, and the ability or desire of the general to manoeuvre; practical considerations dictated whether a charge was undertaken, and if so whether it was 'at the run' and into combat or an attempt to gain a tactical advantage. There is a clear role for the general here; whether it be in attempting grand-scale manoeuvres while advancing and in close proximity to the enemy, leading formations in an attempt to ambush the enemy or otherwise 'steal a march', or, conversely, in deciding *not* to advance while occupying advantageous terrain. Generals could also restrain overly enthusiastic hoplites, react to new information as it became available, and dictate the direction, speed, time, and purpose of the advance, all actions which indicate the level of control that could be found in both amateur and professional forces. The general could influence the advance into combat in many ways. He was not reduced to the position of a helpless observer, carried along in a sea of running men, desperately hoping that his spear would find the enemy while theirs would miss, but remained capable of command

and control throughout the advance.

Section B: Fighting

The second recognisable phase of a hoplite battle, and the point at which various scholars declare the general's role to have ended, is that of the actual fighting, first at the outer range of spears and then gradually into extreme close combat as the distance between phalanxes was reduced. This chapter will focus specifically on the battlefield environment in which generals operated, and shall attempt to discover whether this environment was conducive to the continued exercise of command and control, specifically: did this phase mark the breakdown of the ability of generals to influence battle? I shall argue that hoplite battle was fluid and chaotic, and will develop the argument, started in the previous chapter, that the phalanx was a more flexible formation than has previously been claimed. This point has a direct impact on our overall conception of the influence that generals were able to exert during battle. If the phalanx was so tightly packed that shields were communal pieces of equipment, and individuals were unable to move relatively freely, then the possibility for generals or subordinate commanders to exert any influence on the course of events would have been minimal; however, if the phalanx was not so tightly packed then the possibility remained. Thus, while the title of this chapter is 'Fighting', the focus is on the broader mechanics of battle, which are studied not in order to demonstrate the existence of a definitive fighting system, but to highlight the potential for continued and intelligent intervention by generals and subordinate commanders, and to shed light on the battlefield environment as a whole. This will allow the development of a context in which to place the battlefield role of the general, a context that will be completed at the end of the next chapter, which deals with *ôthismos*, the famous 'push' of hoplite battle.

There are no detailed accounts of exactly what occurred in any given clash between phalanxes, despite the authors of some of our most reliable literary sources having served as generals and fought as hoplites and cavalrymen. Our sources did not feel the need to give details for an experience they assumed their audience would be familiar with, were themselves uninterested in the technical details of battles, or did not think it was possible to give an account of 'everyday' warfare.[459] However, the patchwork that can be created from aggregating the scattered and partial surviving source material regarding hoplite engagements heavily implies 'loose' ranks and the ability of generals, and other individuals, to influence the course of battle.[460] Many battle reports and anecdotes indicate that at least *part* of a phalanx remained under direct control during battle, for example many small units prove themselves highly flexible, generals initiate surprise attacks mid-battle[461] and were regarded as important targets.[462] This indicaties the use of advanced signals or the presence of the general outside the phalanx itself, and is a recognition of the importance of the general himself. This suggests that an image of the hoplite general as an individual whose job was finished once the phalanx had begun to advance is too simplistic, and the following discussion will investigate the scope and range of battlefield command. Individuals are also carried from the ranks, indicative of local-scale organization and control; while the response could have been a 'standard' and trained response, it would still require a co-ordinator or leader, such as a subordinate commander, to take charge.[463]

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[459] Hornblower (2008) 474-5.
[460] Wheeler (1991) 145-50.
[461] E.g. Thucydides 4.96.
[462] E.g. Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.13;Polyaenus 3.9.22; Plutarch *Pelopidas* 2.
[463] For the importance of signals, organization on a strategic scale, and small units see chapter 4.

Generals influencing battle

I begin with an analysis of the various examples of generals directly influencing combat on a level above their personal physical intervention; these examples are relatively rare and are scattered throughout the historical sources, however they cast a great deal of light on the flexibility of the phalanx, and the ability of generals, and individuals, to exert their influence during a battle. The Spartan King Leonidas demonstrated an impressive level of control over his phalanx at the battle of Thermopylae, and made good use of the flexibility of the phalanx as a whole. The small size and elite status of Leonidas' force was unusual and we must not generalise from the engagement; I include it as an example of what generals could achieve with well trained and organised hoplites.

Leonidas' tactics relied upon the ability of his phalanx to feign retreat in the face of Persian infantry attack, inviting a rapid and chaotic pursuit.[464] The Persians were cut down in large numbers when the Spartan phalanx, presumably at Leonidas' command, turned, rallied, and began to fight. This is surely an indication that their ranks were relatively loose. Trained troops in an intact formation were now fighting untrained troops who had lost their formation, a brilliant example of how intelligent use of tactics, terrain, and timing could be just as influential as superiority in numbers or equipment.[465]

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[464] Herodotus 7.211. Discussed above.
[465] Although Herodotus makes it clear that the Greeks also held the advantage in equipment: Herodotus 7.211. Green (1998) 135; Bradford (1980) 124-130 (for the suggestion that the other Greek contingents were commanded by Spartan officers); Hignett (1963) 142-4; Grundy (1901) 297-8; van Wees (2004) 180-1.

Although the various battles of the Persian wars have some value for determining the true density of phalanxes, they only show that a phalanx could find an advantage against light infantry by adopting a relatively loose formation. To establish whether this formation could be successfully adopted against opposing heavy infantry requires the battles of the Peloponnesian and Corinthian wars to be analysed.

Thucydides' account of the battle of Delium contains a brief, but vital, description of how the Boeotian general Pagondas was able to influence battle during the fighting phase: Pagondas was aware of the danger posed by the defeat of his left flank and sent two squadrons of cavalry to its aid. The decision to send this aid appears to have been made mid-battle, suggesting that Pagondas was somehow informed, or could himself see, the plight of the left wing, and that he was able to issue orders to send aid, orders which were communicated quickly enough to have the desired effect. This effect was to cause panic in the previously victorious Athenian right wing, which imagined the cavalry indicated the presence of another army. The Athenian left was unable to resist the concentration of numbers to the front, cavalry to the flank, and fleeing troops to the side, and also broke.[466] Pagondas' army was much larger and not as well trained as Leonidas' at Thermopylae and while he was unable to engage in the technically difficult manoeuvring that Leonidas commanded, he was able to influence battle on a broader scale. The decision to order the cavalry strike was 'pure' generalship, devoid of physical presence, and that it was done by an amateur, non-Spartan, general lends it great weight when we consider the ability of other generals to influence battle:

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[466] Thucydides 4.96.

Spartan generals were not the only ones able to react to changing circumstances during battle!

Generals were able to influence battles, but in larger battles their personal influence, i.e. their ability to physically direct troops around them, was reduced due to the increased ratio of hoplites to generals. One way the Greeks attempted to ensure command was still spread throughout the ranks was by way of subordinate commanders, discussed in chapter 3, and another was to adopt a system of multiple generals. At the battle of Marathon all ten Athenian generals were present, a system which may have been responsible for the ability of the wings to return to the aid of the centre, although Herodotus also used it to explain the Athenian delay in engaging the Persian force. A multiplicity of generals could, therefore, have positive and negative implications for armies; Thucydides' account of the battle of Syracuse implies he was aware of the danger of having *too many* generals on the battlefield: after an extended period of hand to hand fighting the Syracusans were driven from the field and forced to retreat.[467] Thucydides gives no clue as to how the Athenians and their allies were victorious, although he does note that they were surprised at the extent of the Syracusan resistance.[468]

Greek generals were able to order small formations to advance and retreat and give orders to squadrons of cavalry mid-battle, and on those occasionas when they led from the front ranks in the right wing this was not necessarily to provide an inspiration to their men, but because they were thus placed to direct the thrust of the

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[467] See above, chapter 2.
[468] Thucydides 6.70.

best hoplites in the phalanx. There was also recognition that it was possible for 'too many cooks to spoil the broth': if a multitude Greek generals could influence battle *too much* then surely this suggests that individual generals *were* able to do so as well, and that there was a recognition of the concept of a 'balanced command', one which had enough generals and subordinate commanders, without there being too many 'ultimate' sources of orders.

The case for the ability of generals to in influence battle can be further strengthened by examining the nature of the phalanx formation as a whole, in order to examine whether it was a formation which required a tight or a loose order to be effective. The following discussion of the amount of space available to individuals in the phalanx has a vital bearing on the battlefield role of the general; if the phalanx was a very tight formation, with individuals having barely a shield's width between them, then there can have been little scope for the exercise of command functions during a battle, with the general having little option but to remain in place throughout the fighting. If an intensely close order was essential to the nature of the phalanx then it is difficult to see how weapons could be used to any great effect, while a much looser order would make us expect a greater emphasis on individual weapons training and skill in the sources.[469]

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[469] Although the sources do indicate that generals recognised the need for fit and strong individuals, see e.g. Thucydides 1.84; Plato *Republic* 566C-D; Xenophon *Hellenica* 3.4.16; Plutarch *Moralia* 192C-D.

In one of the most recent attempts to describe what happened when two phalanxes met, Schwartz argued that a closely-ordered formation is the most realistic.[470] However, in a summary of his position Schwartz revealed his thoughts regarding a looser order, and demonstrates the false dichotomy that has formed part of the 'orthodox' argument for many years, namely that if battle was not in close order, then it was a free flowing series of duels:

> "It is unrealistic to assume that hoplites were at any point free to move about as they saw fit on the battlefield: not only the weight of armour and weapons, but also the incredible awkwardness of it, ensured that hoplite battles were not enacted as series of loosely connected duels."[471]

To my knowledge no scholar has clearly and plainly argued that hoplites in Classical Greece were 'free to move about' the battlefield fighting a series of duels. Some have questioned the density of the phalanx and suggested a rather looser structure than typically recognized, but none has gone so far as to propose that hoplite warfare was an affair of individual combats.[472] Indeed the general approach has been to emphasise the practical nature of the hoplite and his equipment, largely based around the question that if an individual did not have the room to wield his weapons, then why did he carry them at all? The carrying of specific equipment presupposes the existence of a battlefield environment appropriate for its use, and the surviving evidence makes it clear that hoplites in phalanx formation had the space needed to wield their equipment.

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[470] Schwartz (2009) 98.

[471] Schwartz (2009) 98.

[472] E.g. Cartledge (1977) 13; Krentz (1985) 50-5; Cawkwell (1989) 377-383; van Wees (2004) 185-92.

The orthodox commentators do not offer a definite figure for the amount of space available to individuals in the front ranks of a phalanx, but it is clear that they view the front ranks as being tightly packed, in both rank and file, out of a need to maximise the defensive qualities of the hoplite shield, in order to generate pressure and momentum for *ôthismos*, and because generals could do little more than organise their phalanx and hope for the best.[473] This is also indicated by a modern emphasis on the supposed inability of hoplites to engage in single combat, which increases the reliance on tight ranks as hoplites were apparently unable to operate as individuals, and their insistence on the impracticality of the Thessalian trick, a technique designed to unbalance the enemy by taking a half-step backwards.[474] This technique is deemed to have been impossible because there would have been too much physical pressure from the rear ranks to allow a half-step back to occur. None of these points stand up to scrutiny, and it will be shown that hoplite equipment was as suited to single combat as any other equipment, while there was space in the front ranks for, amongst other things, stepping backwards and carrying individuals from the fighting.[475] I begin with a brief discussion of the scholarship regarding loose ranks, and move onto an analysis of the relevant ancient evidence in the hope of demonstrating that it was possible for generals to influence hoplite battle as ranks were *not so tightly packed as to render it impossible.*

In 1985 Krentz pointed out that "...fighting requires room to fake, to dodge, to sidestep, to wrong-foot the opponent by stepping backwards as he delivers his

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[473] See, e.g. Hanson (2000a) 116-7.
[474] Discussed below.
[475] See, e.g. Xenophon *Hellenica* 5.4.33; 6.4.13.

blow or thrust."[476] Fighting is not a static affair, movement requires room, therefore room must exist in which to move. Krentz proposed that a sensible upper limit for this room could be determined by examining how close individual hoplites would need to be to render assistance to each other if necessary. This space could be determined by the length of a spear, possibly with a single step added to it, thus the space between individual files would ideally not be greater than around seven feet, with Krentz settling on a "...comfortable limit..." of about six feet per man.[477] If we take into account the need for the spear to be held and wielded in a balanced manner, only around half of the spear would actually project in front of the wielder, thus an appropriate distance for "...within a spear's thrust..." would amount to around four to five feet.[478]

Goldsworthy believes that a stronger case can be made for a space of around three feet; such a formation would ensure that the phalanx would remain intact during the advance to battle as individuals would be unable to flinch at the last minute or seek to avoid combat.[479] Van Wees based his approach to the problem on the practical implications of carrying weapons, interpreting Thucydides 5.71 thus: "...clearly what he meant by 'as near as possible' depends on how much room hoplites needed to wield their weapons effectively."[480] Van Wees' approach accounts for the equipment carried by hoplites, the effective use of that equipment, and the human desire not to be isolated in times of stress, while also remaining flexible enough to be acceptable given the ever-changing nature of hoplite battle.

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[476] Krentz (1985) 51-2.
[477] Krentz (1985) 54.
[478] Krentz (1985) 54; Schwartz (2009) 159.
[479] Goldsworthy (1997) 17.
[480] van Wees (2004) 185.

Indeed, the exact distance between hoplites in all formations and battles is an impossible figure to discover and to attempt to do so is to assume not only that all hoplites were the same but that the nature of hoplite battle was constant.[481] However, by examining a number of incidents which demonstrate the relative density of the phalanx we can arrive at a *range* for the distance between hoplites in combat, and if this range indicates a loose order then the possibility for generals and subordinate commanders to influence battle was strong.

The tacticians Asclepiodotus, Arrian and Aelian offer some information regarding this range, but their evidence is late and probably refers to the Macedonian phalanx of the third to the second centuries B.C., a different formation from both the Classical Greek phalanx and the Macedonian phalanx of Philip and Alexander.[482] However, some of their information is of use, especially the suggestion that six feet between files was the natural (marching?) order, while a tightening of files to three feet was necessary for offensive action, and a further tightening to one and a half feet was used for stationary defensive action.[483] These figures serve as useful indicators as to what were regarded as the upper and lower limits for file distances in the late Hellenistic and Roman tacticians' time. However, they cannot be reliably applied to hoplite battle; the tacticians are simply too removed from the time of the Classical hoplite phalanx for their evidence to be relied upon. Two incidents regarding unique and professional forces survive which give some indication regarding the loose nature of phalanxes: at the battle of Cunaxa the 10,000 were able to open gaps in

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[481] A point recognised by Wheeler (2007a) 190; 202.
[482] Asclepiodotus 4.1-3; Arrian *Tactica* 11.1-6; Aelian *Tactica* 11.1-5; Cawkwell (1989) 381; van Wees (2004) 185-6 (N.7); Wheeler (2007a) 208; Schwartz (2009) 157-8
[483] Polybius 12.1.7. Goldsworthy (1997) 14-16.

their ranks to allow Persian chariots to pass harmlessly through.[484] If there was enough room in a phalanx to allow charging chariots to be avoided then there was surely enough room to engage with weapons, display conspicuous bravery, and use techniques such as the Thessalian trick. Similarly at the battle of Gaugamela the Macedonian phalanx was able to open gaps when faced with scythed chariots; the example is even stronger than that of the 10,000 as scythed chariots would presumably need a wider gap to be created. Equally the Macedonian phalanx was well known for its densely packed ranks, and if there was room enough for Macedonian phalangites to step aside, then we can assume there was enough room in a Classical Greek phalanx for hoplites to perform a similar manoeuver.[485] If this was the case then, in these formations, there was room for men to move sideways, indeed there would have to have been more than a man's width if room for a chariot to pass was to be made. The incidents also indicate these formations had a level of command and control that allowed specific sections of the phalanx to recognise incoming chariots and respond accordingly; while the reaction of the troops have have been spontaneous, we can reasonably expect that the movements would have been facilitated by subordinate offices, especially given the number of such officers in a Spartan system of command.[486]

Xenophon's account of the battle of Leuctra contains two valuable pieces of information regarding the ability of individuals to influence combat, the amount of space available to individuals in the front ranks, and the flexibility of the phalanx

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[484] Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.8.10, 20. Note that we do not see purely amateur forces undertake such a manoeuvre, mainly because chariots were not found on the battlefields of Greece. However the evidence suggests that well-trained hoplite forces would be able to undertake such a manoeuvre if necessary, especially as the same evidence also points to a loose formation.

[485] Arrian *Anabasis* 3.13.5; Quintus Curtius Rufus 4.15.4; Bosworth, 2001, 82.

[486] While the 10,000 was made up of Greeks from many states, the majority were Peloponnesians.

formation: (i) the Spartan Cleonymus fell and recovered his footing three times before finally being killed, and (ii) the Spartan King Cleombrotus was fatally wounded in the initial fighting before being carried from the phalanx.[487] Hanson is of the opinion that recoveries such as Cleonymus' "...were probably rare and largely confined to the battle line at the front of the phalanx in the very few seconds following the collision..."[488] Hanson prefers to believe that after the collision the opposing phalanxes were in such close proximity, and their ranks were so dense, that it was not possible to fall, let alone stand up. However Cleonymus fell *three* times, presumably not in a matter of seconds, and was able to not only regain his footing but do so without being trampled or immediately killed.[489] The only way this anecdote makes sense is if there was enough room for Cleonymus to fall, or be physically knocked over, and, more importantly, be observed by other hoplites who could recognise him and subsequently tell friends, or Xenophon himself, what had happened to Cleonymus during the battle. Indeed, whether the incident actually occurred or not is not that important: Xenophon, an experienced general and hoplite, considered it plausible enough to include in the *Hellenica*, and this should be enough indication that it was possible for a hoplite to fall and recover his footing three times in a single battle.

The second piece of information is the ability of the Spartans to recover the wounded Cleombrotus during the course of the battle. Xenophon uses this to prove that the Spartans were initially winning the battle:

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[487] Xenophon *Hellenica* 5.4.33, 6.4.13.

[488] Hanson (2000a) 175.

[489] The incident is slightly suspicious: the 'rule of three' regarding exaggeration or comic effect may be in play, however Xenophon seems to have expected his audience to regard the incident as plausible, so I include it here.

ὅμως δὲ ὡς οἱ μὲν περὶ τὸν Κλεόμβροτον τὸ πρῶτον ἐκράτουν τῇ μάχῃ σαφεῖ τούτῳ

τεκμηρίῳ γνοίη τις ἄν· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐδύναντο αὐτὸν ἀνελέσθαι καὶ ζῶντα ἀπενεγκεῖν, εἰ

μὴ οἱ πρὸ αὐτοῦ μαχόμενοι ἐπεκράτουν ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ χρόνῳ.

Nevertheless, the fact that Cleombrotus and his men were at first victorious in the battle may be known from this clear indication: they would not have been able to take him up and carry him off still living, had not those who were fighting in front of him been holding the advantage at that time.[490]

The recovery of Cleombrotus attests to the amount of space available to those in the front ranks: in a Spartan phalanx that was initially having the better of a fight there was enough integrity of command and room for 'dead weight' to be carried out and taken *back through the rear ranks* to safety.[491] Clearly the Spartan hoplites had the space to step aside or assist in removing the King to safety, while also possessing the ability to secure the position around the fallen King against further attack. This is indicative of battlefield command and control by subordinates in a moment of crisis, indeed teamwork, discipline, and a rapid assumption of leadership would have been vital in order for this action to have been effective, with the Spartan system of subordinate command being largely responsible for this.[492]

Generals were capable of exercising influence over their commands during fighting. This influence was not always decisive, but the fact that it was occasionally responsible for victory, and was also as recognised as problematic if there were *too many* individuals capable of doing so, strongly suggests that command did not 'break down' during fighting by default. Further evidence for the possibility of command

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[490] Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.13.
[491] *Contra* Hanson (2000a) 175: "Fully armed hoplites found it difficult to scoop up a fallen warrior, to much more than awkwardly sidestep his body."
[492] Discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

can be found by analysing the evidence for the amount of space available to generals and hoplites in the front ranks of phalanxes.

The manoeuvre known as the 'Thessalian trick' is a strong indication that there was room enough to move in the phalanx, implying that the ranks were not so densely packed to prohibit generals, and other individuals, from exerting their influence. Thessaly as a region was not known for its hoplites in Classical Greece, and the lines from Euripides, where the trick is described, could indicate that it was a 'fancy' or unusual technique, and by examining it here I do not mean to suggest it was a technique commonly found on the battlefield. Rather I examine the passage and its implications as it is frequently discussed by modern scholars who argue for tightly packed ranks and, usually, the inability of generals to influence battle; in this thesis I suggest both of these points are incorrect and so must engage with this passage.

> κάμακος ἀμφοῖν χεῖρ' ἀπεστερημένοιν. ἔνθεν δὲ κώπας ἁρπάσαντε φασγάνων ἐς ταὐτὸν ἦκον, συμβαλόντε δ' ἀσπίδας πολὺν ταραγμὸν ἀμφιβάντ' εἶχον μάχης. καί πως νοήσας Ἐτεοκλῆς τὸ Θεσσαλὸν ἐσήγαγεν σόφισμ' ὁμιλίᾳ χθονός. ἐξαλλαγείς γὰρ τοῦ παρεστῶτος πόνου, λαιὸν μὲν ἐς τοὔπισθεν ἀμφέρει πόδα, πρόσω τὰ κοῖλα γαστρὸς εὐλαβούμενος, προβὰς δὲ κῶλον δεξιὸν δι' ὀμφαλοῦ καθῆκεν ἔγχος σφονδύλοις τ' ἐνήρμοσεν.

> Then clutching their sword-hilts they closed, and round and round, with shields clashing, they fought a wild battle. And Eteocles introduced the crafty Thessalian trick, having some knowledge of it from his association with that country. Disengaging himself from the immediate contest, he drew back his left foot but kept his eye closely on the pit of the other's stomach from a distance; then advancing his right foot he plunged the weapon through his navel and fixed it in his spine.[493]

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[493] Euripides *Phoenicians* 1404-13.

By taking a quick step back with his left foot a canny hoplite was able to draw his opponent's balance rapidly forward. Simultaneously the hoplite using the trick found his body turning between 90° and 180°, with his weapon hand moving towards his opponent but with his shield arm continuing to provide adequate cover for his body.[494] If the opponent was unprepared for this then he would stumble forward, potentially sinking to one knee or even having to drop one of his arms to steady himself. If the attacking hoplite was quick enough he would be able to launch a powerful strike against an unprotected part of his opponent's body.

Techniques similar to the Thessalian trick are commonplace in martial arts of all styles, although they are especially common in judo and wrestling, as the disruption of balance and stability are the core goals of these sports.[495] The application of force in one direction naturally leads the opponent to resist with an equal amount of force in order to prevent being moved into a disadvantageous position. The instigator can then instantly withdraw this force, resulting in the opponent either stumbling forwards or over-compensating and compromising their balance backwards. The result is usually a scoring throw or an entry into an advantageous position from which a more direct attack can be made. It is to be admitted that these scenarios do not involve weapons, however the principles behind the technique are easily transferred to combat with spear, sword, and shield, as are

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[494] Borthwick (1972) 15-21 observes that this could refer to a specific wrestling move. I agree, however the techniques and principe behind the trick would still be of use to hoplites. Craik (1988) 253-4. Armstrong (1950) 73-9 for a brief discussion of single combat in the, mainly, epic and dramatic sources.

[495] Ju-do(柔道): literally 'gentle way'. Although it may appear to be a contest of brute strength and endurance Judo is actually highly technical, with many of its techniques requiring the misdirection and shift of balance embodied by the Thessalian trick.

many of the basic principles of most martial arts.[496] The example here is Ippon Seio Nage, full point shoulder throw.

Fig 1

In this drawing the first image is similar to the Thessalian trick: the man with the black belt has taken a half step back, which has brought his opponent forwards and compromised his balance, allowing the black belt to throw him.

Fig2

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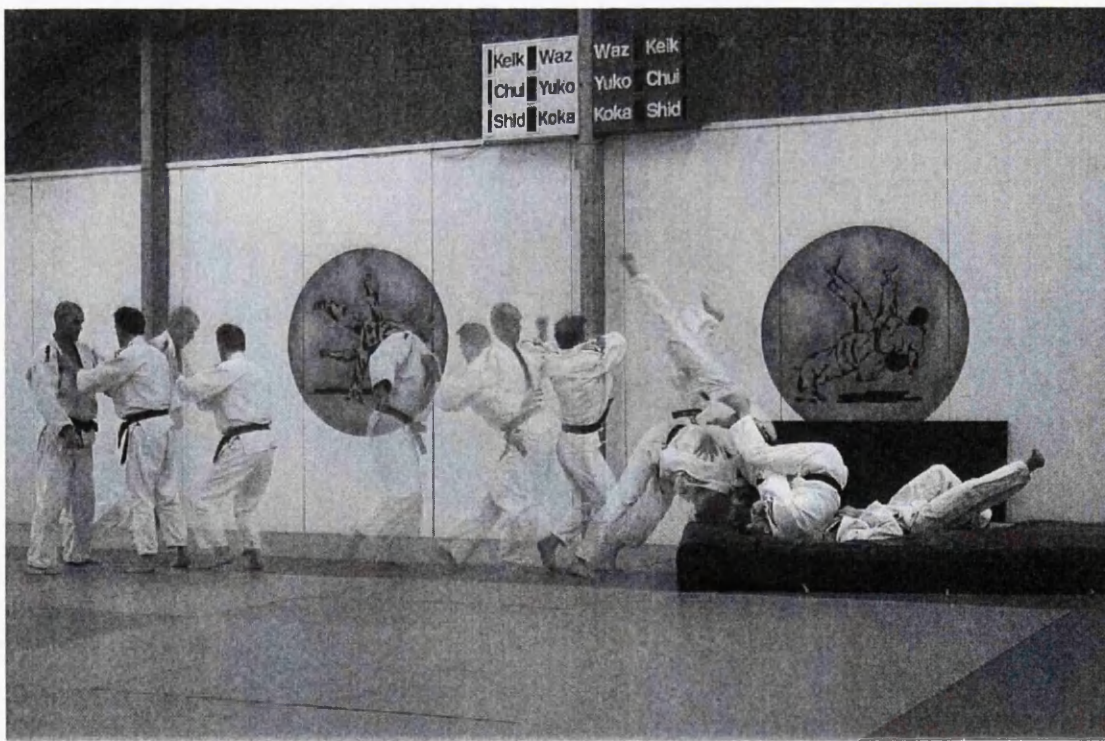
[496] By which I mean the taking of balance, coordination of movement, and awareness of body space.

In this picture the trick can be seen in the third image, where the person with his back to us takes a big step back.

Fig 3:

The distance travelled by both parties in the modern images given above is exaggerated for effect, and it is quite possible to perform this throw effectively with only the half-step mentioned by Euripides in his description of the trick, indeed the shorter and quicker the step, the more surprising and powerful the throw.[498] It is to be admitted that the vase image is two individuals wrestling rather than fighting as hoplites in a phalanx, however the principles behind the application of any unbalancing technique are unchanged by this, and I believe that the principles behind the skills on show, i.e. an understanding of the importance of balance, speed, and flexibility, could have had practical application on the battlefield.[499]

[497] Bronze figurine from Dodona, c.510 B.C. Staaliche Museen zu Berlin, misc. 7470.
[498] Euripides *Phoenicians* 1404-13.
[499] See, e.g. Plutarch *Moralia* 639F; Krentz (1994) 48-9.

Lazenby dismissed the use of the Thessalian trick in a phalanx because "...taking a pace back...would have been almost impossible for a man in the front rank of a phalanx."[500] His objection to this is based on his understanding of *ôthismos* as meaning a mass physical push. This is discussed in detail in the next section, suffice to say here that I do not agree – this interpretation is not supported by the ancient evidence regarding the ability of generals to actively influence battle, and by the concentration by the ancient authors on the flexible nature of the phalanx, neither of which are conducive to a mass push. We have already seen that there was room for individuals to fall in the front ranks, room for individuals to be carried away from the front ranks, and room for spears to be used in active combat, points recognised by Lazenby himself.[501] If there was room to "...swap thrusts with enemy spearmen only a few feet away..." then there was room to take a brief half-step back; this does not imply a completely loose formation, simply one in which ranks were not packed so tightly that they prevented even small movements.[502] Hanson also doubted the possibility of the trick, wondering how such a manoeuvre was possible given the constant pressure on the backs of the front-rank fighters from the shields and bodies of the second rank, as well as posing the question:

"...how could you teach the martial arts to men in armor forced forward constantly by the ranks to the rear...one wonders how (the Thessalian trick) was accomplished when there was pressure at his back as well."[503]

The answer is that there was no *literal* pressure from the second ranks - they were not physically pushing the front rank from behind; indeed, short of actually stabbing

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[500] Lazenby (1991) 94. In the same volume Anderson concluded that "In hoplite battle the front-rank fighters of the 'cutting edge,' carried forward by the mass behind them, would have had little opportunity for feints and withdrawals..." 34.
[501] Lazenby (1991) 94-6.
[502] Lazenby (1991) 95.
[503] Hanson (2000a) 166-7.

his comrades it is difficult to imagine a less helpful course of action for a second ranker to undertake.[504] Equally, if they were pressured like that from behind, the second rankers would be focussed on avoiding impalement on the butt-spikes of the front rank. The notion of a multi-rank physical push is a very difficult scenario to accept in normal battlefield fighting.[505]

The *aspis* and its impact upon formation.

The evidence for the use of weapons and offensive techniques within the phalanx has been reviewed, but this chapter would not be complete without a discussion of the implications that the shield had on the phalanx, and thus also on the ability of generals to influence battle. In a famous passage that has played a huge part in the modern re-creation of phalanx battle Thucydides wrote that all armies push out their right flank while advancing into combat.[506] This remark, seemingly casually made, has led to a number of interpretations as to how the shield was used in hoplite battle, most notably the idea that the hoplite shield offered some physical protection to the left hand side of its bearer and the right hand side of the hoplite to his left, although it is conceded that a physical shield-wall was not possible with round shields.[507] In this way the shield is transformed from a personal piece of equipment to a communal item; the motivation for men in the front ranks to stand their ground was no longer one of personal pride or a demonstration of individual qualities, but was a physical display of public duty. Although this image works well

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[504] Discussed in full in Section B.
[505] Krentz (1985) 59.
[506] Thucydides 5.71: text quoted in full above.
[507] An idea central to Hanson's reconstruction of hoplite battle.

with the conception of hoplite battle as a deliberate and clinical system designed to share the risk of combat between the citizen classes, it does not gel well with the ability, recorded by the ancient authors, of generals to use tactics, local terrain, and trickery, amongst other things, to their advantage, or with the equipment carried by hoplites, the methods by which this equipment was used, and the chaotic reality of battle between phalanxes.

The ability of individual hoplites to protect themselves with their shields allowed the phalanx as a formation to function; however, this does not make the shield a 'communal' piece of equipment, offering protection to anyone other than its wielder, apart from the natural advantage to be found in all members of the phalanx being so protected. In order to provide this physical communal protection the shield would have to be held relatively flat against the chest by a hoplite who had adopted a neutral and front-facing, or square-on, stance; this is the only way in which part of the shield would naturally cover the individual to the bearer's left. However standing in such a way is inherently unstable due to the lack of a 'back foot' to act as a base of balance and strength.[508] This stance presents serious difficulties for the avoidance of blows as any attempt to dodge or step back would begin from an unstable position, and would involve withdrawing the shield arm in such a way that it no longer protected the hoplite to the left. In the packed ranks of a phalanx, as imagined by orthodox commentators, a hoplite would be unable to move sideways, while a step backwards may also have been impossible due to the rear ranks who were apparently applying physical pressure to ensure forward momentum. In this unlikely scenario the front rank fighters could do little more than attempt to parry or absorb blows with

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[508] van Wees (2000) 126-30.

their shield from a static and square-on position. This is not a situation that accords with the conclusions of this study so far: that generals were able to act in a dynamic and proactive manner, and that the phalanx was a relatively flexible formation.

I find a 'square-on' stance very difficult to accept: the shape of the *aspis* meant that in the event of a successful block the attackers' spear would naturally be directed sideways by the curved nature of the shield and the force of the blow; in this manner the communal and packed nature of the phalanx formation would have served to protect the individual while endangering those around him![509] Equally there is very little potential for strong offensive strikes in this stance, unless the attack were accompanied by a step forwards, which would change the stance into something approaching the front-foot forward stance presented by van Wees, amongst others, and affirmed above.[510] A powerful spear thrust from a square-on position is a very difficult action to achieve without either taking a step forwards or twisting the body in order to allow the more powerful shoulder muscles to provide the force for the attack. In this scenario the hoplite would be exposed to attack either as a result of the slowness of his attack or because the twisting of his body resulted in his losing the protection of his shield during the attack.[511] The movement of a hoplite's body during a spear thrust would inevitably also cause his shield arm to move; if the ranks were tightly packed then this could have resulted in the shield bashing or pressing against one's neighbour every time you tried to attack with the spear, hardly an effective or efficient formation.

[509] Schwartz (2009) 34.
[510] Van Wees (2000) 126-131; Cawkwell (1989) 386.
[511] Any attempt to attack would naturally reduce the defensive strength of any stance: see below.

We should not take Thucydides 5.70-1 to mean that each hoplite sought physical protection from the shield of the man to his right. Such a scenario is not supported by the sources and also fails on a practical level: to 'fight' while seeking this protection would be virtually impossible as the weapon hand of each hoplite would be greatly impaired by the shield of the hoplite to his right and footwork would be compromised to such an extent that the avoidance and delivery of blows would be very difficult. Thucydides also makes clear that during the advance to battle most large armies lost their cohesion, primarily because of the reported fear of the hoplites on the extreme right of the phalanx, who found themselves with no cover for their 'naked' spear arm and so marched slightly to the right in an attempt to avoid direct contact with the enemy.[512] Schwartz connects the danger of this situation with the honour that the Greeks attached to holding the right wing of a phalanx, an honour that was usually granted to the best troops in the army, with these troops also being joined by the general.[513] Indeed Schwartz remarks that the right wing was the *most* dangerous posting in a phalanx, a point I find difficult to accept since Thucydides explained that the right wings of opposing phalanxes usually outflanked the enemy left, and that this was a result of the fear of those on the extreme right of the phalanx.[514] Thus when two phalanxes actually engaged those on the respective right wings were *least likely* to engage the enemy head on, and *most likely* to strike enemy hoplites from the side or the rear, consequently they were probably in the safest position of the entire phalanx, while those on the left wing were in the most danger.[515] The placing of the general along with the best troops on

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[512] Thucydides 5.71.
[513] Schwartz (2009) 172.
[514] Thucydides 5.71.
[515] As they would be outflanked by the enemy right wing. The right wing was probably the most dangerous place to be in an *unengaged* phalanx as an enemy could launch a surprise attack upon it, as occurred at Amphipolis: Thucydides 5.10-12. Being able to strike the 'naked' side of a phalanx was

the right wing was a practical measure - it ensured that the best troops were able to take direction from the general himself throughout the course of the engagement, with the accounts of battles where the victorious right wing halted and 'ground up' the enemy centre indicating that an important role for the general remained during the fighting.[516]

Hoplite battle was an affair of fighting, of the trading of blows between men in the front, and frequently the second, rank; the contemporary sources indicate that generals and subordinate commanders were able to influence this fighting and that there was enough room for a relatively fluid form of fighting to occur, while the various incidents discussed indicate that the phalanx was a much more flexible formation than is currently accepted. The mechanics of fighting with both shield and spear, defensive and offensive equipment, in a phalanx formation suggest that a number of practical considerations would limit the methods of combat. Chief amongst these considerations would be the desire of individual hoplites to maximise the protection they could gain from their shields, and the striking power they could gain from their spears: this could be achieved by adopting a simple left-foot forwards stance, with the body turned to almost 90 degrees from the angle of the shield.[517] This would place the body of the hoplite directly behind the shield and allow for effective footwork while also ensuring that the main offensive weapon, the spear, could be powerfully thrust without the risk of losing balance. This thrust would have to be accompanied by a step forward with the right leg, allowing the hoplite to strike

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usually a sign that it had been outmanoeuvered, as occurred at Nemea (Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.18-21) and Laechum (Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.5.14-16.)

[516] See section d and chapter 3.

[517] Cawkwell (1989) 382, 384-5; van Wees (2000) 126-8; (2004) 168-9; Schwartz (2009) 39.

with the maximum strength possible; a simple step back with the same leg would return the hoplite to his original defensive position. This action is not without risk: a twisting of the torso is necessary to deliver such a blow, and this would result in a brief moment of vulnerability during which the shield offered little protection. This is a necessary risk in all fighting systems: an aggressive move naturally reduces the defensive strength of any position, and the front rank fighters of a phalanx would be constantly moving from defence to attack.[518]

Two factors, footwork and balance, are vitally important to any method of fighting, and would be doubly important to the soldiers of ancient Greece, considering the very real possibility that a hoplite would find himself being targeted by a number of enemies simultaneously. I do not suggest that this stance was the *only* one in which hoplites ever stood, indeed the chaotic and frantic nature of fighting in the front ranks would dictate that a hoplite would have to adjust his position and stance constantly, according to circumstances. However when its offensive and defensive strengths are considered, the side-on stance is far more natural than the square-on stance that would have to be adopted if the shield was to physically protect a neighbouring hoplite. Finally, let us consider exactly what a hoplite would have been expected to do: march in line, make effective strikes with his spear, engage in the *óthismos*, protect his left side with the right half of his shield, seek protection for his right side in the left half of shield held by the hoplite to his right, and also provide protection for the hoplite to his left with the left side of his own shield. This is a very complicated scenario, and one which is highly unlikely to be accurate when it is remembered that the vast majority of hoplites were not

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[518] Schwartz (2009) 40.

professionally trained. Equally the evidence for professional hoplite forces indicates that the advantage these forces held over amateur hoplites were increased flexibility and manoeuvrability, not a superior ability to utilise the 'communal' protection offered by the shield.

The shield is vital to any discussion of the hoplite way of war; misunderstandings as to its use and a wholly impractical and unnecessarily strict model of battle has resulted in its importance being recognised, but for misleading and incorrect reasons. It can be seen that the shield's design was that of a personal piece of equipment; it physically protected the individual using it, ensured that he was not exhausted from carrying it when he came to the front ranks and allowed him to endure the blows of the enemy when he was actually engaged in combat. The shield was a communal piece of equipment in that it was absolutely and unquestioningly essential for all in the phalanx to be equipped with one; a hoplite without a shield was largely defenceless, thus instead of contributing to the success of the phalanx by protecting himself and striking at the enemy he was little more than a target for enemy strikes, a weak link to be exploited and a drain on the overall effectiveness of the phalanx itself.[519]

The flexibility of hoplites and the phalanx formation

Some scholars have assumed that the term 'loose ranks' is synonymous with the lack of any recognisable formation, and as such have rejected any notion of loose

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[519] Plutarch *Moralia* 241F.

ranks through the belief that a hoplite's equipment was ineffective or inappropriate for single combat.[520] However loose ranks means that generals would have been able to direct and manoeuvre their phalanxes as hoplites would have room to move and fight, as individuals or as small groups, while being close enough to render assistance to their neighbours if required: it does not mean a series of individual combats, although this undoubtedly took place at times. Schwartz has recently repeated the assertion that the hoplite panoply, and the shield in particular, made single combat an impossibility for hoplites. Thus the shield was "…hopelessly heavy and clumsy and spectacularly out of place outside the highly specialised fighting environment of the phalanx."[521] He compares a single-grip and double-grip shield, and concludes that the single-grip shield is far more suited to single combat because it could be more easily used to parry and block attacks at a greater distance from the body than a double-grip shield.[522] Based on these points he states that "… the hoplite shield was extremely unfit for single combat of any kind: designwise, every single feature is the opposite of what one would want for this kind of fighting."[523] However these points can only count as actual disadvantages in 'this kind of fighting' against *other* forms of infantry; in the event of a hoplite fighting another hoplite in single combat there was no disadvantage present as they would both be fighting under the same circumstances. Indeed there is absolutely no need to label single combat with relatively heavy equipment as being any less possible than single combat with any other form of equipment. It is to be noted that hoplites served as marines aboard triremes in order to repel attackers, to board enemy craft if the opportunity arrived,

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[520] E.g. Cartledge (1977) 13; Holladay (1982) 95-7; Hanson (1991) 6-7; Anderson (1991) 34-5; Hanson (2000a) 166-8; Schwartz (2009) 38-41, 146, 154.

[521] Schwartz (2009) 154. Also 146: "…the defensive weapons – particularly the helmet and shield – were ill-suited to single-combat and hand-to-hand combat in duel situations."

[522] Schwartz (2009) 35-8.

[523] Schwartz (2009) 38.

and to form the backbone of raiding parties or invasion forces; indeed Thucydides' description of the final sea battle of the Sicilian Expedition as like a land battle fought on ships suggests that marines were engaging each other in actual close combat.[524] We cannot be sure that all marines were equipped as hoplites all the time; indeed it is clear that on some occasions they were *sitting down* and throwing javelins, not fighting as a hoplite.[525] However, the limited space aboard a trireme, the need for marines also to fight as hoplites on land, and Plato's scornful image of a marine equipped with a fanciful new weapon, would seem to indicate that the *aspis* was a standard piece of equipment for marines.[526]

This demonstrates not only that fighting in single combat with hoplite equipment was possible, but that it took place on the decks of moving ships![527] These *epibatai* could only function in the very loosest of formations while fighting on deck, and their focus was most likely on teamwork and concentration of force as opposed to strict cohesion and discipline; the constantly moving deck ensured that ship-to-ship boarding actions placed a great deal of emphasis on balance, speed, strength, and agility, all skills required for effective single combat.[528] It is to be admitted that the decks of triremes were cramped and would certainly not have given the *epibatai* much freedom to move, however this would also have prevented an effective phalanx from being formed. Most engagements between marines would have been up-close and deadly, with life or death being based on the key skills of

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[524] Thucydides 7.70-1.
[525] Thucydides 7.67. Van Wees (2004) 227.
[526] Krentz (2007) 153. *IG* (II) 1631.404-9 with Casson (1995.) Plato *Laches* 183D-4A. Thucydides 4.12 describes Brasidas as dropping his shield when he was injured while attempting to force a landing on Sphacteria in 425.
[527] Morrison & Williams (1968) 263-5; Krentz (1985) 53.
[528] Rawlings (2000) 236-7; van Wees (2004) 227-8.

balance and spatial awareness.[529] Van Wees suggests that these marines would probably have been professionals, a reasonable point considering the difficult battlefield environment they found themselves in.[530] The *epibatai* were also expected to take part in raids; these raids involved tactics similar to those employed by light infantry, and as such they required stamina and precise timing in order to, as it were, 'smash and grab.' Although effective, such tactics earned the marines Plato's displeasure; running forwards and backwards from the ship was regarded by Plato as beneath citizen-hoplites.[531]

So we know hoplites could fight as individuals, while on the decks of triremes. What about single combat while fighting on land? In Euripides' *Phoenicians*, produced around 415, the brothers Eteocles and Polyneices fight in single combat; both are equipped as hoplites and engage in a protracted and energetic duel.[532] The sequence has strong epic overtones but the action is described in some detail and must have had a basis in reality if it was to have some resonance with the audience.[533] The brothers' duel serves as a fine literary example of the ability of hoplites to engage in single combat – the two clash their shields together, stab with their spears and finally kill each other with swords. The duel gives some clue as to what could be considered possible by an educated audience, many of whom would likely have fought as, or were even currently liable for service as, hoplites. Indeed, given that the scene is *described* in some detail it would have been incumbent upon the audience to follow the action in their imagination, indicating

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[529] Rawlings (2000) 236-7.
[530] van Wees (2004) 222.
[531] Plato *Laws* 706C
[532] Euripides *Phoenicians* 1404-15.
[533] Schwartz (2009) 42.

that an audience of Athenian citizens could not have been totally unfamiliar with the movements, or the principles behind them.

The most famous example of a hoplite engaging in single combat is probably that of Sophanes of Decelea, the Athenian whose behaviour at the battle of Plataea so interested Herodotus. Two different and incompatible stories were told about Sophanes. According to one, Sophanes apparently arrived at the battle with an anchor attached to his breastplate which he would use to fasten himself to the ground when the fighting started; he would thus be literally anchored to the spot. Herodotus relates that if the Greeks were victorious, Sophanes would pick up his anchor and join in the pursuit.[534] The story is unbelievable, although it does help to demonstrate an important quality of hoplite fighting; a single *involuntary* step backward by a number of individuals, under sustained attack or pressure, could be all that was needed to break a phalanx.[535] Herodotus relates a second interpretation of the anchor imagery, namely that Sophanes had an anchor painted on his shield, which he continually moved from side to side.[536] Being able to move one's shield effectively and rapidly would have been an important part of fighting as a hoplite as he changing nature of battle meant individuals would have to respond rapidly to their immediate circumstances.[537] If Sophanes had room to move his shield as described, and others were able to witness him doing this, then the Athenian hoplite phalanx of the early Fifth century was not so densely packed as to limit the movement of

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[534] Herodotus 9.74

[535] See also section C.

[536] Herodotus 9.74.

[537] Rawlings (2000) 249 for the suggestion that this indicates Sophanes' was trained in *hoplomachia*. The point is well-made but there is no reason to limit such skill to being taught for profit or through traditional dance: these were clearly useful skills for hoplites to possess, and may have simply been general knowledge.

individuals in the front ranks; it implies that the phalanx was relatively flexible, and leaves open the possibility for control and command during battles.

Hoplites fighting in the front ranks of a clash between phalanxes were almost identically equipped; all other things being equal, tactical organisation, local scale leadership, individual skills and the ability to fight would prove useful. Plato has Nicias make it clear that *hoplomachia*, private training in the art of hoplite fighting, could serve a youth well, *by fostering an interest in the art of generalship*, improving his general health and fitness, and by giving him skills that would be of use during battle.[538] The first point is vital: Nicias regards instruction in *hoplomachia* as a 'gateway' to further instruction in, and mastery of, the art of generalship:

> ἔτι δὲ καὶ εἰς ἄλλου καλοῦ μαθήματος ἐπιθυμίαν παρακαλεῖ τὸ τοιοῦτον· πᾶς γὰρ ἂν μαθὼν ἐν ὅπλοις μάχεσθαι ἐπιθυμήσειε καὶ τοῦ ἑξῆς μαθήματος τοῦ περὶ τὰς τάξεις, καὶ ταῦτα λαβὼν καὶ φιλοτιμηθεὶς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ πᾶν ἂν τὸ περὶ τὰς στρατηγίας ὁρμήσειε

> "Moreover, it is a thing which impels one to desire another noble accomplishment; for everyone who has learnt how to fight in armor will desire to learn the accomplishment which comes next, the management of troops; and when he has got that and once taken a pride in his work he will push on to attain the whole art of generalship."[539]

The progression from fighting, to managing troops, to generalship, is fascinating: here we see Plato, through the character of a well-known Athenian general, pointing out, firstly, that there existed what we might call 'levels' of command. Thus 'management of troops', a tactical or administrative concern, must

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[538] Plato *Laches* 181e-182a.
[539] Plato *Laches* 182b-c (trans Lamb.) See Wheeler (1982) and (1983) for comments regarding the possible origins of *hoplomachia* and its effectiveness as a training method. Wheeler does not discuss the importance of the art as a 'gateway' to the study of generalship.

be mastered before one can fully appreciate the wider strategic art of generalship.[540]

Secondly, and most importantly, the ability to function as a general is connected to an understanding of how to fight in armour: thus generals must understand the micro level of battle, as well as the macro level, and be able to appreciate the implications of any orders or plan for men equipped as hoplites. Nicias also emphasises the advantage that such training would give during flight or pursuit, stating that an individual would be able to fight off one, perhaps even several, men without coming to harm; doubtless this would involve a constantly moving shield and many shifts of position or balance – Sophanes' fighting style would not look so out of place on a fourth-century battlefield, and was perhaps not so unique![541] However Hanson takes the discussion to indicate that:

> "...specialized weapons training was of little value except during retreat and pursuit, where for the first and only moment men had room to manoeuver and to use their prowess in arms in duels or individual skirmishing."[542]

This is clearly not the sentiment that Nicias is advancing, indeed Nicias suggests quite the opposite: such training would be of value in the general fighting, but it would be even more valuable once the ranks had broken and there was an element of 'every man for himself.'[543] Nicias' foil in this argument is Laches, who does not dispute Nicias' position regarding the usefulness of *hoplomachia* as a specific and general training aid; instead Laches concentrates on the fact that the teachers of *hoplomachia* do not seek students in, or even dare to set foot into Sparta.

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[540] Hence Xenophon's attack, at *Memorabilia* 3, on those who claim to teach generalship. The students of such men are like doctors who are qualified but have never practiced: they may understand theory, but have no practical understanding of the reality of medicine.

[541] Plato *Laches* 182b.

[542] Hanson (2000a) 91.

[543] Krentz (1985) 57-8; Cawkwell (1989) 378-9;

Professional teachers of fighting in armour could not match up to the Spartan system of education and training, but this does not render their instruction useless, simply not as good as Spartan practice; this much is surely to be expected, and the point being made is that this if one wishes to find instruction in fighting *outside of Sparta*, the *hoplomachoi* would be able to give it, although Plato does not comment on whether it was possible to find further instruction in the art of generalship. However Laches' point is well made; a reputable playwright could not avoid Athens and expect to be taken seriously, just as a teacher of fighting could not avoid Lacedaemon; the fact that the *hoplomachoi* would not even attempt to teach their art to the Spartans was an indication of its inferior quality.[544] Plato has Laches point out that not one instructor of *hoplomachia* had ever distinguished himself in battle, quite the opposite in fact, with Laches telling an amusing story of a *hoplomachos* called Stesilaus who tried to use a spear-scythe combination weapon while on board a ship. The story centres on Stesilaus' over-specialisation for ship-to-ship combat; his weapon, possibly designed to sever ropes and lines, became stuck in the rigging, and he was dragged along the deck of his trireme before being forced to release it, to much laughter.[545] The story serves as a metaphor for the teaching of *hoplomachia* in general; Stesilaus had clearly done much thinking about how to operate effectively while fighting as a marine, however when it came to the actual physical event, rather than theory or practice, he was shown to be a fraud.[546]

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[544] Plato *Laches* 182E-183C.
[545] Plato *Laches* 183D-184A
[546] Van Wees (2004) 90-1.

The fact that Plato regarded the teachers of *hoplomachia* as little more than sophists[547] who refused to engage the recognised experts in the art of hoplite fighting (the Spartans) is not evidence that there was no demand or need for such training, or that it had no practical application on the battlefield. Indeed the discussion emphasises the availability of such instruction, and while Plato frequently hints at the sophistic qualities of the *hoplomachoi*, the dialogue is balanced in its evaluation. It is undeniable that there would be a great deal more room for fighting and single combat once the ranks had broken, hence Nicias' point that instruction would be of most use at this point; however this cannot be taken to mean that there was no room to move before this breaking occurred. That Plato, through the mouths of two experienced generals, suggests that such instruction was a starting point for one interested in the broader aspects of command, and was of practical use for battle, indicates an acknowledgement that effective generalship began with understanding physical limitations, that generals were aware of the benefit that instruction in fighting could bring, and thus that there was room for such techniques to be used in the front ranks.

Conclusions

Various examples discussed above attest to the looseness of the phalanx formation: hoplites in phalanx formation were able to move and fight, and were also able to engage in single combat should the occasion demand it. This, combined with the discussion of communication in chapter 2, suggests that there was no physical block which prevented generals from influencing battle, and the formation as a

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[547] Anderson (1991) 29.

whole was one which allowed, indeed demanded, the influence of individuals to be felt. As spears snapped, individuals fell, and groups of hoplites exploited momentary advantages, sections of two engaged phalanxes would advance and retreat, reacting to the immediate battlefield environment. The surviving contemporary evidence suggests that hoplites could do this in many different ways, with the overall picture being one of flexibility. The Classical phalanx cannot have been 'closed' or 'tight' – this cannot be reconciled with the majority of battle descriptions, which indicate that generals were able to influence fighting, and hoplites were able to move, fight, and fall back as the situation demanded; it is also based on a misunderstanding of the use of the shield, itself taken from a single passage of Thucydides. As pointed out above, this does not mean that I believe hoplite combat to have been an affair of *monomachia*, indeed single combat was most likely the last thing that amateur soldiers wished to engage in, although it was the lack of weapons training that was responsible for this, not the nature of their equipment. I will not attempt to place a definite figure on the distance between individuals in phalanxes – changing tactical circumstances would have ensured that this distance changed frequently, and there is no hint of a 'standard' or 'official' distance in the source material, indeed, there is simply not enough surviving evidence to allow a conclusion about an accurate distance to be reached.

In Classical phalanxes there was normally enough room for hoplites to keep their shields moving, enough room for fully armed injured men to be carried through the ranks to safety, and enough room for especially brave or skilled individuals to be recognised and singled out for praise. Equally, well-trained or professional fourth century phalanxes were able to create small gaps in the ranks to allow chariots to

pass through, were able to reverse the direction of their march without having to rearrange their ranks, and could be penetrated by enemy formations. It is difficult to see how such actions would have been possible if the ranks had been tightly packed; the counter-march at Coronea in particular suggests that the space between individuals was at least the width of a fully armed hoplite, probably slightly more. This is strong evidence for a looser and more flexible formation than is currently recognised, allows for the active use of weapons, and also demonstrates that the shield was not a communal piece of equipment, all points that reinforce the point, presented throughout this thesis, that generals could influence battle. The front ranks of an engaged phalanx were loose enough to allow weapons play, loose enough to allow experienced, skilful, or especially brave fighters to be recognised, and loose enough for individuals to be carried away when injured. This phalanx was not a restrictive formation, and the evidence suggests that the fighting phase of a hoplite engagement did not result in the breakdown of command.

Section C: *Ôthismos* and *ôthismoi*

The previous two sections have examined the ability of generals to exert their influence upon battle, an ability closely tied to the flexible nature of hoplites and the phalanx as a whole. However the picture remains incomplete without an analysis of one vital element: *ôthismos*, generally translated as 'the push'. The broader discussion of this concept has a significant impact upon how we view the exercise of generalship in battle, and it forms the most controversial aspect of hoplite battle. Its various interpretations have resulted in some strikingly different accounts of the battlefield environment generals found themselves in, the combat techniques used by hoplites, and the phases of hoplite battles. An analysis of what *ôthismos* could have been, in light of the previous two chapters, is therefore needed, indeed it is essential if a full picture of the battlefield role of the general is to emerge. If battles were decided by a pushing contest of mass versus mass, as the most influential theory states, then generals can have exerted little influence once 'the' *ôthismos* had begun. However if a different meaning is implied, then our image of hoplite warfare has room for, indeed demands, a role for the general, as a significant obstacle to the continued exercise of command will have been removed. As such the following discussion will analyse the evidence for, and modern discussion of, *ôthismos* and will attempt to show what implications it has for the battlefield role of the general.

I refer in this introduction to '*ôthismos*', a noun, but modern scholarship of this concept also includes the much more common verbs *ôtheo* and *exôtheo*, and treats instances of their use as indicative of the same 'technique' or 'phase.' The ancient literature review which follows will address all three words at the same time.

Reference to this 'technique' or 'phase' with *ôthismos* rather than the verbs is so entrenched that I do not attempt to give a different name to the overall concept here. It is important to point out that reference to 'the' *ôthismos* as a 'phase' of combat is most likely an entirely modern invention – the word only occurs five times in battlefield contexts, and the verbs appear much more frequently, hence the title of this section '*othismos* and *ôthismoi*', rather than just '*ôthismos*.'

Every scholar of Classical Greek warfare has his or her own image of what *ôthismos* was, and any attempt at reconstructing or analysing any aspect of hoplite battle must present an explanation the term or concept. As a result of the increased interest and attention paid to Classical Greek warfare since the 1970s the quantity of scholarship devoted to interpreting *ôthismos* has increased, with new ideas emerging and new methodologies being proposed, however the fundamental nature of the argument remains the same: what was *ôthismos*, and, especially relevant for my purposes, how did it affect the way the phalanx operated? Two identifiable positions have emerged since Cawkwell's three page discussion of the problem in 1978, with the argument largely switching between a physical mass-push and a metaphorical interpretation of the concept; the two interpretations have very different implications for the battlefield role of the general, and neither side has given significant ground.[548]

Those who favour a mass push present a highly physical event; *ôthismos* was an intentional and organised pushing contest involving the entire phalanx, a contest

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[548] Cawkwell (1978).

that would be entered into as soon as possible due to the implications it had for the phalanx's cohesion and order.[549] For this push to be effective it would require a highly compact order, and it would be in the best interests of each phalanx to enter into battle with this order already drawn up.[550] This need for close order and physical pushing is connected with three other factors which combine to form the core of the most influential understanding of Greek warfare as a whole. These factors are (1) The shape of the hoplite shield lends itself to an organised push, (2) Thucydides 5.71 indicates an overriding concern for close order before battle had even been joined, and (3) references to *ôthismos* generally occur immediately before the end of a battle and can be interpreted in such a way as to indicate a literal shoving match.[551] Advocates of this interpretation propose that once the distance between the opposing front ranks had been closed those directly engaged in the fighting could attempt to strike with their swords, continue to fight with their shorter, probably broken spears, or could 'go in' for an *ôthismos*.[552]

In this scenario the front rank fighters would place their shoulders behind their shields and push against the enemy line in an attempt to break through and disrupt the enemy ranks, creating panic amongst the rear ranks and others unable to see what was happening.[553] To ensure maximum power and effectiveness the rear ranks of the phalanx attempting the *ôthismos* would place their shields in the lower backs or side of the hoplites directly in front of them and push. Thus the second rank would push the first, the third rank would push the second all the way through to the

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[549] Hanson (1991) 7; (2000) 171-177.
[550] Luginbill (1994) 56-7
[551] Hanson (1991) 16, 68-71; Wheeler (1991) 129; Schwartz (2009) 162-4.
[552] Lazenby (1991) 87-96; Hanson (2000a) 83-88, 136-170, 171-180. On the length of battles see, most recently, Schwartz (2009) 201-225.
[553] Lazenby (1991) 97; Hanson (2000a).

eighth rank pushing the seventh. In this manner the entire phalanx would function as a battering ram of sorts, with the objective being to either smash the enemy phalanx from the field or to break through the front ranks and allow chaos and panic to spread. Orthodox theory has no counter to such an *ôthismos* other than to reply in kind. A pushing match would ensue, with the phalanx possessing the most staying power, numbers, force, or ranks emerging victorious.

This mass push interpretation has been the dominant theory for over a century: Grundy, Woodhouse, Gomme, Adcock, Anderson, Holladay, Pritchett, Luginbill, Lazenby, Hanson, and Schwartz have all proposed, or assumed, that a concerted shove ended battles.[554] However while this interpretation has proven popular, it is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. Most importantly it reduces the general to little more than a hoplite, pushing with his shield and unable to otherwise affect the engagement. This image has, so far, been shown to be false: generals played an important role in the advance and there was nothing to prevent them continuing to do so during the fighting, so some explicit evidence would be required to definitively claim that it was at this point that command 'broke down.' The explanation also fails because it relies upon a densely packed phalanx, something shown to be false in the previous section.

Reaction against this mass push has been evident since 1942 with Fraser's brief article attacking the 'Myth of the Phalanx Scrimmage' and a theme that was

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[554] Woodhouse (1933) 78-9; Gomme (1937) 135 Grundy (1948) 267; Adcock (1957) 4. Anderson (1970) 175-6; Cartledge (1977) 16; Holladay (1978) 95-7; Pritchett (1985) 65; Hanson (1991) 7, (2000) 28-9, 246; Schwartz (2002) 44-9, (2009) 183-200.

picked up by Krentz in a series of articles spanning three decades. This 'metaphorical' position, so called because the push does not have to be a literal, physical push,[555] concentrates on three different factors, namely (1) the difficulties involved with a mass push given the amateur nature of most Greek armies, (2) the offensive equipment carried by hoplites, and (3) the other uses of the word *ôthismos*.[556] The commentators who propose a metaphorical interpretation have presented the following scenario: the front ranks would break down into a series of localised combats, with advantage being gained and lost across the line; individuals would fall and be replaced by the rear ranks as each side attempted to make inroads into the opposing line of hoplites. As the battle progressed the accumulated physical and mental strain would begin to show and one phalanx would lose its nerve. Initially unnoticed but rapidly developing into a catastrophic loss of confidence, this would result in the phalanx collapsing and splitting, with the majority of casualties being taken at this point.[557] In this construction *ôthismos* is a psychological factor; although it is conceded that pushing, shoving, and even wrestling moves were part of hoplite combat, a phalanx-wide shove is emphatically denied: "If classical hoplite battle was a concerted physical shoving match, front-rank fighters could have done no more than lunge blindly at the enemy while being almost crushed to death by their comrades."[558] However this approach does not explain various battle descriptions where *ôthismos, ôtheo*, and *êxotheo* have a definite physical meaning of some sort, and as such it is also limited, although I do find it to be a more accurate interpretation of the source material than the mass push.

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[555] This position has also been referred to as the 'unorthodox' or 'heretical' position, two terms I also find misleading and so will not be using.
[556] See Fraser (1942); Cawkwell (1978) 152-3, (1989) 375, 389; Krentz (1985) 55-7; (1994) 45; (2010) 53-59; Goldsworthy (1997) 5-6, 24; van Wees (2004) 184-191.
[557] A point recognized by Hanson (2000a) 160.
[558] van Wees (2004) 189.

Some of the most recent work has been undertaken with a more nuanced tone, and does not allow easy categorisation. Wheeler stated that it is not possible to conclusively prove either of the positions outlined above, and Matthew observed that *ôthismos* could be both a physical and a metaphorical push depending on the immediate battlefield circumstances.[559] However both scholars approach the problem, and the source material, with the same understanding of generalship and the battlefield environment of hoplite engagements, i.e. generals could do little to influence the course of battles, and the phalanx relied on a densely packed order to be effective.

I favour a slightly modified interpretation of Krentz and van Wees' view of *ôthismos*, an interpretion that accords with the image of generalship and hoplite fighting that has been built up over the previous two chapters: *ôthismos* need not be *either* a physical push *or* a metaphorical push, but can be both of these things and more. Indeed the sources use *ôthismos*, *ôtheo* and *exôtheo* in many and varied ways, from describing an individual shove with the shield to a movement involving an entire army, and while on some occasions a mass push cannot be ruled out, in the majority of cases a different form of push can be identified.

These pushes can be defined as 1) physical, where a bodily push of some sort is described, usually in addition to other elements of fighting such as use of weapons and shield, for example the *othismos* over the body of Leonidas as Thermopylae;[560] 2) non-physical, where a manoeuvre or tactic such as 'pushing out' a wing or is

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[559] Wheeler (2007a) 211; Matthew (2009) 395-405.
[560] Herodotus 7.225. The passage is discussed in more detail below.

being described, as at the battle of Mantinea in 418, or when a psychological or 'push of effort' is being described, as at the battle of Delium in 424;[561] 3) other, where the words are used in a non-military context, such as Herodotus' reporting of the way Egyptian men push their needles through cloth.[562] In the following sections I analyse the evidence for each of these definitions, and attempt to demonstrate that 'the' *ôthismos* was not a 'phase' of hoplite battle which reduced the role and influence of generals to that of pushing with their shields. The three definitions also highlight the flexibility of the terms and the importance of trying to understand the 'everyday' form of hoplite warfare, a form beyond the large pitched battles.

Potential instances of *ôthismos* indicating a physical push

A number of battles appear to have involved a physical push, or physical pushing of some sorts; if this was a mass push of the sort advocated by Hanson and others then individuals in the front ranks, forced from behind directly against the enemy front ranks, would have been largely unable to move, instead being carried on a wave of pressure generated by the rear ranks. This is a very difficult scenario to accept: the previous sections have emphasised the ability of generals and subordinate officers to influence battle and the flexibility of hoplite forces, so the extraordinary claim that fighting developed into a mass push must be supported by some extraordinary evidence if it is to be proven correct.

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[561] Thucydides 4.96. Discussed in more detail below.
[562] Herodotus 2.35.

The first recorded battlefield *ôthismos* took place during the final day of the battle of Thermopylae, where there was an *ôthismos* over the body of King Leonidas. Herodotus wrote:

καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ νεκροῦ τοῦ Λεωνίδεω Περσέων τε καὶ Λακεδαιμονίων ὠθισμὸς ἐγίνετο πολλός, ἐς ὃ τοῦτόν τε ἀρετῇ οἱ Ἕλληνες ὑπεξείρυσαν καὶ ἐτρέψαντο τοὺς ἐναντίους τετράκις.

"The Persians and Lacedaemonians pushed at length with one and other over the corpse of Leonidas, but the Greeks fought so well and so bravely that they eventually succeeded in dragging his body away. Four times they forced the Persians back..."[563]

This cannot be cited as evidence for a mass push interpretation of *ôthismos*. Indeed it simply shows the intensity of the fighting over the body of Leonidas, fighting that would naturally have included individual pushing and shoving as Herodotus reports that most of the Greek spears had snapped, and the Spartans were forced to use their swords instead. Thus the fighting was at very close range, and we should imagine Spartans stabbing, pushing, shoving, and perhaps wrestling with Persians as they attempted to create a safe area around Leonidas' body.[564] There was no "...confusing contest of pressure..."[565] at Thermopylae, indeed Leonidas' tactics had been fluid, relied on the ability of Spartans to respond to commands of Leonidas, and the flexibility of the Spartan phalanx, attributes polar opposite to those required for a mass push. The ability of the Spartan phalanx to continue to operate in a fluid and flexible manner appears to have been disrupted by Leonidas' death, and the

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[563] Herodotus 7.225 (trans Waterfield.)
[564] Herodotus does not suggest that the snapping of the spears forced the Spartans to attempt a mass push with their shields, as Hanson claims happened in most hoplite battles. Instead the Spartans continued to fight with what weapons they had remaining. Hanson (2000a) 88. Lazenby (1993) 146-7.
[565] Hanson (2000a) 88-9; (1991) 67-71.

battle that raged over possession of his corpse is in stark contrast to the 'baiting' tactics used earlier during the previous days. It is possible that this indicates the Spartan phalanx was rendered less effective following the death of Leonidas, and was unable to continue operating in such a manner. Attached to this is the possibility that the death, or mortal wounding, of Leonidas was spotted and exploited by the Persians, who attempted to take advantage of the confusion and disarray they thought this would cause.[566] Unfortunately for the Persians the Spartans at Thermopylae were veteran troops, and were able to maintain cohesion and discipline despite the loss of Leonidas and several other important men, and the increased pressure of the Persian attack.[567] The *ôthismos* over Leonidas' body was not a mass push, rather it was brutal hand to hand combat between Greek and Persian, with the Spartans demonstrating to the rest of Greece, and to history itself, that the ideal hoplite "...never gave ground but fought to the death, lunging with his spear until it broke, slashing with his sword until it snapped, then punching and biting until the end..."[568]

A comparison of the struggle over Leonidas' body to an incident at the battle of Plataea is of use here. After the Persian cavalry commander Masistius' horse was shot by an arrow he was rapidly set upon and killed by Athenian hoplites.[569] His death was not spotted by the retreating cavalry until they had regrouped, with Herodotus stating that they missed Masistius' presence as there was no one there to give orders. This sudden lack of leadership resulted in the cavalry attacking in a

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[566] Herodotus 9.22-3.
[567] Lazenby (1993) 147 for the observation that the death of Leonidas may have shamed or enraged the surviving Spartans into fighting to the death, an interesting juxtaposition of the current view that the death of a general caused panic to set in! See chapter 3.
[568] van Wees (2004) 183.
[569] Herodotus 9.22; Plutarch *Aristides* 14. Lazenby (1993) 221-2.

fashion notably different to their previous mode of engagement, which had caused a great deal of trouble to the Megarians who had been the target of their first attack. Now, instead of attacking by regiment, they attacked *en masse*, and a fierce struggle over Masistius' body resulted, with the Greeks emerging victorious.[570] The loss of their commanders caused both Spartans and Persians to operate differently until they had the chance to withdraw, regroup, and assess the situation: the Spartans withdrew to a narrow part of the pass and prepared for their last stand, while the Persian cavalry abandoned their attack and went in search of Mardonius for new orders and, presumably, a new commander.[571] The ability of generals to exert influence in both of these battles is indicated by both the change in tactics that occurred once they were killed, indicating the impact this had upon command and control, and the behaviour of the respective units once a brief, and intense, struggle had occurred.

The second use of the word *ôthismos* in a battlefield context in Herodotus occurs during his description of the fighting that occurred once Pausanias received favourable omens at the battle of Plataea. Herodotus records that:

> ἐγίνετο δὲ πρῶτον περὶ τὰ γέρρα μάχη. ὡς δὲ ταῦτα ἐπεπτώκεε, ἤδη ἐγίνετο ἡ μάχη ἰσχυρὴ παρ' αὐτὸ τὸ Δημήτριον καὶ χρόνον ἐπὶ πολλόν, ἐς ὃ ἀπίκοντο ἐς <u>ὠθισμόν</u>

> "The first phase of the battle took place at the wickerwork barricade, until that was pushed down, and then a fierce battle raged for a long time around the temple of Demeter until it came to the push."[572]

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[570] Herodotus 9.22-3
[571] Herodotus 9.23.
[572] Herodotus 9.62 (trans Waterfield, modified.)

None of this supports an interpretation of the *ôthismos* as a mass push; indeed the presence of the barricade would have prevented the Spartans from charging directly into combat, a factor given a great deal of weight by those who prefer this interpretation.[573] The remainder of Herodotus' account of Plataea describes a chaotic and frantic hand to hand struggle, with the Persians being able to break many Greek spears and advance to grappling range. The Greeks were victorious because they were heavily armoured and disciplined as opposed to the lightly armoured and ill-disciplined Persians, not because they were able to literally push the Persians from the battlefield.[574] Indeed many Persians were killed because they advanced on the Greek phalanx individually or in small groups, while only those troops in close proximity to Mardonius himself were inflicting damage to the Spartan phalanx. The Greeks may have pushed down or pushed through the barricade, but they certainly did not engage with the enemy infantry in a massed pushing match.[575] The Greek contingents communicated with each other, sent aid to each other, and, after some eleven days of manoeuvre and harassment, launched a single large attack which proved decisive. Pausanias' tactics did not rely on a mass push, nor did one occur as a separate phase in any of the battles of the Persian wars.[576]

Thucydides' account of the battle of Delium in 424 contains a physical push that has serious implications for the role and influence of the general in battle, and the nature of hoplite battle itself. It is the *only* use of the term *ôthismos* by

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[573] See Section A.
[574] Herodotus 62-3; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 7.4.15.
[575] Matthew (2010) 399.
[576] Herodotus makes no mention of an *ôthismos* at the battle of Marathon, and although Aristophanes has an Athenian veteran use the word in his recounting of the action during the battle, this does not imply a mass push. *Wasps* 1081-85. Discussed below.

Thucydides, and is qualified by the word *aspis* – a 'pushing of shields.' According to Thucydides:

τὸ δὲ ἄλλο καρτερᾷ μάχῃ καὶ ὠθισμῷ ἀσπίδων ξυνειστήκει.

"But the rest clashed in a gruelling fight, with shields shoving against shields."[577]

Matthew takes this to mean a mass physical push,[578] however such an interpretation is very difficult to believe, indeed Thucydides' account indicates that Delium was a battle decided by generalship, hard fighting, and psychology, not by a mass push, as I now explain. The Athenian phalanx was initially victorious on the left wing, where only the Thespian section of the Boeotian phalanx stood its ground; the Thespians were surrounded and annihilated by the Athenians.[579] The fact that the Boeotian sections adjacent to the Thespians were able to withdraw from the battle without being pursued by the Athenians suggests that they did so in some order, presumably under the direction of their generals, otherwise we would expect the Athenians to have attempted to pursue them. This could also suggest the Athenian generals and subordinate commanders were able to ensure their sections of the phalanx continued to engage those parts of the enemy line that were still offering resistance. Equally the Athenian surrounding of the Thespians suggests an understanding on the Athenians' part of the need to defeat intact contingents over the pursuing of fleeing contingents, or the continued pressing of withdrawing contingents. This may have been a result of battlefield orders from Hippocrates, indeed if the Theban general Pagondas was able to direct cavalry to attack the

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[577] Thucydides 4.96 (trans Hammond.)
[578] Matthew (2009)
[579] Thucydides 4.96. Pritchett (1985) 74-5; Hanson (1999) 203-219.

Athenian left wing while the ὠθισμὸ ἀσπίδων was taking place, then there is no

reason to assume that Hippocrates could not send orders informing this wing to

continue surrounding the Thespians.

This engagement was not a mass push: it is difficult to imagine how one

small section of an allied phalanx would have been able to resist a mass push while

others around it voluntarily withdrew, for it is clear that the Thespians were not

pushed back and they did not flee.[580] There was no mass push by the Athenians on

the right flank, just a brave stand by the citizens of Thespiae, whose grandfathers had

died fighting at Thermopylae, and whose sons would stand while others were fleeing

at the battle of Nemea.[581] The ὠθισμὸ ἀσπίδων that Thucydides described was a

natural consequence of fighting with spear and shield: the shield was a large and

heavy piece of equipment and it is logical to assume that some offensive use could

have been made of it, in combination with spears and shields, or as a desperate

attempt to knock an enemy off his feet. It was an *individual* push or shove, not a

mass push[582], and thus did not prevent the continued exercise of command and

control during fighting.

The noun *ôthismos* does not appear in the *Hellenica* of Xenophon, although

there are eight instances of *ôtheo*, all of them in a military context. The first has

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[580] Thucydides 4.96.
[581] Herodotus 7.202; Thucydides 4.96; Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.16-23; Hanson (1989).
[582] As argued by Krentz (1985); Goldsworthy (1997); and van Wees (2004).

recently been called "...one of the literalists' favourite passages...", namely Xenophon's description of the battle of Coronea.[583]

> ἐνταῦθα δὴ Ἀγησίλαον ἀνδρεῖον μὲν ἔξεστιν εἰπεῖν ἀναμφισβητήτως· οὐ μέντοι εἵλετό γε τὰ ἀσφαλέστατα. ἐξὸν γὰρ αὐτῷ παρέντι τοὺς διαπίπτοντας ἀκολουθοῦντι χειροῦσθαι τοὺς ὄπισθεν, οὐκ ἐποίησε τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ἀντιμέτωπος συνέρραξε τοῖς Θηβαίοις· καὶ συμβαλόντες τὰς ἀσπίδας ἐωθοῦντο, ἐμάχοντο, ἀπέκτεινον, ἀπέθνῃσκον.

"At this point one may unquestionably call Agesilaus courageous; at least he certainly did not choose the safest course. For while he might have let the men pass by who were trying to break through and then have followed them and overcome those in the rear, he did not do this, but crashed against the Thebans front to front; and setting shields against shields they pushed, fought, killed, and were killed."[584]

This passage is cited by Hanson in direct support of a literal push, Luginbill claims that although it might be possible to see a metaphorical push a natural reading suggests otherwise, while Schwartz believes it indicates a violent shoving in order to force a path into the enemy phalanx.[585] This passage, along with its concomitant passage in the *Agesilaus*, is the only unambiguous reference in Xenophon's works to a literal and physical push between hoplites; here it is presented along with other elements that we would expect of hoplite battle, and which Thucydides described in his account of Delium, namely shields, fighting, and death.[586] The presence of these elements in Xenophon's description strongly suggests that the second clash at Coronea was a close and fierce encounter, settled by the thrusting of spears and swords, the bashing and shoving of shields, and the discipline and courage of the

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[583] Krentz (2010) 57.
[584] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.19 (trans Brownson, modified); Xenophon *Agesilaus* 2.12, where he also uses *ôtheo*.
[585] Hanson (2000a) 172; Luginbill (1994) 53; Schwartz (2009) 199.
[586] Thucydides 4.96.

opposing phalanxes. Indeed the ability of the Theban phalanx to break through the Spartan phalanx and reach Mount Helicon, although at the cost of 'many' lives, suggests that they were able to cut a bloody path through the Spartans, not literally push them back, a similar situation to that of the battle of Tegyra.[587] There are two possible, but admittedly weak, indications of command during this stage of the battle of Coronea; the ability of the Thebans to force their way through the Spartan phalanx could suggest a co-ordinated attack, while the apparent ability of the Spartans to maintain discipline while losing formation suggests the presence of effective command and communications during battle. However both of these points could simply reflect doctrine and cannot be pushed too far; the second clash at Coronea really does seem to have been a desperate head-on brawl.[588]

'Pushing back' in hoplite battles.

On a number of occasions the ancient authors describe a battle as ending with an army being 'pushed' from the battlefield, or a particular contingent of a phalanx being 'pushed' or 'pushing' the enemy back. A survey of the ancient evidence is needed in order to determine if *ōthismos*, *ōtheo*, and *ēxotheo* are used in a way which supports a literal massed push. If this is indeed the case then the role of the hoplite general must have been severely limited during this stage of the fighting: pushed from behind straight into the enemy front rank he can have done little more than add

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[587] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.16 (trans Brownson.) Plutarch *Pelopidas* 17.
[588] An individual push is also suggested in Xenophon's account of the battle of Nemea, where pushing and fighting are described as occurring at the same time: Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.4.11-12.

his physical effort to a largely uncontrollable sea of men.[589] However if a psychological push, or a non-physical push of effort, can be detected in the source material then the role of the general, and the possibility for control and command during the fighting, can be further clarified. The following discussion focuses on those occasions where armies are said to have 'pushed' back the enemy, or been 'pushed' back themselves.

In Herodotus' description of the battle of Plataea the allied Greek army refused to move from its elevated position on the spurs of Mount Cithaeron and engage the Persians in the plain, so Mardonius ordered his cavalry to attack. Although the attack inflicted heavy damage to some parts of the Greek line, the Persian cavalry commander, Masistius, was killed and the attack was driven off:

> οἱ μέν νυν βάρβαροι τρόπῳ τῷ σφετέρῳ ἀποθανόντα ἐτίμων Μασίστιον: οἱ δὲ Ἕλληνες ὡς τὴν ἵππον ἐδέξαντο προσβάλλουσαν καὶ δεξάμενοι <u>ὤσαντο</u>,

> "Greek morale was considerably raised by the fact that they had not only withstood the assaults of the Persian cavalry, but had actually managed to push them back."[590]

It is highly unlikely that the Greeks engaged the Persian cavalry in a massed pushing contest; rather they were able to resist the attack until such point as an advantage could be gained, in this case the killing of Masistius and his horse by the

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[589] I use 'uncontrollable' here in the sense that a directed 'opening' could not be engineered or communicated. If ranks were packed tightly and individuals were straining against their shields, while being pushed from behind, then it is very difficult to see how amateur soldiers would have been able to control, or accept direction, while taking part in an *ôthismos*.

[590] Herodotus 9.25 (trans Waterfield, modified.)

Athenians.[591] The Greeks had not only withstood the Persian cavalry attack but had actually defeated it, resulting in the attack being repulsed, or pushed back, not through a literal mass push, but through a push of physical effort and psychological strength. The presence of battlefield command during this time is evident by an urgent request from the small Athenian contingent under attack for aid; while this aid was incoming the Athenians were engaged in a fierce struggle with the Persian cavalry over the body of Masistius, but were able to hold the position until the reinforcements arrived.[592] The contrast between the two armies at this point is strong: the Persian cavalry, now leaderless, attacked en masse and became bogged down with the Athenians, who were able to hold them off, inflict further losses, and send for aid – all indications that command and control was being exercised during this 'pushing back' of the Persian attack.[593]

Thucydides wrote that during the Spartan attack on the Athenian fortifications at Pylos in 425 the Spartan advantage of numbers was nullified by the difficulty of the position they were assaulting; however this did not prevent the Spartans from trying to push (ὠσάμενοι) through the Athenian defences and take the fort.[594] The Spartans were unsuccessful and became trapped on the island of Sphacteria, where they were eventually forced to surrender by Demosthenes' skilful use of light infantry. This passage is cited by Hanson in support of a literal interpretation of ôthismos, which he explains as being a crucial phase of hoplite

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[591] Krentz (2010) 56.
[592] Herodotus 9.2-23.
[593] Herodotus 9.22-5.
[594] Thucydides 4.11.

battle which involved the creation of momentum through superior weight.[595] During

this extended skirmish the Athenian force attempted to 'push back' (ὤσασθαι) the

Spartans in a frontal assault.[596] The Athenians' first attempt to engage the Spartans

failed as they held a high and easily defensible position, but it is clear that no truly

physical push was involved as the Athenians were using light infantry; their tactics

involved advancing to launch missiles before retreating to avoid being caught in

close combat, as such they lacked both shields and the formation necessary to

undertake a physical push.[597] A push of effort is what is meant here; the light

infantry applied continuous pressure to the Spartan formation in an attempt to force

it to either give ground or break up.

Schwartz also refers to the passage during a discussion where he states "The

examples of *ôthismos* meaning bodily push are too many and too unambiguous to be

safely ignored or explained away..."[598] However the engagement on Sphacteria was

not a hoplite battle, and the action that Thucydides describes cannot have involved a

physical push; the passage *is* unambiguous, but it is unambiguous in its support of a

push of effort, not for a literal push, and certainly not a pushing of shields.[599] A more

ambiguous example is to be found later in book four, where Thucydides describes a

battle between Corinthian and Athenian hoplites at Solygeia; after a period of hard

hand to hand fighting the Athenians were able to push the Corinthians back.

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[595] Hanson (2000a) 172.
[596] Thucydides 4.35.
[597] Thucydides 4.33-34.
[598] Schwartz (2009) 185.
[599] Matthew (2010) 399.

καὶ πρῶτα μὲν τῷ δεξιῷ κέρᾳ τῶν Ἀθηναίων εὐθὺς ἀποβεβηκότι πρὸ τῆς Χερσονήσου οἱ Κορίνθιοι ἐπέκειντο, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τῷ ἄλλῳ στρατεύματι. καὶ ἦν ἡ μάχη καρτερὰ καὶ ἐν χερσὶ πᾶσα. καὶ τὸ μὲν δεξιὸν κέρας τῶν Ἀθηναίων καὶ Καρυστίων (οὗτοι γὰρ παρατεταγμένοι ἦσαν ἔσχατοι) ἐδέξαντό τε τοὺς Κορινθίους καὶ ἐώσαντο μόλις

The Corinthians first fell on the Athenians' right wing as soon as it had disembarked in front of Chersonesus, and then on the rest of the Athenian army. There was hard fighting, all of it hand-to-hand. The right wing of Athenians and Carystians (these were next to the Athenians on the extreme right) withstood the Corinthian attack and with some difficulty pushed them back."[600]

The Corinthians were not broken by this push, but were able to retreat behind a nearby drystone wall, behind which they launched stones at the Athenian phalanx before raising the paean and advancing to combat once again.[601] This does not fit a mass push interpretation of *ôthismos*, not least because the Athenians would have had to physically push the Corinthian phalanx uphill. Indeed the whole engagement centred on intense hand to hand fighting, with the second clash being a long and hard fought stalemate that was only broken when the Athenian cavalry made its presence felt.[602]

Thucydides also used *exôtheo* when describing hoplite battle, with two of these instances occurring in his description of the battle of Mantinea in 418. First Thucydides describes how all armies are forced to push out (ἐξωθεῖται) their right

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[600] Thucydides 4.43 (trans Hammond, modified.)

[601] Thucydides 4.43.

[602] Thucydides 4.44. See also 4.96 for the battle of Delium, where: τὸ δὲ δεξιόν, ᾗ οἱ Θηβαῖοι ἦσαν, ἐκράτει τῶν Ἀθηναίων, καὶ ὠσάμενοι κατὰ βραχὺ τὸ πρῶτον ἐπηκολούθουν."Their right wing, where the Thebans were stationed, was getting the better of the Athenians, pushing them back gradually at first then ever more insistently." Trans Hammond.

wing in the advance to battle as the fear of the hoplite on the extreme right hand side results in him advancing at an angle.[603] While this can be considered a 'mass push' in the sense that it refers to an entire phalanx, it does not refer to a mass push between opposing phalanxes, and therefore was not a 'mass push' in the sense being examined here. However the passage is still of some use in determining the battlefield role of the general: the tendency to push out the right wing was exploited on a number of occasions by hoplite forces, usually in order to outflank the enemy left wing, and, when combined with the placing of the best troops on the right wing, formed an important tactical consideration.[604]

In the next chapter Thucydides describes how the Mantineans and picked Argive troops rushed through a gap in the Peloponnesian line before pushing back the Peloponnesian left wing.

> ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν χερσὶν ἐγίγνοντο τοῖς ἐναντίοις, τὸ μὲν τῶν Μαντινέων δεξιὸν τρέπει αὐτῶν τοὺς Σκιρίτας καὶ τοὺς Βρασιδείους, καὶ ἐσπεσόντες οἱ Μαντινῆς καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν Ἀργείων οἱ χίλιοι λογάδες κατὰ τὸ διάκενον καὶ οὐ ξυγκλῃσθὲν τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους διέφθειρον καὶ κυκλωσάμενοι ἔτρεψαν καὶ ἐξέωσαν ἐς τὰς ἁμάξας καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τῶν ἐπιτεταγμένων ἀπέκτεινάν τινας.

> "As the engagement began, the Mantineans on the right wing routed the Sciritae and the Brasidean veterans, then together with their allies and the thousand select Argives burst through the still open gap in the opposing line and caused havoc in that section of the Spartans, surrounding them completely then pushing them back in defeat all the way to their wagons, where they killed some of the older men posted to guard them."[605]

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[603] Thucydides 5.72.
[604] See Chapter 2.
[605] Thucydides 5.72 (trans Hammond, modified.)

This description implies the presence of command and control throughout the battle: the decision to push through the gap in the Spartan line must have been taken on the spur of the moment as the Mantineans cannot have known in advance that Agis would order a tactical shift, or that it would be ignored, leaving a gap.[606] If the decision was calculated and deliberate then it was well executed, indicating the ability of generals to influence battle mid-push, although if so then one has to question the amount of information, and level of communication, available to the generals of the Mantinean and Argive phalanxes.[607] However this appears unlikely, indeed the Mantinean phalanx seems to have lost its cohesion somewhat during the advance.[608] Their pursuit of the defeated left wing right back to the baggage train suggests a phalanx which had succumbed to the 'tunnel vision' that occasionally affected victorious phalanxes, leading them to ignore, or leaving their generals unable to implement, the better tactical decision in favour of more bloodshed.[609] This is what we might expect if the 'push' had not been ordered and occurred naturally, with the Mantinean and Argive hoplites rushing forward to exploit the gap; this resulted in their generals momentarily losing control and their phalanxes pursing defeated troops, rather than 'rolling' up the Spartan line. Regardless of the reasons for the Mantineans and Argives pushing back the Spartan left rather than returning to aid their centre, it is very difficult to see a mass push here. A push of effort makes more sense, and also allows for the presence, and potential loss, of command and control.

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[606] Kagan (1981) 130.

[607] If it was a decision made mid-battle then it was certainly the *wrong* decision.

[608] Thucydides 5.72-4. See Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

[609] As occurred, most notoriously, at the battle of Nemea; Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.18-23.

A final example from Thucydides is the battle of Miletus, where the Athenian phalanx pushed back the barbarian troops opposing it.

Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ τούς τε Πελοποννησίους πρώτους νικήσαντες καὶ τοὺς βαρβάρους καὶ τὸν ἄλλον ὄχλον ὠσάμενοι, τοῖς Μιλησίοις οὐ ξυμμείξαντες, ἀλλ' ὑποχωρησάντων αὐτῶν ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν Ἀργείων τροπῆς ἐς τὴν πόλιν ὡς ἑώρων τὸ ἄλλο σφῶν ἡσσώμενον, πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν πόλιν τῶν Μιλησίων κρατοῦντες ἤδη τὰ ὅπλα τίθενται.

"The Athenians first defeated the Peloponnesians, then pushed back the barbarians and the rest of the miscellaneous opposition, but did not engage with the Milesians, as after the rout of the Argives they had retreated inside their city when they saw the other forces losing."[610]

The passage indicates the presence of mid-battle direction in the movement of the Athenians from one section of the line to another (although we are not told where in the line the various contingents were) and in the decision of the Milesians to retreat to their city – presumably they could see, or were otherwise informed, of the plight of the rest of the line, and were able to undertake an organised and safe march back to Miletus. A mass push is difficult to see here, indeed the engagement is more complicated than a single 'shunt' of mass against mass: the Athenians broke the Peloponnesian contingent, and then engaged the other opposition, who put up more resistance but were 'ground' down through a combination of physical and psychological pressure.[611]

Three examples of a psychological 'push' can be found in the *Hellenica*, with the first occurring during the second engagement of the battle of Piraeus in

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[610] Thucydides 8.25 (trans Hammond, modified.)
[611] Thucydides 8.25.

403BC.[612] A Spartan force had been forced to retreat to high ground after Athenian light infantry had killed a number of important men; while the Spartans retreated, Thrasybulus, the Athenian commander, marched to the aid of the light infantry and organised his hoplites into a phalanx eight men deep. According to Xenophon Pausanias did the following:

ἐκεῖ δὲ συνταξάμενος παντελῶς βαθεῖαν τὴν φάλαγγα ἦγεν ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους. οἱ δ' εἰς χεῖρας μὲν ἐδέξαντο, ἔπειτα δὲ οἱ μὲν ἐξεώσθησαν εἰς τὸν ἐν ταῖς Ἁλαῖς πηλόν, οἱ δὲ ἐνέκλιναν· καὶ ἀποθνῄσκουσιν αὐτῶν ὡς πεντήκοντα καὶ ἑκατόν.

"There he formed an extremely deep phalanx and led the charge against the Athenians. The Athenians did indeed accept battle at close quarters; but in the end some of them were pushed into the mire of the marsh of Halae and others gave way; and about one hundred and fifty of them were slain."[613]

Hanson includes this passage in his list of occasions where battle was decided by weight or mass, but such a conclusion is difficult to accept: the eight deep Athenian phalanx initially offered resistance to the 'extremely deep' Spartan phalanx, if the Spartan ranks were only advantageous in the weight they added to a literal push then the Athenians should have been shunted aside almost immediately.[614] This leaves open the possibility for battlefield command, although there is not enough detail in the description to ascribe a definite role to either Pausanias or Thrasybulus during this phase of the battle. However, the two generals seem to have been highly competent, and the whole engagement strongly implies they were both in direct command of their forces: Pausanias had earlier withdrawn to

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[612] A similar push occurs at Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.2.8, but in the context of a siege, rather than a battle.
[613] Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.4.34 (trans Brownson.)
[614] Hanson (2000a) 172. Van Wees (2004) 190.

a hill and ordered reinforcements, while Thrasybulus had used light infantry and cavalry to ambush the Spartans at the beginning of the battle. Would both generals have displayed such talent for tactics and psychology only to throw it away in a blind push once the two phalanxes met? This seems unlikely: the battle of Halae was as much a clash between two generals and two styles of engagement than it was between two phalanxes, and the evidence suggests the final clash was not a mass push. Instead Xenophon's account hints at varying fortunes for different parts of the Athenian line: some were killed, some gave way, and others were pushed back to Halae – perhaps Thrasybulus' phalanx 'unravelled' from the back to the front, with the rear ranks fleeing and the front ranks being cut down as they either tried to resist or turned to run.[615] Indeed, the passage suggests a rearguard action that was forced to give ground, either because it took casualties or was in danger of being flanked, rather than a head on collision and sustained contest of mass against mass.

A psychological push is also implied by Xenophon's account of a battle near Olympia between the Eleans and various enemies in 364BC. The Eleans first defeated an Aracdian contingent and then repulsed an attack by an Argive contingent:

ἐπεὶ μέντοι κατεδίωξαν εἰς τὸ μεταξὺ τοῦ βουλευτηρίου καὶ τοῦ τῆς Ἐστίας ἱεροῦ καὶ τοῦ πρὸς ταῦτα προσήκοντος θεάτρου, ἐμάχοντο μὲν οὐδὲν ἧττον καὶ ἐώθουν πρὸς τὸν βωμὸν ἀπὸ μέντοι τῶν στοῶν τε καὶ τοῦ βουλευτηρίου καὶ τοῦ μεγάλου ναοῦ βαλλόμενοι καὶ ἐν τῷ ἰσοπέδῳ μαχόμενοι, ἀποθνῄσκουσιν ἄλλοι τε τῶν Ἠλείων καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ τῶν τριακοσίων ἄρχων Στρατόλας.

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[615] See Thucydides 3.98

"When, however, they had pursued the enemy to the space between the senate house and the temple of Hestia and the theatre which adjoins these buildings, although they fought no less stoutly and kept pushing the enemy towards the altar, still, since they were pelted from the roofs of the porticoes, the senate house, and the great temple, and were themselves fighting on the ground-level, some of the Eleans were killed, among them Stratolas himself, the leader of the Three Hundred."[616]

Xenophon informs us that the Argives and Arcadians, as well as the Athenians and Achaeans who were also present, despised the Eleans in matters of war and had not expected them to march on Olympia during the games.[617] However the Eleans' success did not come about through surprise or deception any more than it came about through a mass push; Xenophon's account suggests this was an engagement of hard and determined fighting, with the Eleans eventually being forced to retire in the face of a heavy missile attack. The push that Xenophon describes was psychological, as the Eleans were pursuing an already defeated enemy, possibly one offering sporadic bouts of resistance in a similar vein to the Athenian withdrawal after the battle of Delium.[618]

The next example of a 'push' in the *Hellenica* is that of the battle of Leuctra. After the very deep Theban phalanx made contact with the Spartan contingent that made up the Peloponnesian right wing, there was a fierce fight.

ἐπεὶ μέντοι ἀπέθανε Δείνων τε ὁ πολέμαρχος καὶ Σφοδρίας τῶν περὶ δαμοσίαν καὶ Κλεώνυμος ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἵπποι καὶ οἱ συμφορεῖς τοῦ πολεμάρχου καλούμενοι οἵ τε ἄλλοι ὑπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου ὠθούμενοι ἀνεχώρουν, οἱ δὲ τοῦ εὐωνύμου ὄντες τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων ὡς ἑώρων τὸ δεξιὸν ὠθούμενον

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[616] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.4.31 (trans Brownson.)
[617] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.4.29-30 (trans Brownson.)
[618] Thucydides 4.96. Discussed above.

"But when Deinon, the polemarch, Sphodrias, one of the king's tent-companions, and Cleonymus, the son of Sphodrias, had been killed, then the royal bodyguard, the so-called aides of the polemarch, and the others fell back under the pressure of the Theban mass, while those who were on the left wing of the Lacedaemonians, when they saw that the right wing was being pushed back, gave way."[619]

Before the deaths of these important and powerful individuals the Spartans were having the better of the fight, this strongly suggests that what Xenophon is describing is not a literal mass push, but the withdrawal of the Spartan phalanx in the face of greatly superior numbers, and with shaken morale due to the deaths of several prominent men. The fact that the Theban advantage in numbers was only on a narrow front has no bearing on the effectiveness or suitability of the tactic, with Xenophon pointing out that the Thebans were relying on defeating only a small part of the Peloponnesian army: those hoplites immediately around the Spartan king.[620] A final detail demonstrates the mixed nature of this push: if this was an encounter of push versus push, mass versus mass, then the Theban phalanx, with its 4:1 advantage, should have pushed back the Spartan phalanx with ease.[621] Initial Spartan success can only be attributed to their superior system of subordinate command, training, and discipline, advantages that were slowly but surely nullified by a continuous stream of fresh Theban fighters.[622]

In the three major historical sources for the Classical period there is not a single unambiguous example of *ôthismos, ôtheo,* or *êxotheo* referring to a massed

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[619] Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.14 (trans Brownson.)
[620] Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.12.
[621] van Wees (2004) 190.
[622] See Humble (2006) 219-233.

physical push, with the majority of examples indicating the movement of troops as a result of changing battlefield conditions, or the movement of triremes in naval engagements. However two more sources remain to be investigated: Aristophanes refers to a push at the battle of Marathon, and Polyaenus records that three famous commanders all placed great weight on pushing the enemy back a single step.

In Aristophanes' *Wasps* a veteran of Marathon is made to state that the Athenian army, with the help of the gods, pushed the Persians back until evening came:

> εὐθέως γὰρ ἐκδραμόντες ξὺν δορὶ ξὺν ἀσπίδι ἐμαχόμεσθ' αὐτοῖσι, θυμὸν ὀξίνην πεπωκότες, στὰς ἀνὴρ παρ' ἄνδρ', ὑπ' ὀργῆς τὴν χελύνην ἐσθίων: ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν τοξευμάτων οὐκ ἦν ἰδεῖν τὸν οὐρανόν. ἀλλ' ὅμως ἐωσάμεσθα ξὺν θεοῖς πρὸς ἑσπέραν.

> "At once we ran up, armed with lance and shield, and, drunk with the bitter wine of anger, we gave them battle, man standing to man and rage distorting our lips. A hail of arrows hid the sky. However, by the help of the gods, we drove off the foe towards evening."[623]

This is no more evidence of the Athenians physically pushing the Persians than it is of the gods actually descending from Olympus and aiding the Athenians in their fight, for a fight it certainly was; Herodotus reports some 6,400 Persian dead.[624] Indeed, Herodotus' account of the battle itself is brief, descriptive, and, barring the blinding of Epizelos by a phantom hoplite, devoid of supernatural inference or influence; he makes it quite clear that victory was down to the Athenian tactics and their superior equipment, and also emphasises the sheer, although probably

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[623] Aristophanes *Wasps* 1081-85 (trans Barrett, modified.)
[624] Herodotus 6.117. Hanson cites the passage from the *Wasps* in support of a physical and mass push: Hanson (2000a) 172.

exaggerated, scale of the victory. Aristophanes picks up on this; he has the veteran describe spearing Persians like tuna fish and stinging them in the face and jaw as they scrambled to escape; the image of the grizzled veteran whose stories become grander with each telling is brilliantly constructed, but, exaggerated or not, the retelling of the battle does not imply a mass physical push, and serves as a reinforcement of the gritty physical reality of the event; Marathon was a fierce fight, but the Persians could not face the stings of the Athenian wasps, and were slaughtered as a result.[625] The push that Aristophanes has his veteran describe is a psychological push, one that superior numbers, equipment, or position could create. It is the same sort of technical terminology that Thucydides and Xenophon use in their accounts of battles, as described above.

A meaning similar to that given by Aristophanes can be seen in a phrase recorded by Polyaenus and quoted above; although Polyaenus does not use *ôthismos*, *ôtheo*, or *exôtheo*, the passage is occasionally deployed by literalists in support of a massed shove.[626]

ἓν βῆμα χαρίσασθέ μοι, καὶ τὴν νίκην ἕξομεν

"Favour me one more stap and the victory is ours."[627]

In each entry the phrase is uttered by the general and victory follows, however this should not conjure up images of the entire phalanx taking a unified step

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[625] Krentz (2010) 156-7.
[626] Lazenby (1991) 97; Hanson (2000a) 173-5; Schwartz (2009) 190.
[627] Polyaenus *Stratagems* 2.3.2; 3.9.27; 4.3.8.

towards the enemy, shunting them backwards one fatal step; rather it should be seen as an appeal for a few brief moments of intense effort, an effort which gave the phalanx a momentary advantage and ultimately secured victory.[628] The phrase does not allow a solid interpretation for any of the labels used to identify pushes thus far, and using the Polyaenus as the sole source for anything is fraught with danger; however the passage, whether historical or not, remains of some use.[629] Schwartz believes the passage at least shows "...that such a situation – one last step being all that separated the phalanx from victory – was not unthinkable in Greek tradition."[630] I agree: a battle could be won or lost on the timing and force of a single concerted effort, and forcing the enemy to take, or even attempt to take, a single *involuntary* step back could have been enough to break their morale. The passage shows an awareness and appreciation, at least by Polyaenus, of the ability of a general, or subordinate commander, to influence the course of events while in the middle of a battle. Whether this push was called in order to exploit a momentary gap in the enemy line, to pressure an area that looked vulnerable, or simply to initiate a particularly strenuous attack does not matter, the principle remains the same: the order could be given, and whoever gave it could expect it to be both heard, and followed, while Polyaenus could expect his readership, admittedly not Classical Greeks but second century AD Romans, to believe this to have been possible.

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[628] So recognized by Hanson (2000a) 173.
[629] Fraser (1942) 16.
[630] Schwartz (2009) 190.

Uses other than in infantry battle

One of the most important points against interpreting *ôthismos* as a mass push is that the word does not necessarily indicate a physical event, and was used by Herodotus to indicate a fierce argument; a situation where a mass push is out of the question. He uses the phrase ὠθισμὸς λόγων in his reporting of a dispute between the Tegeans and Athenians as to who was most worthy of claiming a position of honour on the wing of the allied phalanx at Plataea.[631]

ἐνθαῦτα ἐν τῇ διατάξι ἐγένετο λόγων πολλῶν ὠθισμὸς Τεγεητέων τε καὶ Ἀθηναίων

"Much pushing of words arose between the Tegeans and the Athenians during the disposition of the troops."[632]

The Athenians argued strongly for the honour of constituting the left wing of the phalanx, and backed up this position by reminding all present that they had defeated the Persians at the battle of Marathon only ten years ago. The left wing was second in honour and danger only to the right wing, and the state that was posted there could legitimately claim to be second in honour and valour only to the Spartans; the decision was tactically important as well, especially considering the size of the allied Greek army. This 'pushing of words' cannot refer to a mass push of any sort, which weakens the argument for *ôthismos* referring to such an event during battle, and strengthens the possibility of generals exerting their influence throughout the fighting. Indeed, both the Tegeans and the Athenians emphasised the strength of their character and their recent military victories, the Tegeans even recounting the

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[631] Herodotus 8.78; 9.26.
[632] Herodotus 9.26 (trans Waterfield.)

ability of one Echemus to fight in single combat, not their ability to engage in mass pushes. The *ôthismos* at the battle of Plataea was one of words, not actions, but even that has the effect of emphasising the importance of generals and generalship to Greek warfare: the Spartans decided in favour of the Athenians because of their victory at Marathon, a victory that I have argued was due to the use of generalship, as well as courage and sheer bravery. Indeed such was the Spartan recognition of Athenian superiority in engaging Persian forces that Herodotus reports Pausanias later ordered the Athenians to move to the *right* wing in order to allow them to directly oppose the Persian forces.[633] The incident may not be true; Lazenby believes it to be designed to glorify Athens, remarking that Spartans would never admit to being less able to engage an enemy force than other Greeks.[634] However the Athenians *were* the most experienced of the Greeks at fighting Persians, and to expect the Spartans to have rejected this expertise in the largest battle of the Persian Wars, and only a year after Leonidas and his command were destroyed at Thermopylae, is to play too much to the Spartan mirage of martial valour.[635] Herodotus considered a swapping of positions to have been possible, given the information he had at his disposal and his knowledge of the Athenian and Spartan characters, and while there was, in the end, no time for the swap to occur, we cannot just dismiss it as an impossibility.

Before the battle of Salamis the Greek commanders were engaged in a heated debate about the best course of action, with some preferring to fall back to the

[633] Herodotus 9.46.
[634] Lazenby (1993) 236-7.
[635] How & Wells (1912) 308.

Peloponnese and others counselling to stand and fight. Herodotus describes the debate thus:

τῶν δὲ ἐν Σαλαμῖνι στρατηγῶν ἐγίνετο ὠθισμὸς λόγων πολλός

"So the commanders at Salamis were furiously pushing their own points of view."[636]

This is clearly a metaphorical use of the word, indicative of the seriousness of the situation and the intensity of the argument; the survival of the allied Greek states hung in the balance, and a decisive and unified response to the Persian threat was essential. This carries the same meaning and implications as the first example, namely that an argument could be so fierce, and its consequences so important, that it could be described as *ôthismos*. Given the importance of the battles of Salamis and Plataea to the independence of the Greek states, and the existence of a clear and fundamental disagreement in how to resist the Persian invasion, it is not surprising that Herodotus emphasised the intensity of debate. That *ôthismos* could be used to describe a heated argument is solid evidence that the word could carry metaphorical or non-physical connotations; indeed it is simply not possible for the word to imply a mass-shove in the two situations mentioned above.

Herodotus makes more use of the verb *ôtheo*, which occurs fifteen times in his work. The versatility of the word and its potential for metaphorical meaning are

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[636] Herodotus 8.78 (trans Waterfield, modified.)

demonstrated by its numerous applications, with Herodotus first using it to describe the strange way Egyptian men weave:

Αἰγύπτιοι ἅμα τῷ οὐρανῷ τῷ κατὰ σφέας ἐόντι ἑτεροίῳ καὶ τῷ ποταμῷ φύσιν ἀλλοίην παρεχομένῳ ἢ οἱ ἄλλοι ποταμοί, τὰ πολλὰ πάντα ἔμπαλιν τοῖσι ἄλλοισι ἀνθρώποισι ἐστήσαντο ἤθεά τε καὶ νόμους: ἐν τοῖσι αἱ μὲν γυναῖκες ἀγοράζουσι καὶ καπηλεύουσι, οἱ δὲ ἄνδρες κατ' οἴκους ἐόντες ὑφαίνουσι: ὑφαίνουσι δὲ οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι ἄνω τὴν κρόκην ὠθέοντες, Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ κάτω.

"In keeping with the idiosyncratic climate which prevails there and the fact that their river behaves differently from any other river, almost all Egyptian customs and practices are the opposite of those of everywhere else. For instance, women go out to the town square and retail goods, while men stay at home and do the weaving; and whereas everyone else weaves by pushing the weft upwards, the Egyptians push it downwards."[637]

Herodotus also uses *ôtheo* to describe pushing past guards, stabbing with daggers, pushing dead bodies off cliffs, and throwing oneself into a fire.[638] Clearly *ôtheo* could carry a wide range of meanings, none of which imply a mass push, a point backed up by two other important examples of Herodotus' use of *ôtheo*: the walling off of Chersonese by Miltiades, and the Athenian rejection of Spartan leadership in the build up to the battles of Plataea and Salamis.[639] These both represent 'pushes' on a strategic scale, with the Aspinthians and the Persians being pushed away from a certain location, the Chersonese in the first case and Greece as a whole in the second. They do not support a massed physical push, indeed they reinforce the image of Greek warfare as being more complicated than is generally

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[637] Herodotus 2.35 (trans Waterfield.)
[638] Herodotus 3.75, 3.78, 4.103, 7.167.
[639] Herodotus 6.37, 8.3.

accepted: strategic concerns are evident in these two examples, and both demonstrate the ability of generals to influence events on a scale outside the phalanx itself. Clearly, *ôtheo* had as many different meanings to the Greeks of Herodotus' day as its equivalent, 'push', has in modern day English.

Thucydides also uses *ôtheo* and *exôtheo* to describe scenarios in which a mass push was simply impossible. The strongest example is that of a speech given in the Syracusan assembly by the Syracusan general Hermocrates. Hermocrates was advising the assembly that an invasion from Athens was a threat to be taken seriously, and that immediate action was needed if Syracuse was to offer serious resistance; to that end he proposed sending the Syracusan fleet to Taras in order to contest any unfriendly crossing of the Ionian Gulf.[640] His hopes were that the Athenian fleet could be engaged early and at some distance from the city, that this engagement would see the Athenians at a disadvantage of either stamina or formation due to the distance they would have travelled, or that this unexpected resistance would force a rethink of strategy.[641]

> ὥστ' ἔγωγε τούτῳ τῷ λογισμῷ ἡγοῦμαι ἀποκλῃομένους αὐτοὺς οὐδ' ἂν ἀπᾶραι ἀπὸ Κερκύρας, ἀλλ' ἢ διαβουλευσαμένους καὶ κατασκοπαῖς χρωμένους, ὁπόσοι τ' ἐσμὲν καὶ ἐν ᾧ χωρίῳ, ἐξωσθῆναι ἂν τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐς χειμῶνα, ἢ καταπλαγέντας τῷ ἀδοκήτῳ καταλῦσαι ἂν τὸν πλοῦν

> "So I believe that these considerations will inhibit them from leaving Corcyra at all. Either the time they spend in discussing strategy and sending out spying missions to establish our numbers and position will push them into the

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[640] Thucydides 6.33-4.
[641] Thucydides 6.34. See Aeneas Tacitus Preface 1 for the advantages of engaging an invading enemy at the earliest opportunity – discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

winter season, or frustration at this unexpected obstacle will cause them to disband the expedition..."[642]

This is a metaphorical use of *exôtheo*, completely lacking any physical element: if the Syracusan fleet could cause enough disruption in the Ionian Gulf then the date of the final crossing to Syracuse could be pushed so far back that it became logistically difficult or physically impossible. This is the only example of *exôtheo* being used in this manner by Thucydides, however the point remains powerful: Thucydides could conceive of a 'push' as having a temporal characteristic, just as we might 'push back' a deadline, with this further damaging the case for *ôthismos*, *ôtheo*, and *exôtheo* referring to a 'mass push', strengthening the case for the ability of generals to influence battle, and showing conclusively that the word does not *have* to have a physical meaning.

Thucydides and Xenophon both use *exôtheo* in their descriptions of naval battles, where a mass push of any kind is impossible to detect. Thucydides' use of *exôtheo* occurs mostly in the various battles fought in the harbour of Syracuse during the final stages of the Sicilian Expedition. The naval engagements were of vital importance to the Athenian force. The fleet, and consequently the entire army, was trapped in the harbour and morale was drastically low – a victory in the harbour was essential if the Expedition was to receive reinforcements or retreat back to Athens. Given the desperate situation of the Athenian force Thucydides' use of the word suggests a similar technical meaning to Herodotus' use of the word during the battles of Salamis and Plataea; the Athenian ships were driven from the battle in the harbour

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[642] Thucydides 6.34 (trans Hammond.)

because the physical damage they sustained also had a severe impact on their collective nerve and morale.

Thucydides first uses *exôtheo* to describe the tactics that would shape the conflicts in the harbour, explaining that:

τῇ τε πρότερον ἀμαθίᾳ τῶν κυβερνητῶν δοκούσῃ εἶναι, τὸ ἀντίπρωρον ξυγκροῦσαι, μάλιστ' ἂν αὐτοὶ χρήσασθαι· πλεῖστον γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ σχήσειν· τὴν γὰρ ἀνάκρουσιν οὐκ ἔσεσθαι τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ἐξωθουμένοις ἄλλοσε ἢ ἐς τὴν γῆν, καὶ ταύτην δι' ὀλίγου καὶ ἐς ὀλίγον, κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ στρατόπεδον τὸ ἑαυτῶν

"Head-on ramming, which had previously been put down to the captains' inexperience of naval warfare, would now be their favoured mode of attack, and they expected to gain great advantage from it. Athenian ships forced to back water out of the battle could only retire towards land, and that land was close by and closely confined to the area of their own base."[643]

The Syracusan tactic of head-on ramming was highly successful against the waterlogged Athenian triremes, especially when combined with the disruptive tactics that the Syracusans used to bring on a sea battle. A second battle quickly followed, with Thucydides again using *exôtheo* to refer to the 'driving ashore' of Athenian triremes.[644] The retreating Athenian ships were not literally shunted from the sea by the pursuing Syracusans, but were forced into this action by the superior enemy numbers and the unfavourable battlefield situation. Thucydides uses *exôtheo* several other times in relation to naval warfare, with it meaning 'driven ashore' or 'forced to

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[643] Thucydides 7.36 (trans Hammond.)
[644] Thucydides 7.39-40.

withdraw' on each occasion: these pushes were all non-physical pushes of effort; none of them was a contest of mass versus mass.[645]

The use of *ôthismos*, *ôtheo*, and *êxotheo* by the ancient historians to describe events that took place at sea, on a strategic level, or in a domestic setting indicates the flexibility of the terms, and suggests that any attempt to 'pin' a single meaning to their use in battle descriptions is flawed. Rather, each 'push' should be analysed with the context of the whole engagement in mind, compared to other instances and similar scenarios, and only then can we ascribe a particular meaning to that push: simply defining 'the' *ôthismos* as a mass push is to ignore the wealth of evidence which suggests that *ôthismos*, *ôtheo*, and *êxotheo* can, and do, mean many different things.

The 'rugby scrum' analogy and the implications this has for generalship

Ôthismos could be an individual push, from the technical prowess of the Thebans in wrestling to perhaps a far from technical strike with the shield, but I do not deny that *ôthismos* could also serve as an event which involved multiple individuals and which involved teamwork and leadership rather than purely physical effort. Indeed there are occasions where a local 'push' of effort involving a small number individuals is a better interpretation than a concerted phalanx-wide effort.

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[645] Thucydides 2.90, 7.63, 8.104-105. Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.12 for a similar use by Xenophon. Krentz (1994) 45-7.

The imagining and description of this situation has presented scholars with some difficulty over the years, with many seeking refuge in the form of an analogy taken from the game of rugby.[646] A discussion of the analogy is needed here as I believe, with some modifications, it can be useful in illustrating the importance of command and communication to hoplite armies, as well as because to avoid it completely would leave an obvious gap in this chapter's analysis of the four phases of battle. The analogy is dangerous for a number of reasons, primarily because it is based on a misunderstanding of the importance of leadership and coordination to successful scrimmaging, and to hoplite battle, and also because it is based on the mass push interpretation from the offset: there are no technical weapons present on the rugby field, and as such the scrum appears to be a matter of pushing and little else. 'General' is also an inappropriate term to use regarding rugby players, however in the scrum, and in 'open' play, there are recognisable individuals who we could reasonably identify as fulfilling a similar role: they are communicating, making decisions, and driving play on. A final difficulty is that a scrum is a 'set-piece' engagement; play is halted and the two opposing packs shuffle into position before play is resumed by a recognised signal – the insertion of the ball into the relatively stable and waiting scrum. The phrase 'set-piece' is difficult to apply to hoplite battle; few engagements took place 'by agreement' and the one example of the deliberate limiting of combat, the 'battle of champions', if it was historical at all, ended in a full scale pitched battle anyway.[647] A final danger is the incompleteness of the analogy; the primary purpose of a scrum is to gain possession of a rugby ball within the confines of the rules, whereas the primary purpose of hoplite battle was to kill and not be killed; there were no rules and certainly no referee governing the

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[646] Krentz (2010) 52-6.
[647] Herodotus 1.82.

conduct of combat in the front ranks. However, despite these dangers I believe a rugby analogy can be of some use in describing *ôthismos*; I will begin by giving a more detailed analysis of the scrum as an analogy.

The use of a rugby scrum as an analogy for the *ôthismos* is truly successful only in that to an outside observer with little experience both the rugby scrum and a phalanx battle would be a baffling sight to experience. It is fair to say that many commentators on the nature of the phalanx who make comparisons to the scrum do not appear to have much experience of the reality of the event; a scrum, while undoubtedly an intensely physical event, does not have a mass shove as its sole technique or objective and is certainly not as simple as it may seem to an external observer. Indeed tactical leadership and constant communication are vital elements of successful scrimmaging, and are, ironically, denied a place in the battlefield environment that the 'mass push' interpretation of *ôthismos* presents. For example, while the side putting the ball in has an inevitable advantage in that the hooker generally receives a silent signal before the ball is rolled in, the opposing side can disrupt this by spotting and reporting the put-in and attempting to 'spoil' the ball. Equally one member of the scrum 'pack' is usually designated the 'pack leader', and this individual will develop and communicate tactics throughout the game, as well as ensuring the coordination of the pack as a whole. There are also *three* other command and control figures present during a scrum: a referee to ensure safety and fair play, and two 'scrum-halves' who are responsible for inserting and retrieving the ball, and organising both the scrum and communication with the backs who will receive the ball: scrums, like hoplite battles, are not about pushing!

A successful scrum requires constant communication and direction from a designated leader, as well as the development of the techniques, strength, and balance appropriate to the activity, all attributes that have been shown as integral to Classical Greek warfare. On this understanding of the analogy the scrum actually helps the case for generalship, however a more powerful and appropriate analogy can be used, also from rugby, namely the 'ruck' or 'maul.' These two aspects of play are more appropriate analogies as they are not 'set piece', and while the objective is still to retain or retrieve the ball, this is achieved through a combination of both co-ordinated pushing on a local scale and tactical retreats and advances upon the flanks to weaken the integrity of the opponent's defence. A successful attack will either gain the ball, force a scuff of the ball, or force the opposition into an accidental or deliberate foul, all scenarios which would likely result in possession of the ball being granted to your side.

In these events the co-ordinated pushing of the enemy remains important, but is much more difficult to achieve in a steady and methodical manner, given the lack of an initial shunt and the co-operative manoeuvring, overseen by the referee, such as begins a scrum. A ruck or maul is free-flowing; they are not initiated by a set movement or action and generally build up, in the absence of a swift capture or retrieval of the ball, until the forward players of each side are engaged, and continue until one side is able to secure the ball and release it to those more mobile individuals in the backs. Individual players will join, reinforce the structure and integrity of the formation, add their physical and psychological strength to the effort, and then withdraw when they become out of position, when the ball is retrieved, or when they become physically exhausted. Localised leadership, communication, and

tactical decision making remain vital in order to secure and protect the ball, as well as to ensure that the individuals who are not directly involved in the process are aware of what is going on, and what to do once the ball comes out. Once the ball is won it is sent out another ruck or maul is likely to occur soon afterwards as players are tackled or forced out of position. This is referred to as a 'phase' of play, with teams that are able to string together multiple phases of play being rewarded by constant possession of the ball and dominance of the field. Thus victory is achieved by multiple local scale pushes; pushes which secure a brief tactical advantage, which are coordinated by recognisable individuals, and which can be exploited to advance into enemy territory before the cycle begins again. This is exactly how I conceive the fighting and pushing of a hoplite battle to have been: the communication and decision making of the generals, and subordinate officers, would result in multiple small scale pushes of effort, which would exert psychological and physical pressure resulting in sections of the enemy front line bending or otherwise beginning to show the strain of battle. Leadership and 'generalship' are vital aspects of rugby, just like they were to the armies of Classical Greece.

Conclusions

The evidence suggests that no single definition can be placed on 'the' push or pushes our sources sometimes refer to, but that each instance must be evaluated in the context of the engagement; some are physical pushes, others are psychological pushes of effort, but none of them are a massed push. This is an entirely unbelievable form of warfare, which denies the possibility of generals influencing battle, which has not been found anywhere else in the world, at any time, and which relies upon an

advance 'at the run' into combat in a closed and restrictive formation in order to occur, scenarios which the previous section of this chapter have shown are not supported by the sources. There is also no evidence to suggest that *ôthismos* was a 'phase' of battle distinct from the fighting, indeed on many occasions pushing occurs at the same time as fighting, while the use of *ôtheo*, *êxotheo*, and *ôthismos* in naval, metaphorical, and other non-literal contexts indicates that a strict definition of push as a mass physical shove is incorrect. The push of hoplite battle was the desperate engineering of advantage, the deliberate attempt to exploit favourable situations to the fullest, the desire to inflict as much damage as possible while the balance of the engagement was swung your way, and the frantic struggle to stay calm and escape while others around you panicked and were struck down. Scale is not an issue for this definition; three hoplites pushing back the enemy with their spears in order to save a friend works as well as a formation wide-effort to break the enemy resistance, with both these scenarios requiring leadership, teamwork, and communication in order to be effective.

If "the" *ôthismos* was not a mass push then it allows, indeed demands, the presence of leadership and the ability of individuals in command to exercise their influence. The source material indicates that this was the case, with this conclusion supporting the argument developed above that hoplite battle was a chaotic and messy affair, but one that could be, and frequently was, influenced by generals, veterans, or by individuals who spotted the potential for advantage or disadvantage, and made themselves heard.

Section D: retreat and pursuit

The final breaking of a phalanx could come about in many different ways: front rank cohesion could be lost and enemy fighters penetrate the formation; the deaths of generals and notable individuals could remove the ability to maintain command and control or destroy morale; sheer weight of numbers could inflict massive casualties; and a collective loss of nerve could result in defeat before any fighting actually took place. Regardless of how this breakdown occurred, it marked the final recognisable phase of a hoplite battle, that of the retreat and pursuit.

This phase of battle has received relatively little treatment in modern scholarship, but its nature is vital to any discussion of the role of the general in hoplite battle. If the sources demonstrate that there were 'levels' of pursuit, or that phalanxes could remain cohesive and under control despite being on the retreat, then this could indicate that generals were capable of issuing orders in what was likely the most chaotic phase of battle; orders which may have relied on the training or continued discipline or of their troops, but which still indicate generals could influence the phase.

The battles of the Persian Wars demonstrate the ability of generals to influence the final phase of battle, the strength and survivability of hoplite forces in the face of massed light and ranged infantry, as well as the tactical flexibility of the phalanx formation. At the battle of Marathon in 490 Herodotus reports that both of

the Athenian wings were victorious and did not pursue the fleeing Persians, instead combining into one phalanx and marching to the aid of their defeated centre.[648]

μαχομένων δὲ ἐν τῷ Μαραθῶνι χρόνος ἐγίνετο πολλός, καὶ τὸ μὲν μέσον τοῦ στρατοπέδου ἐνίκων οἱ βάρβαροι, τῇ Πέρσαι τε αὐτοὶ καὶ Σάκαι ἐτετάχατο· κατὰ τοῦτο μὲν δὴ ἐνίκων οἱ βάρβαροι καὶ ῥήξαντες ἐδίωκον ἐς τὴν μεσόγαιαν, τὸ δὲ κέρας ἑκάτερον ἐνίκων Ἀθηναῖοί τε καὶ Πλαταιέες· νικῶντες δὲ τὸ μὲν τετραμμένον τῶν βαρβάρων φεύγειν ἔων, τοῖσι δὲ τὸ μέσον ῥήξασι αὐτῶν συναγαγόντες τὰ κέρεα ἀμφότερα ἐμάχοντο, καὶ ἐνίκων Ἀθηναῖοι. φεύγουσι δὲ τοῖσι Πέρσῃσι εἵποντο κόπτοντες

The fighting at Marathon was long and drawn out. In the centre, where the Greeks were faced with the Persians themselves and the Sacae, they were beaten; the invaders got the better of the Greeks at this point, broke their lines, and pursued them inland. However, the Athenians and Plataeans on their respective wings were victorious. They left the Persians they had routed to flee from the battlefield and concentrated on those who had broken through the centre. The two wings were combined into a single fighting unit- and the Athenians won.[649]

This restraint of pursuit, whether planned in advance or a 'natural' decision made by both wings simultaneously, was a sensible decision given the tactical environment, indeed the battle may have been lost had the wings not returned to aid the centre as rapidly as they did.[650] The exact nature of the Athenian tactics at Marathon has been disputed, with some preferring a deliberate withdrawal by the Athenian centre followed by a double envelopment, and others imagining that both wings re-formed into a single phalanx which then charged the Persian centre from

[648] Herodotus 6.112-3.
[649] Herodotus 6.113 (trans Waterfield.)
[650] Herodotus 6.111-3. Describing the restraint as a deliberate tactical double envelopment gives too much credit to the amateur, inexperienced Athenian hoplites of 490, as does any thought of a deliberate 'withdrawal' or sacrifice of the centre, a tactic that would have sharply clashed with the ideal of shared risk in battle. Krentz (2010) 158.

behind.[651] Both interpretations give a great deal of credit to the untrained and inexperienced Athenian and Plataean hoplites,[652] and gift Miltiades a victory of tactics and subtlety while ignoring the presence of nine other *strategoi* on the field.[653] Crediting Miltiades with deliberately thinning the centre in order to gain a double envelopment may be expecting too much, and it is true that the ability of amateur hoplites to undertake manoeuvres mid-battle, or even to maintain the most basic of formations once battle had ended, can be doubted, given later examples, however this does not automatically render Herodotus' account false or useless.

Van Wees emphasises the heroic perfection of Herodotus' account, however I do not agree with his conclusion that hoplite armies did not have the degree of control and cohesion required to perform such a manoeuvre;[654] examples of phalanxes performing actions which would require communication, cohesion, discipline, and command abound. Later armies rally,[655] return to the battlefield,[656] and ignore fleeing enemies to engage intact phalanxes,[657] and when the nature of the Athenian army at Marathon is considered, the case for a deliberate restraint of pursuit followed by an organized advance back into combat becomes stronger. The Athenian and Plataean phalanx at Marathon had a distinct advantage over larger phalanxes made up of contingents from several cities or areas: a lifetime of

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[651] Lloyd (1881) 338 for the view that the Athenian centre gave way deliberately. Van der Veer (1982) 319; Burn (1984) 520; Hammond (1988) 512 for the view that the wings joined into a single phalanx. Green (1996) 37 suggests both wings reformed and began a pincer-movement.

[652] Van Wees (2004) 180.

[653] While Herodotus' account can be quite reasonably be described as "…a story of hoplite behaviour pushed to heroic extremes", there are also reasons to believe the fundamental details, as long as one does not go past these and posit a deliberate 'double envelopment'. Van Wees (2004) 180. Green (1996) 37; Santosuosso (1997) 35-6. Krentz (2010).

[654] Van Wees (2004) 180.

[655] Thucydides 5.10.

[656] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.3.18-20.

[657] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.20-3.

friendship, family, and love.[658] It may be too much to expect Argive and Corinthian hoplites to give up pursuit of an enemy to come to the aid of Athenians in battle, but the same surely cannot be said of a phalanx comprised of only Athenians and Plataeans, such a close ally that its population was offered Athenian citizenship after the city was razed by the Peloponnesians in 428.[659] Thus the decision to return to the aid of the centre may have been natural, rather than one 'forced' thanks to the tactical insight of the generals present, however the point raised above still stands: the two wings still needed to be organized and, to some extent perhaps 'reformed', before advancing upon the centre, indicating the ability of the generals present to influence battle in this final stage. A final point ends the discussion of Marathon: that this was a deliberate restraint of pursuit is further indicated by the subsequent lengthy pursuit of the Persian centre all the way to the shoreline; once the centre had been defeated there was no tactical concern which demanded pursuit be restrained, and the Athenians pursued and killed as many of the Persians as they could.[660]

The ability of generals to influence the pursuit phase of battle can also be seen at the battle of Plataea; after the death of the Persian commander Mardonius the Persian infantry fell back in disarray to their camp and were pursued with 'much slaughter.'[661]

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[658] Lazenby (1993) 248, 258.
[659] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.21-3. Thucydides 3.55, 63; Isocrates 12.94; Lysias *Against Pancleon*; Diodorus 14.46.6. However such solidarity does not seem to have come into play at the battle of Nemea, perhaps because that engagement involved an allied phalanx of many different states, not a 'single nation' phalanx. Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.16-23.
[660] Herodotus 6.113-5; Aristophanes *Wasps* 1081-85.
[661] Herodotus 9.63.

τῇ δὲ ἐτύγχανε αὐτὸς ἐὼν Μαρδόνιος, ἀπ᾽ ἵππου τε μαχόμενος λευκοῦ ἔχων τε περὶ ἑωυτὸν λογάδας Περσέων τοὺς ἀρίστους χιλίους, ταύτῃ δὲ καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς ἐναντίους ἐπίεσαν. ὅσον μὲν νυν χρόνον Μαρδόνιος περιῆν, οἳ δὲ ἀντεῖχον καὶ ἀμυνόμενοι κατέβαλλον πολλοὺς τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων· ὡς δὲ Μαρδόνιος ἀπέθανε καὶ τὸ περὶ ἐκεῖνον τεταγμένον ἐὸν ἰσχυρότατον ἔπεσε, οὕτω δὴ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἐτράποντο καὶ εἶξαν τοῖσι Λακεδαιμονίοισι.

Mardonius rode into battle on his white horse, surrounded by his elite battalion of a thousand first-rate soldiers, and wherever he put in a personal appearance the Persians made things particularly difficult for their opponents. As long as Mardonius was alive, the Persians held their ground and fought back, inflicting heavy casualties on the Lacedaemonians. But after he had been killed and the men of his battalion, the most effective troops on the Persian side, had been cut down, all the others turned and fled before the Lacedaemonians..[662]

This slaughter continued when the camp barricade came down, and does not seem to have ended until the Persians were utterly destroyed as a fighting force.[663] Specific roles for any Greek generals during this pursuit are difficult to determine, however there is no indication that any of those phalanxes directly involved in the initial fighting lost their coherence or began an unwise pursuit, thus it can fairly be stated that they remained under the control of their generals. This is strengthened by the degree of co-operation implied by the breach of the Persian palisade wall; Herodotus reports the Spartans had been unable to break through the wall and were being hard pressed by the Persian defenders until the Athenian contingent arrived and created a breach, with the Tegean contingent being the first enter the camp.[664] The episode is suspicious as there is no indication that Athenian forces were

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[662] Herodotus 9.63 (trans Waterfield.)
[663] Herodotus 9.64-5.
[664] Herodotus 9.70.

experienced in siege techniques at this time,[665] although such an implication would

undoubtedly have gone down well with Herodotus' contemporary audience, while

the fact that the Tegeans were the first through the breach (and also the first to begin

the advance against the Persian infantry) would seem to indicate that they created it

in the first place.[666] However, the story is believable, indeed Herodotus must have

expected his audience to believe that such a degree of co-operation was possible, co-

operation that could only have been effective with a degree of communication

between the Athenian, Tegean, and Spartan contingents, who also, therefore,

remained under effective command.[667] The breach of the palisade led to the massacre

and final defeat of the Persian force, with Herodotus emphasising the Persian lack of

order and other soldiery virtues, a situation presumably matched by the Greek

forces' retention of such qualities; while Herodotus' figure of 257,000 killed is

fantastically large, a great slaughter surely followed.[668]

The successful, and extended, pursuit by the Greek forces at Plataea

demonstrates the ability of generals to maintain control over their forces during this

final phase of battle, and is all the more impressive considering the eleven day build

up to the final engagement and the 'desertion' of so many contingents at the last

minute. However Herodotus also records an incident where the opposite seems to

have happened, i.e. generals being *unable* to control their troops, this being the

massacre by Theban cavalry of 600 Megarian, Phleiasian, and other Greeks who

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[665] How & Wells (1912) 316.
[666] Herodotus 9.62. Lazenby (1985) 244.
[667] Herodotus 9.70.
[668] Lazenby (1985) 244-5.

rushed forward in a mob after spotting the retreat of the Persian infantry.[669] Herodotus points out that they had not played a part in the earlier fighting[670] and so were presumably at 'full strength' before embarking on their precipitate pursuit, which leaves three explanations as to why they did so: 1) the generals were unaware of the danger posed by the Theban cavalry and so ordered the pursuit to be undertaken, 2) the generals were aware of the danger and did not order the pursuit, but were unable to prevent the hoplites from beginning it, 3) the generals were aware of the danger but became caught up in the moment and began the pursuit anyway. The second and third possibilities are more likely as Herodotus emphasises the lack of cohesion and discipline these hoplites demonstrated in their haste to join the pursuit, two attributes in direct opposition to those displayed by the Spartan, Athenian, and Tegean contingents. The generals of the various contingents present at Plataea played direct and important roles in the pursuit of the retreating Persian forces, and their ability, or inability, to make appropriate tactical decisions, as well as to control their men, was the difference between life and death for their contingents.

The ability, and desire, of generals to restrain pursuit in unfavourable tactical circumstances was not isolated to the large battles of the Persian Wars, indeed it can be detected in several battles of the Peloponnesian and Corinthian Wars, most notably in the various battles involving the Athenian generals Demosthenes and Thrasybulus. In 426 Demosthenes, in command of a small allied hoplite force,

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[669] Herodotus 9.69.
[670] Burn (1962) 537 for the suggestion that these Greeks were marching to aid the Athenians, Woodhouse (1898) 50-1 for the conjecture that the Greeks set off upon receipt of a message from Pausanias.

defeated a larger Peloponnesian army at the battle of Olpae by anticipating the flanking manoeuvre of their right wing, and placing 400 hoplites and light infantry in ambush for it.[671] This ambush resulted in the defeat of the Peloponnesian right, and the spread of a contagious panic which resulted in all but the Ambraciot contingent of the Peloponnesian force turning to flight. The Ambraciots had met with initial success, and pursued those immediately opposite them right the way back to Argos. The Ambraciot contingent would have been more effective had it restrained its pursuit and covered the retreat of the rest of the army, or moved to engage another section of Demosthenes' army, however the extent of the Ambraciot pursuit suggests that their general may have been unable to control his troops, or preferred to chase down fleeing enemies rather than engage an intact phalanx.[672] Either way, when the Ambraciots did return to the battlefield they found it held by Demosthenes, were engaged and defeated by his Acarnanian troops, and turned from pursuer into pursued. Thucydides stresses the lack of discipline shown by the Ambraciots during their retreat: many were killed in headlong flight. The desperate flight of the Ambraciots is immediately contrasted with the seemingly calm and disciplined retreat of the Mantinean contingent, who maintained their formation and, presumably, were able to withdraw in safety.[673]

Demosthenes' army does not appear to have attempted to pursue the main body of Peloponnesian troops, choosing to occupy the battlefield instead, a wise decision given the initial success of the Ambraciot contingent. This success may

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[671] Thucydides 3.106-7.
[672] Thucydides 3.108. Hornblower (1991) 532 refers to this as an 'over-pursuit' – a useful phrase. However he also refers to this section of Thucydides as containing many events "…contrary to the spirit of hoplite warfare." This 'spirit' is an entirely modern invention, See Chapters 1 and 6.
[673] Thucydides 3.108.

have been communicated to Demosthenes, or those commanding the Acarnanian hoplites, resulting in the centre and left wing restraining their pursuit and awaiting the return of the Ambraciots; given the level of intelligence and local geographical knowledge that Demosthenes seems to demonstrate here, it is reasonable to posit that an effective messaging system was in place. However this restraint of pursuit was achieved, it resulted in Demosthenes' army occupying the battlefield and inflicting heavy casualties on the Ambraciots as they fled to Olpae.

So generals were able to plan ahead for the retreat/pursuit phase of battle, however such forward planning was not always necessary, and generals were also able to influence this phase by reacting to changing tactical circumstances. The battle of Cyzicus, discussed in Chapter 2, is a good example of this, as is the battle of Munychia, where Thrasybulus, one of the three Athenians generals present at Cyzicus, commanded the 'rebel' forces.[674] Xenophon's description of the fighting is brief, although we are told the rebel forces pursued the forces of the Thirty as far as level ground and that the enemy general Critias was killed. In this case it was Thrasybulus' concern for the maintenance of geographical advantage in the face of a numerically superior enemy rather than the threat of an intact enemy force that placed a limitation on the extent of pursuit: Diodorus was explicit in explaining that the rebel survivors of the battle would not pursue further due to their relative lack of numbers, and in this he is probably correct.[675] The forces of the Thirty were unable to maximise their numerical advantage due to the difficulty of the terrain and the

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[674] Xenophon *Hellenica* 1.1.12.
[675] Diodorus 14.33.2-3.

presence of a road, as such they had arrayed some fifty ranks deep.[676] This compared to the ten ranks of the rebels, a disparity that could have had dangerous consequences if the rebels' force-multiplier of favourable terrain had been abandoned. If the rebels had continued their pursuit then they would have risked the possibility of being re-engaged on level terrain by a force whose frontage could have been extended to overlap on both flanks – the pursuit by Thrasybulus' men up to, but not beyond, level ground was a sound tactical decision based upon the immediate terrain and the composition of the opposing armies.

The most striking example of the ability of the general to influence the final phase of battle, and the advantages of the restraint of pursuit, as opposed to a headlong pursuit, is the battle of Nemea. Here the Spartan contingent was able to defeat the six Athenian tribal contingents opposite them, and wheel round to come to the aid of their beleaguered allies.[677] By contrast the four other Athenian tribal contingents had pursued their enemies so far that the Spartans did not even come into contact with them, gifting the Spartans free rein to attack and kill large numbers of Argive and Corinthian hoplites.[678] This restraint of pursuit was a response to the immediate tactical environment: by leaving defeated enemies to flee they were able to concentrate on those enemy elements that were still intact. Indeed, the initial Spartan restraint of pursuit enabled them to 'roll' up the allied line, striking enemy hoplites on their shield-less side and probably causing more casualties than if they had pursued the hoplites they had initially defeated. By doing this the Spartan phalanx was also able to maintain a high level of discipline and cohesion, as

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[676] Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.4.11-12.
[677] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.18-23.
[678] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.20-3.

demonstrated by their defeat of those enemy formations which were initially successful, began a pursuit, and returned to the battlefield later. Thus returning Argive, Corinthian, and Theban formations were systematically attacked and defeated, resulting in a comprehensive Spartan victory.[679] It is difficult to ascribe the ability of the Spartans to go to the aid of their allies, and then engage three more enemy formations, to anything other than effective battlefield command and control combined with developed tactical awareness, two qualities that the Argive, Corinthian, and Theban phalanxes appear to have lacked.

Spartan tactical concerns in pursuit

Thucydides' account of the battle of Mantinea in 418 is of great use for determining the ability of generals to influence the final phase of battle and of the apparent Spartan preference for restraint in pursuit. In his description of the battle Thucydides remarks that there was little in the way of pursuit once the Argives and their allies turned to flight, and notes that:

οἱ γὰρ Λακεδαιμόνιοι μέχρι μὲν τοῦ τρέψαι χρονίους τὰς μάχας καὶ βεβαίους τῷ μένειν ποιοῦνται, τρέψαντες δὲ βραχείας καὶ οὐκ ἐπὶ πολὺ τὰς διώξεις.

"The Spartans fight their battles long and resolute to the turning point, but once they have turned the enemy they do not pursue for any great time or distance."[680]

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[679] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.2.22-3.
[680] Thucydides 5.73 (trans Hammond).

Plutarch recorded a similar sentiment: apparently Lycurgus stated that Spartans should only pursue until victory was assured as any further pursuit gave the impression that nothing was to be gained from flight.[681] Xenophon also had an opinion: he reported that Agesilaus was greatly upset at the scale of the carnage at Nemea, and in an idealised demonstration of his subject's concern for Greek lives and pan-Hellenic unity he has Agesilaus proclaim that the number of Greeks who fell in one day were enough to defeat all the Barbarians had they lived.[682] However Spartan practice does not match the image presented by these sources: the victorious Spartans in the battle for the walls of Corinth in 392B.C. felt the sight of a crowd of panicking, scared, and utterly defeated hoplites to be a gift sent from heaven, and set about slaughtering them.[683] A similar sentiment can be found in the account of the 'Tearless battle' in 368B.C.: such was the ferocity of the Spartan advance that the majority of the opposing Argive phalanx fled before contact was made, while those who stood their ground were quickly killed and a pursuit of the fleeing army undertaken. Xenophon reports that vast numbers of the Argives were killed, a situation viewed with great pleasure at Sparta.[684]

The response of a Spartan general to a fleeing enemy was based on the immediate tactical circumstances: if there were intact enemy contingents still fighting then the standard response seems to have been to restrain pursuit and engage

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[681] Plutarch *Moralia* 228F; Polyaenus 1.16.3. A similar sentiment is expressed by Diodotus in the Mytilene debate: if Athens punishes cities who have surrendered by slaughtering their citizens, then what incentive would cities have to surrender in the first place? Thucydides 3.46.

[682] Xenophon *Agesilaus* 7.5. Schwartz accepts the evidence for lengthy pursuit but also suggests that Spartan practice was indeed to offer only limited pursuit, even stating that it may have been official policy. Schwartz (2009) 214-5.

[683] Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.4.12. Also Thucydides 5.10 for the lengthy pursuit of the Athenians after the battle of Amphipolis.

[684] Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.1.31-2; Diodorus 15.72.

these threats, however if there was no need for restraint then Spartan generals were able to order a sustained pursuit of the enemy. Spartan forces were also able to retreat in good order when defeated in hoplite engagements, chase off attacking light infantry, and form 'flying companies' to help cover a withdrawal, all indications of the ability of their generals to influence the retreat, as well as the pursuit.[685]

Extended pursuit

Those occasions when phalanxes engaged in extended pursuit of a defeated enemy are as useful in determining the battlefield role of the general as times when this pursuit was restrained or abandoned; they will help to indicate whether pursuit was a 'natural' response to victory, a deliberate and desirable action given the specific tactical circumstances, or that pursuit was undesirable but the phalanx could not be prevented from undertaking it. An analysis of these occasions will further highlight the battlefield role of the general by showing the limits of what was possible: if many battles ended in a tactically unwise pursuit then either many generals could not exercise sufficient influence to prevent this, or lacked the tactical nuance to realise that such pursuit should not be undertaken.

One of the most striking examples of battlefield command during a pursuit is that of the stoning to death of a number of Corinthian hoplites after the battle of

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[685] Xenophon *Hellenica* 6.4.13-14, 7.5.18-25, 4.4.16; Thucydides 4.126-7.

Megara in 457.[686] Thucydides' description of the engagement is detailed, interesting, and surprisingly moving; it tells us a great deal the role of the general and the nature of Greek warfare, and has not been given nearly enough attention by modern authors.[687] The passage is also of interest as a result of its position in Thucydides' work, and the amount of space he devoted to it: Kitto comments that ". . .this section of the *History* is written with such concentration that the events of nearly fifty years are packed into what becomes only sixteen pages of the Teubner text...yet Thucydides could spare half a page for this one afternoon's horrible work."[688] As such we must treat the passage with the respect it deserves, and see what it tells us about the battlefield role of the general:

οἱ δὲ νικώμενοι ὑπεχώρουν, καί τι αὐτῶν μέρος οὐκ ὀλίγον προσβιασθὲν καὶ διαμαρτὸν τῆς ὁδοῦ ἐσέπεσεν ἐς του χωρίον ἰδιώτου, ᾧ ἔτυχεν ὄρυγμα μέγα περιεῖργον καὶ οὐκ ἦν ἔξοδος. οἱ δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι γνόντες κατὰ πρόσωπόν τε εἶργον τοῖς ὁπλίταις καὶ περιστήσαντες κύκλῳ τοὺς ψιλοὺς κατέλευσαν πάντας τοὺς ἐσελθόντας.

As the Corinthians were retreating after this defeat, quite a large section of them, hard pressed and missing the way back, found themselves in a private estate which was surrounded by a deep ditch with no other exit. Seeing this, the Athenians blocked the entrance with their hoplites, positioned light infantry round the perimeter, and stoned to death all those inside."[689]

The incident is an important example of command and control being exercised during the retreat/pursuit phase of hoplite battle, and highlights the level of sophistication that amateur forces could operate with. The effective deployment of light infantry was difficult for Classical Greek generals to achieve, yet here we see it

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[686] Thucydides 1.106.

[687] Schwartz (2009) 264-5 includes some detail of it in his battle appendix but offers no comment.

[688] Kitto (1966) 271; Hornblower (1991) 166.

[689] Thucydides 1.106 (trans Hammond, modified.)

used in combination with a pursuing hoplite force to exploit advantageous terrain while in unfamiliar territory, the very model of an effective engagement as recommended by Aeneas Tacticus![690] This level of sophistication is all the more surprising when it is remembered that a large percentage of Athenian manpower was, at this time, serving abroad in Aegina and Egypt, and the force that was sent to Megara was made up of the remaining men of serviceable age, i.e. the youngest and oldest.[691] That an Athenian army made up of 'second-choice' hoplites, and an unreported number of light infantry of unknown quality, was able to undertake a coordinated action in which the hoplites performed a 'checking' role and the light infantry did the damage, suggests generals and subordinate commanders could influence the final phase of battle. Indeed the engagement indicates that Myronides, the Athenian general, was able to direct his forces during their pursuit of the Corinthians, while the haste of the Corinthians suggests that their general was no longer able to control his force, or had been killed.[692] A degree of caution may be needed when looking at the incident generally as the Corinthian forces were so clealy beaten they may no longer have posed a threat to the Athenians, thus allowing the Athenians to make decisions or engage in operations which were normally not options when faced with more coherent opposition. However when we remember Myronides' force was *not* made up of the best hoplites the Athenians had, quite the opposite in fact, we can see that Thucydides' description remains of use.

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[690] Aeneas Tacticus 16-18. Discussed in Chapter 4.

[691] Thucydides 1.105.

[692] The engagement began with the Athenians sallying out of Megara and destroying a Corinthian force which was erecting a trophy – it is reasonable to assume that the Corinthian general would have been involved in this. Thucydides 1.104.

The ability of the general to influence the retreat/pursuit phase of battle, as well as the importance of maintaining cohesion and discipline during the retreat, was dramatically demonstrated in two battles involving the Athenian general Demosthenes in 426. In an engagement in Aetolia Demosthenes' phalanx was broken by Aetolian light infantry and, with its Messenian guide having been killed, fled in disorder; the situation was similar to that of the battle of Megara discussed above, with some Athenians running into inescapable ravines, and others into a forest which was blocked off and set alight.[693] Thucydides' comment regarding the death of the Messenian guide is interesting, perhaps serving as an attempt to save Demosthenes from taking the full blame for the defeat. Indeed Thucydides' readership would surely have appreciated the importance of knowledge of local terrain and the ability of generals to use this intelligence in battle: had the guide survived, then maybe the defeat would not have been so serious.[694] In the end some 120 Athenian hoplites were killed, and the ability of light infantry to engage hoplites effectively was ably demonstrated, a lesson which Demosthenes learnt and later put into practice himself.[695]

Thucydides records another engagement involving Demosthenes in 426, one which shows what a good general could achieve in the final phase of hoplite battle, although mostly by the use of scouting and advance planning.[696] At the battle of Idomene Demosthenes planned in advance how to maximise the casualties that could be inflicted on his retreating enemy. He placed Amphilochian troops, familiar with

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[693] Thucydides 3.97-8. Hornblower (1991) 512-4; Lazenby (2004) 61-2.
[694] Thucydides 3.97.
[695] Some 40% of the hoplites present. See below for Demosthenes' use of skirmishing tactics.
[696] Thucydides 3.97-99; Roisman (1993) 12-13.

the immediate territory, in ambush along the natural lines of retreat from the battlefield before attacking the Ambraciot army at day break.[697] His achievement of surprise was total: some Ambraciots were killed on the field while others who fled to the mountains were cut down by the Amphilochians, who had the additional advantage of being lightly armed:

προκατειλημμένων δὲ τῶν ὁδῶν, καὶ ἅμα τῶν μὲν Ἀμφιλόχων ἐμπείρων ὄντων τῆς ἑαυτῶν γῆς καὶ ψιλῶν πρὸς ὁπλίτας, τῶν δὲ ἀπείρων καὶ ἀνεπιστημόνων ὅπῃ τράπωνται, ἐσπίπτοντες ἔς τε χαράδρας καὶ τὰς προλελοχισμένας ἐνέδρας διεφθείροντο.

But the paths had been ambushed in advance, and moreover the Amphilocians were familiar with their own territory, in which they had the advantage of light-armed troops against hoplites, while the Ambraciots did not know which was to turn in unfamiliar country: so they blundered into ravines or the ambushes already laid for them, and were killed.[698]

The engagement is similar to Demosthenes' earlier defeat at the hands of Aetolian light infantry, and indicates that he had learnt from that experience and had taken advice from the Amphilochian light infantry regarding the immediate terrain and the advantages they held over hoplites. Either possibility points to an important role for the general during the retreat/pursuit phase of battle, although on this occasion it was more planning before battle rather than direct command during the retreat that was important.[699]

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[697] Thucydides 3.112.
[698] Thucydides 3.112 (trans Hammond.)
[699] Thucydides 3.113. Roisman (1993) 14-15.

The year 395 saw an allied Ainianian and Athamanian army defeat and pursue a Phocian army.[700] Few details survive, but Diodorus makes it clear that pursuit was undertaken until nightfall, i.e. it ended because the coming of night made it difficult to see and kill the fleeing enemy, as well as making the accurate transmission of orders using messengers or visual signals difficult.[701] While one cannot make too much of such a brief battle description, the fact that nightfall was the only reason the pursuit ended indicates that this pursuit was initially appropriate given the circumstances, and was deliberately restrained when it became too dangerous.[702] Whether this restraint was ordered by the general or occurred naturally cannot be determined, but it is reasonable to suggest that both could occur simultaneously; indeed a single *salpinx* note indicating 'recall' or 'gather', perhaps that used for reveille, could have been used. The incident also strongly suggests that there was no moral concern regarding the cutting down of defeated enemies; if the coming of night was the only reason the pursuit was ended, then this reinforces the notion that the only limiting factor regarding the killing of other Greeks was that of a desire to, sometimes, 'play it safe.'[703]

The nature of the final phase of battle is difficult to define and the only certain position is that there was no 'standard' response to defeat or victory: the unique circumstances of each battle dictated if, how, and for how long an enemy would be pursued. Not all accounts of battles record details of the retreat and pursuit, and there is no direct discussion by the contemporary sources of the role of generals

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[700] Diodorus 14.82.7-10; also Thucydides 4.44 for nightfall ending the pursuit after the battle of Abydos and *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 1, 6.
[701] Diodorus Siculus 14.82.9.
[702] The coming of night was also the only reason the Boeotians did not pursue the Athenians after the battle of Delium: Thucydides 4.96.
[703] See Appendix 1.

or hoplites during this phase, beyond Laches' belief that the study of *hoplomachia* would be of some use.[704] This is unfortunate, but expected: as discussed in chapter 1, the only way to effectively and reliably analyse or reconstruct Greek warfare is through interpreting a collage of anecdotes, vignettes, and the occasional brief description; we cannot avoid the relative dearth of evidence for the retreat/pursuit phase of battle, and so must work with what we have.

The overall image of this final phase is one of a highly dangerous and fluid situation for both phalanxes; the defeated phalanx risked annihilation if it fled in total disorder, while the victorious phalanx risked over-extension and counter-attack   . if a careless or overly enthusiastic pursuit was begun. While none of the surviving sources directly discusses the role, or potential, role of the general in this phase, the evidence suggests that command and control could be, and was, exercised up to a point. Those examples where phalanxes pursued recklessly or fled in disorder can be attributed not just to a collective loss of nerve, but a collective loss of command as well; we cannot say which came first, but the two are closely connected. A loss of nerve could render individuals and groups unable to respond to commands, while the loss of command, or even the perceived loss of command, could cause a loss of nerve – phalanx combat was confusing, and if there was no source of orders or authority, or no individual willing to 'step up' and fulfill that role, it could result in a final, and devastating, blow to cohesion and morale.

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[704] Plato *Laches* 181e-182a. See above.

Conclusions

The evidence discussed above indicates that some hoplite generals were able significantly to influence the course of the final phase of battles, a finding which accords with the previous argument emphasising the flexible nature of the phalanx and the importance of leadership, communication, and command and control. There was no 'standard' response to victory or defeat in battle: the immediate tactical circumstances and the ability of the general, or other individuals, to communicate his orders determined how, or if, the retreat/pursuit was undertaken. Sometimes armies pursued long and hard, chasing down their defeated enemies until nightfall, or intact enemy forces, or difficult terrain forced them to stop; other times armies pursued headlong and without regard to nearby danger or allies in distress; while still other times armies restrained their pursuit due to tactical concerns. Some phalanxes were able to maintain their cohesion and formation in defeat; others were able to maintain this cohesion in certain parts of their line; and still others simply disintegrated when it became clear that they had been defeated. This variety of responses indicates the varying abilities of different generals and subordinate commanders to react to, and exploit, the immediate tactical situation, in attack or defence, and the difficulty some phalanxes found themselves in if effective command and control could not be maintained. This is to be expected given the differences in skill and discipline that were to be found between opposing armies in the field, and the unique geographical and military circumstances which surrounded each battle recorded by our sources. If pursuit was limited then sometimes it was for a practical military reason, and sometimes because Greek commanders were unable to control their troops, but there is no evidence to suggest that it happened because commanders routinely could not

influence this phase of combat, or that the Greeks were concerned with limiting the human cost of hoplite battle.

Chapter Conclusions

There is a great deal of evidence regarding the battlefield role of the general, his ability to communicate with his phalax, and his ability to influence combat; this evidence suggests his role was not limited to offering an inspirational example by fighting in the front ranks, and that in principle he was able to influence all phases of battle. However it is likely that his influence changed as the battle progressed, becoming weaker during the fighting itself and only returning to its full strength once the retreat/pursuit phase of battle began, because most generals would have been directly involved in the fighting at some point. The ability of generals to influence battle can be split into three main sections: before battle, during battle, and after battle.

Before battle we sometimes see generals being able to set up ambushes in order to counter enemy manoeuvres, place troops behind enemy positions in order to cause more casualties during the pursuit, give long and inspiring speeches before battle, give short speeches before battle in order to catch the enemy off guard, emphasise the importance of terrain to their troops, and make use of intelligence in order to attack the enemy when they are unprepared or defenceless. The focus is on the exploitation of natural advantages and the engineering of other advantages, and

the source material suggests that the last thing he should do is to accept a challenge to battle where his forces would be on equal terms with the enemy.

The battle proper began with the advance to combat, where we see the influence of the general begin to wane slightly. Examples of large phalanxes manoeuvring during this phase of battle are rare, although it appears that Spartan phalanxes could make significant tactical manoeuvres during the advance, and other Greeks *were* capable of exploiting changing tactical circumstances during the advance.

During the actual fighting the influence of the general could be exercised on a local level, i.e. within the immediate visual and aural range of other hoplites, and on a tactical level should circumstances demand or allow it; messengers could be sent, orders passed down the line, or pushes called for. His contribution to the fighting, and his ability to command others, was not reduced to that of an inspirational example, although the ability to lead by example where necessary and to offer continued exhortation during the fighting would have been a significant advantage. The main influence that the general was able to exert here was that of calling for pushes or retreats in the face of changing local circumstances. However there are examples which indicate the ability of generals to exercise influence and control on a larger scale: Pagondas was able to order a cavalry attack in the middle of the battle of Delium, Pelopidas directed the Sacred Band against specific parts of a Spartan army, and Spartan armies regularly wheeled to attack other parts of an enemy line that were still engaged, rather than pursue fleeing hoplites. A significant

piece of evidence regarding the ability, and expectation, of a general to influence battle can be found in the death of Epaminondas at the second battle of Mantinea. This resulted in such confusion that the Theban-led army ground to a halt, and any chance of securing a significant victory was lost. The use of the word 'confusion' rather than a more emotive word is deliberate: Epaminondas' army may have lost its momentum not because it was so shocked at the death of its leader that it was unable to continue, but because the ultimate source of command and control had suddenly been wiped out, hence confusion reigned. It is, of course, possible that a combination of the two was responsible for the inability of the Boeotian army to secure victory, indeed this is likely – what is no longer acceptable is only looking to the impact on *morale* that the death of Epaminondas caused.

During the final phase of hoplite battle, the retreat/pursuit, the role and influence of the general comes back into focus, reduced to the question "should we pursue or not?" The 'default' position of hoplite armies was one of significant and fierce pursuit, and several examples attest to the desire, and ability, of victorious hoplites to pursue defeated and broken enemies some distance if the tactical circumstances allowed it. Those examples where pursuit did not occur are at least as important, indicating that a deliberate and calculated decision had been taken by the general, and communicated to the rest of the phalanx; this deliberate restraint could occur because of the presence of other enemy forces, a nearby enemy city, or because other friendly elements were still fighting and required assistance. Spartan forces appear to have been well trained in this regard, and regularly returned to the main fighting instead of pursuing fleeing enemies, although they were also capable of engaging in the slaughter of a defeated army if there was no tactical reason to

return to the battlefield. The overall concern appears to have been one of tactical expediency: the general restrained his troops from pursuing if to do so could invite further attack, and crafted a pursuit to cause maximum casualties.

While a progression from advance to retreat can be detected in the structure of most battles, the nature of this progression depended on changing tactical circumstances. Some battles involved a large amount of manoeuvring before and during the advance, others involved a simple advance which was followed by a lengthy and intense period of fighting with no pursuit, while others saw little fighting at all, with one phalanx losing its nerve and running before the two sides made contact. The lack of similarity from one battle to the next is accounted for by a number of factors, including geographical factors, phalanx composition, the presence of supporting forces such as light infantry or cavalry, and the motivation of those forces present. However the most important factor was the ability of generals to influence the course of battle.

Generals were capable of exercising command and control throughout these battles, sometimes with a view in mind to maximising enemy casualties, other times to exert control over territory or save beleaguered allied units. Not all battles required complex tactics, and not all generals were capable of advanced tactical thinking, but this does not reduce the art of generalship in the Classical Greek world to setting an example as a warrior. Indeed remarks comparing the development of generalship from the brutal and simple onslaught of an Achilles to the intelligent and innovative plans of an Odysseus miss the point. This contrast was as possible in the world of Homer as it was in the Classical world; it did not represent an 'advance' in

generalship, and from Homer's time to modern times, the emphasis has been on a balance between the two, not a progression from one to the other. This balance can be seen throughout Greek history, when warfare was a balancing act between brutality and intelligence, between rage and restraint, and between selfishness and communal good; it was not simple, it was not undirected, and it was certainly not limited to a single, honourable clash between equal phalanxes on a level plain.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to present a new approach to the study of hoplite battle, one that is centred on the role and influence of the general and subordinate commanders. The vision of battle thus created is brutal, at times utterly chaotic, and seemingly unrestricted in nature, and at other times clinical, malicious, and chilling to a modern civilian mind-set quite divorced from the physical violence and blood of battle. The experiences of the Athenian army that was defeated at the battle of Delium in 424 epitomises this vision: first interrupted by an unexpected enemy advance, the Athenian phalanx found success on its left flank, routing most of its opposition and massacring those who stood, met with resistance on its right flank, and was finally broken by the appearance of enemy cavalry. The 'fog of war' present at Delium was such that this cavalry was mistaken as an advance scouting force of another Boeotian army, while the victorious Athenian left flank became so disorientated that it began to engage itself. No quarter was expected, none was given, and hundreds were killed in the fighting and pursuit, which only ended with the coming of night.

I began this research with the intention of examining the evidence for generals and generalship in the battles of the Classical Greeks. I was unconvinced by assertions that generals were little more than foci for the morale of hoplite armies, and that the only way they could really influence battle was by providing a brave and conspicuous example. Attached to this was a deep degree of scepticism regarding the notion that Classical Greeks operated under a 'system' of warfare that somehow deliberately limited tactics and, consequently, casualties. The two positions must be

taken together if they are to make sense, thus some of the most influential scholars of the past fifty years have created and developed an interpretation of warfare which placed limits on the ability of generals to influence battle and emphasised the simple nature of warfare, which itself resulted in a minimum of casualties occurring. The above chapters have collected and analysed the evidence for this image of Classical Greek warfare, and have concluded that it must be rejected.

Initially I analysed and discussed the source material in a chronological way, looking for changing trends in the battlefield role of the general from Herodotus to Aeneas Tacticus, a search which has revealed that there was very little development of generalship as a formal topic of study and investigation during this time. Indeed, while gifted, driven, and occasionally eccentric generals appear in the pages of the historians using 'radical' tactics or methods of engagement, as do radical technologies such as flame throwers and siege mounds, they briefly make their mark and then disappear. Sometimes, years later, the theories, practices, and successes of these generals were replicated by another individual, but there was no linear progression or development of generalship in the Classical period: the underlying theories of battle and warfare that governed the Athenian response to the first Persian invasion and Pausanias' command of the allied army that resisted the second were functionally identical to those which Epaminondas followed in his defeat of Sparta at the second battle of Mantinea. Individually gifted generals either took their style of command to the grave, or the secrets of their success were too complicated and different for their contemporaries to grasp: *generals* developed, but *generalship* as a genre and technical skill did not.

A degree of command and control was detected throughout most of the engagements described by Herodotus: hoplite forces frequently attacked at such a time, and in such a manner, as to gain the maximum advantage from the tactical circumstances. The battles described by Thucydides echo these qualities, although he gives greater detail and approaches the engagements with a more technical eye, something we would expect given his experience and his reasons for writing. Thucydides offers stark examples of the dangers associated with underestimating light infantry, comments on the chaotic reality of fighting in the front ranks of a phalanx, and also gives a great deal of information regarding the ability of generals, and subordinate commanders, to influence engagements. There is no indication that a theory of warfare and command had developed, or was developing, and there is certainly no indication that warfare had become 'more brutal' since the events described by Herodotus. There is no noticeable difference in the level of battlefield command present in Xenophon's battle descriptions than in Thucydides or Herodotus, though he describes some of the largest hoplite battles the Greek world ever saw, as well as a number of small and intense skirmishes. Aeneas Tacticus' conception of warfare conforms to that of his historical predecessors and contemporaries: he does not present any of his advice as being new or revolutionary, indeed much of it has direct parallels with earlier events.

The use of intelligent generalship, subordinate commanders, light infantry, and flexible heavy infantry, as well as a desire for victory regardless of the method, are all attributes that are present in Greek warfare throughout the Classical period;

indeed, they define it.[705] These attributes account for the fact that no two battles from Classical Greece were truly alike; while a progression from advance to retreat can be detected in the structure of most battles, the nature of this progression depended on changing tactical circumstances. Some battles involved a large amount of manoeuvring before and during the advance, others involved a simple advance which was followed by a lengthy and intense period of fighting with no pursuit, while others saw little fighting at all, with one phalanx losing its nerve and running before the two sides made contact. The differences between battles are accounted for by a number of factors, including geographical factors, phalanx composition, the presence of supporting forces such as light infantry or cavalry, and the motivation of those forces present. However the most important factor was the ability, discussed throughout this thesis, of individuals to influence the course of battle. On many occasions this individual was the general, who could have used scouting parties to gather information, set ambushes to tie up a wing of the enemy during battle, placed troops behind the enemy to maximise casualties, led a small strike force himself, determined when to attack and whether to pursue, and even stepped back from the fighting to allow fresh orders to be sent to other parts of the line. Equally this individual may have been a designated subordinate officer or an observant or experienced hoplite who shouted out advice, recognised and exploited a weakness in the enemy line, or organised the defence of an injured comrade. In a relatively loose phalanx formation all of these actions would have been occurring up and down the line simultaneously, with the ebb and flow of battle changing constantly according to the overall tactical situation. Hoplite battle was not about massive defensive formations or shows of social solidarity in the face of danger; it was about

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[705] *Contra* Carmen (1999) 40-2; Hanson (2000b) 201-232. Rawlings (2000) 233-250 for discussion of the individual flexibility of hoplites.

teamwork, communication, leadership, and the ability of individuals from the supreme commander down to the youngest hoplite, to 'step up' when the situation demanded it.

Two levels of command and control have been identified in the surviving accounts of hoplite engagements. These are: 1) generals; 2) designated subordinate commanders, veterans, and notable individuals. These levels of command are found in all the phases of battle, although their importance and prominence change from one phase to the next. The presence of subordinate officers in Classical Greek armies suggests that the Greeks recognised the importance of command and control, and that they took steps to ensure it could be maintained thoughout an engagement. This may seem to reduce the overall role of the general but when we remember the difficulties of communication during engagements, and how the Greeks attempted to overcome them, we can begin to see the complete picture: subordinate commanders were present not only to maintain order and morale directly around them, but also to pass on orders and ensure those under their command responded to new orders issued from the general himself. Subordinate commanders help to complete the image of generalship and command in Classical Greek armies that this study has attempted to create; one of continued tactical influence (whether extremely local or army-wide) combined with the ability to innovate should the individual general have the chance or capacity to do so.

Hoplite generals were able to influence each and every stage of a hoplite battle: This is specifically demonstrated by a number of battlefield incidents

recorded by reliable sources, as well as being heavily implied by evidence which suggests that the phalanx formation was not a basic and tightly packed battering ram. Indeed, the phalanx could be a highly manoeuvrable formation, while individual hoplites were flexible and capable of individual action. This potential, indeed this desire, for battlefield flexibility is emphasised further when the position of light infantry in Greek warfare is considered. Light infantry was highly dangerous when handled correctly, but to do so required either a great deal of micro-management, a successful ambush, a supporting phalanx of hoplites to 'check' the response of the targeted phalanx, or a combination of all of these. As such it is perhaps unsurprising that there are relatively few examples of the effective use of light infantry by Greek generals, although those that survive to us indicate that there was no doctrinal or moral bar on their use; the only battlefield restriction on the effective deployment of light infantry was the competence of the general in command. The evidence of the Fourth century tactician Aeneas Tacticus is important in this regard; his treatise on how to survive under siege involves a very broad conception of siege, one that extends to the mere presence of enemy forces on the extreme borders of a state's territory, and as such his advice has some application to pitched battles and warfare in general. This advice concentrates on the use of combined forces in co-ordinated attacks that strike the enemy when they are least prepared; in order to achieve this he emphasises the importance of effective, rapid communications, and an experienced scouting force. Aeneas assumes a great deal about the military forces and capabilities of a state and he does not present his work as being anything other than a practical guide for any other state to follow; his advice does not appear to be unrealistic or radically innovative, rather it represents an everyday approach to the forms of warfare that average states would experience. As such we must engage with his

surviving work if we are to form a complete understanding of warfare, and Greek attitudes to military organisation, command, and violence. For this is what Aeneas' text is: a guide to killing as many of the enemy as possible at the smallest risk to the state through the use of intelligent generalship coupled with overwhelming force; in this Aeneas echoes, in a greatly refined form, the work of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon.

The conclusions of this study have significant implications for the study of Classical Greek warfare, and help to complete a number of recent trends in modern scholarship, namely the rejection of idealised notions of Greek warfare as being somehow superior to later forms, the vigorous re-examination of ideas and concepts promoted by earlier generations of scholars, and the drive to expose the sophistication of thought and action which the Greeks brought to the history of warfare. The hoplite general now appears as more than just a first amongst equals, destined to fall in the front ranks of a phalanx over which he held only tenuous and fleeting control, and in order to demonstrate to his fellow citizens that he was worthy of his office. Indeed he is now helped by subordinate commanders, who were present to ensure the continued existence of command and control in hoplite armies. The general is now seen as playing a vital role in the battlefield effectiveness of his phalanx, a role which saw a remarkable array of tactics, ruse, and manoeuvre being used, from Herodotus through to Xenophon's day, and which was limited only by the extent of his own imagination.

Appendix 1: Casualties in Hoplite Battles

Josiah Ober detected a deliberate attempt to maintain a level of decency in the way the states of Greece made war; in his list of the 'rules of war' in Classical Greece he includes 'Pursuit of defeated and retreating enemies should be limited in duration.'[706] A similar sentiment can be found in the works of Hanson, who is of the opinion that the beauty of the Greek way of war was its deliberate focus on the limiting of conflict to a single brief encounter which allowed disputes to be settled decisively and with the minimum of bloodshed.[707] Krentz has calculated that casualties in the pitched battles recorded by our surviving sources were generally low; an average of 5% of the victorious force was lost, compared to 14% of the defeated force.[708] This relative lack of bloodshed has been lauded by some modern commentators as demonstrating the underlying humanity inherent in the pitched battles fought between hoplites in Classical Greece.[709] According to this viewpoint, the concern for the limitation of bloodshed also resulted in the deliberate exclusion of certain tactics and military forces from significant roles in warfare; lightly armed troops and cavalry were largely ignored in mainland Greece, while battles were brief and involved little or no pursuit of the enemy.[710]

This is not to say that battles were not fiercely contested affairs; Hanson has imagined the battlefield environment of the hoplite in vivid and disturbing detail,

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[706] Ober (1996) 56.

[707] Hanson (2000a) 36. See also Anderson (1970) 149; Lazenby (1991) 101; Wheeler (2007a) 212.

[708] Krentz (1985) 13-20.

[709] Most forcefully by Hanson (2000a) 36-7: "For more than three hundred years Greece thrived under such a structured system of conflict between amateurs, where the waste of defensive expenditure in lives and lost work and agricultural produce was kept within "limits."

[710] A factor closely connected to the exclusion of manoeuvrable and fast striking forces such as lightly armed troops: see Chapter 4.7.

while Goldsworthy pointed out that although 5% may appear to be a small figure, it still represents nearly half of the front rank of a 'standard' eight rank phalanx, with 14% accounting for a rank and a half.[711] Hanson views these casualties as acceptable: "The outcome of hoplite pitched battle left the property and culture of the defeated intact, robbed only of some 15% of their male citizens, many of whom were already past the prime of life."[712] This is a very difficult statement to accept; 15% of a city's available male citizens was no small loss, and it is rather disingenuous to suggest that this blow had no effect on the culture of a *polis*. Indeed, in the vast majority of cases city's would have responded to threats or undertaken their own offensive operations with the largest levy possible; in the event of defeat this would result in, on average, 15% of the total male citizen population being wiped out in a single encounter. This would have a drastic effect on culture, however it is defined, and would also have serious financial, political, and social implications. It is difficult to see how Hanson could conclude that most of these casualties were past their prime, indeed the evidence suggests that the exact opposite was the case, with most of these casualties being taken by the first two ranks, i.e. by be the strongest, fittest, and by extension youngest, members of the phalanx. This much is suggested by Arrian's advice that the first ranks of a phalanx should be comprised of the strongest and fittest men, surely also the younger members, while Xenophon suggested that the rear ranks should be made up of the most experienced, level-headed, and elder members.[713] These young men could become casualties by being struck by enemy spears or swords during the fighting phase of combat, but more likely they were killed when the nerve of their phalanx broke and they were faced with the choice of fighting on without support, attempting an organised withdrawal,

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[711] Goldsworthy (1997) 22-3.

[712] Hanson (2000a) 224.

[713] Arrian *Tactica* 12.2; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 3.3.41-2. Anderson (1970) 174-5; Hanson (2000a) 29.

or fleeing in panic. Thucydides' description of 120 hoplites killed in Aetolia in 426B.C. as "...men in the prime of their youth..." suggests that these men were certainly not past their best, and the note of pathos in the historian's account suggests that their loss was keenly felt in Athens.[714] Finally the Spartan system of responding to skirmishing attack involved certain age classes being instructed to begin a pursuit; when Iphicrates attacked a Spartan *mora* in 390B.C. his peltasts were pursued by the first ten, and then the first fifteen, year classes.[715] The younger age classes were preferred for this task because of the need for brief and intense bursts of speed; their youth gave them an obvious advantage over the older members of the phalanx. This system also suggests that these young hoplites were in a position to make an immediate response to skirmishing attack; I suggest that they made up the majority of the front ranks, although given the flexibility of the Spartan phalanx it is entirely possible that the age groups could be rapidly assembled from various parts of the phalanx. Even if this were the case, the battle of Lechaeum still speaks against Hanson's position: the first, and presumably the heaviest, casualties were taken by those hoplites who were ordered to chase down the peltasts, i.e. those aged 18-32, certainly not men past their prime.[716]

When viewed in this way the incredibly violent nature of hoplite battle becomes apparent, as does the difficulty of viewing its system as being one designed to limit the impact that warfare would have on the state. If the majority of deaths

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[714] Thucydides 3.98.
[715] Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 4.5.14-15. Also *Hellenica* 2.4.29-31, on which see below. Rawlings (2000) 239 states: "That this strategy met with mixed results does not invalidate the Spartan recognition of physiological reality."
[716] Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 4.5.16.

from recorded battles were amongst the young and strong front rank fighters, then

how is this system any different or more praiseworthy than any other?

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