

A Garrison at Oropos?

The primary military function of the Athenian *ephebeia* in the Lycurgan era (and the likely reason for its existence) was to protect the inhabitants of Attica against small bands of raiders originating from Boeotia. According to the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* “ephebes patrol the countryside and spend time in the guard-posts (*phylakteria*)” in the second year of their national service (42.4: περιπολοῦσι τὴν χώραν καὶ διατρίβουσιν ἐν τοῖς φυλακτηρίοις). If the *ephebeia* was created sometime after Alexander of Macedon’s destruction of Thebes in September 335 BCE, it would mean that the *terminus post quem* for the regular deployment of a minimum of one *phyle* of ephebes at these *phylakteria* was 333/2 BCE (Friend 2019). The epigraphic habit of the ephebes who had garrisoned the defensive infrastructure of Attica in the 330s and 320s BCE, until the probable abolition of the *ephebeia* after the Lamian War, permits the identification of the *Athenaion Politeia*’s unnamed “guard-posts”. An analysis of those end of service dedications erected by individual ephebic *phylai* reveals that the *phylakteria* would have consisted of fortified demes (Eleusis, Rhamnous, and Oinoe) and of border forts (Phyle and Panactum) situated at the Attic-Boeotian frontier or at the northeastern coast of Attica.

Did the ephebes also garrison Oropos after the acquisition of the frontier stronghold from Alexander in 335/4 (rather than from Philip in 338/7), just as in the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 8.60.1)? Two arguments can be adduced in support of the view that ephebes (and presumably their older compatriots) were responsible for patrolling the Oropia. First, a reconstruction of the routes used by ephebes on their daily patrols suggests that it was impractical for those ephebes stationed at Rhamnous (the nearest *phylakterion*) to have travelled from their respective starting point to the town of Oropos and back again, even if we assume a round trip lasting two days. For

them, the terminus was probably the eastern and southern fringes of the Oropia (cf. Fachard and Pirisino 2015; McHugh 2019). Second, the epigraphic record, specifically the well-known Leontid dedication (the date is uncertain but clearly Lycurgan) published by Leonardos and set up at the Amphiaraion (Friend 2019 T15 = Petrakos 1997 no. 353 = Reinmuth 1971 no. 15), suggests that ephebes actively participated in the cult of Amphiaraos while being based at Oropos. In this respect Oropos was probably no different from Rhamnous, where ephebes are known to have celebrated the Nemesia and other religious events associated with the deme (Friend 2014).

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