

Aristotle's description of the ephebia in *Athenaion Politeia* 42, while providing valuable evidence for how it functioned, provides no insight as to why or when it was reformed. The *communis opinio* is that this reform occurred sometime after the battle of Chaeronea but before 334/3 B.C., the date of the inscription for the first enrollment class of the ephebia (I.G. II² 1156, 1189, 2970).

The most widely accepted theory is that the poor performance of the Athenian hoplites at the battle of Chaeronea spurred the Athenians to introduce peacetime military training for eighteen and nineteen year old Athenian males, in order to increase the number and fighting quality of Athens' hoplite force. But this theory does not take into account that the ephebia did not result in the rapid expansion of Athens' hoplite force and it does not explain why much of the military training the ephebes received consisted of training in non-hoplite weaponry. A second theory has also been advanced, which argues that Athenian enthusiasm in the wake of the recovery of Oropus, either after Chaeronea or the destruction of Thebes, revived Athenian hopes of regaining their former hegemony and the reformed ephebia was a demonstration that Athens was willing to protect her boundaries. But this theory assumes an Athenian reaction to these events which contradicts the ancient evidence. It is also difficult to understand why the recovery of Oropus should result in reforming the ephebia rather than continuing existing military practices.

In this paper I will argue that the reformed ephebia was a defensive response to the aftermath of Alexander's destruction of Thebes in October 335 B.C., an event which horrified Athens (Arr.Anab. 1.10.2; D.S. 17.15.1; Just. 11.4.9; Plut.Alex 13.1; Plut.Dem. 23.3) and was still vividly remembered five years later (Aesch. 3.133). In this atmosphere of great anxiety and fear, Athens was not only deprived of her most important ally, but also faced increased tension along the Boeotian border, since the former territory of Thebes was divided between Alexander's Boeotian allies, none of which was well-disposed towards Athens on account of her support for Thebes (cf. Arr.Anab. 1.9.9; D.S. 18.11.4; Just. 11.4.7; Hyp. 6.11, 17). This situation forced the Athenians to develop a system to better protect their countryside from the increased danger of raids and banditry.

The solution was to use ephebes to patrol, garrison, and defend the countryside. The reformed ephebia, in which ephebes garrisoned the Piraeus in the first year and border forts in the second year (Arist.AP 42.3-4), provided Athens in 334/3 B.C. with the *immediate* benefit of a standing army devoted to protecting Attica during peace-time (cf. Xen.*Hiero* 10.4-8). This explanation also sheds light on why ephebes were trained in javelin-throwing, archery, and catapult-operating (Arist.AP 42.3): the program intended from the very beginning that ephebes should have the necessary skills for garrison duty while also having competence in hoplite battle.