

## Accustomed to Obedience?: The Ionian Reputation for Martial Weakness

In 193 the Seleucid king Antiochus III was negotiating with Rome. According to Appian, he agreed to leave the Greek cities in Asia Minor free and autonomous, but insisted that the Aeolians and Ionians should be excepted on the grounds that they were “accustomed to obedience to barbarian kings” (App. *Syr.* 3.12.1). His rationale appealed to the reputation of the Ionians. Antiochus suggests that the Ionians were once powerful, but that they no longer deserved freedom because had long been subservient to foreign kings. Appian’s passage is not meant to give a history of Ionia, but it maps easily onto the narrative that the Ionian flowering was in the Archaic period, but that the importance of the region dwindled during the Classical period. Athenaeus and other Roman-era authors such as Aelian and Plutarch corroborate Appian’s opinion of the Ionians, and supplement it by offering explanations for this change in circumstance. In particular, they frequently turn to tropes of barbarian customs and luxury in order to explain the enervation of Classical Ionia.

“Corrupting luxury” is a trope long-thought to pervade both Greek and Roman thought and literature (e.g. Bernhardt, 2003), and Ionia’s endowment with a mild climate, high-value resources, and contact with non-Greek cultures made it particularly susceptible to such moralizing. However, recent scholarship has shown that the moral overtones in Greek literature comes from conscious manipulation of Greek authors known only from fragments in Roman sources (Gorman and Gorman, 2007; Gorman and Gorman, 2014; Kurke, 1992). In contrast, the evidence from the classical period reveals a more nuanced and complicated relationship with both luxury and foreign influences, sometimes describing it as problematic, other times beneficial (Miller, 1997; Miller, 2013; Roisman and Worthington, 2015; Vlassopoulos, 2013).

In this paper, I first analyze the two supposed sources of Ionian corruption, demonstrating that both explanations belong to the late Hellenistic or Roman periods while sources from the classical period mention barbarian customs and luxury without negative connotations (e.g. Xen. *Hell.* 1.5.1). Then I turn to the classical sources that discuss military weakness and luxuries of Ionia. On the surface, there is plenty of evidence to support this later vision of Ionians weakness and corruption, such as stories of sexual depravity (e.g. Hdt. 8.105) and the comparison of the Chians to a trained horse not in need of a whip (Eupolis F 232). Even more directly, both Herodotus and Xenophon (e.g. *Hell.* 3.2.14) narrate Ionian military defeats that seem to demonstrate Ionian weakness. Yet, neither Herodotus nor Xenophon lay the blame for the Ionian defeats on their corruption, but on training and leadership. The contemporary authors were still largely dismissive of Ionian fighting capabilities, but the problems are in the experience of warfare not in the moral corruption. Similarly, classical sources do not use morally-charged language to discuss Ionian luxury or barbarian influence. The overriding concern in these passages is not corruption, but rather with stasis and faction that could be brought on by hubris unless the polis is governed well (e.g. Thuc. 8.24.4).

Antiochus' declaration that the Ionians were accustomed to obedience was meant to appeal to the Ionian reputation as weak and subservient and thereby advance his claim to the region. Closer examination, however, reveals that the Ionian reputation developed along one track in the Classical period and then metastasized, becoming overlaid with moral connotations in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

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