

Like a Father More Than a Tyrant: Romulus as Paradigm in Appian's *Roman History*

Appian of Alexandria was a second-century Greek historian who, after a successful legal career in Rome and promotion to *procurator* by Antoninus Pius, steeped himself in the Latin historiographical tradition to compose a pro-monarchical history of Rome (Bucher). Except for five books on the Late Republic, most of his *Roman History* is lost but for a few fragments as well as Byzantine summaries such as that of Photius on the reigns of the original kings. According to Photius' synopsis (*Bibl.* 57), Romulus "ruled like a father more than a tyrant, but was nevertheless murdered (ἄρξας τε πατρικῶς μᾶλλον ἢ τυραννικῶς, ὅμως ἐσφάγη)." Other fragments of his reign and those of his successors suggest a largely positive evaluation of the kings that is not only in line with Appian's advocacy of monarchy as the best form of government, but also suggests that the regal period was essential to the unity of the *Roman History*, with the kings serving as exemplary paradigms for figures in the later books who are themselves presented as positive models.

This paper argues how figures in the extant portions of Appian's history, particularly Scipio Aemilianus, Tiberius Gracchus, and Julius Caesar, recapitulate a pattern established by Romulus. Scipio's election as consul despite his age is justified by the Roman people's appeal to "the laws of Tullius and Romulus" (*App. Pun.* 27.112), and he is driven to suicide later in his career under accusations of tyranny. Tiberius Gracchus, after passing the *lex Sempronia* (*App. BC* 1.13.1), is hailed by the people of Rome and Italy as though he were their "founder" (κτίστης). The assassins of Julius Caesar deliberately associate their deed with the murder of Romulus (*App. BC* 2.114), and contrary to Gowing's analysis, I demonstrate that Appian never concedes that, like Romulus, Caesar had not in fact become a τύραννος.

While not kings themselves, both the political programs and treatment of these late Republican figures at the hands of their political opponents not only resemble the career of Romulus, but Appian also consciously signals such comparisons through explicit allusions to Romulus as founder, champion of the common people, and victim of an aristocracy that falsely accused him of becoming a tyrant. Appian deliberately employs allusions to Romulus in order to recommend not only these men, but also Cicero (App. *BC* 2.7) and Octavian (App. *BC* 4.94), as model *patres patriae* that anticipate and endorse the benevolent rule of the Antonine emperors. Appian maintains an ethical distinction between a king (βασιλεύς) and a tyrant (τύραννος), and in recommending these figures takes pains to present accusations of tyrannical behavior as only the false accusations of their enemies, just as with Romulus.

Bibliography

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- Gowing, A. M. 1992. *The Triumviral Narratives of Appian and Cassius Dio*. Ann Arbor.