

## From Ephebe to *Ephebeia*

The Athenian *ephebeia* as described in chapter forty-two of the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* and attested in a corpus of twenty-eight honorific inscriptions was a two-year state-funded and -organized program of compulsory national service, consisting of garrison duty, military training, and civic education, for Athenian youths aged in their nineteenth and twentieth years called ephebes. Long the domain of epigraphers, scholarly interest in ephebes and the *ephebeia* has increased greatly in recent decades, so much so that the discussion of both is now considered relevant, even central, to various debates on a broad array of historical and cultural topics connected to Athens, and, more generally, to classical Greece (e.g. Barringer 2001; Pritchard 2013). This paper examines a topic which has attracted little attention from scholars, namely the two- to three- month period between a youth's enrollment upon the deme register and the beginning of his national service in the *ephebeia*. By providing a thematic and chronological reconstruction of this not well-understood period, the paper will address the most fundamental of questions concerning ephebes – what is an *ephebos*? – and aims to shed light upon the activities of ephebes as a distinct socio-political subgroup of the Demos during the Lycurgan era (i.e. from 334/3 to 323/2 BC).

The prevailing opinion is that “the ephebe” was a figure who was (1) in transition from childhood to adulthood and (2) a technical term inextricably intertwined with the *ephebeia* (e.g. Vidal-Naquet 1986; Farenga 2006). But a careful reading of the multi-staged enrollment procedure described in the *Athenaion Politeia* (42.1-2), our most informative and detailed account of how a youth in his nineteenth year became a citizen in classical Athens (Whitehead 1986), suggests that ephebes were officially recognized as adults (i.e. they were not *paidēs*) who were no longer subject to the authority (*kureia*) of their fathers and henceforth were in

possession of full-citizen rights with some age-restrictions (cf. Strauss 1993). Moreover, while a comparison of the few extant well-preserved ephebic rosters to Athenian demographic data reveals that approximately half to two-thirds of Athenian citizens aged eighteen would have carried out their tour of duty in the *ephebeia* in the 330s and 320s (Hansen 2006), there is nothing to suggest that those citizens who did *not* serve were not in fact called *epheboi*, because the *Athenaion Politeia* (42.2-5) provides no alternative designation for adult male citizens under twenty years of age other than *ephebos*.

The second part of the paper builds upon these observations and explores the likelihood that there were two main preoccupations for ephebes, who were free to participate in the public life of Athens (cf. [Arist.] *Ath.Pol.* 42.5), until they began their national service (probably) in the month of Boedromion of the same archon-year in which they had successfully completed their deme registration (cf. Pélékidis 1962). The first was to negotiate the conscription process. Sometime after the scrutiny (*dokimasia*) by the Council, ephebes of all Solonian property classes were called-up for duty (along with precise instructions on where and when to muster) in a system known as conscription by age-groups ([Arist.] *Ath.Pol.* 53.4, 7). For some ephebes, the main task was to petition the *strategos* for a legitimate release from service (cf. Christ 2001), while others (who were not exempt) spent their time preparing for their tour of duty. Second, computer modelling suggests that about half of eighteen-year-old citizens would have come into their patrimony when they had attained civic majority (Golden 2015). For them, there was a delicate balancing act between the inheritance of their fathers' property and the assignment of the same property to caretakers to manage whatever assets they possessed (upon which the ephebes' future livelihood would depend) faithfully and competently in their two-year absence ([Arist.] *Ath.Pol.* 42.4). Taken together, they provide another example of the challenges faced by

Athenian citizens who were not unwilling to carry out their civic obligations for the benefit of the city.

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