

Ephebes at the Nemesisia?

The Athenian *ephebeia* in the Lycurgan era, as described in chapter 42 of the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* and attested in a corpus of thirty-one ephebic inscriptions, was a two-year long state-organized and -funded system of compulsory national service for ephebes, adult male citizens in their nineteenth and twentieth years. In a recent study of the institution (Friend 2019), it was maintained that the involvement of ephebes in the religious life of Athens seems to have consisted of (1) a limited program of prominent festivals in which all the ephebic *phylai* from both enrollment years would have celebrated and (2) the participation of at least one *phyle* from one enrollment year in those cults where the ephebes were deployed. It was further argued that Friend 2009 T16 = *IG II² 4 339* = Petrakos 1999 no. 99, a fragmentary honorific dedication set up by the ephebes of Aigeis at Rhamnous, provided an unambiguous example of the second category of ephebic involvement. While this author's edition of the text did not reveal to whom Tharrias, the *sophronistes*, (is likely to have) sacrificed "on behalf of the health and safety of the Council and the Demos and the demos of the Rhamnousians" (*front*, ll. 3-5), it seemed reasonable to assume that the unnamed cultic figure was probably Themis or Nemesis and that the ephebes had attended an regular(?) event on the (now lost) deme *fasti*.

This presentation, however, will suggest an alternative interpretation of our dedication, namely that the *phyle* of Aigeis was commemorating its contribution to the Nemesisia, the annual festival held in honor of Nemesis (i.e. the first category described above). Definitive evidence for the festival does not predate the Hellenistic period (*SEG* 21.345; 25.155), but two dedications in the Lycurgan ephebic corpus suggest (indirectly) not only its existence in the 330s but also the mass participation of ephebes in the *lampadedromia*, an athletic event associated with young

men in Classical Athens (Friend 2019 T10 = *IG* II³ 4 336 = Petrakos 1999 no. 98; Friend T21 = *IG* II³ 4 338 = Petrakos 1999 no. 100). We may tentatively infer from Friend 2009 T16 that the *sophronistai* of (every?) ephobic *phyle* would have made sacrifices at the Nemesis, with the *sophronistai* themselves perhaps bearing the cost for the victim, although the fragmentary state of the stone admittedly hinders a definitive understanding of the ephebes' participation in the Nemesis. Nevertheless, we may speculate that the ephebes of Aigeis, desiring *philotimia*, a civic virtue which Aristotle's *Rhetoric* explicitly associates with young adult males (1389a13), had made their dedication because they had not defeated rival *phylai* in the torch-race and hence could not lay claim to distinction among the ephebes belonging to their enrollment year.

Bibliography

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