

ARMIES AND NAVIES

Hoplite Warfare: Introduction

Types of military

Landed

- Heavy infantry (hoplites)
- Light infantry
- Archers, slingers, peltasts
- Cavalry

Naval

- Small ships (pentekonters, biremes)
- Triremes
- Polyremes (from 4th century onwards)

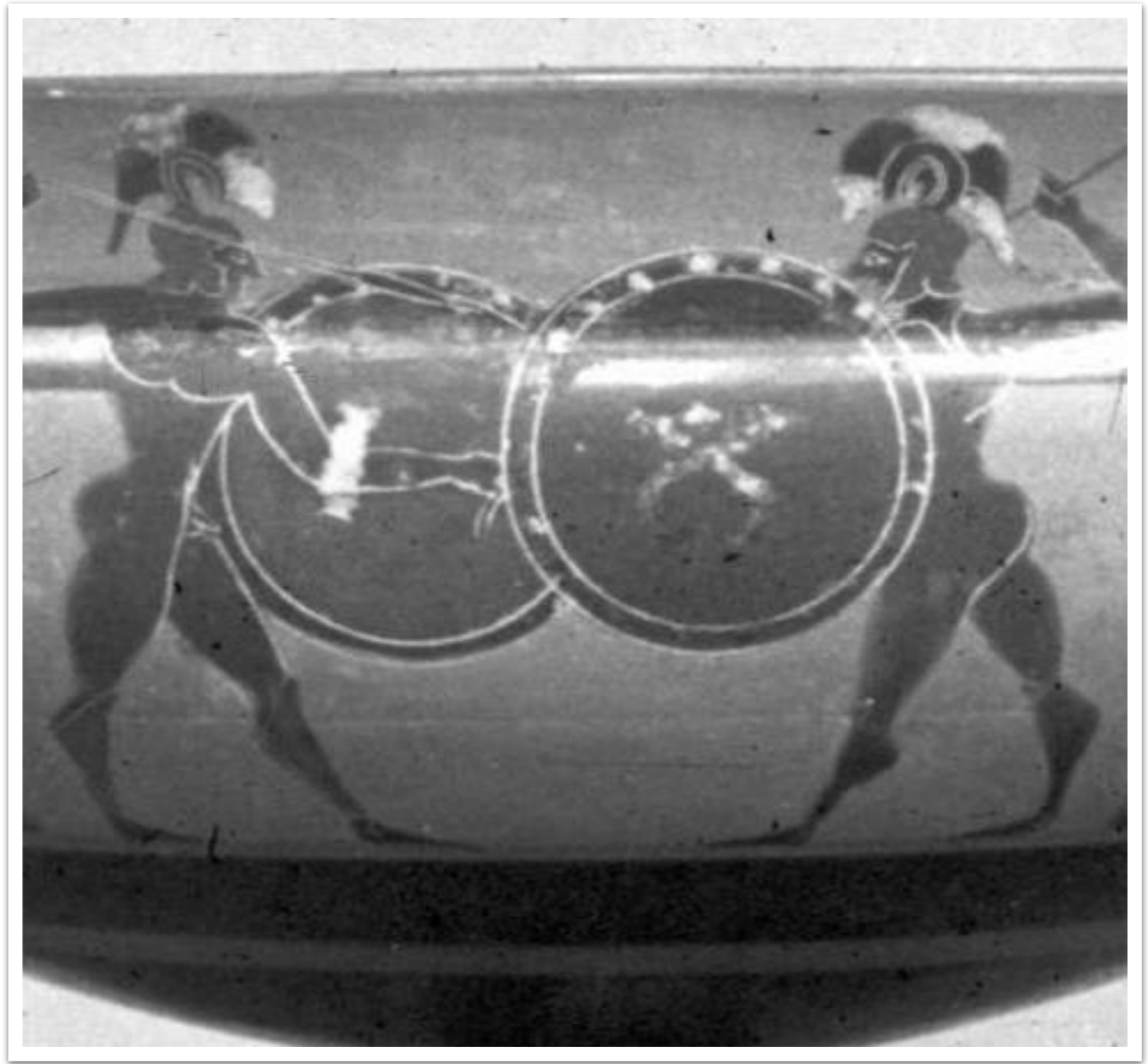
The Hoplites

The hoplite heavy infantry soldiers are the most iconic aspect of Greek warfare.

Most of our sources concentrate on hoplite battles, and the role of hoplites in battles.

Yet, heavy infantry is not necessarily the best troop for the terrain and climate of the Greek world.

The hoplites have garnered a lot of attention in scholarship, and essentially every aspect of hoplite warfare is debated to some extent or other.



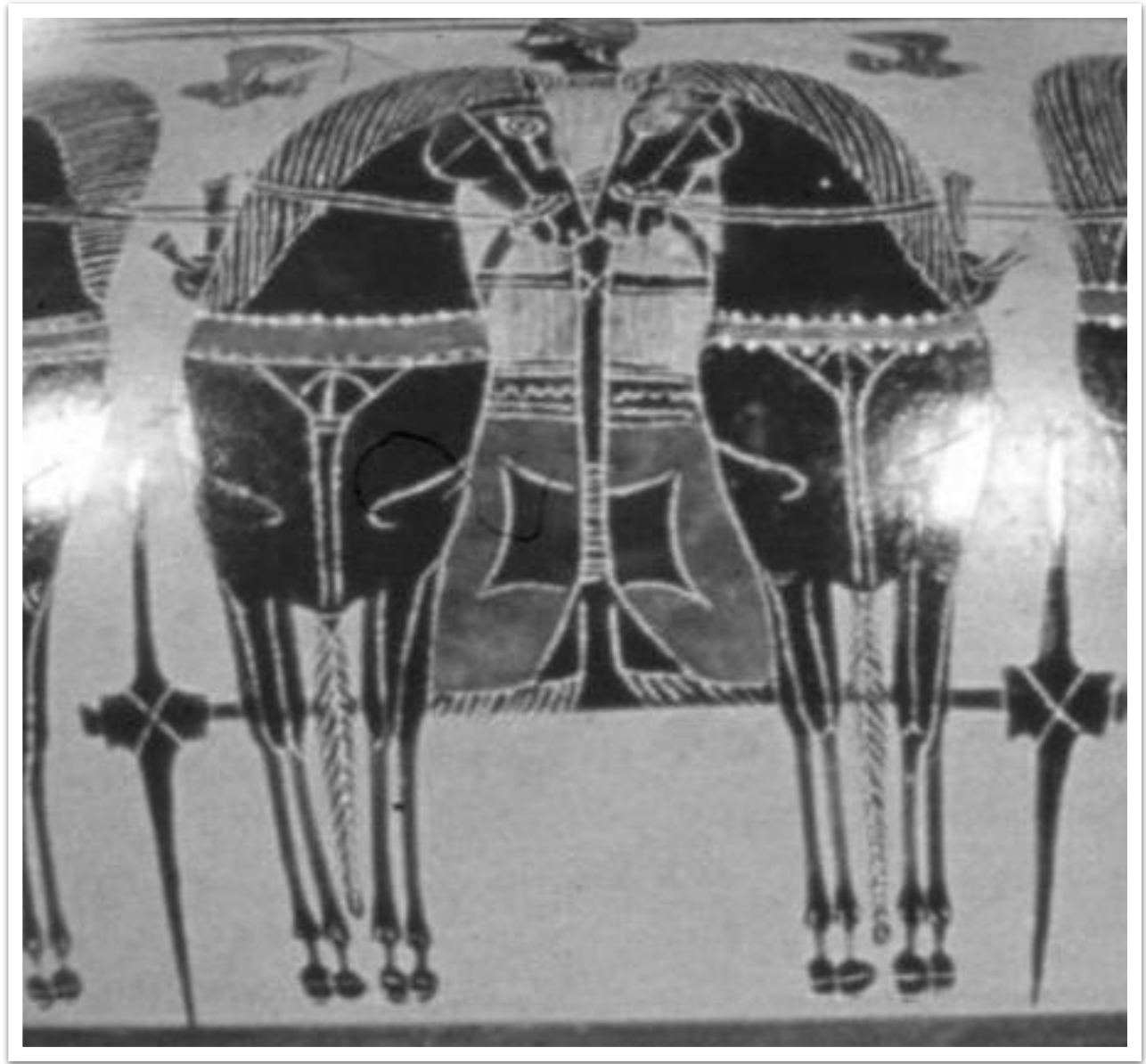
Main Debates on hoplites

1. Origin and evolution
2. Relation to socio-political changes and situations in the archaic and classical periods
3. Practicalities of hoplite battle (mainly in relation to othismos)

Origin and Evolution

Two aspects:

1. Homeric Warfare and Hoplite Warfare
2. Evolutions and changes in Arms and Armour (and what they mean)



Socio-political changes

- What was, if any, the relationship between hoplites and the fall of the aristocracies in the middle archaic period?
- What was the connection between oligarchy and a large hoplite cohort in a polis?
- Were the hoplites a type of “middle class”?

Practicalities

What was the othismos? Was it the main (or only) feature of hoplite battle? Or was it simply a tactic?

How did the hoplite phalanx work?

What is the effect of changes in arms and armour upon the hoplite phalanx?



Interconnected debates

- All these debates are interconnected, even if they do not seem to be so at first glance.
- An opinion on one issue has consequences upon other issues.
- Read discerningly, and make certain that you always check the sources and evidence (and evaluate them on your own).