

Polybius, Syracuse, and the Politics of Accommodation

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POLYBIUS' INTENDED audience was made up of political men; his avowed purpose was to prepare such men for political action in the real world; his theme was the expansion of Roman power.¹ Despite the simplicity of these basic principles of the *Histories*, there remains considerable disagreement about Polybius' attitude towards Rome. This is the result partly of the fragmentary nature of the extant text, partly of the obscurity of some of Polybius' own remarks.² There is particular debate over whether Polybius' view of Rome gradually became more accommodating over time. Walbank strongly favors this hypothesis, while others (Musti, Shimron) have recently asserted that Polybius always remained "a loyal Greek."³ Any new material would be useful in this dispute. There is in fact evidence that has not yet been brought to bear.

In the surviving text of the *Histories* there are four encomia of 'good kings' of the third and second centuries B.C.: Hiero II of Syracuse (in Books 1 and 7); Attalus I of Pergamum (Book 18); Eumenes

¹ On the nature and purpose of Polybius' *πραγματικὴ ἱστορία*, see now K. S. Sacks, *Polybius on the Writing of History* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1981), esp. 178–86.

² For moderns, the classic case of Polybian obscurity is 36.9, describing Greek views on Roman policy towards Carthage at the beginning of the Third Punic War. Four Greek opinions of Roman behavior are presented, two positive and two negative; it remains unclear which (if any) of these is Polybius' own. Cf. the debate between F. W. Walbank, "Polybius between Greece and Rome," *Entretiens Hardt* 20 (1974) 14–18, and D. Musti, *Polibio e l'imperialismo romano* (Naples 1978) 55f.

³ According to Walbank, Polybius, while a politician in his native Achaia (prior to 168 B.C.), was cautiously anti-Roman; but during his subsequent exile in Italy (168–150) he became cynical and detached, although traces of an anti-Roman attitude can be found in the *Histories* as late as Book 30 or even Book 33; finally, in the wake of the catastrophic events of 149–146, Polybius became strongly pro-Roman. See *Polybius* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1972) 166–83, "Polybius between Greece and Rome" (*supra* n.2), and "Polybius' Last Ten Books," *Historiographia Antiqua: Comm. in honorem W. Peremans* (Leuven 1977), esp. 156–59. Against the idea that Polybius ever fully accepted Roman power, either emotionally or intellectually, see Musti (*supra* n.2) 46–48, 145–47; B. Shimron, "Polybius on Rome: A Re-examination of the Evidence," *SCI* 5 (1979/80) 94ff (responding to "Last Ten Books"); also A. Momigliano, "Polibio, Posidonio e l'imperialismo romano," *AttiTor* 107 (1973) 198. The phrase "a loyal Greek" is from Shimron (95, 107).

II of Pergamum (Book 32); and Massinissa of Numidia (Book 36). Their very names indicate immediately a certain underlying direction in Polybius' thought, for an enduring cornerstone of the foreign policy of all four of these 'good kings' was cooperation with Rome.⁴ Conversely, all those kings who opposed Rome militarily (Hieronymus of Syracuse, Philip V, Antiochus III, Perseus, Andriscus the Pseudo-Philip) come in for heavy criticism: they are foolish and mostly tyrannical, not 'good kings'.

The encomium of Hiero II is particularly instructive, because Hiero's policies were so closely bound up with those of Rome and the encomium occurs so early in the *Histories*. Moreover, Polybius' explicit contrast in Book 7 between the achievements of Hiero and the troubles caused by his anti-Roman successor Hieronymus provides an early and precise model of the famous condemnations of anti-Roman politicians that characterize the last books of the work. While these latter condemnations have led Walbank to argue that Polybius' attitude towards Rome became increasingly accommodating as the *Histories* drew to a close, it may well be that Polybius was a political realist from beginning to end.⁵

Our understanding of Polybius' attitude towards kings and kingship has been greatly enhanced by K.-W. Welwei's re-examination of the assumption that Polybius, who grew up under a republican form of government in Achaea, hated monarchy *per se*.⁶ Welwei has shown that the situation was far more complex: while Polybius clearly disliked oppressive personal despotism, he also made a distinction between raw tyranny and true kingship. The true king possessed innate personal excellence (*ἀρετή*) and greatness of spirit (*μεγαλοψυχία*), best reinforced by education and training; his basic task was the care of his subjects' welfare, and he should seek to engage in benevolent actions (*εὐεργεσίαι*) both on their behalf and, out of his general concern for mankind (his *φιλανθρωπία*), on behalf of others as well. The true king's maturity of character was expressed by moderation (*σωφροσύνη*) in all his actions, including a restrained style of life and a mild internal régime; moreover, he devoted a large portion of his energy to securing personally the protection of his community and its

⁴ Indeed, the extensive realms of Eumenes and Massinissa were in good part creations of Rome, gained thanks to the pro-Roman policies they adopted.

⁵ A fifth encomium, of a much earlier Greek king, Philip II of Macedon (Book 8), will be useful especially as a contrast to Polybius' comments on the behavior of those kings who had to confront Roman power: see 275 *infra*.

⁶ *Könige und Königtum im Urteil des Polybios* (Cologne 1963), esp. 18 (hereafter 'Welwei').

interests against all external dangers. A successful king, therefore, was so outstanding an individual that he found his subjects obeying him more or less voluntarily, out of a sense of respect and even awe.⁷

Polybius did not, of course, invent this concept of the true king. He drew upon an intellectual tradition, reaching back as far as Isocrates, Xenophon, and Plato, that formed the common inheritance of Hellenistic political thought on kingship.⁸ The traits of Polybius' true king appear in summary form in Book 6, where in a general examination of systems of government we find a contrast between monarchy and its degenerate twin, tyranny (6.6f). But these concepts of kingship are applied consistently in Polybius' discussion of individual rulers throughout the *Histories*: specifically, in the four encomia we have already mentioned, beginning with Hiero of Syracuse.

As we have noted, Polybius discusses Hiero in detail twice. In 1.8.3–17.1 Hiero figures prominently in the events surrounding the outbreak of the First Punic War. In 7.8.1–8 Polybius offers a general evaluation of Hiero and his rule, now looking back over a reign of more than fifty years. In both sections Polybius presents Hiero as an ideal ruler. Even as a young man Hiero was a natural statesman worthy of being a king (1.8.3); he rose to power in Syracuse without any initial advantages beyond his outstanding character (7.8.1f). Polybius passes quickly over Hiero's original coup d'état, emphasizing instead the mild nature of his early régime (1.8.4). The mildness of Hiero's government is stressed again in Book 7, where Polybius even claims that the king, throughout his long reign, never exiled, executed, or even injured a single Syracusan citizen (7.8.2). Hiero was similarly restrained in his personal style of life, though he was eventually surrounded by great prosperity; Polybius says that in this way the king preserved his physical and mental vigor past the age of ninety (7.8.7f), while at the same time avoiding envy (7.8.3). Within his own family, Hiero was able to inspire intense loyalty (7.8.9). As a result, popular in Syracuse from the beginning (1.8.5), Hiero remained immensely and universally popular to the end of his reign (7.8.5–7).

There is no reason to doubt that Hiero was basically a 'good' ruler. On the other hand, Berve has suggested that Polybius' edifying

⁷ For references and discussion see Welwei 123–84. Polybius also believes that the outward appearance of the true king will naturally reflect his inner worth and quality—an odd idea to moderns, perhaps, but typically Greek: cf. Welwei 156–62.

⁸ Cf. the detailed discussion of Welwei 133ff. On Hellenistic ruler-theory in general, cf. F. W. Walbank's remarks in *CAH*² VII.1 (Cambridge 1984) 75–84 (with bibliography).

picture of Hiero's character and régime may in some respects be overdrawn.⁹ The Roman governor at Lilybaeum, for example, felt it necessary in 215 to send a strong Roman naval force to Syracuse upon hearing a (false) rumor of Hiero's death, in order to ensure that power remained in the hands of Hiero's family (7.3.5–7). This hardly suggests that the family, or the monarchy, was universally popular. It is also difficult to believe that Hiero's extensive and very efficient system of taxation contributed to his popularity.¹⁰ But if Polybius' picture of an idyllic Syracuse under Hiero is somewhat exaggerated, this only emphasizes that behind Polybius' ardent praise of Hiero lay an ideological commitment. Some elements of this commitment should already be obvious from his conception of the true king; there are others.

The primary characteristic of Hiero's reign, according to Polybius, was peace: *ἔτη γὰρ πεντήκοντα καὶ τέτταρα βασιλεύσας διετήρησε μὲν τῇ πατρίδι τὴν εἰρήνην* (7.8.4). As Welwei puts it (94), Hiero appears to Polybius as an "Idealherrscher und Friedensfürst." The reference is partly to internal peace, but it is also an obvious reference to Syracusan foreign relations. Here the crucial event was Hiero's decision in 263 to come to terms with Roman power, a decision on which Polybius comments at some length.

In 264 war had broken out, between Rome on the one side and Carthage and Syracuse on the other, over Roman protection of Messana and its Mamertine rulers. The combined Carthaginian-Syracusan siege of Messana eventually failed, and in 263 the armies of Rome overran all of northeastern Sicily.¹¹ In Polybius' account Hiero now re-evaluated the general situation and his own position, and rationally calculated that the Romans were far more powerful than Carthage (1.16.4). This conviction impelled him to make peace with Rome, a peace he successfully negotiated with the Roman commanders in Sicily, the consuls M'. Valerius Maximus and M'. Otacilius Crassus. Hiero agreed to pay Rome a war indemnity and to restrict himself to the southeastern corner of Sicily (1.16.5–9: Hiero's ambitions in the northeast had been one of the causes of the war). Polybius continues (1.16.10f):

⁹ H. Berve, *König Hieron II.* (SitzBerlin 47 [1959]) 64ff, 82ff; cf. Welwei 95.

¹⁰ Cf. the comments of Berve (*supra* n.9) 85, 63, and 66.

¹¹ The most stimulating discussion of the events surrounding the outbreak of what became the First Punic War remains A. Heuss, "Der erste punische Krieg und das Problem des römischen Imperialismus (zur politischen Beurteilung des Krieges)," *HZ* 169 (1949) 457ff. A useful summary of scholarly debate over the outbreak of the war can be found in F. Hampl, "Zur Vorgeschichte des ersten und zweiten punischen Krieges," *ANRW* I.1 (Berlin/New York 1972) 412ff.

King Hiero, having placed himself under the protection of the Romans, always furnished them with resources according to the necessities of the situation. Henceforth he ruled over Syracuse in security and treated the Greeks in such a way as to win from them crowns and honors. We may, indeed, regard him as the most illustrious of rulers, and the one who reaped for the longest time the fruits of his own wisdom, both in particular cases and in general policy.¹²

Polybius' judgment on Hiero's decision to go over to the Roman side seems wholly positive, and it leads to a general encomium emphasizing Hiero's wisdom (*εὐβουλία*). Indeed, this evaluation is so startlingly 'pro-Roman' that scholars since Gelzer have assumed that it derives ultimately not from Polybius himself, but from Fabius Pictor.¹³

Even if this were certain, it would not diminish in the least the significance of the passage. Polybius was no mindless copier, and he was well aware of Fabius Pictor's political bias (*cf.* 1.14f); if in Fabius he found sentiments such as these concerning Hiero and chose to include them in the *Histories*, it was because they contributed to some intellectual purpose of his own. In any case, we cannot be certain that the thinking of 1.16.10f is not Polybius' own. Gelzer's original argument was very brief: merely that the depiction of Hiero in 1.16.10f is so pro-Roman as to be un-Polybian. But this begs the question; moreover, whatever its origin, Polybius chose to include this passage without the slightest caveat to his readers. In favor of direct Polybian authorship is the consistency of tone in 1.6.10f with that of the final encomium of Hiero in 7.8, which seems to express Polybius' own evaluation of the king. Moreover, the reference in 1.16.10f to Hiero's benefactions after 263 to the wider Greek world would hardly derive from Fabius Pictor (why should he care?), while, on the other hand, we know that this is precisely the benevolent behavior Polybius expected of the true king.¹⁴ In fact, in his final encomium Polybius once again praises Hiero's benefactions to the Greeks and comments on the great reputation they won for him in the Greek world (7.8.6).

¹² ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Ἱέρων ὑποστείλας ἑαυτὸν ὑπὸ τὴν Ῥωμαίων σκέπη, καὶ χορηγῶν αἰεὶ τοῦτοις εἰς τὰ κατεπεύγοντα τῶν πραγμάτων, ἀδεῶς ἐβασίλευε τῶν Συρακοσίων τὸν μετὰ ταῦτα χρόνον, φιλοστεφανῶν καὶ φιλοδοξῶν εἰς τοὺς Ἕλληνας. ἐπιφανέστατος γὰρ δὴ πάντων οὗτος δοκεῖ καὶ πλείστον χρόνον ἀπολελανκέναι τῆς ἰδίας εὐβουλίας ἔν τε τοῖς κατὰ μέρος καὶ τοῖς καθόλου πράγμασιν. (The translation above is adapted from the Loeb version by W. R. Paton.)

¹³ M. Gelzer, "Römische Politik bei Fabius Pictor," *Hermes* 68 (1933) 138; *cf.* F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford 1957-69) I 66, 146; Welwei 97.

¹⁴ *Cf. supra* 266f. For comparison with Polybius' praise of Hiero's *εὐεργεσίαι* towards the Greeks, note esp. 18.41.9 (Attalus I) and 32.8.5 (Eumenes II).

There is good reason, therefore, to conclude that the highly positive judgment of Hiero at 1.16.10f represents Polybius' thinking, and not that of Fabius Pictor. Even more important for our purpose, Polybius consciously allowed this depiction of Hiero to suggest to his readers a favorable response to the first decision by a Greek statesman in the *Histories* to seek an accommodation with Roman power. And if there is perhaps some exaggeration in Polybius' representation of Hiero's decision as a model of rational political decision-making (1.16.4), this only serves to strengthen the proposition that in 1.16 Polybius was seeking to make a didactic point to his readers.¹⁵

One may add that Hiero's agreement with the Romans in 263 was probably simply a treaty of peace, and not a military alliance with stipulated requirements for concrete Syracusan military aid to Rome.¹⁶ This, in turn, would suggest that Polybius, in noting that Hiero "always furnished [the Romans] with resources according to the necessities of the situation" (1.16.10), meant to indicate that Hiero, wise to make a political accommodation with Rome in 263, continued to show political wisdom throughout his reign by always cooperating voluntarily with the Romans and supporting them in their various projects.¹⁷

There may well be a similar didactic point in Polybius' final encomium of Hiero at 7.8. The passage is introduced by belittling comments on Hiero's anti-Roman successor, Hieronymus, and continues with the remark that it would be more useful for his readers to reflect upon the career of Hiero instead (7.7.1-7). The positive evaluation of Hiero's régime and character that follows is set in the perspective of the chaos and disaster that are about to engulf Syracuse after the half-century of peace and prosperity that resulted from Hiero's policies. This is clear from the position of the encomium of Hiero in the early fragments of Book 7, where it is the culmination of (and a strong contrast to) the main story of Hieronymus' wanton destruc-

¹⁵ Polybius fails to mention explicitly what other sources tell us: that the Roman armies were encamped before the walls of Syracuse itself, preparing to besiege Hiero's capital, when the king decided to sue for peace (cf. Diod. 23.4; Zon. 8.9). The Roman annalistic tradition, in particular, emphasizes Hiero's terror at the course events had taken since the opening of the war in 264: cf. Oros. *Adv. Pag.* 4.7.3, *De Vir. Ill.* 37.5, Zon. 8.9. This need not be accepted *in toto* either, of course. Another factor in Hiero's sudden decision to seek peace would appear to have been growing discontent in Syracuse concerning the war: that is the reason given by Diodorus (23.4.1). The alternative might have been revolution.

¹⁶ Cf. A. M. Eckstein, "Unicum Subsidiium Populi Romani: Hiero II and Rome, 263 B.C.-215 B.C.," *Chiron* 10 (1980) 183ff; and now E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome I* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1984) 67f.

¹⁷ On the meaning of the phrase *εἰς τὰ κατεπεύγοντα τῶν πραγμάτων* in 1.16.10 see Eckstein (*supra* n.16) 190 n.24.

tion of the friendly relations between Syracuse and Rome that Hiero had carefully constructed (7.2–7). We also know that the encomium of Hiero was followed, later in Book 7, by an account of how the anti-Roman policies of Hieronymus led, after his own death, to outright war with Rome.¹⁸ The consequence of that war, of course, was the end of Syracuse as an independent state.¹⁹

We need not conclude, however, that Polybius was a pro-Roman sycophant, or that he consciously advocated sycophancy in others. The best argument against such an interpretation may be found in Polybius' comments on the policies of Hiero after the end of the First Punic War (1.83.2–4). He says that from the start of Carthage's deadly war with the Mercenaries (241 B.C.), Hiero had been glad to comply with every Carthaginian request for aid. This probably took the form of grain shipments.²⁰ Polybius adds that Hiero gladly helped Carthage because he was convinced that the physical survival of Carthage was in his own interest, both in regard to his Sicilian dominions and his friendship with Rome; in this way, no one power (*i.e.*, Rome) would completely and easily dominate the western Mediterranean. Polybius concludes that in so doing Hiero acted very wisely and intelligently (*πάνν φρονιμῶς καὶ νουνεχῶς*), for one should never contribute to the attainment by one state of a power so preponderant that none dare dispute it even on the basis of acknowledged treaty-rights.

In contrast to the 'pro-Roman' implications of the judgment of Hiero presented in 1.16, Gelzer and others have claimed that in 1.83 we see the 'real' Polybius.²¹ But in fact there is no true contradiction between the sentiments. In the former passage Polybius praises Hiero for his intelligence in originally bending to the reality of Roman power, and thus accepting Roman hegemony;²² in the latter, Polybius praises him for seeking to preserve the objective conditions that allow Syracuse to retain a relative independence *within* an acknowledged

¹⁸ Livy's detailed account of the constant political turmoil in Syracuse after Hieronymus' death (24.21–33) is clearly derived from Polybius (*cf.* 8.3.1). On Polybius as Livy's source for Sicilian affairs during the Hannibalic War, *cf.* in general A. Klotz, "Die Benutzung des Polybios bei römischen Schriftstellern," *Sittal* 25 (1951) 243ff.

¹⁹ On the disastrous course of the Syracusan War of 213–211, *cf.* J. F. Lazenby, *Hannibal's War* (Warminster 1978) 102–08, 115–19.

²⁰ *Cf.* Berve (*supra* n.9) 75.

²¹ Gelzer (*supra* n.13) 138; so also Walbank (*supra* n.13) 146.

²² On Roman hegemony over the Hieronic régime, *cf.* Polybius' remark that in making peace with Rome, Hiero "placed himself under the protection of the Romans . . . and henceforth ruled over Syracuse in security" (*ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Ἱέρων ὑποστέλας ἑαυτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων σκέπην*, 1.16.10). The reference is probably both to protection from internal opposition and also from Carthage, the hereditary external enemy of Syracuse: *cf.* Berve (*supra* n.9) 37.

Roman hegemony.²³ Indeed, the aim of Hiero's maneuvers at 1.83, as Polybius presents them, is not to destroy Roman hegemony, or even to escape from it, but precisely to *maintain* the current conditions of his friendship with Rome (1.83.3), conditions made abundantly clear in 1.16.²⁴

H. H. Schmitt has argued that in 1.83.2–4 Polybius is in fact presenting Hiero with approval as a classic practitioner of balance of power theory.²⁵ No doubt there is an element of such thinking in the passage, for the preservation of Carthage would naturally impede complete Roman domination (and thus eventual oppression) of the states of the western Mediterranean. But Polybius' aim here is much broader and less focused than the illustration of a balance of power theory *per se* —which, in the form elucidated by Schmitt (the searching out and steadfast support of an external counter-weight to a hegemonic power) is inapplicable to the foreign policy of Hiero. Rather, the comments in 1.83 on Hiero's actions articulate one of Polybius' general principles concerning the interaction of a weak state directly with a hegemonic one: the weak state, if it can avoid it, should not by its own behavior abet the strengthening of that hegemony. This explains why Polybius' remark here is in the present tense, a usage that greatly puzzled Schmitt, for by the time Polybius was writing, there *was* no power in the Mediterranean capable of acting as a counter-weight to Rome.²⁶ Moreover, if the basis of Hiero's foreign policy had been the concept of preserving an international balance of power, Hiero would naturally have moved to support the weaker party during the Second Punic War (Carthage), or would at least have tried to remain *de facto* neutral: in this way, there would have been a better chance of redressing the balance of power, then greatly in favor of Rome. But Polybius was well aware, and told his readers, that Hiero strongly supported Rome in the Second Punic

²³ Note Polybius' point that the preservation of Carthage would be of benefit both to Hiero's Sicilian dominions *and* to his friendship with Rome (1.83.3).

²⁴ Polybius here, as elsewhere, may in fact have simplified and schematized Hiero's situation and actions. For it is possible to interpret Hiero's aid to the Carthaginians during the Mercenary War as not so much a subtle demonstration of independence from Rome as adherence to the current policy of the Romans themselves towards Carthage (*cf.* 1.83.5). As for opposition to Roman power, shortly after the Romans broke politically with Carthage (238) we find Hiero in Rome, demonstrating by means of an immense free gift of grain that he was a friend of the Romans, not the Carthaginians (in 237: Eutrop. 3.1.3, *cf.* 2.1). On this latter stroke of Hiero's policy, *cf.* Eckstein (*supra* n.16) 196 and n.41.

²⁵ "Polybios und die Gleichgewicht der Mächte," *Entretiens Hardt* 20 (1974) 81–83. *Cf.* also (briefly) Walbank (*supra* n.13) III 333, and Musti (*supra* n.2) 78.

²⁶ *Cf.* Schmitt (*supra* n.25) 82.

War—just as he was aware, and told his readers, that the heart of Hiero's foreign policy from 263 onwards had been cooperation with Rome. In fact, there was no other alternative.²⁷

Thus, Polybius' description in 1.16 of a statesman's rational acceptance of the reality of an unfavorable military-political situation stands in close relationship to that in 1.83, which describes the statesman's attempt to maneuver *within* that unfavorable situation to maintain whatever advantage is still possible both for himself and for his community. Perhaps Polybius' sensitivity to such problems stems from his background as a citizen not of a great power, but of a state that had always been relatively weak even within the Greek context.²⁸

In short, Polybius in Book 1 indicates his approval of two modes of political behavior: he accepts cooperation with Rome out of practical necessity (and perhaps even for local advantage), combining this with a countervailing stress on avoiding unnecessary capitulation to Roman power. Both these principles will receive more famous expression much later in the *Histories*.²⁹ What is striking, and important for our understanding of the development of Polybius' thought, is that we find both principles made explicit so early. But if both are already important in Polybius' thinking about Rome in Book 1, the warning about unnecessary capitulation to Roman power (1.83.4) only comes into play because Polybius already assumes that a policy of general cooperation with Rome will so often be the only politically intelligent policy for Greek states to follow. Syracuse is the first example.

If Polybius presents Hiero as the archetype of the practical, intelligent, and successful statesman, the opposite is the case with Hiero's grandson. Hieronymus was only fifteen when he came to the throne of Syracuse (Liv. 24.5.9); in Polybius' judgment, he soon proved himself an immature and incompetent ruler. He fell under the influ-

²⁷ Polybius on Hiero's aid to Rome during the Hannibalic War: 3.75.7; cf. also 8.3.1, 8.7.3. It therefore seems better to link 1.83.2–4 with the later debate between Aristaeus and Philopoemen over the degree of Achaean subservience to Rome (24.11–13)—as Walbank himself does (*Polybius* [*supra* n.3] 167)—than to emphasize a connection between 1.83.2–4 and the theory of balance of power. Note that Walbank now goes very far towards denying the existence of conscious balance of power theory in the Hellenistic period: *CAH*² VII.1 81.

²⁸ Cf. the cogent remarks of Schmitt (*supra* n.25) 80. On the generally diminished Greek expectations for the 'freedom' of small states in the Hellenistic world of great hegemonic powers, cf. M.-L. Heidemann, *Die Freiheitsparole in der griechisch-römischen Auseinandersetzung (200–188 v. Chr.)* (Bonn 1966) 13, 20.

²⁹ On the foolishness of opposing Rome militarily, cf. Polybius' famous comments in Books 36 and 38 on the anti-Roman Greek politicians of the 140's (discussed 276f *infra*). On the avoidance of *unnecessary* capitulation to Roman power, see his account of the debate between Aristaeus and Philopoemen (24.11–13).

ence of various poor advisors; together, they steered Syracuse away from Rome, eventually concluding an alliance with Carthage. Meanwhile, the régime was continually rent by bitter factional strife that led to occasional executions and, after thirteen months, to the murder of Hieronymus himself.³⁰ Polybius consistently refers to Hieronymus with contempt as “the boy” (*μειράκιον*).³¹ The new king was “naturally of highly unstable character” (*φύσει μὲν ἀκατάστατον*), a situation made worse by his evil advisors (7.4.6). He was drawn to Carthage by misleadingly positive accounts of Hannibal’s campaign in Italy (7.4.4). He not only rejected Roman envoys who had come to renew Hiero’s old treaty, but wantonly insulted them (7.3.4–9), disregarding their dignified warning that he was acting against both justice and his own best interests (7.4.4). Highly susceptible to flattery, Hieronymus began to take too seriously his descent from Pyrrhus, and his ambitions grew irrational: he was originally willing to conclude an alliance with Carthage in return for Syracusan control over the eastern half of Sicily, but was soon demanding the whole island (7.4.2–9). The Carthaginian government, for its part, perceived “the boy’s complete instability and mental derangement” (*τὴν μὲν οὖν ὄλην ἀκαταστασίαν καὶ μανίαν . . . τοῦ μειρακίου*), but they also saw that it was in their immediate interests to agree to everything he demanded (7.4.8f). When the new treaty subsequently came up for discussion among Hieronymus’ advisors, those who opposed it (the native Syracusans) remained silent, fearing the king’s lack of self-control (7.5.3).

Polybius’ general conclusion is that Hieronymus’ character was “exceedingly capricious and violent” (7.7.5), and that he was worthless as a subject for serious study; as we have noted, Polybius comments that it would be far more agreeable, and also far more useful to the serious student of politics, to consider at length the career of Hiero instead (7.7.8).

Polybius’ account of the reign of Hieronymus has received little attention; while Hiero is discussed in detail in Welwei’s catalogue of Polybian depictions of good and bad rulers, Hieronymus is missing entirely. But despite Polybius’ strictures in 7.7.8, it is clear from the fragments surviving from the early part of Book 7 that Polybius discussed the politics of Hieronymus’ régime at length. Moreover, what does survive of this account (in 7.2–7) provides further evidence for Polybius’ general ideology of kingship, for Hieronymus’

³⁰ For discussion of the factional conflicts during Hieronymus’ reign, see Berve (*supra* n.9) 86ff.

³¹ 7.2.3, 7.4.6, 7.4.8, *cf.* *παῖς* at 7.7.3.

régime is presented as in every respect the opposite of Hiero's. Instead of an internal stability lasting decades, we see instability of such severity that it soon destroyed the ruler himself; instead of constant mildness of government, we see increasing cruelty; instead of habitual self-restraint amid the temptations of great luxury, we see growing megalomania; instead of careful analysis of the realities of the geopolitical situation of Syracuse and the construction of an equally careful foreign policy, we see a ruler easily and fatally misled about the true balance of power in the world; finally, instead of decades of peace and prosperity, we see Syracuse brought to the brink of a disastrous war with Rome. Thus, it is hardly surprising that for Polybius, the arbitrary and self-absorbed Hieronymus is not an exemplar of true kingship (as his wise grandfather Hiero so obviously is), but represents the degenerate twin of kingship: Polybius places Hieronymus squarely among the ranks of the tyrants.³²

But if Hieronymus appears to Polybius as a ruler actually more foolish than truly evil,³³ it is a foolishness that expresses itself not only in chaotic internal politics, but more importantly in foreign policy. Childishly enthralled by stories of Hannibal's victories in Italy, carried away by an irrational vision of rule over all Sicily, Hieronymus allowed himself to be drawn over to the side of Carthage.³⁴ Indeed, it is precisely in the context of Hieronymus' irrational ambitions that Polybius concentrates his criticism of the young king's personality, put into the mouths of the Carthaginians themselves (7.4.8f). Now, such wide ambitions among rulers are not, for Polybius, foolish *per se*, nor are they the invariable sign of a tyrant: their wisdom depends upon the political context in which they are conceived and the means by which they are carried out. Thus, Philip II of Macedon receives only the highest praise for the vision, energy, and skill with which he extended his hegemony over Greece.³⁵ But his approval of Philip II only serves to bring Polybius' condemnation of Hieronymus' dreams into sharper relief: Philip was a king of the far past, and Polybius'

³² Cf. 7.7.1–6, esp. 7.7.5. Note that Hieronymus also fulfills another element of the classic Polybian paradigm of the tyrant: he is the pampered and degenerate child of the palace (cf. 6.7.6ff).

³³ Cf. 7.7.1–6, esp. 7.7.4.

³⁴ Cf. especially 7.4, also 7.2.1–3 (where Hieronymus, in a description of his hopes for Syracusan expansion, is called *μειράκιον*).

³⁵ For Polybius' favorable judgment of Philip II's achievements, cf. especially 8.9–11. On Polybius' favorable attitude towards Philip, see the discussion of Welwei (22–28), who points out that this attitude derives in part from a defense of the fourth-century politicians of Polybius' native Arcadia, who invited Philip into the Peloponnese to aid them against their traditional local enemy, Sparta, contrary to the advice of Demosthenes (18.14).

criticism of Hieronymus is based on his failure to see that he was living in an age of *Roman* power that imposed severe restraints upon Syracusan policy. The price of Syracusan peace and prosperity had been (and had to be) the abandonment of traditional ambitions to dominate the island. Polybius praises Hiero in 1.16 for realising this; he condemns Hieronymus as “mentally deranged” for failing to do so.

It may be that Polybius’ view of Hieronymus is somewhat unfair. After all, Hieronymus had come to the Syracusan throne in the year after the Roman catastrophe at Cannae and had no personal experience of Roman steadfastness in adversity: in 215 it was possible to believe that Roman hegemony in Sicily was on the wane. As for claiming the entire island, one may argue that it was intelligent policy for Hieronymus to exact from Carthage as high a price as possible in return for his military cooperation.³⁶ But if Polybius has (once again) simplified the actual political situation at Syracuse, this only reveals (once again) his desire to make a didactic point: in this case, that statesmen who chose to oppose Rome militarily were making a very foolish miscalculation, no matter what the immediate situation.

Finally, it is important to note that Polybius’ condemnation of the personality and policy of Hieronymus in Book 7 is an early model of those more famous Polybian condemnations of the ‘irrational’ personalities and policies of anti-Roman politicians that appear later in the *Histories*. Hieronymus is called immature, highly unstable, and even mentally deranged. Similarly, in Book 23 Polybius takes the (alleged) preparations of Philip V for a war of revenge against Rome as evidence—along with his increasing tyranny—that in the 180’s Philip, too, had gone insane.³⁷ Again, those Macedonians who supported the disastrous attempt to resurrect the Antigonid monarchy (149/8) appear to Polybius to have been struck by madness sent from heaven (36.17.13–15). And shortly thereafter, the Achaean leaders who went to war with Rome over the issue of possible Roman liberation of Sparta from the Achaean League also are depicted by Polybius as stupid or even insane.³⁸ There are common themes in Book 7 and

³⁶ That wide ambitions in Sicily died hard among the Syracusan populace as a whole seems indicated by the difficulty experienced by M. Claudius Marcellus in gaining ratification of the renewal of Hiero’s treaty late in 214, even with a pro-Roman government in temporary control of the city (Liv. 24.28).

³⁷ 23.10.1–4; cf. F. W. Walbank, “ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΣ ΤΡΑΓΩΔΟΥΜΕΝΟΣ: A Polybian Experiment,” *JHS* 58 (1938) 67. By contrast, Philip receives Polybius’ hearty praise for his behavior in the previous period, when he had “adapted to circumstances,” *i.e.*, Roman hegemony: cf. 25.3.9–10 (for the context, cf. Welwei 49f).

³⁸ Stupidity: 38.1.5, 38.3.7, 38.10.13, 38.11.10f; madness: 38.12.7, 38.13.8, 38.16.2, 38.18.3.

the later Books 23, 36, and 38: (1) policies flow from personalities, and (2) behind all these destructive attempts to break free of Roman hegemony lie seriously flawed, irrational politicians. Moreover, if Polybius' discussion of the events in Achaëa in the 140's is explicitly intended as a warning to his readers to avoid such disastrous (and even ridiculous) mistakes in the future (38.4.8), surely the same holds true for Polybius' condemnation of Hieronymus in Book 7. Clearly, the 'fully developed' Polybian view of the necessity of cooperation with Rome was already a prominent feature of his work early in the text, and is not merely a characteristic of the later books of the *Histories*, especially the last decade.

Polybius' attitude towards Hiero and Hieronymus can further be used to help date more precisely Polybius' own intellectual development, as well as to clarify what he hoped would be the impact of his *Histories* among the Greeks. First, Polybius' consistent reference in Books 1–15 to Carthage as an existing state is a strong indication that this part of the *Histories* (i.e., down to the end of the Second Punic War) was already written by 150 B.C., while Polybius was still an exile in Rome.³⁹ This means, in turn, that Polybius' understanding of the limits imposed on the political behavior of communities confronting Roman power was fully developed before the disasters of 149–146 in Greece; therefore, Polybius' ideology of 'the political art of the possible' cannot be viewed simply as a result of those events. Second, there are good reasons for believing that all of Books 1–15 had actually been published by 150.⁴⁰ Thus, Polybius' advice, explicit and implied, on the necessity and benefits of cooperation with Rome was advanced publicly to the Greek world before the collapse of the Achaean League. This may further explain the special bitterness in Polybius' later depiction of the 'irrational' anti-Roman politicians of the 140's, especially in Achaëa itself.⁴¹

In fact, we should not be surprised to find an explicit attitude of political 'realism' towards Roman power so early in Polybius' work. From his own description, this was precisely the view he had taken as a young politician during the period 170–168. The Achaean political situation at this time is well known. Polybius himself was an ad-

³⁹ For discussion of the date of composition of Books 1–15, see Walbank, *Polybius* (*supra* n.3) 18f.

⁴⁰ For the arguments here, see Walbank (*supra* n.13) I 293f; *Polybius* (*supra* n.3) 20f.

⁴¹ Cf. especially the description of the followers of Critolaus and Diaeus. There is no doubt that the shocking events of 149–146 had a strong impact on Polybius' thought: cf. 3.3–5, esp. 3.4.13. What is being suggested is that the direction of Polybius' thinking in regard to the question of accommodation with Rome was already firmly established before 150.

herent of the faction centered around Philopoemen, and, after the latter's death, around Archon and Polybius' own father, Lycortas. These men advocated asserting the letter of Achaean rights under the League's equal treaty of alliance with Rome—although they also seem increasingly to have conceded the necessity of ultimate obedience to any really persistent Roman request, as well as the wisdom of supporting Rome in any major Roman project.⁴² The Archon-Lycortas group was opposed by a faction centered around Callicrates that advocated much more whole-hearted cooperation with the Romans.⁴³ In the late 170's, when Roman relations with Perseus of Macedon became strained, there were various Roman expressions of concern about Achaean loyalty, based specifically on the attitudes of the men around Archon and Lycortas.⁴⁴

At the time, these Roman suspicions were hotly denied; and indeed, when war actually broke out between Rome and Macedon (spring 171), Archon, as *strategos* of the Achaean League for 172/1, immediately complied with a Roman request for direct military assistance.⁴⁵ Yet when his faction assembled in the autumn of 170 to consider its position on the war, now that Archon was running again for *strategos* (for 170/69), there was in fact a considerable difference of opinion. Some advocated a direct confrontation with Callicrates and his supporters on the grounds that they were too pro-Roman (Polyb. 28.6.6); Lycortas himself urged that they aid neither Macedon nor Rome (28.6.3–5). But Archon advised the group to “obey circumstances” (*ἀκολουθεῖν ἔφη δέιν τοῖς καιροῖς*) and not give their enemies any excuse to denounce them as anti-Roman (28.6.7). Some modern scholars hold that Archon was merely proposing a policy of ‘waiting on events’, nothing more.⁴⁶ But one should remember that the Lycortas-Archon group was under considerable pressure in the autumn of 170 to adopt an overtly pro-Roman stance, if only for the

⁴² Even Philopoemen himself had fully supported Rome in the war against Antiochus III and the Aetolians in 191–189, as Polybius well knew: *cf.* 39.3.4–8, with the comments of R. M. Errington, *Philopoemen* (Oxford 1969) 210. On the steady retreat of the Lycortas-Archon group in the 170's regarding the possible extent of Achaean freedom of action, *cf.* Errington 207f.

⁴³ On Callicrates and Polybius' attitude towards him see P. S. Derow, “Polybios and the Embassy of Kallikrates,” *Essays Presented to C. M. Bowra* (Oxford 1970) 12ff.

⁴⁴ For discussion, *cf.* Errington (*supra* n.42) 208–10.

⁴⁵ In response to a request from A. Atilius Serranus and Q. Marcius Philippus, Archon sent 1,000 Achaean troops to garrison the important fortress of Chalcis against Perseus (Polyb. 27.2.11f, Liv. 42.44.7f). Later an additional 1,500 Achaean infantry were sent to join the consul P. Licinius Crassus in Thessaly (Liv. 42.55.10).

⁴⁶ *Cf.* P. Pédech, “Polybe hipparque de la confédération achéenne (170–69 av. J.-C.),” *EtClass* 37 (1969) 254f; Gruen (*supra* n.16) II 508.

sake of self-preservation: there had been rumors that they would be publicly accused by the Romans themselves of taking an anti-Roman attitude (28.3.7f). Polybius has Archon now say that the group must not allow themselves to suffer the fate of the Aetolian politician Nicander and his friends, already deported to Italy for anti-Roman behavior (28.6.7).⁴⁷ Moreover, in a neglected passage that serves as Polybius' direct gloss on Archon's policy as re-elected *strategos*, we are told that Archon and his followers were in favor of "working with the Romans" and their friends (*συμπράττειν Ῥωμαίοις*, 28.7.1). In other words, at the meeting in autumn 170 what Archon advocated was full Achaean cooperation with Rome against Perseus; this had been his policy as *strategos* in 172/1, and this was his position now.⁴⁸ Further, it is important to note that Polybius says he *supported* Archon (28.6.8), in effect publicly parting company with his father, who advocated neutrality (*cf.* 28.6.3–5). It may be that Polybius took this remarkable step because he himself was about to run for hipparch (28.6.9) and felt he had to adopt a more 'responsible' position on the great issue of Achaean cooperation with Rome.⁴⁹ Even so, the incident reveals much about Polybius' thinking concerning 'the political art of the possible' long before the *Histories* came to be written.⁵⁰

One can follow this attitude further in the actions of Archon and Polybius once they were elected and took office for 170/69. Polybius' first act was to advocate restoring certain Achaean honors to the pro-Roman Eumenes II of Pergamum.⁵¹ Shortly thereafter, Archon carried a proposal that the Achaean League spontaneously offer the services of the full Achaean military levy to Q. Marcius Philippus, the new Roman commander in Greece; and it was Polybius who personally headed the Achaean delegation sent to make this offer

⁴⁷ On Nicander see Liv. 42.60.6–9 with Polyb. 28.4.6, and Walbank, (*supra* n.13) III 315f, 332.

⁴⁸ Both Errington (*supra* n.42) 210f, and G. A. Lehmann, *Untersuchungen zur historischen Glaubwürdigkeit des Polybios* (Münster 1967) 201, assume, simply on the basis of 28.6.7, that Archon's position is self-evidently pro-Roman; thus Lehmann notes 28.7.1 in support of the 'pro-Roman' hypothesis only in passing, while Errington does not refer to 28.7.1 at all. Neither Pédech (*supra* n.46) 255 nor Gruen (*supra* n.16) II 508 mention the passage in their discussions of the autumn 170 meeting of the Archon-Lycortas group, even to argue against it. Yet 28.7.1 clears up any possible ambiguity in the phraseology of 28.6.7, and is therefore crucial.

⁴⁹ *Cf.* Walbank, *Polybius* (*supra* n.3) 167.

⁵⁰ That is, assuming that Polybius is not lying (on which question see 280f *infra*). This reconstruction of the meeting of the Archon-Lycortas group in autumn 170 is argued in less detail by Errington (*supra* n.42) 210 and Lehmann (*supra* n.48) 201. See also Walbank, *Polybius* (*supra* n.3) 167 (but *cf.* n.74).

⁵¹ 28.7. It is precisely in this context that Polybius explains that the public position of the men around Archon was cooperation with the Romans and their friends.

(28.12.4f). The offer was declined, but Polybius stayed on voluntarily with the Romans, taking part in Philippus' campaign against Perseus in 169 (28.13.1–7). After returning to Achaea, Polybius advocated the dispatch of a small Achaean military force to aid Ptolemaic Egypt, now threatened by Antiochus IV (29.23–25: winter 169/8). But he immediately dropped this proposal when Philippus by letter urged the League to support the Roman policy of mediation of this conflict; and indeed, the Achaean embassy of mediation sent out in response to Philippus' letter included Archon himself (29.25.6).⁵²

None of this prevented Polybius and other Achaean politicians from being deported to Italy after Pydna, on Callicrates' denunciation of their anti-Roman views: the Lycortas-Archon group had been under suspicion too long (one reason why Archon, in autumn 170, had advocated full cooperation with Rome). Polybius himself condemns as false all Callicrates' specific allegations (30.13.9f); and his account of his own conduct as hipparch in 170/69—a narrative there seems little reason to question—seems to bear this out. To accept Polybius' narrative is not a naïve act of faith. First, Polybius' public behavior makes sense given the difficult political circumstances of the men around Lycortas and Archon, the Roman pressures on them, and Archon's conscious policy of attempting to turn aside Roman suspicion from the group. Second, it is clear that in his account of this period Polybius is not simply engaging in propaganda aimed at endearing himself and his friends to Rome at all costs: he makes no secret of the hostility to Rome of some of his close associates, including his own father (28.6.3–6).⁵³ He also indicates that he personally delayed making Archon's offer of Achaean troops to Philippus until the time was most suitable for *Achaean* interests, *i.e.*, not those of Rome (28.13.1–4).⁵⁴ And he claims that he advocated restoring some, but not the most extravagant, of the Achaean honors to the pro-Roman Eumenes II (28.7). This is not a whitewash.⁵⁵ In the absence of contrary evidence, as Walbank observes, we should assume that Polybius is essentially telling the truth about his own public acts.⁵⁶

⁵² Polybius' proposal had been made with the public understanding that the small force he advocated would hardly impede major assistance to the Romans in Greece, if they should reverse their stance and request it (29.24.1–4, 7f).

⁵³ Cf. the comments of Lehmann (*supra* n.48) 201.

⁵⁴ Lehmann (*supra* n.48) 203.

⁵⁵ For a persuasive general defense of Polybius' objectivity and veracity concerning his own actions in 170–168, see especially Lehmann (*supra* n.48) 200–05.

⁵⁶ *Supra* n.13, III 346f. This is in the context of a discussion of Polybius' rôle in preventing the dispatch of Achaean troops to aid Ap. Claudius Centhos, the Roman

This reconstruction of Polybius' political behavior in 170–168 tells us much, in turn, about the younger Polybius. He believed that in the crisis of the Roman war with Perseus, the Achaean League (and especially his own political faction) had no rational choice but to adopt a policy of basic cooperation with Rome. On the other hand, he did what he could to avoid complete sycophancy and the sacrifice of Achaean interests. Thus, it makes sense that someone with Polybius' principles of political 'realism' with regard to Rome—apparent in his actions in 170–168—would, while composing the earlier books of his *Histories*, find the political behavior of Hiero rational, attractive, and even exemplary, and that of Hieronymus immature, irrational, and deranged.

Given the implications of Polybius' evaluation of Hiero and Hieronymus, as well as the reconstruction offered above of Polybius' own political behavior in 170–168, we seem once more to be faced with the questions: did Polybius then care nothing for 'Greek freedom' *per se*? Was he merely a cold and unfeeling advocate of *Macht-politik* who bowed to the will of the stronger, or (worse) a quisling?⁵⁷ The issue is more complex than this. In the Hellenistic age, political hegemony was even more prevalent than in the Classical period, and it had also become more acceptable intellectually, its forms often more polite.⁵⁸ Thus, Polybius grew up in a world where the political hegemony of great states was a long-acknowledged fact of life. No one knew the situation better than Achaean politicians: the Achaean League had long had an accommodation with Macedon and (later) with Rome, while Aratus' efforts to gain full independence of action for the League had led to near disaster in the 220's at the hands of Cleomenes of Sparta.⁵⁹ Similarly, it may have seemed to many

commander in Illyria (28.13.7–13). Polybius says that he acted in this affair at the behest of Philippos. One might suspect that Polybius here was actually covering up an anti-Roman action, if Polybius did not also say that his proposal to the Achaeans was to turn the matter over to Philippos himself, that this was in fact done, and that it was Philippos who then decided not to send the Achaean troops. Polybius can hardly have risked lying about this. Admittedly Polybius may have viewed it as an additional benefit that the incident allowed him to assert the old position of his political mentors, that the Achaean League should respond only to official requests from the Roman State, not to the private communications of individual Roman aristocrats, such as Centho (13.11).

⁵⁷ For the presentation of the problem in these terms, *cf.* especially Shimron (*supra* n.3) 95 and n.3. But he is not alone: *cf.* Walbank (*supra* n.2) 13–18; A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom* (Cambridge 1975) 29, who discusses the issue of Polybius' "moral and intellectual capitulation" to Rome; Musti (*supra* n.2) 46–48, 145–47.

⁵⁸ *Cf.* Heidemann (*supra* n.28) 13, 20, 47f, and the comments of Walbank in *CAH*² VII.1 62.

⁵⁹ For detailed discussion of the ironic turn of events that led to Aratus' invitation to Macedon in 224 to re-enter the Peloponnese, see E. S. Gruen, "Aratus and the Achaean Alliance with Macedon," *Historia* 21 (1972) 609ff. For Polybius' defense of Aratus'

Greeks in 170–168 that the issue was not Greek freedom or Greek enslavement to Rome, but rather a choice between the loose hegemony over Greece exercised by the Romans or a much tighter control over Greece that might be exercised by Perseus from nearby Macedon.⁶⁰ In any event, Polybius believed that the options available to most statesmen were quite limited, and he took submission to some sort of hegemony to be the natural condition of all but the most powerful states. In this situation, it was certainly the duty of the weaker state to preserve its interests and its autonomy as best it could;⁶¹ but submission even to a marginally satisfactory relationship of hegemony was preferable to hopeless and destructive rebellion. Nevertheless, the issue of how to behave in relation to a stronger state was only one element in Polybius' central focus, which was not simply upon freedom *versus* submission to hegemony, but rather upon rational *versus* irrational decision-making. The latter emphasis on 'rationality' was what was most important, and it was on this basis that Polybius wrote the *Histories* as a guide to politicians. These considerations explain much about his attitudes, from the beginning of the work, towards those Greek statesmen who had to deal with the overwhelming fact of Roman power.⁶²

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decision (that there was no other choice), see 2.47–52 (esp. 2.50.11), very similar in tone to his defense of Aristaenus' policy of bringing the League over to the side of Rome in 198 (13.13.8–11). The latter discussion is closely linked with Polybius' defense of the politicians of Arcadia who called in Philip II to help protect them against Sparta, accepting a loose Macedonian hegemony (18.14: see *supra* n.35).

⁶⁰ Cf. 27.10.1–5, with the remarks of Walbank (*supra* n.13) III 308, and Musti (*supra* n.2) 79.

⁶¹ Hence Polybius' condemnation of King Prusias II of Bithynia for his attitude of utter servility towards the Romans (30.18; cf. Diod. 31.15.1–3). Note also the historian's advice on the efficacy of standing up firmly for the interests of one's own state when appealing to the Romans on certain issues (24.10.11).

⁶² Walbank (*supra* n.2) 28 has justly expressed Polybius' dilemma—and his limitations—concerning power and power politics: "Polybius' commitment to the doctrine of 'the possible' is no doubt a praiseworthy quality in a statesman—even though the really 'great' statesman is the man who makes his own definition of the possible."

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