

Thukydides I 90, 3: ἄρωσιν or αἴρωσιν? On temporal constructions expressing limit in the future*

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1. Editors¹ generally accept the amendment ἄρωσιν in the temporal construction appearing in Thukydides I 90, 3, ἀλλ' ἐπισχεῖν μέχρι τοσούτου ἕως ἂν τὸ τεῖχος ἱκανὸν ἄρωσιν, although the form of the codices is αἴρωσιν. The text in question is:

(1) Thukydides I 90, 3, οἱ δ' Ἀθηναῖοι Θεμιστοκλέους γνώμη τοὺς μὲν Λακεδαιμονίους ταῦτ' εἰπόντας ἀποκρινάμενοι ὅτι πέμψουσιν ὡς αὐτοὺς πρέσβεις περὶ ὧν λέγουσιν εὐθὺς ἀπήλλαξαν· ἑαυτὸν δ' ἐκέλευεν ἀποστέλλειν ὡς τάχιστα ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς ἐς τὴν Λακεδαίμονα, ἄλλους δὲ πρὸς ἑαυτῷ ἐλομένους πρέσβεις μὴ εὐθὺς ἐκπέμπειν, ἀλλ' ἐπισχεῖν μέχρι τοσούτου ἕως ἂν τὸ τεῖχος ἱκανὸν ἄρωσιν² ὥστε ἀπομάχεσθαι ἐκ τοῦ ἀναγκαιοτάτου ὕψους· τειχίζειν δὲ πάντας πανδημεὶ τοὺς ἐν τῇ πόλει ...

“The Athenians, on the advice of Themistocles, dismissed immediately the Lacedaemonians after they had thus spoken with the answer that ambassadors should be sent to them to discuss the question. Themistocles told the Athenians to send him off with all speed to Lacedaemon, but not to despatch other ambassadors as soon as they had selected them, but to wait until they had raised their wall

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¹ *Thucydides Historiae*, iterum recensuit Carolus Hude, Lipsiae 1913 (Teubner); *Thucydides Historiae*, recognovit brevisque adnotatione critica instruxit H. Stuart Jones, Oxonii 1942; Thucydide, *La guerre du Péloponnèse I*. Texte établi et traduit par J. de Romilly, Paris 1964 (Les Belles Lettres). Nevertheless, W. W. Goodwin, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb*, Bristol 1998 (reprint of the edition of 1889), p. 237, § 614.1, prefers the form of the codices. Later, in n. 19, we will analyze the arguments on which his proposal is based.

² The codices present αἴρωσιν.

to the height from which defence was possible. And that the whole population in the city should build the wall ...”.

1.1. Classen Steup³ points out that ἄρωσιν is Bekker's conjecture which is to be accepted necessarily, in opposition to the form presented by the manuscripts, the present of subjunctive αἴρωσιν, because the construction introduced by ἕως ἄν expresses the objective to be achieved, not as in 58, 2, with the imperfective present tense,⁴ where a durative action is expressed. In the same way Chanet⁵ points out that the editors usually correct the present αἴρωσιν with the aorist ἄρωσιν and interprets the text as “jusqu'au moment où le rempart reconstruit serait assez élevé”, with ἄρωσιν, to maintain the limitative use of ἕως.

1.2. The problem that we raise here is whether it is actually necessary to replace the form presented by the codices, αἴρωσιν, with the aorist ἄρωσιν, which is the usual editorial practice. The aorist form of a subordinate introduced by ἕως implies that the subordinate verbal action begins at the same time as that of the main sentence concludes and acts as its limit;⁶ alternatively, the present stem suggests that we are dealing with two simultaneous actions.⁷ Starting from these premises we encounter the paradox that, if we respect the form of the codices, αἴρωσιν, and ignore the pattern μέγρι τοσούτου, this same construction of ἕως ἄν +

³ *Thukydides I*. Erklärt von J. Classen, bearbeitet von J. Steup, Berlin 1919⁵ (rprnt. Weidmann 1977), p. 247: “ἄρωσιν (Bk.) st. des handschriftlichen αἴρωσιν notwendig nach ἕως ἄν, da das zu erreichende Ziel, nicht wie c. 58, 2 der dauernde Verlauf, auszudrücken war”. He points out below that the construction would be equivalent to ἕως ἄν τὸ τεῖχος ἐς τὸ πρὸς τὸ ἀπομάχεσθαι ἀναγκαιότατον ὕψος ἄρωσιν, in reference to the final moment of the construction of the wall.

⁴ Th. I 58, 2, τοῖς τ' ἐκλιπούσι τούτοις τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γῆς τῆς Μυγδονίας περὶ τὴν Βόλβην λίμνην ἔδωκε νέμεσθαι, ἕως ἄν ὁ πρὸς Ἀθηναίους πόλεμος ᾗ.

⁵ A. M. Chanet, “Eως et πρὶν en grec classique”, *REG* 92 (1979), 169, n. 9.

⁶ Cf. W.W. Goodwin, *op.cit.*, p. 234, § 611, γ p.235, § 613. 3; A. Monteil, *La phrase relative en grec ancien*, Paris 1963, p. 304-6

⁷ Cf. A.Monteil, *ibid.*, p. 303-4.

subjunctive of present is unproblematically understood as a temporal subordinate expressing an action which is simultaneous to the main one, with no changes of sense in this passage:

(2) *ἀλλ' <ἐκέλευεν> ἐπισχεῖν, ἕως ἄν τὸ τεῖχος ἰκανὸν αἴρωσιν ὥστε ἀπομάχεσθαι ...
 “but he told them to retain them while they raised their wall to the height from which defence was possible ...”.

This is the idea which the text actually expresses and which does not contradict the interpretations made by its translators: namely, that it would be necessary to retain the ambassadors for the duration of the construction of the walls and that this retention should conclude once the construction had reached a height appropriate for defensive purposes. But the appearance of this pattern μέχρι τούτου before ἕως ἄν would appear to transform the idea of simultaneity and to reinforce the limit idea, which prompts the editors to amend the text by replacing the present of subjunctive, αἴρωσιν, with that of aorist, ἄρωσιν.

2. It would thus seem necessary to review the texts where the locution μέχρι τούτου / τούτου, ἕως ἄν appears, since this is a complex temporal marker which is used in Greek to introduce constructions with both the subjunctive of present and the subjunctive of aorist alike.

2.1. As examples of the locution μέχρι τούτου / τούτου, ἕως ἄν + subjunctive of aorist we have:⁸

(3) Plato, *Phd.* 81e, καὶ μέχρι γε τούτου πλανῶνται, ἕως ἄν τῇ τοῦ συνεπακολουθοῦντος, τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς, ἐπιθυμία πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα.
 “And until that moment they walk wandering, until through the desire of the corporeal which clings to them they are again imprisoned in a body”.

⁸ Further evidence of this subordinate construction with subjunctive of aorist is to be found in Aristotle, *APo.* 96a 32; *de An.* 435a 3; *Met.* 349a 34.

(4) Demosthenes IX 10, Καὶ μὴν εἰ μέχρι τούτου περιμενοῦμεν, ἕως ἂν ἡμῖν ὁμολογήσῃ πολεμεῖν, πάντων ἐσμὲν εὐηθέστατοι.
 “If we are going to wait *until that moment*, *until* he admits a state of war with us, we are indeed the simplest of mortals”.

Texts (3) and (4) share the fact that they indicate two different verbal actions, in which the beginning of the verbal action of the subordinate sentence represents the end of that of the main sentence.

2.2. However, when the verbal form of the sentence introduced by ἕως ἂν is not a subjunctive of aorist, the temporal reference is not the same, as can be seen in

(5) Plato, *Thi.* 169a, ἀλλ' ἴθι, ὦ ἄριστε, ὀλίγον ἐπίσπου, μέχρι τούτου αὐτοῦ ἕως ἂν εἰδῶμεν εἴτε ἄρα σὲ δεῖ διαγραμμάτων περί μέτρον εἶναι, εἴτε πάντες ὁμοίως σοὶ ἱκανοὶ ἑαυτοῖς εἰς τε ἀστρονομίαν καὶ τὰλλα ὧν δὴ σὺ περί αἰτίαν ἔχεις διαφέρειν.⁹
 “but come, my good man, follow the discussion a little way, *just until* we can see (= *as long as* we know) whether, after all, you must be a measure in respect to diagrams, or whether all men are as sufficient unto themselves as you are in astronomy and the other sciences in which you are alleged to be superior”.

(6) Aristotle, *de An.* 416b 14, σώζει γὰρ τὴν οὐσίαν, καὶ μέχρι τούτου ἔστιν ἕως ἂν τρέφεται.
 “and <the food> maintains the being of what is fed, and that continues to be what it is *so long as* the process of nutrition continues”.

(7) Aristotle, *Pr.* 923a 35, ἢ ἅπαντα μὲν μέχρι τούτου ἀκμάζει, ἕως ἂν κατὰ τὸ σπέρμα ἀκμάζει;
 “or all things flourish *as long as* their seed are at their prime?”.

⁹ A form of the perfect from the morphological point of view appears in (5), but semantically speaking, it is equivalent to a present.

(8) Aristotle, *Ph.* 243b 2, ἡ δὲ ῥίψις, ὅταν σφοδρότεραν ποιήσῃ τὴν ἀφ' αὐτοῦ κίνησιν τῆς κατὰ φύσιν φορᾶς, καὶ μέχρι τοσοῦτου φέρεται ἕως ἂν κρατῇ ἡ κίνησις.

“throwing when the mover causes a motion away from itself more violent than the natural locomotion of the thing moved, and this continues its course *so long as* it is controlled by the motion imparted to it”.

The verbal action of the sentence introduced by ἕως ἂν in (5), the fact of knowing, corresponds to the final phase of a telic situation, so that the action expressed by the main sentence concludes at the same time as that of the subordinate, “follow ... until we can know...”. We have, therefore, two simultaneous actions ending at the same time, although that simultaneity is supplemented by a mark which indicates the end of both actions explicitly, μέχρι τούτου ... ἕως ἂν.... This accumulation of marks can be understood because the temporal reference is double, the simultaneity of the two processes and the end of each taking place at the same time. And the same thing can be said of (6), because the food can only fulfill its function while it feeds and it has only fulfilled this function once it ceases to feed; concerning (7), the fullness of the plants remains as long as they produce the seed, and their fullness concludes when they cease to produce it, and the same can be said of (8), because one can only speak of throwing an object when the latter has a speed which is greater than that which corresponds to its nature and only until that greater speed ceases to exist.

2.3. Therefore, in accordance with what we have said about (6), (7), and (8) it seems that we are dealing with a falsely limitative temporal type of sentence, if as a reference of these limitative temporal constructions we take those constructed with the aorist. That is to say, while a construction introduced by μέχρι τούτου / τοσοῦτου ἕως ἂν + subjunctive of aorist expresses the end of the action of the main sentence and the beginning of another action, that of the subordinate, when the temporal sentence is introduced by μέχρι τούτου / τοσοῦτου ἕως

ἄν + subjunctive of present,¹⁰ the actions expressed both by the main sentence and by the subordinate are simultaneous and superimposed, a fact suggested by the possibility of translating the conjunction ἕως as “while” in those same passages, without a change of the meaning to the text, if μέχρι τούτου / τοσούτου is dispensed with. Hence, we need to think of the sequence μέχρι τούτου / τοσούτου ἕως ἄν + subjunctive of present as involving the additional mark of an explicit end to the two verbal actions at the same time, as well as the simultaneity of the general process of those same actions, as opposed to the marker ἕως, without μέχρι τούτου / τοσούτου, which merely indicates simultaneity.

3. The fact that a construction with μέχρι can appear in connection with the expression of two simultaneous verbal actions may seem surprising; but a series of locutions with μέχρι + substantive can be found in the Ionic environment to indicate the explicit end of a situation which is given simultaneously to the verbal action of the sentence where this locution appears, a situation which concludes at the same time as the verbal action. This is the case in

(9) Herodotus, III 160, 2, καὶ τὴν Βαβυλωνά οἱ ἔδωκε ἀτελέα νέμεσθαι μέχρι τῆς ἐκείνου ζόης,
 “and let him govern Babylon *all his life* (*until* the end of his life = *during* all his life) with no tribute to pay”

The locution μέχρι τῆς ἐκείνου ζόης of (9) is the Ionic variant of the Attic construction ἕως ἄν ζῆ, “while he lives”.¹¹ The same construction is typical of Ionic phraseology, since it is also documented in inscriptions:

¹⁰ Cf. the previous note.

¹¹ Cf., f.ex., Aristophanes, *Eq.*, 395; Platón, *Phd.* 84b 2; *Lg.* 755a 3.

(10) *Syll.*³ 577, 34, Milet, 200/199 B.C.,¹² τίθεσθαι ἐν τῇ ὀρχήστρῃ τρίποδα καὶ θυμιάτρον, τοὺς δὲ ἱερεῖς τὸν τε τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ τοῦ Ἐναγωνίου τοῦ ἐν τῇ παλαίστρῃ τῶν παίδων καὶ τὸν τῶν Μουσῶν καὶ τὸν ἱεροκήρυκα καὶ τοὺς κεχειροτονημένους καὶ μέλλο[ν]τας ἄρχειν παιδονόμους καὶ μέχρι μὲν ζωῆς Εὐδήμου, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τῶν ἀπὸ Εὐδήμου τὸν πρεσβύτατον ἐπιθυμῆσαι λιβανωτὸν τῷ τε Ἑρμ[ῆ]ι καὶ ταῖς Μούσαις καὶ Ἀπόλλωνι Μουσηγέτῃ: “that they place in the orchestra a tripod and a censer, and the priests, that of Hermes Enagonius, this of the palaestra of the youths, and this of the Muses and the herald of the sacrifices and the education inspectors, the elected ones and those who will take the position, and Eudemus *until the end of his life* (= *during all his life, while he lives, ἕως ἂν ζῆ*), and, after this, of among Eudemus’ descendants, the older, that they offer incense to Hermes, the Muses and Apollo Musegetas”.

(11) *Famyzon*,¹³ 28, l. 6, Amyzon (Caria), s. III/II B.C., διδόναι δὲ ἕκαστον τοῖς [αἰρεθεῖσιν ἀνδρά] [σι ὑ]πὸ τοῦ δήμου· ὅσοι δὲ ἂν μὴ εἰσενέγκωσιν καθότι γέγραπται ἀποτεισάτωσαν πεν[τή]κοντα δραχμὰς καὶ μὴ [ἔστ]ω αὐτοῖς μετουσία μήτε τῶγ Χρυσσαορικῶν μήτε τῶν ἄλλων ἱερῶν μέχρι το[ῦ] βίου τοῦ ἑαυ[τῶν]. “that each one gives to the elected men for the demos. And who don’t pay as it has been written, that they pay fifty drachmas and they don’t participate in the feasts in honor of Apollo of golden sword neither in other feasts *until the end of their life* (= *during all their life, while they live, ἕως ἂν ζῆ*)”.

This expression also appears in Calymna, a Dorian-speaking island, and in Cos, where the influence of the Ionian is very important.¹⁴ It can be seen, for example, in

¹² W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum I-IV*, Leipzig 1915-1924³.

¹³ Jeanne & Louis Robert, *Fouilles d’Amyzon en Carie, I. Exploration, histoire, monnaies et inscriptions*, Paris 1983.

¹⁴ The use of the locution ἐς ὃ κα, “until”, can serve as an example, a locution which appears extensively with this value in Herodotus, although it can also be found, with the variant εἰς ὃ κε(v), in Homer and Hesiod.

(12) Calymna,¹⁵ 164a, l. 6, 14-54 B.C., ἐπὶ στεφαναφόρου Στρατονίκου, τοῖδε ἐκαρύχθησαν ἐλεύθεροι: Σωσίμη καὶ Γαῦρον καὶ Ἑρμιόνη ἢ λεγομένη Γραῦς ὑπὸ Ἀντάνορος καὶ Ἀρτεμισίας, παραμε[ί]ναντες αὐτοῖς *μέχρι ζωᾶς*.

"In the time of Stratonicus, the magistrate bearer of the crown, these were proclaimed free: Sosima, Gaurus and Hermione, the so-called Graus, by Antenor and Artemisia, remaining with them *until the end of their life* (= *during their lifetimes, while they were alive*, ἕως ἂν ζῶσιν)".¹⁶

3.1. Besides this evidence, there is also a series of locutions with *μέχρι* + noun of temporal reference (*μέχρι ... ἡμερῶν / μηνῶν / ἔτων*), which are also found in constructions in which the verb takes the present stem and, moreover, in which the verbal action takes place during the period to which the situation expressed by means of this locution with *μέχρι* refers. This is the case, for example, in

(13) Herodotus VI 12, 2, *Μέχρι* μὲν νυν ἡμερέων ἑπτὰ ἐπειθοντό τε καὶ ἐποίεον τὸ κελεύομενον,

"For seven days they obeyed him and did his bidding".

(14) Herodotus IX 41, *Μέχρι* μὲν νυν τῶν δέκα ἡμερέων οὐδὲν ἐπὶ πλέον ἐγίνετο τούτων.

"Until ten days had passed (= for a period of ten days), no more than this was done".¹⁷

(15) *Corpus Hippocraticum, Mul.*, 11, 7, ἦν δὲ ἀφασσῆση, κενεὸν γίνεταί τὸ πλήρωμα· ταύτη *μέχρι* μὲν δέκα μηνῶν τὸ οἴδημα κατ' ὀλίγον αὖξεται,

"and if one feels, the cavity is empty; therefore, the swell increases gradually up to (= during) ten months".

¹⁵ M. Segre, "Tituli Calymnii," *Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene* 22-23, N.S. 6-7 (1944-1945 [1952]), 1-248.

¹⁶ The same locution also appears in Calymna, in 154, 3; 156, 3; 157, 5; 161, 3; 163, 7 and 178, 4.

¹⁷ This locution also appears in the same author, in II 5, 1 and II 31.

(16) *Corpus Hippocraticum, Nat.Mul.*, 133, 9, πάσχουσι γὰρ τοιαῦτα οἷά περ αἱ κύουσαι μέχρι μηνῶν ἑπτὰ ἢ ὀκτώ·
 “since they suffer such things, as the pregnant ones, *until* (= *during*) seven or eight months”.

(17) *Corpus Hippocraticum, Nat.Mul.*, 133, 197, Ταύτη τῇ διαίτῃ μέχρι ἡμερῶν πέντε ἢ ἕξ χρεέσθω
 “<The patient> has to follow this diet *until* (= *during*) five or six days”.

(18) Thukydides, V 47, 6,¹⁸ τοῖς δὲ βοηθοῦσιν ἡ πόλις ἢ πέμπουσα παρεχέτω μέχρι μὲν τριάκοντα ἡμερῶν σίτον,
 “The relieving troops shall be maintained by the city sending them *for* (*until* = *during*) thirty days”.

(19) Xenophon, *HG* III 1, 17, ἐπεὶ δὲ θυομένῳ αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐγίγνετο τὰ ἱερά τῇ πρώτῃ, τῇ ὑστεραία πάλιν ἐθύετο. ὥς δὲ οὐδὲ ταῦτα ἐκαλλιερεῖτο, πάλιν τῇ τρίτῃ καὶ μέχρι τεττάρων ἡμερῶν ἐκαρτέρει θυόμενος, μάλα χαλεπῶς φέρων·
 “And when the sacrifices that he offered did not prove favourable on the first day, he sacrificed again on the following day. And when these sacrifices also did not prove favourable, he tried again on the third day; and *for* (*until* = *during*) four days he kept persistently on with his sacrificing, though greatly disturbed by the delay”.

(29) Xenophon, *HG* III 2, 12, Καὶ μέχρι τούτου τοῦ χρόνου ἐν εἰρήνῃ διήγον Τισσαφέρνης τε καὶ Δερκυλίδας καὶ οἱ ταύτῃ Ἕλληνες καὶ οἱ βάρβαροι.
 “And *up* (= *during*) this time Tissaphernes and Dercylidas, and the Greeks of this region and the barbarians, continued at peace with one another”.

3.2. The fact that, *a*), the pattern μέχρι τῆς ζόης appears only in Herodotus and in inscriptions of the Ionic environment, and in Calymna, an island of Dorian speech but with a strong Ionian influence, together with the pattern μέχρι + noun of temporal reference (type μέχρι ... ἡμερῶν / μηνῶν / ἔτων), both patterns

¹⁸ The decree exists in fragmentary form as an inscription, in *IG* I² 86. Cf. A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes and K. J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides IV*, Oxford 1970, p. 54 fl..

being dependent on verbs with the present stem; *b*), that they express a situation which is happening simultaneously to the verbal action of the sentence to which they belong, as well as the simultaneous end of both actions, and also *c*), that this second pattern is also attested in the Ionic environment, Herodotus, the *corpus Hippocraticum*, as well as in Thucydides and Xenophon, but not, for example, in Attic oratory, suggests that we are faced with an expression which was typical of Ionic phraseology and was introduced partially into Attic, although it did not become generalized there.

4. In the light of these remarks and to return to (1), we think that it is perfectly possible to read the manuscripts, αἴρῳσιν, with the subjunctive of present, at the same as it is necessary to reject the amendment ἄρῳσιν, with the subjunctive of aorist. In consequence, the text of Thucydides I 90, 3 we are defending is that which appears in the manuscripts:

(9) ἀλλ' ἐπισχεῖν μέχρι τοσούτου ἕως ἂν τὸ τεῖχος ἰκανὸν αἴρῳσιν ὥστε ἀπομάχεσθαι ἐκ τοῦ ἀναγκαιωτάτου ὕψους:
 “but rather to retain them *until* they had raised (= *while* they erect) their wall to the height from which defence was possible”

The construction with μέχρι τοσούτου ἕως ἂν + subjunctive of present would presuppose that the ambassadors had to be retained during the time in which they were raising a wall appropriate for their defense and up to the moment in which they had finished raising it. It is not, therefore, necessary to replace the present αἴρῳσιν with the aorist of subjunctive, ἄρῳσιν, but rather the construction with the present is perfectly acceptable: the retention of the ambassadors would last as long as the building of the walls; consequently, the construction expresses the simultaneity of the two verbal actions, that of the main sentence and that of the subordinate, and, at the same time, the simultaneous end of both. If, on the contrary, the amendment ἄρῳσιν, subjunctive of aorist, is preferred, the text (1) would have to be understood differently, namely, “but rather they retained <the ambassadors> *until* the moment in which they

began to erect an appropriate wall to the height from which defence was possible”, not until the moment of completion, since it would be an identical construction to that of texts (3) and (4), which makes no sense at all.¹⁹

¹⁹ W. W. Goodwin, *op.cit.*, p. 237, § 614.1, follows the reading of the codexes in the text (9), αἴρωσιν, and translates as “but he bade them detain the ambassadors until they (the Athenians) should be getting their wall high enough to defend”. He adds that the construction with the aorist, proposed by many editors, ἄρωσιν, would have to be interpreted as “but he bade them detain the ambassadors until they (the Athenians) should get their wall high enough to defend”, so that the construction with αἴρωσιν would indicate a less defined and exact reference from the temporal point of view and, in consequence, would be more appropriate in this context. As we have already pointed out, the difference between the two constructions, that of the codexes, with αἴρωσιν, and that proposed by many editors, with ἄρωσιν, would not be a function of greater or lesser definition or temporal exactness, but of the verbal action of the subordinate: whether it is simultaneous to that of the main sentence, with αἴρωσιν, or it represents the temporal limit to that of the main sentence, with ἄρωσιν.