

Christopher de Lisle, *The Ephebate in Roman Athens: Outline and Catalogue of Inscriptions*. AIO Papers no. 12. December 2020. Pp. vii + 103. ISSN 2054-6769 (print).

This work of Christopher de Lisle (hereafter L.), from the *Attic Inscriptions Online* (AIO) Papers series, constitutes a welcome contribution to the study of the Athenian *ephebeia*. The stated objective is “to provide an overview of the Roman-period ephebate and its inscriptions in their contemporary Athenian context” (p. 2). The result is a clearly written volume which aims at a synthesis of modern research on the *ephebeia* in several key areas between two historically significant sacks of the city, one by Sulla in 86 BCE and the other by the Heruli in 267 CE.¹ Despite its brevity, L. succeeds in packing a wide range of material into four well-organized chapters, while the fifth chapter is a comprehensive register of the ephebic corpus from 86 BCE onwards, building on the catalogue in Wilson’s unpublished Ph.D. thesis.² As one would expect for an AIO publication, L.’s arguments are for the most part closely supported by the epigraphic evidence. Much of the ephebic corpus appears on the AIO website with text, translation, notes, and with links to other relevant inscriptions. In keeping with the objectives of the AIO series, the work should appeal to specialists in the field and to Greek epigraphers interested in Roman Athens.

To his credit, L. addresses the methodological dilemma for all those working on the *ephebeia*, namely to what extent can practices attested in one period be assumed for another (pp. 15, 36)? In general L. shows a commendable reluctance to supplement the evidence from the Post-Sullan period, which was (as the author observes) only the “half-way point” in the *ephebeia*’s long and eventful history, with the more detailed honorific inscriptions dating to Hellenistic Athens. It is therefore a point of criticism from this reviewer that L. is not more skeptical about the relevance of the fourth-century BCE *ephebeia* to the period under study. To be sure, it is useful to compare the revived office of *sophronistes* (beginning in 139/40 CE) to its previous incarnation, which is epigraphically last attested in 300 BCE (pp. 18–19: *IG II² 1159, 2044*). But L.’s assertion, for instance, that “in the Classical period, the staff were elected annually by the ephebes’ fathers” (p. 20) is not only of questionable relevance to the Post-Sullan institution but is also contradicted by Pseudo-Aristotle 42.3. Similar examples can be found elsewhere.³

¹ Recent studies have their terminus in the Hellenistic Period or in the early Roman Period: Perrin-Saminadayar, E., *Éducation, culture et société à Athènes: Les acteurs de la vie culturelle athénienne (229-88): un tout petit monde*. Paris, 2007. Henderson, T.R., *The Springtime of the People: The Athenian Ephebeia and Citizen Training from Lykourgos to Augustus*. Leiden; Boston, 2020.

² Wilson, P., “A Corpus of Ephebic Inscriptions from Roman Athens: 31 BC-267 AD.” Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Monash University, 1992.

³ Sample of fourth-century BCE errors: *kosmetes* as an annual office (p. 16), nature of ephebic gymnasiarchy (p. 23), and association of chlamys with Theseus (p. 32). See Friend, J.L., *The Athenian Ephebeia in the Fourth Century BCE*. Leiden & Boston, 2019.

Chapter one (“Periodization and Typology of Inscriptions”) all too briefly discusses the five epigraphic genres associated with the *ephebeia* from 86 BCE to 267 CE. It plausibly argues that the absence of securely-dated inscriptions between 13/2 CE and 36/7 CE need not indicate “a decline of the ephebeia itself or a substantial shift in the way it operated” (p. 6). The epigraphic record also suggests that the *ephebeia* was not in decline before the changes introduced in the reign of Hadrian (rejecting the view of Perrin-Saminadayar).⁴ The central importance of the *kosmetes* in the production of ephebic inscriptions during the Roman period is clear from L’s discussion of the ephebic catalogues erected annually for a given cohort of ephebes, first appearing in 61/2 CE (*IG II²* 1990), and of the honorific herms, which may be a development of the *philoï* lists dating to the first- and second-centuries CE.

Chapter two (“Personnel”) begins with the *kosmetes*, the most important official of the *ephebeia*, where L. insightfully observes that “the portraits of the *kosmetai* on the herms are closely modelled on both classical portraits of rhetors and philosophers ... thus associating the *kosmetes* with two sets of moral paragons, which were probably perceived as complementary rather than contrasting” (p. 17). What follows is an uneven but interesting discussion of the remaining annual magistrates (and their subordinates) and the ephebic staff (the military instructors and lower-level staff), and ends with “ephebic liturgists and cohort magistracies”, whom he correctly identifies as the sons of the Athenian political elite (see chapter four).

In chapter three (“Activities of the Ephebes”), L. sets himself the difficult task of summarizing the numerous activities of the *ephebeia* and then dividing them into five interrelated categories (political participation, athletics, military training, rhetoric/academia, religious festivals). The last category is a fascinating discussion (again all too brief) on the nature and the extent of the ephebes’ religious participation in Roman Athens. He rightly suggests that “the most prominent ephebic festival activity in the epigraphic record is the series of games funded and organized by the ephebic *agonothetai*” (p. 40). The itinerary of festivals (conveniently listed on p. 44) seems to have consisted of those connected to the imperial cult, beginning with the Germanikeia, while continued involvement in the city’s traditional cults is also epigraphically attested.

Chapter four (“Ephebes and Status”) argues that “like Athens as a whole, the ephebeia was generally an elitist and exclusive organization in the Imperial period” (p. 54; cf. the rosters of ephebes summarized in tables 1 and 3, pp. 7, 11). The *ephebeia* was markedly hierarchical, with the sons of the aristocracy which dominated Roman Athens at the apex, who gained prestige from holding ephebic liturgies and magistracies, followed by those citizens who lacked the wealth to compete with the elite but could still distinguish themselves by winning athletic events and defeating

⁴ Perrin-Saminadayar, E., “L’éphébie attique de la crise mithridatique à Hadrien: miroir de la société athénienne?” In: S. Follet (ed.), *L’Hellénisme d’époque romaine. Nouveaux documents, nouvelles approches (Ier s. aC-IIIe. s. pC)*. Paris, 2004: 87–103.

their rivals in oratorical contests. Finally, all citizens had precedence over ephebes called *epengraphoi* (“additional enrollees”) in ephebic catalogues from the reign of Trajan, a term apparently denoting those *Milesioi* (“Milesians”) who had served in the *ephebeia*. Exactly who the *Milesioi* were, however, is disputed, with immigrants from the city of Miletus and (more convincingly) “a status group” similar to *medikoi* in Classical Athens ventured as possibilities.⁵ L.’s description of the *Milesioi* as “semi-citizens” adds nothing to the debate. The likelihood that various restrictions prevented them from gaining prominence, compared to citizens, is intriguing and worth further discussion.

In conclusion, this is a solidly researched work which is largely successful in demonstrating that “the ephebate was an institution of central importance to Athens in the Imperial period” (p. 60). One naturally would have liked to have seen more of an engagement with current academic debates, but L. does address the issues thoughtfully (though not always persuasively) within a brief format, and his up-to-date bibliography should be a useful resource for scholars who intend to research the *ephebeia* at this time.

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⁵ See S.D. Lambert on *AIUK* 2 (BSA), no. 13, p. 37.