Polybius and his world. 
Essays in memory of 
F. W. Walbank

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Welcome to the Liverpool Conference

Good morning—and welcome to the conference. I wish I could be with you in person, but this impressive piece of technology will have to do for both you and me. I am grateful to my Liverpool colleagues for setting it up. It is for me a great and much appreciated honour that this conference is taking place and especially that it is taking place in Liverpool, where my work on the Polybian Commentary was initiated and carried through; though Volume 3 only appeared in 1979, two years after I had retired.

The year 2007 seems the right date to celebrate the Commentary—if indeed it is to be celebrated. But 2007 is also a significant date for quite another reason. It is the 80th anniversary of my first introduction to Polybius. And I should at this point like to pay a long-due tribute to E. H. Goddard, later a lifelong friend and an outstanding teacher of Classics at Bradford Grammar School, where in 1927 I was just starting on my last year before going up to Peterhouse. So let me tell you how first I met Polybius.

To save us from repeating the normal prescribed period of Roman History, Ned Goddard had arranged for the Joint Matriculation Board to prescribe, just for Bradford Grammar School, a special paper on the period 200–133 bc. To help us prepare for this, he came up with a small German edition of Polybius—I don’t recall whose it was—which he handed to another boy and myself with the instruction to translate a number of chosen passages, to précis them and reproduce the result, using a kind of jelly stained with purple ink, for the rest of the form, which at the expense of several free periods we did. There was of course no question of using a Loeb in this operation. I don’t think we knew what a Loeb was!

When I last heard of the other boy, he was lecturing in Economics at the University of Leeds, so it seems likely that Polybius didn’t play a great part in his later life. For me it was obviously going to be a different story. I just wonder how many grammar-school boys in the late 1920s were reading Polybius: not many, I fancy! I was the lucky one.

We have a splendid range of participants in the congress: I am really moved that so many have chosen to come long distances to take part. And I’m grateful to Tom Harrison, Bruce Gibson, and their colleagues here in Liverpool for the organization it has surely involved. But I have already taken enough of your time; so let the work begin.

Frank Walbank
Polybius’ Roman prokataskeuē

Hans Beck

It is a truism that we never get the full story of events, past or present. The human brain works in an innately selective way, and our ability to collect, analyse, and process data from sources other than our individual experience has its limitations. The nemesis of subjectivity adds to the accumulation of gaps and omissions. In order to create narratives and fill them with meaning, we select what we think is significant in any given context, a selection which is based on preconceptions that, again, are the result of our subjective approach. The inevitable process of selection (random or deliberate) poses one of the greatest problems for the writing of ancient history. Literary and material evidence is scarce and often isolated. Historians are not always in a position to compare different accounts on any given incident; more often than not, we are forced to rely on textual remains that offer brief snapshots of events rather than complex accounts, written from different perspectives and retrieved from multiple layers of investigation.

The source narrative is in itself the product of a highly subjective process. What might appear as a ‘fact’ is nothing more than the preselection of an ancient author, made subconsciously or consciously, and modelled, presented, and appraised according to his own preconceptions. An author may have composed his account to meet certain literary standards and suit artistic purposes, to achieve a more persuasive message or meaning, or simply to adhere to the needs of his supposed audience. Indeed, the ancient author will have omitted as redundant information with which his audience was most likely very familiar. At the same time, he will have meticulously spelled out other items and episodes. But often they only made sense because the audience understood them in relation to other notions that were left unsaid. Finally, some remarks would have been completely new to the audience, in which case they were at the mercy of the author and his preconceptions, for better or for worse.1

1 Cf. Morley 1999, whose opinionated account is highly enjoyable. It echoes post-modern approaches and advances in narratology, discourse analysis, and critical thinking. But it also offers
The processes of omission, selection, and framing contribute to a dramatic reduction of what we call the 'body of evidence'. Much remains unknown or, at best, open to speculation, because details have been excluded from the narrative; or simply because another piece of information, crucial for understanding the significance of what was included, had been omitted. Aware of this problem, Jacob Burckhardt reached the famous verdict that Thucydides' Histories may well contain a piece of first-class information that will only be discovered in a century or so.2 The key will be to recover the missing link that once connected the related piece of evidence to the information that was precluded. In the meantime, selection and subjectivity prevail more than ever.

The writing of a commentary is one of the most effective scholarly antidotes against selectivity. Commentaries expand upon the narrative of the ancient sources: they spell out the unspoken; they delve into the text in an attempt to read between the lines, trying to see what the sources reveal about the subconscious assumptions and knowledge of a writer and his audience. The proper commentary, to be sure, distinguishes itself through linguistic expertise. For instance, when Cato is said to have used the word biber, the learned modern scholiast notes at some length that this may not mean 'drinker', but rather 'to drink', since biber is an archaic infinitive and not a noun.3 This is important. But it is hardly this sort of commentary that, to borrow a Polybian phrase, enlightens the reader so that he can make his own judgement and draw forth new conclusions.

In contrast (and although the genre itself is exposed to the pitfalls of selectivity), the historical commentary attempts to fill the gaps of selectivity and provide a meaning to the narrative tradition that goes beyond the account of the written word. It explains both intra- and extra-textual references, and elaborates on the cultural characteristics of a past environment; in this regard, it also resolves textual or linguistic ambiguities. But, most of all, it sheds light on the text's implicit assumptions and silent innuendoes. It discloses the intellectual environment surrounding the author and his readership, since it illuminates the background knowledge of their communication. In this regard, the critical commentary becomes one with the ancient tradition.4 The dangers

2 1982: 252.
4 Cf. also FRH F, pp. 52–3, which elaborates on this with regard to historical fragments. This is not the place to open Pandora's box and embark on an in-depth analysis of the vexed relation between text and commentary. Earlier notions 'against interpretation' (e.g. S. Sontag, Against Interpretation and Other Essays, 4th edn., New York 1964), notably the belief that only the reader may provide a viable commentary (in his or her head, that is), have lost much plausibility.
associated with such an enterprise are obvious: redundancy is one, overinterpretation another; and behind the façade of acquaintance with the ancient authorities lurks the temptation of self-importance. HCP is free from any of these misfortunes. Frank Walbank not only mastered the skill of critical commentary writing, but his commentary itself has set the standards for generations. It is an exemplum maiorum, a permanent reminder of what has been achieved, and can be achieved, by means of true scholarship.

It was perhaps HCP Volume 1 that challenged its author in his dealings with selection and subjectivity more than anything else. Volume 1 covers Books 1–6. These books include a prelude to the actual topic of Polybius’ universal history, famously announced as ‘the fifty-three years [from 220 to 167] in which the Romans succeeded in bringing almost the whole inhabited world under them’. Before he turned to this, Polybius ‘thought it necessary to prefix this book [the first] and the next’ (1. 3. 8), in order that ‘no one after becoming engrossed in the narrative proper may find himself at a loss, and ask by what counsel and trusting to what power and resources the Romans embarked on that enterprise which has made them lords over land and sea in our part of the world’ (1. 3. 9). The grand scheme is clear. Books 1 and 2 were designed to provide a preliminary sketch, while the proper narrative commenced in Book 3. This preface was necessary—at least this is what Polybius thought—because the Greeks were not ‘well acquainted with the two states which disputed the empire of the world’. This led him ‘to deal... with the previous history [of the Romans and the Carthaginians] and to narrate what purpose guided them and on what sources of strength they relied, in entering upon such a vast undertaking’ (1. 3. 7).

Polybius framed a new technical expression for this preface, η προκατασκευή, which signifies the ‘preparation’ or ‘introduction’ to the main history (the κατασκευή, HCP i. 216). He generally uses the term prokataskeuē for the contents of Books 1 and 2, both throughout the books themselves, when he refers to ‘the brief summary of events included in these introductory books’ (1. 13. 1), and in later sections of his Histories. For instance, in Books 4 and 5, when the reader is reminded of events described in the preface, he is referred to the prokataskeuē (4. 1. 9; 5. 111. 10). On the first occurrence of prokataskeuē in the text (1. 3. 10), HCP volume 1 lists other references in the Polybian text and informs the reader that, even though the word is a new term for an

Assmann and Gladigow 1995 is one of the most important single steps towards a reconceptualization of the genre; see also Most 1999, and Gibson and Kraus 2002.

5 Plb. 1. 1. 5. References to Polybius and translations are based on W. R. Paton’s Loeb edn. (first published 1922, latest repr. 2005), unless otherwise stated.

6 1. 3. 10; 1. 13. 1–8; 2. 14. 1; 2. 16. 14; 2. 37. 2–3; 4. 1. 9; 5. 111. 10. Cf. Glockmann and Helms, s.v. προκατασκευή; Petzold 1969: 20–5.
introduction, ‘the custom of appending introductions was already usual’ (44). Walbank refers the reader to Thucydides Book 1, whose *Archaeology* (1. 2–22) may well have formed a most eminent and most influential introduction to monographic history-writing in antiquity.\(^7\)

Later occurrences of the term *prokataskeuē*, all of them in Books 1–5, receive no specific discussion in *HCP* Volume 1, with one notable exception. In 2. 37. 2, towards the end of his Roman preface, Polybius remarks that he has now ‘given a continuous sketch, suitable to the preliminary plan of my book, of events in Sicily, Libya and so forth . . . down to the second war between the Romans and Carthaginians. This, as I stated at the outset [1. 3. 1–2], is the date at which I propose to begin my own narrative.’ Yet, as the text unfolds, Polybius turns ‘to the affairs of Greece, so that everywhere alike I may bring down this preliminary or introductory sketch to the same date’ (2. 37. 3). In other words, Polybius closes the Roman *prokataskeuē* in 2. 37. 2 with the promise to turn to his genuine topic. However, in the next sentence (3) he begins to append a lengthy survey of the earlier history of Macedon and Achaea (2. 37. 3–70. 8). This is remarkable in the sense that it presents a significant rupture in the text. It also contradicts the programmatic statement on the nature of the *prokataskeuē* in 1. 3. 7–10 (cited above), which was conceived of as an introduction necessary because of Hellenic ignorance of Roman and Carthaginian histories prior to the Hannibalic War.

This contradiction has triggered a lively debate on the Hellenic *prokataskeuē* and its place in the *Histories*. Notably, Matthias Gelzer and Richard Laqueur have argued that Polybius inserted the Achaean introduction (2. 37. 3–70. 8) only towards the end of his life (after 146).\(^8\) Gelzer in particular assumed that the second half of Book 2 was not envisaged at all when the *Histories* were composed. On a similar note, he suggested that references to the contents of the Hellenic introduction (such as 1. 13. 5) were also later additions.\(^9\) Gelzer surmounts the obvious difficulty created by those references by proposing the hypothesis of an early Polybian work which was composed in support of the propaganda conducted for the return of the Achaean exiles after Pydna. According to Gelzer, that work was later incorporated into the main history, along with a series of cross-references and anticipatory notes.\(^10\) This view prompted a lengthy response in *HCP* i. 215–16. Its main objective was to counter the hypothesis of a later insertion. Walbank points to various sections of the introductory chapters that imply the continued existence of the Achaean League at the time of the composition of Books 1 and 2.\(^11\) This argument

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\(^{7}\) Cf. Luraghi 2000, Tsamakis 1995, esp. 20–63; also S. Hornblower 1991: 4–56, which replaces Gomme’s earlier interpretation of the *Archaeology*.


\(^{9}\) Gelzer 1940a: 28–9, 30–3.

\(^{10}\) Ibid.: 33–5.

\(^{11}\) Plb. 2. 38. 4; 2. 42. 2–6; 2. 62. 4.
alone makes it difficult to accept the hypothesis of a later insertion, and there seems to be no compelling reason to revive it. However, this solution still provokes a certain discomfort, since Walbank does not explain the break in the narrative at 2. 37. 2–3 as noted above, when Polybius closes the Roman introduction and promises to turn to his own narrative only to continue with the Hellenic introduction. HCP Volume 1 leaves this incongruity without comment.

The issue is difficult to resolve, but the terminology in 2. 37 may hint at a better understanding of this crucial passage. While the account of Roman affairs prior to the Hannibalic War is again referred to as prokataskeuē (2. 37, 2), the history which follows is announced as syntaxis (2. 37. 3) and, for the first time, as apodeiktikē historia (ibid.). As Walbank has shown as early as 1945 and again in HCP Volume 1, Polybius uses apodeiktikos here to mean ‘supported by full reasons’, which highlights apodeiktikē historia as ‘detailed, well-argued history’. The term thus opposes the ‘apodeictic’ narrative of the main theme and the preparatory account that consists of mere assertions (cf. 4. 40. 1) or, as of this point, the prokataskeuē of Books 1 and 2. The apodeictic narrative is concerned with a fully-fledged, elaborate methodology, tracing causes and effects. In contrast, the prokataskeuē is kephalaioédēs, ‘summarily as introduction’ or, literally, ‘according to head topics’ (cf. 1. 13. 7; 2. 1. 4). Its summary nature does not allow for an in-depth analysis, and it may not even leave room for a critical review of other historians, let alone the inclusion of material of a tragic character. In short, apodeiktikos and its opposite, kephalaioédēs, refer to distinct methodologies that are applied to different sections of the Histories. Polybius endorses this idea in 2. 37, at the end of the Roman introduction. He does so, most likely, to remind the reader of the different texture of the introductory books and the main narrative.

The concluding remarks of Book 2 again highlight the conceptual approach towards history in the prokataskeuē. Polybius stresses that the topical and methodological scheme of the Histories made it necessary ‘to make clearly known to everyone the state of affairs in Macedonia and Greece’ (2. 71. 2). The term for ‘making (or being) clearly known’ applied here and elsewhere (2. 37. 6; cf. also 1. 5. 4, cited below) is γινώρμοιν ύπάρχειαν, which refers to a common

12 HCP i. 216; Walbank 1945a: 16, Sacks 1981: 171–86, Mauersberger, s.v. ἀποδεικτικὸς.
14 Cf. HCP i. 181. The criticism of Phylarchus in the Hellenic introduction (2. 56–63) is an exceptional case. As Walbank has indicated, Polybius’ polemic against him was not only inspired by Phylarchus’ ethos as ‘tragic’ historian but also by his partisanship for Cleomenes against Aratus. Thus, the digression is a powerful political statement, for which there was no other place than the Hellenic introduction. See also John Marincola’s contribution in this volume.
knowledge that is generally agreed upon and free from disputes and doubts.\textsuperscript{15} The Hellenic introduction is thus consistent with the historiographical principles spelled out for the \textit{prokataskeuē}. Despite its erratic positioning, it is well in line with the grand scheme of an introductory section that is written programmatically and without in-depth analyses of the causation of events, and that presents the reader with an (allegedly) undisputed narrative of events. Polybius endorse this approach both at the beginning and towards the end of the Hellenic introduction.

The Roman \textit{prokataskeuē} is less troublesome, at least as far as its place in the \textit{Histories} is concerned. The section deals with affairs in the western Mediterranean before 220. It starts from ‘the first occasion on which the Romans crossed the sea from Italy’, an event that, according to Polybius, took place in the 129th Olympiad (264–1, that is) and that followed immediately on the close of Timaeus’ \textit{History}.\textsuperscript{16} It is clear from this announcement that the Roman \textit{prokataskeuē} covered the period of the First Punic War (1. 10–63), the Mercenary War (1. 64–88),\textsuperscript{17} as well as the events that led to the Hannibalic War (2. 1–36), a period of about forty-five years. This is indeed how Polybius summarizes the contents at the beginning of Book 2 and again in 2. 37 towards the end of the Roman introduction. But this preparatory outline receives yet another introduction: after a succinct description of the Gallic Wars of the fourth century and the expansion of Roman power in Italy (1. 6. 1–4), Polybius relates the events that led to the Tarentine War, Pyrrhus’ engagement in Italy, and the conflict between Messana and Rhegium (1. 6. 5–9. 8). This opening section is designed to extrapolate a clear starting-point, that is, a beginning that is generally agreed upon and recognized, and also ‘self-apparent from the events’ (1. 5. 4).\textsuperscript{18}

It is ironic that of all possible candidates for such an undisputed starting-point, Polybius picks the most controversial one possible—the Roman crossing to Sicily, an incident which he intends to relate without comment so that his narrative will not be discredited by disputes and digressions early in the

\textsuperscript{15} Mauersberger, \textit{s.v. γνωρίζω}.

\textsuperscript{16} The crossing would be that of Ap. Claudius Caudex (cos. 264), which seems to have occurred in the late summer, \textit{HCP} i. 46. Timaeus has now been re-edited by Craige Champion in \textit{FGrHist} 566, who also offers a fully-flended discussion of the close of his \textit{History}.

\textsuperscript{17} On this, see the contribution by Bruce Gibson in this volume.

\textsuperscript{18} The passage deserves to be quoted in full: ‘I shall adopt as the starting-point of this book the first occasion on which the Romans crossed the sea from Italy. This follows immediately on the close of Timaeus’ \textit{History}, and took place in the 129th Olympiad. Thus we must first state how and when the Romans established their position in Italy, and what prompted them afterwards to cross to Sicily, the first country outside Italy where they set foot. The actual cause of the crossing must be stated without comment; for if I were to seek the cause of the cause and so on, my whole work would have no clear starting-point and principle. The starting-point must be an era generally agreed upon and recognized (ὁμολογηθεὶς καὶ γνωρίζωμεν ἀρχή παρ’ ἀπαί), and one self-apparent from the events, even if this involves my going back a little in point of date and giving a summary of intervening occurrences.’ (1. 5. 1–4)
text (cf. 1. 5. 5). Hence, the Roman prokataskeuē starts with a historiographical big bang. In order to establish a genuine and undisputed beginning, Polybius relates the occasion and motives of the first Roman crossing from Italy with an armed force (1. 7. 1–12. 4). But he does so in a highly opinionated fashion, according to events which he had selected as significant in their context and crucial for his approach, and he does so with no reference whatsoever to alternative interpretations, let alone to the contradictory accounts of other authorities.

As mentioned above, the principle of including an opening section might have been inspired by Thucydides. But upon a closer look at what follows after the Roman crossing from Italy, it becomes obvious that Polybius’ prokataskeuē has little in common with Thucydides. The very nature of a universal history set a distinct tone. In his attempt to disentangle the interconnectedness of events that enable the reader to grasp a sense of the whole world, Polybius’ conceptual approach differs from that of Thucydides, whose aim was to disclose the mechanics of bipolarity.19 This difference is also reflected in the number of pages each devotes to the introduction. While Polybius’ introduction fills nearly one and a half books (some 155 Loeb pages, excluding the Hellenic introduction), Thucydides’ treatment of a similar time span comprises only 28 chapters (1. 89–117, 23 Loeb pages). So, despite his previous commitment to provide the reader with an introduction written in a kephalaioïdēs style, summarily and according to key themes, Polybius’ actual text is remarkably detailed and, at times, long-winded. This leads to a third major difference between Thucydides’ and Polybius’ introductory sections, which is also the most eminent one. For unlike Thucydides, whose Pentekontaetia was an unprecedented attempt to compose a narrative on the topic, Polybius’ enterprise was by no means without predecessors. The First Punic War had been treated by historians who had plenty of first-hand information, including personal experience. Their histories were both an invaluable source for Polybius and a challenge.

The most important sources were of course Fabius Pictor and Philinus.20 Scholars have long been puzzled over which of the two historians Polybius followed as his principal source in any given passage. This exercise has

19 The locus classicus is 1. 1, when Thucydides justifies his perception of the Peloponnesian War as great and noteworthy above all, ‘inferring this from the fact that both powers were at their best in their preparations for war in every way, and seeing the rest of the Hellenes taking sides with the one state or the other, some at once, others in contemplation’. On this, Fliess 1966, and Strauss and Lebow 1991 are still useful. Cf. now also Eckstein 2003, whose reading of Thucydides’ interstate theory flirts with neo-realist paradigms. On Polybius’ universal approach, see Pédech 1964: 496–514, Sacks 1981: 96–121, Marincola 1997: 37; cf. also Champion 2004a: 2: ‘The unification of world events under Rome’s aegis required a new kind of history, universal in scope.’
20 The most recent editions of both are those of Hans Beck and Uwe Walter in FRH I2 (Fabius) and Craige Champion in FGrHist 174 (Philinus). Both editions include extensive
attracted scholars of all ages and—naturally—it has produced competing and often conflicting views on Polybius’ use of his sources.21 There is no need to flog a dead horse here and offer another precarious exercise in Quellenforschung. As Gelzer pointed out long ago, Polybius’ Roman introduction was not a mechanically constructed patchwork of easily separable material from Fabius and Philinus.22 For instance, Gelzer has shown that when Polybius mentions all Roman consuls for the years 263 to 250, this information as such does not indicate the use of Fabius Pictor (and, in turn, the absence of consul names does not point to the use of Philinus).23 Walbank has developed this idea further. In ‘Polybius, Philinus, and the First Punic War’ he stressed the interweaving of two inextricably connected strands in the Polybian tradition.24 This was not a new aperçu, but Walbank’s analysis also, and more generally, raised a red flag about Polybius’ independence from his sources in the Roman introduction. He demonstrated that many passages that seem essentially Polybian in character may in fact derive more or less as they stand from his predecessors.25 Walbank concludes that long sections in Book 1 may go back directly to either Fabius or, more extensively, Philinus, whose didactic history does not [appear] dissimilar in temperament26 to Polybius.

These observations, if taken seriously, cast additional light on our understanding of Polybius’ Roman introduction. The section is methodologically and conceptually unique, a historiographical piece sui generis. It is designed to set the stage for a universal history, but it actually relates the conflict between Rome and Carthage prior to the Hannibalic War. The material is arranged kephalaiōdōs, but the text is lengthy and significantly detailed. And, while the narrative is clearly not apodeiktikos but rather opinionated and selective, it is seemingly at the mercy of its sources.

From 1.20 on, Polybius relates when and how the Romans first built naval forces. The incident, in the consulship of Cn. Cornelius Scipio and C. Dullius in 260, is described as a great turning-point that marks a defining moment in the course of the First Punic War (cf. 2. 1. 2). When the Romans saw that the war was dragging on, the senate decided to build a fleet of 100 quinqueremes and 20 triremes (1. 20. 9–10). Before the building programme and the training of the crews were complete, the consul appointed to the command of the naval forces, Cn. Cornelius Scipio, embarked on a mission to Lipara to capture the island with the support of certain traitors. But the plan fell through. The

bibliographies, biographical accounts, and commentaries on individual fragments. Cf. also Ambaglio 2005.

21 e.g. Pédech 1964; Lehmann 1974. The most recent contribution is the volume edited by Schepens and Bollansée 2005. It contains up-to-date discussions on Polybius and all of his eminent sources.

22 Gelzer 1933: 133. 23 Ibid.: 133–42. 24 Walbank 1945a: 1.

Roman armada was captured and Scipio was taken prisoner (1. 21. 1–8), which left the bulk of the fleet still in Ostia without a commander. Only now, as Polybius reports, was C. Duilius appointed to the naval command. Once at sea, he trounced a Carthaginian naval contingent near Mylae, landed on Sicily, and drove out the Carthaginians from the area around Segesta (1. 22. 1–24. 2). Duilius’ stunning success is said to have been due to a technical revolution. For someone (τις: 1. 22. 3) had the idea of equipping the Roman vessels with boarding planks—the famous ravens—which allowed for a novel fighting method much more advantageous to the Romans than the traditional ‘ram and sink’. At least this is what Polybius says.27

This account is not unchallenged. For instance, the role of the ravens has long been questioned. Their impact on naval warfare in and after 260 was most likely much less significant than Polybius suggests.28 But there are other, and more profound, objections. Epigraphic evidence, as well as fragments of the Roman annalistic tradition, offer a different outline.29 Their version is complemented by Dio/Zonaras, who provides the only coherent narrative, besides that of Polybius, to survive.30 The Roman tradition sets a different tone. In Dio, Duilius is in command of the naval forces from the beginning,31 and it is Duilius, not Scipio, who is credited with the training of the crews and the invention of the corvi.32 The battles of Mylae and near

27 Esp. 1. 23. 6: ‘When the Roman crews boarded by means of the ravens and attacked them hand to hand on deck, some Carthaginians were cut down and others surrendered from dismay at what was going on, the battle having become just like a fight on land.’

28 HCP i. 77–8 gives the relevant literature on the topic. Later discussions include Sordi 1967, who argues against the importance Polybius attributes to the corvi; cf. also Poznanski 1979, Lazenby 1996: 68–71.


30 Dio fr. 11. 16–18 / Zonar. 8. 10–11.

31 Zonar. 8. 11.

32 Zonar. 8. 11; cf. Fron. Str. 2. 3. 24; Flor. 1. 18. 9–10; De vir. ill. 38. 1. Lazenby 1996: 70, is aware of these sources, but he goes out of his way to dissociate Duilius from the corvi, because Polybius doesn’t mention him in this regard: ‘Unfortunately he [Polybius] does not say who suggested it [the idea of boarding-ladders], but it may have been a Syracusan, perhaps even Archimedes. However, one should not rule out the possibility that a Roman was the inventor.’
Segesta are presented as his personal achievements (Polybius does not mention Duilius with regard to these events), while Scipio’s attempt to seize Lipara is portrayed as an unauthorized, and in fact foolish, expedition.33 Dio’s narrative, along with scattered evidence from the annalistic tradition, enables us to reassess Polybius’. For once, we are in a position to compare accounts and evaluate their coherence and credibility. It has been argued elsewhere that the Roman tradition as preserved in Dio/Zonaras is trustworthy and in fact superior to Polybius’ version, which not only suffers from a lack of plausibility but also from internal contradictions.34 A close reading of the Roman tradition reveals a remarkably coherent alternative, an alternative that sheds a different light on the events as outlined by Polybius: not Scipio, but Duilius was in charge of the fleet.35 As consul with the naval provincia, he oversaw the technical equipment and the training of the crews.36 And it was due to his expertise that the Roman fleet fought a first successful naval encounter with the Carthaginians and drove them away from Segesta.37 As mentioned above, it has therefore been suggested that our picture of these events needs thorough revision, which, consequently, brings new light to the understanding of a defining moment in the history of the First Punic War. But, with regard to historiography, what are the ramifications of this for our understanding of Polybius’ prokataskeuē and the veracity of the section in general?

Both Fabius Pictor and Philinus treated the events in question at some length, but it is not always easy to see to what extent their opposed prejudices coloured their accounts.38 As far as Scipio’s disaster near Lipara is concerned, the Roman tradition accuses the Carthaginians of betrayal and treason;

33 Mylae and Segesta: Zonar. 8. 11. For Scipio’s premature strike on Lipara, see 8. 10: ‘The latter [Scipio], neglecting the war on land, which had fallen to his lot, sailed with the ships which he had to Lipara, on the understanding that it was to be betrayed to him. But this was a ruse on the part of the Carthaginians.’
34 It is surprising that Scipio put to sea with only seventeen ships to sail to Messana and then to Lipara before the bulk of his fleet was ready. Plb. 1. 20. 5 makes it clear that the Carthaginians by that time ‘maintained without any trouble the command of the sea’, which makes Scipio’s action as consul with the naval command (Polybius) most questionable. If appointed to the naval command, there would have been no need to rush. A thorough revision of these events, contra the Polybius-based communis opinio, has been suggested by Bleckmann 2002: 113–31, and Beck 2005: 22–5. Cf. also Kondratieff 2004.
35 This is also suggested by the Duilius inscription, ll. 5–6 (cited above).
36 Again, see ll. 7–8 of the Duilius inscription (cited above), which explicitly credit Duilius with this.
37 Cf. ll. 1–5 of the Duilius inscription, which refers to his advance on Sicily. Unlike Zonaras, the inscription places Duilius’ land engagement on Sicily before the naval encounter near Mylae. Most likely, this follows the formulaic order terra marique, which also added to a climax of Duilius’ actions as listed in the inscription (i.e. the sea battle as his most memorable achievement comes at the end): see Degrassi’s commentary on Inscr. It. 13. 3. 69 and Walbank, HCP i. 80.
38 Cf. Polybius’ famous verdict on Fabius’ and Philinus’ partisanship in 1. 14. 1–3, on which see Walbank, HCP i. 26–35, 64–6, and two seminal articles by Gelzer 1933 and 1934. Cf. also FRH I2 1 F 27 (comm.); Marincola 1997: 171.
allegedly, the consul was taken prisoner during certain negotiations. Polybius, too, implies that Scipio’s mission was based on false promises (1. 21. 5; cf. 8. 35. 9), but he refrains from allegations, let alone accusations, against the Carthaginians. This observation points to Philinus rather than Fabius, who most likely will have promoted the version of Carthaginian infidelity. Polybius’ use of Philinus may also be supported by his emphasis on elements of surprise and unexpected turns throughout that passage. The opening remark in 1. 20. 9 that the senate decided to build a war fleet only in 260, when the Romans saw that the war was dragging on, sets the stage for a genuine turning-point in Polybius’ account and enhances its dramaturgy. But it also eclipses the point that a massive Roman fleet of more than 100 ships had already been built and was in use as early as 263. Polybius simply ignored this, most likely to increase the narrative tension of the passage. In 1. 23. 1, he pinpoints the peripeteia that had befallen Scipio, and in 1. 24. 1 it is stated that the naval success at Mylae (Duilius is not mentioned by name) came paradoxos, ‘contrary to all expectation’. The stress on paradox, sensational and unexpected reversals of fortune, as well as the prominent part played in human affairs by tyche seem to have been characteristic of Philinus’ work. Again, this was demonstrated long ago by Walbank, who deems Philinus’ history an outstanding contribution to the Hellenistic tragic school. It is thus possible to reinforce the proposal that the events of 260 as related by Polybius stem largely and widely from Philinus. But there is at least one important exception. For neither Philinus nor Fabius will have changed the provinciae of the consuls. This must have been a Polybian ingredient. What appears as a minor or maybe a cosmetic manipulation of a detailed piece of information had, however, huge ramifications for the overall account in that section. Not only was Cn. Cornelius Scipio portrayed in a more favourable light than he deserved but the course of events was tweaked and turned into a major peripeteia. Under the

39 Liv. Per. 17; Val. Max. 6. 6. 2; Flor. 1. 18. 11; Eutr. 2. 20; Oros. 4. 7. 7–9; Polyæn. 6. 16. 5.
40 Cf. Walbank, HCP i. 77.
41 Piso FRH I 7 F 32 (with commentary and Forsythe 1994: 361–2) relates a shipbuilding programme in the consulship of M. Valerius Messalla (cos. 263); cf. also Ined. Vat. FGrHist 839 F 4. Both sources are discussed by Thiel 1954: 70–1 and, more recently, Steinby 2007. A collegium of duoviri navales classis ornandae rei publicae causa is attested as early as 311: Liv. 9. 30. 4.
42 e.g. Walbank, HCP i. 16–26 (a classic discussion).
43 Walbank 1945a: 11–13, contra Gelzer 1933.
44 Bleckmann 2002: 134 and n. 1 believes that the provinciae were changed by a writer after Fabius, most likely by someone who represented pro-Scipionic family traditions. But who would that be? Polybius is notorious for his pro-Scipionic tendencies (as Bleckmann’s own analysis reveals: 131–9). The switch is best ascribed to him.
smokescreen of the *prokataskeuē*’s conceptual approach, Polybius took the liberty to promote this version as something that was common knowledge.

While the year 260 is highlighted as a *peripeteia* in the First Punic War, the technique of singling out individual years and marking them as great turning-points is by no means limited to that one campaigning season. Indeed, it is a prominent feature throughout the *prokataskeuē*. The naval battle of Cape Ecnomus in 256 (1. 26. 1–28. 14), to be followed by Regulus’ expedition to Africa (1. 30–4), is another major caesura in the narrative, as is the battle of Drepana in 249 (1. 49. 6–51. 12). As Walbank has demonstrated, Polybius’ source in both cases seems to have been Philinus who was either himself a contemporary of the events or drew on sources from eyewitness accounts.\(^{46}\) Both descriptions reveal a significant interest in battle formations and tactical manoeuvring which underlines their importance in Polybius’ grand scheme of events. In Regulus’ case, his tragic fate even invited a longer reflection on the *peripeteia* of Roman and Carthaginian affairs that was brought about by the consul and by Xanthippus respectively (1. 35). While Regulus illustrates the turn of history wrought by fortune, Carthage was (temporarily) restored to confidence through the aid of a single man (cf. *HCP* i. 92–4).

It was recently argued by Bruno Bleckmann that Polybius’ focus on the narrative exposition of ‘big events’ and turning-points hardly reflects the realities of the bitter, exhausting, and tenacious hostilities that had worn down both parties in the 250s and earlier years of the 240s.\(^{47}\) Bleckmann demonstrates that Polybius’ tendency to overemphasize the importance of single events also includes attempts to present the years preceding such key moments as relatively eventless. The narrative strategy seems to have been that of a ‘calm before the storm’, i.e. the reader’s anticipation of a major conflict is fuelled by the insinuation that both parties refrained from fighting in order to prepare a major strike in the following year. For instance, in Polybius’ account of the campaigning season of 257 (before Ecnomus) the naval engagement off Tyndaris is portrayed as a minor skirmish, and C. Atilius Regulus’ operations on Sicily are presented as ‘nothing worthy of mention’, as both parties spent their time ‘in minor operations of no significance’ (1. 25. 6).

In contrast, Dio/Zonaras relates that the Roman fleet, after the Tyndaris encounter, waged a full-scale attack on Lipara to capture the island.\(^{48}\) The Roman tradition also claims that Atilius Regulus sailed as far as Malta and plundered the harbour.\(^{49}\) Both references may be authentic: towards the end of

\(^{46}\) Walbank, *HCP* i. 85–9, 113–17.


\(^{49}\) Naevius fr. 32 Strzelecki: *transit Melitam | Romanus exercitus insulam integram urit | populatur, vastat, rem hostium concinnat*; cf. Oros. 4. 8. 5; Bleckmann 2002: 158.
258, the senate freed funds to inaugurate an expensive ship-building programme, which was designed both to expand and intensify the warfare at sea.\textsuperscript{50} Exploring new sea routes and widening the maritime horizon, the expedition to Malta, the most southern spot to which a Roman fleet had ever sailed until that date, would have fitted into that strategy. Upon his return Atilius Regulus celebrated a \textit{triumphus navalis} over the Carthaginians, which proves Polybius’ account of a dull campaign season wrong.\textsuperscript{51}

The conceptual approach to the events covered in the \textit{prokataškeuē} allowed for such a pin-pointing; in fact, the arrangement of the material in a \textit{kephalaiōdēs} manner made it necessary to focus on peaks and turns. But at the same time, the information related in the introduction exceeds what is announced as a summary introduction; it often departs from the principle of ‘head topics’. Several passages are extremely elaborate and filled with numerous details that obfuscate rather than sharpen the narrative agenda of a topical peak. It is in those sections that Polybius’ account seems to be particularly prone to unreliability. The evaluation of the narrative on the consular years of 260 and 257 suggests as much.

The final years of the First Punic War point in the same direction. In a famous passage, Polybius claims that the end of the war was not precipitated by mutual exhaustion in the fighting on land. For ‘both sides employed every device and effort that the siege [at Mount Eryx] demanded. Both endured every kind of privation and both essayed every means of attack and every variety of action. At length not, as Fabius Pictor says, owing to their exhaustion and sufferings, but like two uninjured and invincible champions, they left the contest drawn. For before either could get the better of the other . . . the war had been decided by other means.’\textsuperscript{52} Despite the decision of the people’s assemblies to withdraw from large-scale naval enterprises in 247,\textsuperscript{53} which by that time had involved heavy losses and devoured enormous sums from the state treasury, the senate in 242 decided once again to ‘court the prospect of using sea-forces’ (1. 58. 2). Polybius sets this decision in stark contrast to the previous maxim of avoiding the sea. It was due to this reversal, so he stresses, that Rome ultimately prevailed over the Carthaginians, since the latter had neglected their naval forces for many a year, ‘owing to their having never expected the Romans to dispute the sea with them again’ (1. 61. 5; cf. 1. 58. 3).\textsuperscript{54} Rome’s return to the sea is an unexpected move that marks the final \textit{peripeteia} on the road to victory.

\textsuperscript{51} Inscr. It. 13. 1. 77; Itgenshorst 2005: no. 133.
\textsuperscript{52} Plb. 1. 58. 4–6 = Fabius Pictor \textit{FRH I}² 1 F 28.
\textsuperscript{53} Plb. 1. 55. 2; cf. Zonar. 8. 16.
\textsuperscript{54} Polybius’ account of the years 247 to 242 (1. 55 to 1. 59) indeed refers to warfare on land in Sicily exclusively.
This picture is widely accepted among scholars, although the tradition is not unchallenged. The annalistic tradition as preserved in Dio/Zonaras contains various references that point to a high frequency of sea raids that were undertaken by Roman privateers in the years after 247. Most prominently, a lengthy passage on a naval encounter in the harbour of Hippo in North Africa documents that the fighting at sea resembled some of the major operations in the decade before, especially in terms of the numbers of combatants involved. These manoeuvres continued and, in fact, increased in the years before 242. It has been argued that the vessels used during those campaigns were maintained by private entrepreneurs rather than the state treasury, and that the crews were signed on from privateers and pirates, who looked for plunder and booty. This may indeed have been the case. But it is striking to note that Dio/Zonaras ascribes an interesting sidelight to those operations. He notes that ‘by the ravaging of Africa on the part of the private citizens who were managing the ships, they were no longer willing to neglect the sea, but again got together a fleet’. In other words: when the Romans ‘officially’ returned to the sea in 242, this was not so much due to a deadlock in the war on land and the general exhaustion that was provoked by it, but was triggered by a series of successful encounters fought by Roman ‘privateers’, whose victories instilled the voting assemblies with new confidence at sea. Polybius’ notorious picture of Rome’s capacity to mobilize its resources and overcome the miseries of exhaustion—a capacity that is ultimately explained by Rome’s moral superiority—seems to be imperfect at best. The annalistic tradition offers a different explanation for the Roman return to the sea, and it is noteworthy that Dio’s account rests on elaborate historical contextualization rather than on moral preconceptions.

When C. Lutatius Catulus was elected consul for 242 Roman hopes were put to the test. Polybius makes it clear that Lutatius’ actions were determined by speed. He unexpectedly (paradoxòs: 1. 59. 9) appeared off the coast of Sicily,

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55 Zonar. 8. 16; cf. Fron. Str. 1. 5. 6, who credits C. Duilius with a successful raid in portu Syracusano (probably to be emended to in portu Hippocrítano, i.e. Hippou Acra: Lazenby 1996: 147). The presence of the famous consul of 260 during those campaigns raises doubts about their strictly ‘private’ character. Note that a flotilla of only 20 quinqueremes would have required a crew of c. 6,000 men.

56 Cf. MRR i. 216–17, which assembles the evidence for various operations at sea. Zonaras’ account (8. 16) makes it clear that operations such as the one against Hippo were by no means extraordinary or isolated affairs.


58 8. 16.


60 Note e.g. the didactic references to Roman ψυχομαχίαι in 1. 58. 7–59. 6; cf. Bleckmann 2002: 212.
Polybius’ Roman prokataskeuē

‘allowed no time to pass uselessly’ (11) and, believing that it was only by a sea battle that the war could be finished, readied his oarsmen ‘in a very short time’ (12). Polybius’ account insinuates a dramatically accelerated course of events that leads to the final show-down at the Aegates Islands. According to the alternative tradition of Dio/Zonaras, upon his arrival on Sicily the consul was wounded during the preparations for the siege of Drepana, which posed a significant delay to the next steps. In the course of events, the actual sea battle is less dramatic in Dio, and its outcome is a much narrower victory. The Roman tradition again takes into account various details and some detours that add to a less streamlined course of events. On the other hand, Polybius’ version seems once again oversimplified, focusing on the sensation of Rome’s military and moral achievement.

After his victory near the Aegates Islands, C. Lutatius demanded the surrender of arms and deserters, but when Hamilcar refused, the consul did not press these demands and readily consented to negotiate a peace treaty. Polybius reiterates the exhaustion motive, stressing that Lutatius’ readiness for peace was triggered by the fact ‘that the Romans were by this time worn out and enfeebled by the war’ (1. 62. 7). But when the peace terms were referred to Rome and put before the people’s assembly, the people did not accept them and sent ten commissioners to examine the matter in the next spring (241). Polybius offers no explanation for this delay, which seems to be odd, at best, in the light of omnipresent weariness. The historical reasons for the rejection of the first draft of the peace have been debated since the days of Mommsen: it has been suggested that the procedure of sending legati indicates a break with the nobility, or that the passage cloaks the activities of the equites who pressed for harsher economic terms to get higher interest on their loans to the state treasury. More recently, it has been argued that the idea of sending a group of ten emissaries was indicative of the aristocracy’s attitude that they should, rather than allow Lutatius to monopolize victory, divide it among the leading families that had provided holders of imperium over the past two decades.

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62 According to Zonar. 8. 17, the Romans prevailed only because the Carthaginian vessels ‘were impeded by the fact that they also carried freight, grain and money’. Diodorus, based on Philinus, also reports a close victory (24. 11).
63 Plb. 1. 63. 1–3; cf. Lazenby 1996: 158.
64 For relevant references, see Walbank, HCP i. 127; cf. Hoyos 1998: 120 and n. 8.
65 The names of the emissaries are unknown except for that of their leader, Q. Lutatius Cerco (cos. 241), brother of the consul of the previous year, C. Lutatius Catulus, MRR i. 219. Hence prosopography falls short. Although the people first rejected the terms, the embassy of the decem viri does not seem to have made substantial changes to Lutatius’ proposal. Hence, there was no controversy over the contents of the peace but rather over the formal arrangement. The procedure of sending delegates anticipates that towards the end of the Hannibalic War, when the senate stipulated ut P. Scipio ex decem legatorum sententia pacem cum populo Carthaginensi...
Be that as it may, in historiographical terms, *HCP* Volume 1 bases the Polybian account ‘no doubt... on Fabius’ (127) and links it with the latter’s thesis of ‘popular greed’ (ibid.), which had decided the issue of helping the Mamertini at the beginning of the war. Fabius Pictor’s text for both instances, at the outbreak of the war and on its conclusion, is, of course, lost, which puts Walbank’s assumption in a plausible realm, yet it none the less remains unverifiable Quellenforschung. It is striking to note that the greed motive is in fact related in the sources. When Dio/Zonaras narrates the events that led to the peace treaty with Carthage, he relates that the people rejected the first draft of terms because ‘they could no longer restrain themselves, and hoped to possess all of Africa’. 66 That is to say, in Dio’s account, the Roman forces are by no means exhausted, nor is the consul’s desire for peace driven by the hardships of a war that was dragging on for more than two decades. Instead, Dio points to Rome’s eagerness to maximize war spoils and, if necessary, prolong hostilities for the sake of a more profitable peace arrangement. Once again, Dio/Zonaras presents the reader with an alternative account that is not altogether unconvincing, whereas Polybius’ version, forceful as it may be, suffers from internal inconsistencies.

By the time of *HCP* Volume 1, Polybius’ superiority over Cassius Dio and the remnants of the annalistic tradition in his work was axiomatic in classical scholarship. It was based on one of the fundamental tenets of ancient history that sources more contemporary to the events they describe are credited with more weight than later authorities, though not uncritically. There was also a widespread consensus that Polybius’ skills were intellectually and methodologically preferable to those of Cassius Dio and, with regard to the first quarter of his history, his Byzantine epitomizer, Zonaras.67 The latter’s record was mostly disregarded. In only a very few instances does *HCP* Volume 1 refer the reader to the account of Zonaras, while references to Cassius Dio are even less frequent.68 This prominent view was only recently subjected to thorough revision. The in-depth analysis of Dio/Zonaras’ narrative on the First Punic War by Bleckmann reveals striking similarities between Dio and a variety of non-annalistic source materials, including epigraphic evidence. Bleckmann is

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66 8. 17, implicitly accepted by Hoyos 1998: 119.
68 Index references to Zonaras and Cassius Dio are rare: five and two, respectively. On at least one occasion, *HCP* Vol. 1 finds Dio’s account preferable to that of Polybius (‘quite credible’: 168).

*quibus legibus ei videretur faceret* (‘that Publius Scipio on the advice of ten envoys should make peace with the Carthaginians upon such terms as he saw fit’ Liv. 30. 43. 4). On this, see Eckstein 1987a: 255–66 and Beck 2005: 352–4, who point to the nobility’s desire to de-monopolize Scipio’s fame.
able to extrapolate traces of a tradition that is not necessarily annalistic in a rigid sense of the concept, but which preserves scattered pieces of contemporary evidence from the third and second centuries, as well as historiographical information from both annalistic writers and other authors. Revisiting this stream of the tradition, Bleckmann credits it with ‘even more weight’ than Polybius, at least concerning events related in the prokataskeuē.

The true value of the ‘new’ Dio/Zonaras, then, is not so much—and certainly not in the first place—to prove Polybius wrong or convict him of ‘lies’. Rather, the comparative approach enables historians to broaden the basis of textual remains and tackle the challenges of selectivity. Most significantly, it allows for a better understanding of what is actually related in Polybius’ work. In other words: it is not necessarily their potential to revise Polybius’ information that makes parallel accounts such as Dio/Zonaras’ so valuable, but rather their contribution to the vexed process of unearthing the underlying assumptions of Polybius’ Histories and deciphering its inherent patterns of selecting the material, creating a narrative, and promoting a certain meaning. With regard to the Roman prokataskeuē, this approach is particularly promising. Scholars for long have been puzzled by the methodology and narrative techniques applied to the introduction and also by its reliability. The tradition preserved in Dio/Zonaras makes an important contribution to these questions.

On Polybius’ own account, the narrative of the Roman introduction was designed to provide the main points necessary for understanding the history proper. Its goal was to familiarize the Greek audience with affairs in the western Mediterranean and to narrate what purpose guided the Romans when they began the unique undertaking of becoming the masters of all. To illustrate this, the material was presented summarily and in key topics, kephalaiōdōs. In turn, this implied that the introduction eschewed historical detail and in-depth analysis, a methodology that was presented in contrast to the pragmatic style of the main history. One may wonder how much justice the prokataskeuē does to that goal. To be sure, the narrative on the First Punic War meets a didactic aim in the sense that it illustrates some of Polybius’ basic convictions and beliefs: the works of tyche, but also the moral matrix of politics

69 Dio’s sources are a notorious problem. Neither Millar 1964 nor Manuwald 1979 (cf. above n. 67) were able to identify specific authors with certainty. The most comprehensive accounts are those by Bleckmann 2002: 36–50 and Urso 2005: 163–93. The latter argues for a liber de magistratibus (by Aelius Tubero?) as source of Dio’s early Rome. Bleckmann’s intention is not so much to name Dio’s sources, but to extrapolate similarities between Dio’s (late) account and more contemporary Roman sources from the third and second centuries, including epigraphic evidence (e.g. the Duilius inscription, elogia of the Scipios, fasti).


71 Cf. the provoking title of Hoyos 1985a.
and Rome’s superior mental qualities, notably its ψυχομοχια. But, unlike Thucydides, Polybius often refrains from axiomatic reductions. His didactic agenda is embedded in long-winded narratives on campaign seasons and the technicalities of warfare. The actual content of this year-by-year account is rendered from Fabius and Philinus—indeed, it is not implausible to suggest, as Walbank has done, that much of the Roman prokataskeue was copied from Philinus. In this regard, the Roman introduction remarkably lacks independence.

Yet, at the same time, the approach is individualistic and highly opinionated, especially when didactic or other high-minded goals are at stake. True, this technique was covered by the claim to write kephalaiodos. But it might be argued that this principle also helped to promote Polybius’ preconceptions and distort the reporting of details so that they suited the didactic or moral agenda of a passage. It is not easy to determine to what extent such a rewriting of events took place, but the comparison with Dio/Zonaras’ account suggests that Polybius was not over-scrupulous in his dealings with what he had found in his sources. The Roman introduction oscillates between the reproduction of material that was already related by his forerunners and Polybius’ creative rewriting of selected events. It is this dichotomy that defines its unique historiographical legacy.

72 i.e. the ability to fight, and succeed, under extreme pressure: 1. 59. 6 and Walbank, HCP i. 123; cf. also 6. 52. 7 and n. 60 above.
73 1945a: 11–14.
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