

THE CADETSHIP OF CLASSICAL ATHENS*

By David M. Pritchard

Summary: The classical Athenians voted for a fulltime preparation-program for new hoplites in 335/4 BC. There have for a long time been three debates about this cadetship. The first debate is whether all eighteen-year-olds or only those who had chosen to be hoplites were *ephebes*. The second debate concerns dating. On one side are those ancient historians who think that the *ephebeia* ('cadetship') dates back to the early fourth or even the fifth century. But the other side insists that the cadetship was entirely brand new in the mid-330s. The third debate is about why the *demos* ('people') actually voted for this military reform. The predominant view is that their vote was a response to the crushing defeat of Athenian hoplites at Chaeronea. But there have always been doubts about whether this was the main reason. J.L. Friend and T.R. Henderson have recently published book-length studies of the Athenian cadetship. Theirs are the first monographs on the *ephebeia* in sixty years. By championing minority views and making innovative arguments, Friend and Henderson have injected considerable new heat into these old debates. This article reconsiders the three debates in light of their important books. It aims to settle each debate one way or another by weighing up all available evidence.

1. Three Debates about the *Ephebes*

In, probably, 335/4, the Athenians voted for a *nomos* ('law') that a certain Epicrates had formulated about the *epheboi* ('ephebes').¹ His law created a fulltime program of training and reserve military service for 18- and

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1 Harp. s.v. *Epikrates*. For the date see e.g. Chankowski 2010: 128-29; 2014: 18; Friend 2019: 50; Henderson 2020: 37-36; Rhodes 1981: 592.

19-year-old Athenians. The *demos* agreed to spend on this major reform 50 talents ('t.') or so per year.² This state subsidisation was more than what they were spending at the time on the cavalry-corps.³ Their decision to dedicate such significant new public spending to the military preparedness of fellow citizens shows how they continued to see themselves as 'the backbone' of the Athenian armed forces.⁴ In this *ephebeia* ('cadetship'), first-year participants were required to guard the Piraeus. While living in this port, they also received professional training.⁵ The state hired several *didaskaloi* ('teachers') to instruct them in hoplite and non-hoplite modes of combat as well as two *paidotribai* ('athletics teachers'), whose classes helped them to acquire *euexia* ('physical fitness').⁶ The second year saw the ephebes put some of this training into practice. Ps.-Aristotle writes of this year (*Ath. Pol.* 42.4): "they live in the forts and patrol (*peripolousi*) the countryside". Participants in the *ephebeia* were legally required to be free of all other commitments (5). To this end, the *demos* exempted them from liturgies and barred them from participating in lawsuits.

There are now three open debates about the cadetship among ancient historians. The first concerns the participation-rate in this military institution. Some still agree with C. Mossé that every single Athenian joined the *ephebeia* when he had turned 18.⁷ But the fact that participants appear to have been training to be hoplites gives others pause.⁸ Because the participation-rate in the hoplite corps had historically been only 30

2 Friend 2019: 55-56; cf. Chankowski 2014: 17; Hansen 1991: 310; Migeotte 2014: 563-64; Schwartz 2026: 146.

3 The *demos* spent 40 t. per year on the pay of horsemen throughout the fourth century (Xen. *Eq. Mag.* 1.19; *Vect.* 6.1; Blaineau 2015: 229; Bugh 1988: 222).

4 Burckhardt 1995: 131; cf. Schwartz 2026: 152.

5 Friend 2019: 76-87.

6 [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.3. *Didaskaloi* are often mentioned in the ephebic inscriptions of the 330s and the 320s (e.g. Friend 2019: cat. nos. T4.6-7; T6.10-11; T9 column I.33-38; T14.7-8). For the *paidotribai* see e.g. Friend 2019: cat. no. T25.1-2; Henderson 2020: 127; Pritchard 2013: 163.

7 E.g. Chankowski 2010: 125-27; 2014: 20; Friend 2019: 95-100; Mossé 1962: 322-26; 1973: 83-84; Schwartz 2026: 151; Sekunda 1990: 149-58; Vidal-Naquet 1968: 12.

8 Rhodes 1981: 503.

percent or so,⁹ this side of the debate doubts that it would have trebled after 335/4. The second debate about ephebes is whether the *nomos* of Epicrates created a new institution or reformed a pre-existing one. U. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff made the strongest possible case for its being all brand new in the 1890s.¹⁰ The twentieth century witnessed a series of ancient historians challenging him by pushing back the *ephebeia*'s creation to the early fourth or even the fifth century.¹¹ The current prevailing view is that Epicrates most probably reformed a pre-existing cadetship.¹² There would not even be an ongoing debate about dating if it were not for two recent monographs. J.L. Friend and T.R. Henderson have published the first book-length studies of the Athenian *ephebeia* in sixty years.¹³ Both of them thoroughly critique the case for an earlier cadetship and fully endorse the original one of Wilamowitz.¹⁴

The third debate concerns the reasons why the *demos* voted for what Epicrates had formulated in the first place. The traditional argument focusses on the crushing defeat of Athens at Chaeronea in 338/7. This battle in Boeotia saw the 6000 Athenian hoplites conscripted for it perform disastrously against the highly trained Macedonian phalanx. Ancient historians have for a long time argued that the main reason for the law of 335/4 was to bring the Athenian hoplite corps up to the manifest new performance-standard.¹⁵ Yet, the two new books about the Athenian *ephebeia* reject this reason categorically. Instead, Henderson argues that the reform's main reason was civic education. For his part, Friend argues that it was a response to a different military problem that only emerged three years after Chaeronea.

9 Pritchard 2019a: 36–38.

10 Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1893: 191–94.

11 For the early fourth century see e.g. Chankowski 2010: 117–24; 2014: 19, 59, 65; Gauthier 1976: 190–95; Ober 1985: 90–95. For the fifth century see e.g. Barringer 2001: 47–50; Pélékidis 1962: 71–79; Reinmuth 1952; Schwartz 2026: 145, 153 n. 14; Sekunda 1990: 149–58; 2025: 18; Winkler 1990: 26–31.

12 E.g. Chankowski 2022; Christ 2001: 416; Harding 2015: 45; Mossé 1973: 83–84; Ridley 1979: 534; Rhodes 1981: 494–95; 2012: 125; Sekunda 2025: 57.

13 The last to publish such a book was C. Pélékidis in 1962.

14 Friend 2019: 8–33; Henderson 2020: 36–55; cf. Pritchard 2015: 110.

15 E.g. Bugh 1988: 168–69, 178; Burckhardt 1995: 131; 2018: 161; 2024: 143–44; Pritchard 2013: 162; Rawlings 2000: 242; cf. Friend 2019: 37.

2. The Extent of Participation

There is no doubt that what Epicrates formulated for the *demos* in 335/4 was a preparation-program for new hoplites.¹⁶ His *ephebeia* clearly sought to habituate participants to serving in the regular hoplite corps.¹⁷ When entering at 18 years of age, ephebes, like hoplites, were divided into ten tribal units ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.2-3). In each *phule* ('tribe'), one ephebe served as the *taxiarchos* and others as *lochagoi* ('subunit commanders').¹⁸ The latter led the *lochoi* ('subunits') into which the regular army's taxiarch divided his tribe's hoplites for a particular campaign.¹⁹ First-year ephebes also received training in *hoplomachia* or fighting as a hoplite (3). It gave them a skill in weapons-handling that was recognised as critical for hoplites in land battles (e.g. Pl. *Lach.* 182a-b). At the start of their second year, ephebes paraded before assemblygoers ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.4). This parade allowed them to demonstrate their skill at manoeuvring as part of their tribal units. It concluded with each of them receiving, as gifts from the state, a hoplite-shield and spear. Non-elite Athenians chose which branch of the armed forces they would serve in when they reached manhood.²⁰ Because ephebes were clearly hoplites in training, it is likely that only those who had chosen this branch would participate in the cadetship. This means that full participation in the *ephebeia* presupposes that every 18-year-old would have now chosen to be a hoplite. Historically, the hoplite corps had included no more than a third of Athenians. Therefore, there is good reason to doubt that ephebic participation was as high as it has often been claimed.

Fortunately, we have reliable evidence for settling this first debate. From 332/1, when the first ephebes graduated, the council and the *demos* began to award public honours to them. Each tribe and, often, the rural demes in which its ephebes had spent their second year, duplicated these honorary decrees. An inscription of these decrees for a tribe's graduating

16 Kucewicz *et al.* 2021: 229; Schwartz 2026: 146; Vidal-Naquet 1968: 12-13.

17 Chankowski 2014: 23-24.

18 These ephebic officers were regularly mentioned in the contemporaneous ephebic inscriptions (e.g. Friend 2019: cat. nos. T6.14-18; T8.6-7, 7-10; T9 column I.19-28, column II.15-21; T14, 2-6; T15.1-5; T22.3-15; cf. Henderson 2020: 98-99).

19 Pritchard 2019a: 36.

20 Pritchard 2019a: 105.

ephebes was, it appears, always set up, to which a roster of their names was attached.²¹ The rosters of 7 such inscriptions from the 330s and the 320s are more or less complete.²² They suggest that the average number of 19-year-olds graduating from the cadetship each year was 500.²³ The work of M.H. Hansen on ancient Greek demography remains widely accepted.²⁴ Hansen convincingly estimated that there were 30,000 adult Athenians in the later fourth century.²⁵ His age-distribution-model suggests that 19-year-olds were 3.3 percent of all adult males.²⁶ This means that there would have been more or less 990 of them when the first class of the cadetship graduated in 332/1. Therefore, the participation-rate of citizens in the *ephebeia* of the 330s and the 320s was around 50 percent.

It is not clear that such an increase in hoplite participation was an explicit aim of Epicrates.²⁷ But Friend must be right that it was largely the result of his reform.²⁸ The 50 t. that the *demos* was spending on the *ephebeia* made participating in this corps easier: hoplites now had accommodation and all other living expenses covered by the state for their first 2 years and also obtained for free most of a hoplite's equipment ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.3-5). After Chaeronea, there was also simply a great deal more social pressure on all citizens to serve in the armed forces.²⁹ Mossé argued that more and more Athenians refused to be combatants as the fourth century progressed.³⁰ The truly enormous increase from 334/3 in the participation-rate of them in the hoplite corps undercuts her famous argument.

21 Sekunda 2025: 58.

22 Friend 2019: 97-98; Hansen 1986: 12, 47-50; Rhodes & Osborne, *GHI* pp. 453-54.

23 E.g. Burckhardt 1996: 37; Reinmuth 1971: 37.

24 Moreno 2007: 28-31; Pritchard 2019b: 45-46.

25 Hansen 1986: 37-43, 66.

26 Hansen 1986: 9-13.

27 Pace Burckhardt 2018: 161.

28 Friend 2019: 99-100 pace Pritchard 2010: 55.

29 Pritchard 2013: 79.

30 E.g. Mossé 1962: 315, 318-19.

3. Dating of the Cadetship

Friend and Henderson rightly remind us of the strong points that Wilamowitz originally made in his case for the cadetship's being brand new. The first is the dating of the 31 ephebic inscriptions surviving from classical Athens. None of them can be dated with certainty before the graduation of those who joined the *ephebeia* in 334/3.³¹ The earliest literary description of the Athenian cadetship appears to be chapter 42 of the *Constitution of the Athenians*. The second strong point is that Ps.-Aristotle wrote this treatise in the early 320s.³² The third is that the *demos* erected a public statue for Epicrates in recognition of his *nomos* about the ephebes (Harp. s.v. *Epikrates*). Because this was one of their highest civic honours,³³ they clearly judged his action as extraordinary. Taken together, these three strong points do suggest that Epicrates was the creator of the Athenian *ephebeia*.

Proponents of an early cadetship have always disputed the second point that Wilamowitz made. They argue that there is firm literary evidence for a cadetship dating back to the 370s.³⁴ In the mid-340s, Demosthenes prosecuted Aeschines for treason. His speech cast aspersions on

31 Some have tried to date one of these 31 inscriptions (Friend 2019: cat. no. T1) to the early fourth century. But Friend 2019: 12-13, 187-88 and Henderson 2020: 48-54 canvass well the solid case against any such dating of them before 334/3. O. W. Reinmuth famously placed this ephebic inscription in 361/0 by restoring Nikophemos as the eponymous archon in its first line (1971: 1-4). D.M. Lewis (1973) and F.W. Mitchel (1975) objected that the inscription's spacing and letter shapes were clearly those of the 330s and the 320s. They also realised that the gap in the first line required a longer name. Their proposed restoration was the genitive of Ctesicles, who was the eponymous magistrate in 334/3. Forty years later, A.S. Chankowski attempted to revive the earlier dating (2014; cf. 2022). His strongest argument is that a spelling of several genitives in this ephebic inscription was more common before 350 (especially 54-56). Chankowski rightly points out that there are archon names from the 350s that could fit the lacuna in line 1. But the spelling on which he focusses persisted on inscriptions well after this decade (Henderson 2020: 54). What undermines Chankowski's attempt still more is the original objection of Lewis and Mitchel: epigraphically Friend 2019: cat. no. T1 generally belongs to the Lycurgan era.

32 For the date see e.g. Rhodes 1981: 51-57.

33 Friend 2019: 36; Henderson 2020: 38-39; Pritchard 2019a: 208.

34 E.g. Chankowski 2010: 114-15.

this rival politician's military record (e.g. Dem. 19.113). In the law-court case, Aeschines responded by presenting himself as one who had always been an exemplary soldier (2.167-69). The first proof that his defence speech offered was what he had done in the late 370s.³⁵ When he had turned 18, Aeschines claimed that he had "become a *peripolos* ('patroller') of this countryside for 2 years" (167). Because this apparently back-to-back service as a patroller was unusual, Aeschines detailed that he would be calling 'my fellow *epheboi* and our commanders as witnesses'. Those challenging Wilamowitz assume that *epheboi* here can mean only 'participants in the *ephebeia*'. They also think that the details of Aeschines 2.167 parallel Ps.-Aristotle's description of Epicrates's cadetship.

It is true that the ephebic inscriptions and Ps.-Aristotle did use *epheboi* as a term to describe participants in the *ephebeia*. Yet, it cannot be assumed that Aeschines did the same in this particular speech. Friend and Henderson put beyond doubt that *ephebos* had an earlier meaning that persisted into the 330s. This word is a neologism that first appeared in the *Cyropaedia* that was published after 362.³⁶ There, Xenophon explicitly called it an *helikia* or age-class and used it as such to describe young men who had turned 18 (1.2.4-13). *Ephebos* relates to a cluster of older Greek words that describe a male who is an adult.³⁷ It is most closely related to *ephebao*, which means 'I am an adult'. Yet, in the aorist tense, this verb signifies a person who has just reached adulthood.³⁸ P. Chantraine thus defined *ephebos* as 'one who has arrived at manhood'.³⁹ Friend plausibly suggests that it was the new system for conscripting hoplites that pushed the Athenians to invent this new word.⁴⁰ Before 387/6, they had used *hoi neotatoi* ('the youngest') to describe the hoplites who were 18- and 19-years-old.⁴¹ Yet, with the new age-class system for conscripting hoplites, they needed now to differentiate between these two age-classes and so

35 For the dating of his service as a patroller see e.g. Friend 2019: 14; Henderson 2020: 25.

36 For the publication-date see e.g. Gera 1993: 23-25.

37 E.g. Henderson 2020: 3-35; Rhodes 1981: 495.

38 E.g. Aesch. Sept. 664-667; Eur. Supp. 1213-1215; Hdt. 6.83.1.

39 Chantraine 1999: s.v. *hebe*.

40 E.g. Friend 2019: 17, 21-22, 168.

41 E.g. Thuc. 2.13.7. This new system was probably introduced in the early 370s (Pritchard 2026: 71-72).

came up with *epheboi* for those who were 18. Later, when Epicrates's cadetship came into operation, they began also to use *ephebos* in a new sense to describe the 18- and 19-year-old participants.

There is a clear use of *ephebos* in its earlier sense in a legal speech from 330. In it, Lycurgus reminded the jurors (1.76): "you have an oath that all citizens swear, when they are registered in the *lexiarchikon grammateion* and become *epheboi*". The *lexiarchikon grammateion* was each deme's register of citizens.⁴² At the time of this speech, the demes entered the names of new citizens into this register a few months before the hoplites among them started ephebic training.⁴³ The oath that eighteen-year-olds swore is first attested in a deme-decree of the 340s.⁴⁴ New citizens had most probably been swearing it from the beginning of Athenian democracy itself.⁴⁵ We have already established that only 50 percent of 18-year-olds participated in the *ephebeia*. Consequently, Lycurgus cannot be implying here that 'all citizens' are doing this hoplite training. Rather, he was using *epheboi* to describe the moment when young Athenians were recognised as having reached adulthood. It is a distinct possibility that Aeschines, like others in the 340s, was simply using *epheboi* in the same sense for those who had turned 18.⁴⁶

Henderson draws our attention to the major differences between what 18- and 19-year-old hoplites did in the late 370s and from the mid-330s.⁴⁷ He, along with Friend, also convincingly argue that Aeschines's first period of military service was no different from what the *neotatoi* had been called up to do from at least the 410s.⁴⁸ There is no mention of training in Aeschines 2.167. Because Demosthenes mocked him for it, we know that Aeschines began working as an undersecretary for magistrates as soon as he had turned 18.⁴⁹ Consequently, Aeschines would have been juggling patrolling and work-commitments in the late 370s. After

42 E.g. Pritchard 2019b: 46.

43 [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.1; Henderson 2020: 21, 146–47.

44 Rhodes & Osborne, *GHI* no. 88.

45 E.g. Siewert 1977; cf. Chankowski 2010: 127–28.

46 E.g. Aeschin. 1.49; 2.167; Dem. 19.302–304.

47 Henderson 2020: 47.

48 Friend 2019: 28–30; Henderson 2020: 28–29.

49 E.g. Dem. 18.127, 261; 19.20, 200, 249; Pritchard 2015: 81.

335/4, by contrast, ephebes got a year of training before becoming *peripoloi* and were legally required to be free of all other commitments.

Fifth-century Athenians were loath to conscript the *neotatoi* for actual battles.⁵⁰ Typically, these 18- and 19-year-old hoplites were called up to man Attica's forts and the city's walls only when there was a perceived threat.⁵¹ By 415/14, this home guard was being called the *peripoloi* or patrollers (e.g. Ar. Av. 1177; IG I³ 93.41-42). In this guard, the *neotatoi* served alongside Athenian hoplites who were older than 50 as well as metic hoplites (e.g. Ar. Av. 1367). *Peripoloi* were divided into units that had individual commanders, while a solitary *peripolarchos* commanded the home guard as a whole (Thuc. 8.92.5). We know that the *demos* deployed patrollers for a few consecutive years after large-scale war recommenced in 378/7 (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.1). They would have perceived that the threat to Attica was even higher five years later; for, by then, Thebes had attacked nearby cities and had emerged as a potentially dangerous rival.⁵² Therefore, it is likely that the *demos* again deployed their *peripoloi* in back-to-back deployments in order to man their rural forts during the late 370s. What Aeschines described at 2.167 is consistent with these deployments. This means that this passage is not firm evidence for an *ephebeia* before 335/4.⁵³

50 Pritchard 2019a: 36-37.

51 Pritchard 2019a: 52.

52 E.g. Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.19-20; Baldacini 2026: 185; Harding 1988: 64; 2015: 36-37; Henderson 2020: 29, 48.

53 P. Gauthier (1976: 190-95) famously argued that Xen. *Vect.* 4.51-52 is also firm evidence for an *ephebeia* before Epicrates. Written in the 350s, this passage focussed on those men ordered (1) to train for torch-races, (2) to guard forts, and (3) both to be peltasts and to patrol the countryside (52). Xenophon claimed that the men performing these three tasks would do so more enthusiastically upon receipt of a state subsidy. Because it was *epheboi* who did these tasks after 335/4, Gauthier argued that Xenophon must be referring to an earlier cadetship. Influential as his argument has been (e.g. Chankowski 2014: 19-20; Sekunda 2025: 51-52) – it rests on long-recognised errors (Friend 2019: 22-26; Henderson 2020: 44-45; cf. Forbes 1929: 121). The first error is to read the group from which the men performing the three tasks came as the ephebes. Xen. *Vect.* 4.51 actually explicitly states that this group was the *polis* itself. The second error is to ignore Xenophon's use of *te* three times to link his men performing the three tasks. Such conjunctions put beyond doubt that he was describing three distinct subgroups rather than one doing all three tasks.

4. The Reasons for the *Ephebeia*

The Spartans had stood apart from all other fifth-century Greeks for their training of hoplites. Indeed, the state-sponsored *agoge* ('education') of Spartan *paides* or boys "resembled nothing so much as a military assault course".⁵⁴ The Athenian *demos* boasted that their hoplites needed no such preparation (e.g. Thuc. 2.39). They claimed that the *arete* ('courage') of all Athenian combatants arose effortlessly out of their democratic way of life.⁵⁵ Boasts aside, there was a simple reason why the Athenians got away with not training their hoplites for most of the classical period (Xen. *Mem.* 3.12.5). With the exception of the Spartans, their enemies did not have state-sponsored training either.⁵⁶ The resulting equal amateurism of both phalanxes drastically reduced the deadliness of land battles.⁵⁷ However, this equality disappeared in the course of the fourth century because other Greeks began to copy the Spartans.⁵⁸ The first to do so successfully were the Thebans. After 378/7, they created a fulltime corps of hoplites, called the Sacred Band, who were highly trained, and began to drill the rest of their hoplites in manoeuvres.⁵⁹ These reforms enabled Thebes to crush Sparta at the battle of Leuctra in July 371, with 400 of the 700 Spartan hoplites present being killed (e.g. Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.1-19). Within several years, Thebes had liberated Sparta's slaves, the Messenians, and dismantled the Peloponnesian League.⁶⁰

This spectacular collapse of the centuries-long military dominance of Sparta encouraged others to introduce public training for hoplites.⁶¹ Among those to do so was Philip II, who had been held as a hostage in Thebes during the 360s.⁶² After taking Macedon's throne in 359, he began

54 E.g. Arist. *Pol.* 1338b27-29; Xen. *Lac.* 1.4; 4.2-6; 5.8-9; *Mem.* 3.5.15-16; Cartledge 2001: 79-90; Hodkinson 1999: 149-50. Quotation from Cartledge 2001: 86.

55 E.g. Ar. *Vesp.* 1075-1091; Dem. 60.3-5; Hyp. 6.7-8; Lys. 2.20, 43, 50-51; Pl. *Menex.* 238c, 239a-b; Xen. *Cyr.* 2.1.18-19; 2.3.8-11; Hodkinson 2020: 350-51; Lenfant 2024: 373-74.

56 Fisher 2009: 532; Schwartz 2009: 228.

57 Friend 2019: 76-77; Pritchard 2013: 161.

58 See e.g. Arist. *Pol.* 1338b25-38; Lendon 2005: 106-14.

59 Hodkinson 1999: 160; Pritchett 1974: 221-22.

60 Cartledge 2002: 251-58.

61 Pritchett 1974: 228-29.

62 See e.g. Just. *Epit.* 6.9.5; 7.5.2; Plut. *Pel.* 26.5; Hammond 1997.

paying Macedonian hoplites to serve on back-to-back campaigns and imposing on them “a degree of training which no Greek army ever acquired”.⁶³ What made this professionalisation possible was his careful management of Macedon’s public finances.⁶⁴ For example, when Philip II captured Mount Pangaeum in 356, he massively expanded the gold mines there, resulting in 1000 t. of extra income per year (Diod. Sic. 16.8.6). In the next two decades, his nonstop campaigning turned his kingdom into a major regional power.⁶⁵ His decisive victory at Chaeronea in July 338 made Macedon Greece’s new unrivalled superpower.⁶⁶ This battle also made clear how Macedonian hoplites were now operating at a far higher performance-level than their rivals.⁶⁷ Although the coalition army that opposed them was the same size as theirs, Philip’s troops still killed the Sacred Band to a man as well as thousands of other Thebans (Diod. Sic. 16.86.5-6). They also cut down 1000 of the 6000 Athenian hoplites present and captured a further 2000.

Friend and Henderson reject categorically the traditional argument that this crushing defeat was the main reason for Epicrates’s reform. It has to be said that this rejection is the most unconvincing aspect of their recent books. Our ancient sources for Chaeronea concur on the three weaknesses that the Athenian hoplites exhibited there.⁶⁸ The first weakness was that they were entirely untrained. The second weakness was that they lacked *euexia*. The Athenians recognised that such a lack of physical fitness could cause hoplites to give up in battle.⁶⁹ By contrast, our sources confirm that the Macedonians in 338/7 were much stronger in terms of training and *euexia*. The third weakness was that the Athenians brought to bear the wrong moral dispositions: they had a great deal of passion, which resulted in a costly lack of discipline. The same sources

63 See e.g. Diod. Sic. 16.3.1; Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.6; Polyaeus *Strat.* 4.2.10; Hammond 1997: 366; Hamilton 1999: 170; Hodkinson 2020: 341. Quotation from Pritchett 1974: 228-29.

64 Pritchard 2019a: 178-79.

65 Bosworth 1988: 5-19.

66 For this battle see e.g. Diod. Sic. 16.85.5-86.6; Burckhardt 2024: 143-44; Worthington 2013: 248-51. For the date see e.g. Burckhardt 2024: 143.

67 Schwartz 2026: 150.

68 Frontin. *Str.* 2.1.9; Justin 9.3.9-10; Polyaeus 4.2.2, 7; cf. Diod. Sic. 16.86.2.

69 See e.g. Pl. *Prt.* 326b-c; Xen. *Mem.* 3.12.1-4; Pritchard 2013: 159-60.

explicitly state that Philip II deftly exploited these weaknesses in the pursuit of his victory.

The *ephebeia* that Epicrates formulated manifestly addressed all three weaknesses. Firstly, it trained future Athenian hoplites in weapons-handling as well as in mass manoeuvres. Secondly, it forced them to get physically fit. To this end, in their first year, ephebes participated in the regular sports classes of a *paidotribes*. This athletics teacher, it appears, also trained them in running the torch races at Athenian festivals.⁷⁰ Before 335/4, it had been only wealthier young men who had competed in such team footraces.⁷¹ Epicrates now made torch races compulsory for all 18- and 19-year-old hoplites.⁷² Thirdly, his cadetship taught future hoplites the moral dispositions that were required for victory in conventional land battles. This moral purpose of the reform is clear to see in the ephebic inscriptions. They often mentioned the magistrate who looked after each *phule* of ephebes.⁷³ He was called a *sophronistes* ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.2-3), which literally means a teacher of *sophrosune* ('self-control'). These inscriptions always praised the graduating ephebes for this virtue as well as *eutaxia* ('good order') and *arete*.⁷⁴ This clear match between the Athenian weaknesses at Chaeronea and the reform's features leaves no room for doubt: the main reason for the *ephebeia* was indeed to raise the Athenian hoplite corps to the new required performance-standard. In voting for this reform, the *demos* were also seeking to increase the likelihood that Athens could win in future land battles against the Macedonians.

The alternate main reasons for the cadetship that Friend and Henderson propose are unconvincing. Certainly, the moral dispositions for which the ephebes were praised were also important in civilian life. For Henderson, this means that the main reason for the *ephebeia* was training for this non-military life.⁷⁵ But his argument simply ignores that *arete*

70 Friend 2019: doc. no. T25.1-2.

71 Chankowski 2010: 103-14; Pritchard 2013: 76-80.

72 Friend 2019: 120-26; Henderson 2020: 158-63; cf. Sekunda 2025: 18-19.

73 E.g. Friend 2019: doc. nos. T2.28-29, 54-56; T9.1-2; T10.1.

74 E.g. Friend 2019: doc. nos. T2. 31, 58; T5.3-4; T9.2, 7-8, 13-14, 30-31; Pritchard 2013: 214-16.

75 Henderson 2020: 56-79.

and *eukosmia* were primarily military virtues in classical Athens. It was a trope of Athenian public discourse that victory in battle depended on *arete*.⁷⁶ Xenophon writes: “*eutaxia* clearly saves men, while *ataxia* (‘disorder’) has already killed many” (*An.* 3.1.38-39; cf. *Eq. mag.* 1.24). He was not alone in thinking that *sophrosune* was another disposition that a soldier required (e.g. *Mem.* 3.5.1; *Hyp.* 6.8). Therefore, teaching these virtues was a critical part of training hoplites for their pitched battles. Doing so was entirely consistent with the primary *military* purpose of the *ephebeia*.

Friend offers two grounds for doubting that preparing hoplites for regular land battles was the main reason for the *ephebeia*.⁷⁷ The first grounds are that Epicrates formulated his *nomos* only three years after Chaeronea. As far as Friend is concerned, this yearslong delay proves that the reform was not about how Athenian hoplites had performed there. The second grounds are that ephebes also got a great deal of instruction in non-hoplite fighting. In addition to *hoplomachia*, their training covered archery, javelin-throwing and catapult-firing ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 42.3) Friend’s new explanation for the *ephebeia* accommodates both grounds. In mid-335, Alexander the Great captured Thebes by a direct attack on its walls during a battle.⁷⁸ The son of Philip II obliterated this state, selling thirty-thousand Thebans into slavery. This act of genocide put the absolute fear of God into the Athenian *demos* (e.g. Diod. Sic. 17.15.1). Friend hypothesises that it also created instability on the Attic-Boeotian frontier. In particular, Boeotians, he suggests, were now privately raiding Attica. Friend argues that the *ephebeia* was created so that there would be specialist troops to stop these raiders.

Unfortunately, his alternate main reason for the cadetship does not withstand scrutiny either. In fourth-century Athens, there often was a quite lengthy delay between a military problem’s first manifestation and a subsequent reform.⁷⁹ Consequently, the three years that it took the *demos* to address what Chaeronea had made plain was par for the course.

76 E.g. Dem. 60.21; Lys. 2.4-6, 20, 24, 64-65; Pl. *Menex.* 243c, 240d; Pritchard 2010: 37.

77 Friend 2019: 34-57.

78 E.g. Ael. *VH* 13.7; Arr. *Anab.* 1.7.1-9.10; Diod. Sic. 17.12.1-14.4; Plut. *Alex.* 11-12; Harris 2024: 193.

79 E.g. Pritchard 2026: 71-72, 77-81.

Even more problematical is the complete lack of evidence for the border instability or for the cross-border raids that Friend hypothesises.⁸⁰

What Friend does get absolutely right is the need to account for the non-hoplite training of ephebes. Critical here is that Philip II had become, well before the 330s, Greece's leading besieger of cities (e.g. Dem. 9.48-50; Diod. Sic. 16.8.2). The big fear gripping Athens in the days after Chaeronea was that Philip would employ his innovative siege engines to capture Athens.⁸¹ Therefore, all available manpower was thrown into strengthening the fortifications as quickly as possible by digging temporary ditches and building palisades out of pillaged tombstones and felled trees (e.g. Aeschin. 3.236; Lycurg. 1.44). When the immediate danger had passed, the *demos* still voted for a systematic upgrading of the Athens-Piraeus circuit of fortifications (e.g. Aeschin. 3.23, 27-30; IG II³ 1 429). There was also set up on the Acropolis a storehouse with 50,000 missiles that could be used for defence during a siege ([Plut.] *X orat.* 852c). The fact that Alexander III could quickly take Thebes without siege engines undoubtedly pushed the Athenians to do more. In classical Greece, troops typically protected walls by firing or throwing arrows, javelins and catapult-bolts at enemies getting too close.⁸² The main Athenian corps specialising in such non-hoplite combat had been disbanded more than forty years earlier.⁸³ Without the old archers, the *demos* knew that they were now relying on untrained troops to check any Macedonian assault against their walls. In 335/4, they agreed to remove this vulnerability by training the new hoplites, who could soon be asked to protect the walls, in how to despatch 'siege weapons' effectively.⁸⁴ This means that the secondary reason for Epicrates's *ephebeia* was to strengthen the city-fortifications.

Chaeronea clearly showed the *demos* that there was a pressing need for the public training of their hoplites. Three years later, Alexander the

80 Henderson 2020: 57-62.

81 Baldacini 2026: 188; Burckhardt 2024: 144; Worthington 2013: 256; cf. Harding 1988: 69-70.

82 E.g. Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.5-6; Friend 2019: 87; Henderson 2020: 128-131; Kuciewicz et al. 2021: 227; Ober 1985: 91.

83 Pritchard 2019a: 78.

84 Baldacini 2026: 188.

Great's act of genocide against Thebes jolted them into enacting reform.⁸⁵ The cost to the public purse alone ruled out Sparta's education of boys as a model on which they could base this reform. Boys, as far as the classical Athenians were concerned, were aged between 10 and 17 years.⁸⁶ Males aged 18 to 80+ years on Hansen's age-distribution-model are 57.47 percent.⁸⁷ This means that his 30,000 adults in the later fourth century translate into 52,000 males in total. The same model suggests that 10 to 17-year-olds were 16.97 percent, which points to there being 8,858 *paides* or thereabouts. After 335/4, half of them went on to be hoplites. Giving 4429 *paides* the same level of support as the ephebes would have cost 4 to 5 times more than the *ephebeia*. Because Athens's annual income was only 400 t. in the late 340s,⁸⁸ a program based on Sparta's *agoge* would have been completely unaffordable. Likewise, hundreds of talents per year would have been required to pay for the back-to-back service of all active-service hoplites. Consequently, the Macedonian model for hoplite professionalisation was not viable either for the Athenian people.

By contrast, the truly unprecedented model that Epicrates had worked out required only 2 years of state subsidisation for the 18-year-olds that had chosen to be hoplites. This meant that the public purse was paying only 50 t. for 1000 fulltime ephebes in any one year. Moreover, hoplites who were 18 and 19 had traditionally been called up only for the home guard. This gave the *nomos* of Epicrates two further advantages. Firstly, his cadetship did not reduce the number of active-service hoplites. This was important because a land battle's outcome often turned on how many hoplites each side could mobilise.⁸⁹ Secondly, training 18-year-old soldiers in how to defend the walls and the forts effectively was entirely consistent with their traditional military role. There would have thus been little push back against this non-hoplite training. In conclusion, it is not hard to understand why the *demos* embraced the *nomos* of Epicrates about the ephebes and publicly honoured him as highly as they

85 Sekunda 2025: 57.

86 E.g. Golden 1990: 12-22, 68-69; 1998: 104-7; Pritchard 2004: 220.

87 Hansen 1986: 11-12.

88 Dem. 10.38; Harris 2024: 194, 198; Pritchard 2015: 15.

89 Pritchard 2019a: 50.

did. The early hellenistic period would see many ancient Greek states copy this new Athenian model for training young citizens.⁹⁰

5. Conclusion: Settling the Three Debates

What the Athenian *demos* voted for in 335/4 was a fulltime program of training and reserve service for new hoplites. Non-elite Athenians chose the corps in which they would fight when they turned eighteen. Only those who had chosen to be hoplites were required to serve as *ephebes* for the next two years. Nevertheless, the new cadetship included generous new subsidies for participating in the hoplite corps. The state covered the living expenses of eighteen- and nineteen-year-old hoplites, and gifted them most of their equipment. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the *ephebeia* resulted in a huge rise in the participation-rate of Athenians as hoplites from thirty to fifty percent. It is true that the *ephebeia* was not entirely brand new. Eighteen-year-olds had always sworn an oath about civic obligations. Athenian democracy had for a long time treated the *neotatoi* differently. However, before the law of Epicrates, such new hoplites were called up only to protect the fortifications of the city or to patrol Attica during military emergencies. They were never offered any state-subsidised training and were free to devote themselves to fulltime civilian roles. These significant differences suggest that the cadetship of the Lycurgan era was more a new institution than a reform of a pre-existing institution. The Athenians suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Macedonian hoplites at the battle of Chaeronea in 338. The Macedonians were simply much better trained and physically fitter. The main reason for the *ephebeia* indisputably was to get Athenian hoplites up to this new Macedonian performance-standard. But it is notable that this reform also trained the new hoplites in archery, javelin-throwing and catapult-firing. In classical Greece, such non-hoplite forms of combat were indispensable for protecting fortifications. By the 330s, the Macedonians had become the leading besiegers of cities. This suggests that a second-

90 E.g. Chankowski 2010; Kennell 2006.

ary reason for the Athenian cadetship was the need for well-trained soldiers to protect the Athens-Piraeus fortifications from sieges and frontal assaults.

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