The springtime of the people: the Athenian Ephebeia and citizen training from Lykourgos to Augustus

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Preview

The last monograph devoted to the Athenian *ephēbeia*, that of C. Pélékidis[1], appeared in 1962. Although it continues to be useful, the status of the question has significantly evolved, thanks to new documents, but also to numerous studies on youth in the Greek societies,[2] the institution of the *ephēbeia* in the Greek cities,[3] and the history of Athens.[4] Re-studying the *ephēbeia* in the city where it was born and whose model seems to have decisively influenced the system of training of young people in other cities has therefore been long overdue. T.R. Henderson's work, as well as that of J.L. Friend[5], published almost simultaneously, aim to fill this gap.

The book grew out of a PhD thesis written at Florida State University in 2011. It is composed of three parts. The first ("Preliminaries") focuses on the origins and birth of the Athenian *ephēbeia*. The second ("The Lykourgan Ephebeia") studies the *ephēbeia* in "the Age of Lykourgos" that is, the *ephēbeia* in the form which, according to Henderson, constitutes the first stage of this institution. The third ("The Hellenistic ephebeia") presents the evolution of the *ephēbeia*from the Lamian War to the time of Augustus. The book is completed by a documentary part. It consists of a catalogue, which inventories all the inscriptions relating to the *ephēbeia* from its beginnings to 31 BCE, and a selection of relevant texts, quoted *in extenso* and translated. Four demographic and prosopographic appendices close this documentary section.

The first part aims to prove that, contrary to the prevailing opinion, the *ephēbeia* did not exist before the time of Lycurgus. According to Henderson, it was only by virtue of the "law on the ephebes" attributed to Epikrates (voted in late 335 or in early 334) that the *ephēbeia* was established.[6] To demonstrate this, Henderson attempts to prove three things:

1) The term *ephēbos*, attested *before* "the Age of Lykourgos", refers neither to a "young man performing a service for the purpose of integration into the community of adult citizens" (in the technical institutional sense) nor to an "adolescent" (in the general sense), but to "a young man who has arrived at the age of civic and legal maturity". According to Henderson, ephebes are therefore already full citizens.
2) The passages of Aeschines (2.167) and Xenophon (*Poroi* 4.51-52) which are considered as evidence about the ephebic service prior to the law of Epikrates do not refer to this service.
3) The decree of the Akamantis tribe in honor of the *kosmētēs* Autolykos (Reinmuth, *Eph.Insc*. 1, l. 13-26) is subsequent to the law of Epikrates.[7]

The analyses conducted in this section are rigorous and of high quality. Particularly successful is the study of the term *ephēbos* and its derivatives, based on the use of all literary sources.

Henderson demonstrates in particular that, contrary to what is often asserted, the word *hēbē*, to which the neologism *ephēbos* is etymologically related, did not mean in the first place "youth", but "time of life marked by the height of physical strength".[8] However, the main thesis about the non-existence of *ephēbeia* before the law of Epikrates has not, in my opinion, been proven. If the term *ephēboi* had meant "new citizens", and not "young people performing the ephebic service", why do all the sources posterior to the law of Epikrates use this term exclusively in the second sense? Is it possible that in 330, when the *ephēbeia* was already well attested, that, while speaking in the speech *Against Leocrates* about the "oath of the ephebes", Lycurgus had in mind "new soldiers" (as Henderson maintains, p. 23 and p. 35) and not young people accomplishing their ephebic service? In all the sources from the fourth century subsequent to the law of Epikrates, the term *ephēboi* has a strictly technical and institutional meaning. One can therefore hardly assume that before this law this term designated another statutory category, only to be transferred, so to speak, at the time of the vote of the law to another category supposedly created with that law.

Henderson is certainly right to draw attention to some flaws in Vidal-Naquet's famous interpretation of the *ephēbeia* as a rite of integration (n. 2), but I wonder if, by excluding the anthropological perspective entirely from his view, he does not throw out the baby with the bathwater. The author of the *Athēnaiōn Politeia* attributed to Aristotle makes it clear that ephebes are fully integrated citizens *only* at the end of the service.[9] This exclusion of a young Athenian from civic life, between the enrollment on the list of citizens of his deme at the beginning of the ephebic service, and its end, exclusionwhich the author of this treatise explains by practical reasons, can be interpreted in an *anthropological perspective* as a period of transition, giving to this service the sense of a rite of integration extended over two years.

Finally, I believe that the apparent contradictions between the information coming from the two passages of Aeschines and Xenophon mentioned above and that provided by the *Athēnaiōn Politeia* attributed to Aristotle and the ephebic inscriptions subsequent to the law of Epikrates can be explained not by the fact that Aeschines and Xenophon speak of something else than the ephebic service, but by the fact that they speak of another *form* of this service, a service which was not yet funded by the city (what limited access to it to a restricted group) and which did not have yet as regular a character as the service reformed by the law of Epikrates, introducing the financing of the service from the public budget. *Pace* Henderson, I continue to think that by speaking about young Athenians who trained to assume both ritual tasks (those of runners of torches races) and military tasks (those of *phrouroi*, *peripoloi* and *peltastai*) Xenophon could only think of the young people fulfilling the ephebic service, because the combination of these two types of tasks constituted the very meaning of the *ephēbeia*.

It must be emphasized, however, that for the reader, the question of the existence or non-existence of the *ephēbeia* before the law of Epikrates will be of secondary importance. Indeed, this book above all provides an excellent presentation of the *ephēbeia* created (or reformed) by the law of Epikrates. This is the best part of the book, based on insightful analyses of numerous sources and providing nuanced judgments.

It is preceded by the chapter "The Purpose of the Athenian Ephebeia" (which acts as a transition between the first and the second part), and in which Henderson explains the vote of the law of Epikrates at that precise moment of the Athenian history. In order to do it, scholars have usually invoked the need to increase the military capabilities of Athens after the defeat at Chaeronea. Henderson opposes this point of view. Instead of pure military training, he sees this institution as a form of civic *paideia*, established under the influence of thinkers like Plato, Isocrates, and Xenophon and intended to instill in young citizens the values of *eutaxia*, *peitharchia*, *sōphrosynē*, and *kosmiotēs*. All of them had admittedly a military dimension, but in addition to it, they were to animate, and be implemented in, all areas of Athenian public life, in accordance with the program of the "patriotic renewal" promoted by Lycurgus. To support this reasoning, Henderson shows well (chapter 5), that despite the often-held view, the *ephēbeia* did not have as its priority to train the youth for hoplitic combat[10], but gave young men general physical

training and civic education. In accordance with what several writers of the fourth century advocate, the effective military service of the ephebes, that of guards (*phrouroi*) and patrolmen (*peripoloi*), also played an educational role.

Particularly successful is the detailed and thorough discussion of the organization of the "Lycourgan ephebeia" (chapter 4), with the emphasis on the role that the tribes played in the structuring of this institution and the resulting educational implications for the reinforcement of "tribal identity" in young Athenians. This part ends with a precise and nuanced presentation of the participation of the ephebes in the religious life during their service.

Since the third part was supposed to discuss a very long period (321-31 BCE) of the history of the *ephēbeia*, the treatment of the questions in this part is less detailed than in the one devoted to the "Lycourgan ephebeia". It should be emphasized, first, that sources for this period become numerous and informative only in the second century, and, second, that the *ephēbeia* of this late Hellenistic period has been studied in detail by É. Perrin-Saminadayar.[11] For these reasons Henderson has opted here for a series of approaches that provide useful and well-informed updates on different aspects of the *ephēbeia* at different times of its long history.

He begins with the event-based chapter 7, where he presents the history of the *ephēbeia* between 322 and 302 on the backdrop of the vicissitudes of Athenian political history of this period.[12] The paucity of sources makes the question of the very existence of this institution at different moments hypothetical. In each case, Henderson clearly presents the state of the question, insisting on fragile nature of our interpretations and the impossibility of formulating definitive conclusions. To take one example: while supporting the idea of the annual *ephēbeia* after 307, he shows the fragility of this common opinion, based on a questionable interpretation by O.W. Reinmuth (p. 190). Chapter 8 concerns the organization of the *ephēbeia* and the content of this service between 268/7 and 31, with the principal aim of drawing comparisons with what constitutes the principal object of his investigation, i.e. the "Lycourgan ephebeia". In chapter 8, Henderson shows convincingly that the intense participation in religious life during the 229-31 period was very different in nature from that of the fourth century and had a strong identity dimension. Relying on the work of Perrin-Saminadayar, he shows, in the last chapter, first, that the opening of the *ephēbeia* to foreigners during the 128/7-31 period, was not a way of accessing the Athenian citizenship and, second, that the inclusion of the teaching of philosophy in the program of the *ephēbeia* had not obliterated the military character of the service.[13]

Henderson cites a large number of works, not limited to those written in English.[14] However, in his discussions of certain points, he does not always do justice to other scholars who have worked before him on the same issues, such as the important legal expression ἐπὶ διετὲς ἠβῆσαι, as well as the rite called οἰνιστήρια, which were studied in my book on the *ephēbeia*, with conclusions partly different from Henderson's.[15]

Throughout his study, Henderson demonstrates an excellent command of sources of different kinds (in particular epigraphic and literary), not only from Athens, but also from other cities. Whatever the points of disagreement that the readers may have on this or that particular question, they will benefit from reading this book which marks a real progress in our knowledge of the Athenian *ephēbeia* and will henceforth be a reference work for anyone who wants to be informed either on this institution in general or on its particular aspects.

Notes

[1] *Histoire de l'éphébie attique*, Paris 1962.

[2] P. Vidal-Naquet, *Le chasseur noir*, Paris 1981 (ET *The Black Hunter*, Baltimore 1986).

[3] N.M. Nigel, *Ephebeia. A Register of Greek Cities with Citizen Training Systems in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, Hildesheim 2006. A.S. Chankowski. *L'éphébie hellénistique*, Paris 2010.

[4] C. Habicht, *Athen: Die Geschichte der Stadt in hellenistischer Zeit*, München 1995 (ET *Ath from Alexander to Anthony*, Cambridge Mass. 1997).

[5] J.L. Friend, *The Athenian Ephebeia in the Fourth Century BCE, Leiden 2019. Cf. N. Sekunda,* BMCR 2020.11.20.

[6] This is also Friend's opinion (n. 5).

[7] *Pace* A.S. Chankowski, *BCH* 138 (2014), 15-78.

[8] Cf. Chankowski, *L'éphébie* (n. 4), 48-82.

[9] 42.5 διε[ξ]ελθόντων δὲ τῶν δυεῖν ἐτῶν, ἤδη μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων εἰσίν, "when the two years are up, they are now with the rest".

[10] The same problem also arises with the *ephēbeia* in the cities of the Hellenistic world: A.S. Chankowski, Ideology of war and expansion? A study of the education of young men in Hellenistic *gymnasia* in M. Champion, L. O'Sullivan (ed.), *Cultural Perception of Violence in the Hellenistic World*, London 2017, 42-46.

[11] *Éducation, culture et société à Athènes*, Paris 2007.

[12] His bibliography is missing the important work by B. Dreyer, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des spätklassischen Athen (322 – ca. 230 v. Chr.)*, Stuttgart 1999.

[13] Cf. D. Knoepfler, L'éphébie athénienne comme préparation à la guerre du IV^{e} s. au II^{e} siècle av. J.-C., *in* Ph. Contamine, J. Jouanna, M. Zink (ed.), *La Grèce et la guerre. Cahiers de la Villa « Kérylos »*, 26 (2015), 59-104 (not quoted by Henderson).

[14] Concerning the *ephēbeia* of the imperial era, mentionned in his "Epilogue", one could quote H.-U. Wiemer, Von der Bürgerschule zum aristokratischen Klub? Die athenische Ephebie in der römischen Kaiserzeit, *Chiron* 41 (2011) 487-538.

[15] Respectively Chankowski (n. 4), 73-82, 99-102, and Henderson, 12-17, 150-152.