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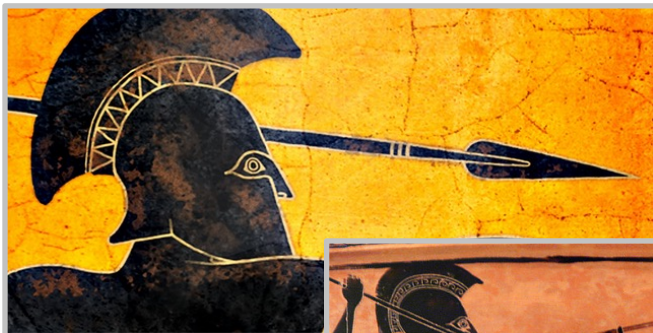
The Hoplite Class as a Flexible Category in Greek Political Thought

Richard Fernando Buxton, Colorado College



Scholars have undermined the received wisdom that hoplites formed a “middle” class able to shift the balance between oligarchy and democracy. Nevertheless, hoplites were frequently if inconsistently identified in Greek political thought with different constitutions and the social classes whose interests these promoted. This paper argues that the current picture of hoplites as a group internally divided between elite and sub-elite elements fits well with such a critical but flexible role: Elite hoplites could narrowly dominate sub-elite elements, forming a backstop to moderate oligarchies, while sub-elite elements were seen as a potential counterweight, helping explain how endemic stasis was possible.

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Department of Classics
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

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