

Imperial Greek Narrative and Greek and Roman Ideas of Fairness

The annals of history are replete with the actions of Roman generals and politicians behaving badly. Sometimes we also have events considered praiseworthy by earlier authors that were later considered reprehensible. In this paper, I argue we can distill the ancient authors' ideas of 'fairness' from the ideals of their historical subjects (and that it is useful to do so!). In the present paper, I confine myself chiefly to actions in warfare as described by authors of the first and second centuries CE (and especially Plutarch). In this area alone, we can see different ideas on: treatment of pirates, treatment of mercenaries, the value of clemency to the defeated, the value of deception, the relevance of personal conduct, and how much strictness is necessary for discipline. Plutarch's assessments are often explicit (e.g. Plut., *Comp. Alc. Et Cor.*), but many of the ideas explicit in Plutarch can also be seen as implicit in Appian and others.

While many have keenly compared Greek and Latin historical sources for historical details, the impact of Latin historiography on Greek historians (and vice versa) is far less examined. While there has been some discussion of similarities (e.g. Adler 2011), rarely is a distinction drawn between Greek and Roman narratives (though see Kemezis 2014 and Schulz 2016 for a later period). And that nuance is relevant in their assumptions of fair play. Accordingly, we might find in Livy (and the Livian tradition) that the pirates of Cilicia, Crete, and the Balearics were *naturally* ne'er-do-wells, but Strabo and Appian present piracy as rooted in their poverty (cf. Beek 2016). Sometimes the philosophical differences are even more notable. In his comparison of Greek and Roman lives, Plutarch often notes the Greek counterpart employing a greater degree of deception, yet defending it as customary for the time (such as in the *Philopoemon*). The collector of stratagems Polyaeus also delights in

records cunning tricks, many of minimal military value, over the far more pragmatic and topically-organized work of Frontinus, yet avoids other more straightforward tactics Frontinus describes, apparently as unworthy for a Roman emperor. Sometimes we have no real Latin comparison (such as for the ‘barbarianization’ of Sertorius in Plutarch and Appian). Nevertheless, these track with the portrayals we see elsewhere in these authors’ substantial corpus.

Much of the discrepancy can be ascribed to the *mores* of a later century (though Florus or Tacitus nevertheless bears more similarity to Livy in this respect than to more contemporaneous authors). There is nevertheless some question of why Greek and Latin sources should differ. To this, I argue that this distinction is rooted not in some notion of national character, but rather derived from their education. That is, there was a distinctly Greek (though including some Latin writers) and a distinctly Roman (though including some Greek writers) school of thought on what actions were fair in war, particularly in the second century CE. Understanding this paradigm when approaching our sources helps us understand both the way they saw the past and why they recorded it the way they did.

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