

Narrative Structures in Polybius' *Histories*

By

Ross M. Shaler

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Chairperson: Dr. Michael Shaw

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Dr. Pamela Gordon

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Dr. Tara Welch

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The Thesis Committee for Ross M. Shaler

certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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## Abstract

This thesis builds upon recent scholarship that has analyzed Polybius' *Histories* as a literary work both to offer an interpretation of the narrative structures that define the text and to analyze the implications of these structures for our reading of the text as a historical source. It investigates the challenges of narrative that Polybius encountered as he wrote the *Histories*, how he coped with these obstacles, and what effects his solutions to these problems imposed on his presentation of the real world. The relationship between the didactic purpose of the *Histories* and Polybius' selection and presentation of historical content is also examined. The primary conclusions drawn by this thesis is that the *Histories* is a literary presentation of the real world, and that readers must always approach the text as a subjective interpretation of the past—not as an authoritative narrative of events. The purpose of this investigation is not to discover what actually happened around the Mediterranean in the third and second centuries B.C.E., but to better understand the literary representation of this world created by Polybius.

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## Introduction

In a recent essay on historical selectivity in Polybius' account of the First Punic War, Hans Beck noted that:

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, analyze, 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 (Beck in Gibson and Harrison, 125).

The selective and literary nature of Polybius' treatment of the First Punic War has been demonstrated by both Beck (2013) and Rood (2012), but in fact the entire *Histories* is just as subjective and literary in its representation of the historical past. Davidson (1991) has highlighted Polybius' subjective method of representing events in the *Histories* through what he terms the "gaze" of both actors within the text and the reader, but he is also careful to note that the use of such a literary method of narrative is not necessarily incompatible with a commitment to historical accuracy (23). It must be remembered that all works of history must be influenced and shaped by the disconnect between the actual events and the imperfect, human mind that seeks to recreate reality in the written form—or in any other medium. History is not what *actually* happened, it is what men and women—either collectively or singly—*believe* or *claim* happened. Events recorded within the tradition of Greek historiography carry the further baggage of being literary texts that artistically depict the past utilizing stylistic elements, such as speeches (Loraux in Marincola, 2011, 35-39). Thus all history contains artistic and subjective elements that shape and color the "facts" which differentiate History from Fiction. One must be aware of these elements when one attempts to conceptualize past events based upon such, ultimately, imperfect reflections. But these literary and artistic facets are an integral component of Greek

historiography, and if we are to understand what ancient authors are trying to tell us about the past—how they understood it—we must pay close attention to the literary and subjective aspects of these writer’s histories. This is true for all historians of any time, but especially for those of antiquity. What Rood writes about the dangers of trying to separate Thucydides “the writer” from Thucydides the “historian” can aptly be applied to Polybius (Rood, 1998, 9).

It is not my objective here to highlight the inevitable shortcomings of historiography as a means of representing the past, and certainly not to detract from Polybius’ reputation as a generally reliable narrator of events—which he seems to have been, to the extent that reliability is possible from an ancient historian. I instead intend to investigate the challenges of narrative that Polybius encountered as he wrote the *Histories*, how he coped with these obstacles, and what effects his solutions to these problems imposed on his presentation of the real world. The main themes investigated here will be: the types of narrative employed by Polybius and his transitions between them (chapter one), his general criteria for including historical material in narratives and his methods of crafting this material into coherent episodes (chapter two), the use of *exempla* (ὑποδείγματα) and their role in narratives (chapter three), and his methods of arranging content into discrete narratives and his methods of organizing these narratives into a coherent historical account (chapter four). It is only by understanding these facets of Polybius’ narratological strategies that one can fully appreciate the complex web of narratives that constitute the *Histories* and the literary skill with which they were crafted. The purpose of this investigation is not to discover what actually happened around the Mediterranean in the third and second centuries, but instead to better understand the literary representation of this world created by Polybius.

## Chapter One: Classes of Macro Narrative and Transitions

Polybius' ability to compose compelling narrative was quite remarkable.<sup>1</sup> The skill with which he could take a complicated web of events and lay it out in a clear, logical manner is equally impressive. His knack for foreshadowing and the dramatic withholding of certain details from the narrative until they must be revealed often resulted in well-knit and engaging episodes that come to dramatic conclusions.<sup>2</sup> Before we take a detailed look at the methods used by Polybius to develop these accounts, we must first consider the general characteristics of his narratives and enumerate the different scales of narrative that he employed.

Polybius reports on events spanning from the fifth century B.C.E. down to his own departure from Rome in 144.<sup>3</sup> The detail with which he treats the events of this period is far from consistent. Rome's expansion in Italy from 387 to 271 is summarized in a single chapter of book one, while books III-V in their entirety only cover the period from 220 to 218. This discrepancy reflects Polybius' use of several different forms of what I will call "macro-scale narrative" in the *Histories*. These macro-scale narrations form the core structure of his text and are employed either to relate background information (such as Rome's expansion between 387 and 271) or to connect more detailed and focused segments of narrative, or as I will refer to them, "micro-scale narrative". Sections of macro-narrative naturally contain more ellipses—rapid accelerations of "narrative speed"<sup>4</sup> (Genette, 1980, 43)—and omissions—deliberate gaps of information

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<sup>1</sup> McGing (2010) has noted this (96).

<sup>2</sup> Polybius' narratives of the outbreak of the First Punic War (1.5-1.12) and Scipio Africanus' capture of New Carthage (10.2-20) are both outstanding examples of such finely-crafted narrative scenes. Both of these episodes will be considered in greater detail below.

<sup>3</sup> All dates are B.C.E.

<sup>4</sup> "Narrative speed" represents the relationship between the amount of space allotted to a specific event in a story-telling medium ( i.e., pages in a book or minutes in a movie) and the span of time occupied by that event in the story. Thus a conversation represented verbatim in the narrative exhibits a much slower narrative speed than a third-person summary that briefly mentions only the gist of what was said. "Narrative Speed" will be discussed in greater detail below.

completely absent from the text (Rood, 1998, 10); these macro-narratives deal with material in a less detailed manner. Micro-narratives provide more detail and contain fewer ellipses and omissions—although such gaps of information are unavoidable in any re-creation of real-world events. The distinction between these two general levels of narrative can be hazy at times, and they work together to create an organic whole, but, as will be demonstrated below, certain narratives in the *Histories* certainly serve distinct functions and can rightly be classified as distinct types of narrative.

Polybius himself broke up his history into two distinct sections. The first—the προκατασκευή consisting of books I-II (Polybius employed book divisions and explicitly marks off the first two books as a separate entity<sup>5</sup>)—outlines events from the outbreak of the First Punic War in 264 down to the events just prior to the beginning of the Social War in 219 (1.5). The second part of the *Histories*—the πραγματεία consisting of books III-XXXIX—spans the years from 220 down to the conclusions of the Third Punic War and of the Achaean War in 146.<sup>6</sup> The προκατασκευή serves as the introduction to the actual history that begins in book III and is generally less dense than the πραγματεία, although parts of it are very detailed. The πραγματεία constitutes the main body of the *Histories* and is much more detailed in its general focus. Whereas the προκατασκευή covers forty-five years in two books, the πραγματεία relates seventy-four years in thirty-seven. The books of the προκατασκευή are, on average, shorter than the wholly extant books of the πραγματεία (III-V). The former average 114 pages of Greek text per book in the Loeb edition, whereas the latter average around 125—and these seem to be generally representative of the average length of the fragmentary books, although

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<sup>5</sup> ἀναγκαῖον ὑπελάβομεν εἶναι συντάξασθαι ταύτην καὶ τὴν ἐξῆς βύβλον πρὸ τῆς ἱστορίας (1.3.8).

<sup>6</sup> For the starting point of the πραγματεία, see 1.3.1-6. For the end point of the *Histories*, see 3.5.

there was certainly some variation.<sup>7</sup> Thus “story time”—the real-world span of time that is being dealt with by a narrative—corresponds to over ten times as much “narrative time”—the amount of time (or here, pages) that the real-world time is allotted in the narrative—in the *πραγματεία*!<sup>8</sup>

One of the aspects of the *πραγματεία* that, in part, accounts for its increased length is the widespread inclusion of analytical and interpretive passages separate from the main narrative of events. At the beginning of book III, Polybius states that he will “now try to explain with exposition” the three major wars that broke out in this period and their causes (3.3).<sup>9</sup> By this phrase, Polybius means that he will analyze the causes and consequences of events, and not just provide a summary of what happened without comment or explanation. It is important to note that the events of the *προκατασκευή* are occasionally, but not always, laid out “with exposition” (Sacks, 176-178). The purpose of the *προκατασκευή* is to acquaint the reader with the events that preceded the *πραγματεία*, and for this sort of narrative not as much explication is required.

As McGing (2010) has noted, Polybius—more so than any other ancient historian—frequently pauses his narrative of events in order to “discuss his plans, summarize or recapitulate what he has been saying, or offer analysis and comment of one sort or another on a host of different topics” (20). These narrative pauses represent what Genette has referred to as “paratexts”. Genette (1997, B) describes paratexts as the elements external to the text—such as titles, prefaces, or illustrations—that are nevertheless tied to the reception and consumption of the text by the reader (1). I will apply this term in a somewhat nuanced way to the *Histories*; the frequent narrative pauses in which Polybius primes the reader for what he is about to read, or

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<sup>7</sup> See Walbank, 1972, 108-110. For these page totals, I have used the second-edition Loeb text edited by F. Walbank and C. Habicht. The text employed in the Loeb is based upon the standard Büttner-Wobst Teubner, but has the added benefit of having been revised and updated by Professors Walbank and Habicht. See Appendix A for a chart of page lengths for the extant and fragmentary books.

<sup>8</sup> For a brief discussion of “story time” and “narrative time”, see Genette, 1980, 33-35. These terms are derived from the traditional “erzählte Zeit” and “Erzählzeit” of German narratological parlance.

<sup>9</sup> νῦν δὲ πειρασόμεθα [...] μετ’ ἀποδείξεως ἐξαγγέλλειν. All translations are my own. These wars are the Social War (220-217), the Second Punic War (218-201), and the Fourth Syrian War (219-217).

interprets what he has just read, may rightly be referred to as paratexts, as they are (generally) clearly distinguishable from the actual narrative and are intended to guide the reader's consumption and interpretation of the narrative (the "text" in Genette's definition).

The προκατασκευή and the πραγματεία represent two distinct types of macro-narrative not only because Polybius himself distinguishes between them, but because of the vast difference in their "narrative speed"—the relationship between story time and narrative time (Genette, 1980, 87). These are the two most basic levels of narrative in the *Histories*. They each play a distinct role in the text as a whole, and this is reflected in the general difference in their narrative speeds. These contain numerous smaller macro and micro-narratives that exhibit much slower or faster narrative speeds. This, of course, results from Polybius' decisions of when to include more events and more detail, and when to omit or gloss over information. It is a necessity of storytelling that narrative speed must vary (Genette, 1980, 87-88). Although the presence of a micro-narrative within either the προκατασκευή or the πραγματεία does necessarily determine its own narrative speed, those embedded within the former tend to be faster, and those within the latter more often are slower. The speed of the macro-narrative is determined by the collective speeds of the micro-narratives that populate it. This is in turn a general reflection of the function of each overarching macro-narrative.

One distinct class of macro-narrative that exists within both the προκατασκευή and the πραγματεία is what I will refer to as a "φιλόζ", or "bare-narrative", using Polybius' terminology. At certain points, Polybius saw the need to fill in necessary background information for his readers, but the material is completely utilitarian and laid out in as plain a manner as possible. The best example of this class of macro-narrative—from which I have derived the term "bare-narrative"—is the summary of Roman expansion in Italy from 386 to

271. This account provides context for Polybius' narrative of the First Punic War—the main focus of book I—and is the first example of this sort of φιλόσ macro-scale narrative in the *Histories*. Polybius states that he will relate this initial introductory narration “plainly” (φιλωῶς) (1.5.3). This summary of Rome's conquest of Italy represents one-hundred and sixteen years of story time, yet it is compressed into three-quarters of a *page* in narrative time! This rapid narrative speed makes the προκατασκευή seem lavishly thorough and marks out this narrative as a distinct, utilitarian sub-class of macro-narrative. Bare-narratives are effectively exposition tools that give the reader necessary information in an efficient manner.

The *Histories* seems to have contained at least several of these bare-narratives, although the example discussed above was possibly the shortest. The fragmentary Book VI seems to have originally contained a brief narrative of early Roman history and the development of the Roman constitution (the so-called “*archaeologica*”), although this survives only in fragments (Walbank, 1957, p. 663, note on 6.11). This narrative—covering hundreds of years of history in a fraction of a book—could have been little more than summary in nature, although it was certainly more detailed than the account of Roman expansion in book I. It also functioned as an exposition of the development of Rome's constitution in preparation for Polybius' discussion of her political system.

A macro-narrative preserved in book II provides an example of a more fully developed bare-narrative. This is Polybius' account of Rome's wars with the Gauls from 387 down to 222. This account of 165 years is related in forty-six pages.<sup>10</sup> Although this is a much slower narrative speed than that of the account of Rome's expansion—116 years in a single page—the ratio of story time to narrative time in this narrative is over eighteen times faster than it is in the προκατασκευή—forty-five years in 227 pages! Polybius inserted this narrative within a

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<sup>10</sup> I am not counting Polybius' two page digression on the military manpower of Rome at 2.24.

digression on the geography and peoples of the Po Valley. The point of this digression—and the account of Rome’s Celtic wars—is, as Polybius states, to enable his readers to better understand the men and land that Hannibal relied upon while campaigning in Italy (this is the subject of book III) (2.14.1-3). Thus, although the narrative speed of this example is slower than that of the eponymous bare-narrative, it is certainly a longer example of this category of macro-narrative. Both the relatively fast narrative speed and the utilitarian nature of these narratives are indicative of the φιλόσ macro-narrative. Brief “historical outlines” such as these constitute the widest angle lens employed by Polybius in his macro-scale narratives and have the fastest narrative speeds of all the narratives in the *Histories*.

Thus the general “narrative speed” of the προκατασκευή, the πραγματεία, and the φιλόσ/bare-narrative differ quite significantly. What unifies them as macro-narratives is their big-picture outlook and their generally rapid narrative speeds. Each of these types of macro-narrative could contain micro-narratives that exhibit drastically slower narrative speeds. These micro-narratives represent the primary locations where Polybius displays his talents as a storyteller and presents to his readers the exemplary events and persons who bring the *Histories* to life. We will examine these micro-narratives in detail below. The macro-narratives function as a framework that structures the micro-narratives and moves the reader through time and space from one event to another. In this sense, all of the macro-narratives are utilitarian. What makes the φιλόσ narratives so distinct is the relative dearth of micro-narratives situated within them and their exceptional narrative speed.

While these classes of macro-narrative—φιλόσ, προκατασκευή, and πραγματεία—vary greatly in their chronological scope, their narrative speeds, and their inclusion of explication, they all share the primary function of advancing a general survey of events from point A to point

B. Micro-scale narratives, in contrast, act as microscopes that zoom in on certain events or actions to provide detailed sub-narratives that fill out the action of the macro-scale narratives. These micro-narratives have greatly slowed narrative speeds and constitute the bulk of the narrative space in the *Histories*.

Even within the *πραγματεία*, Polybius' main narrative must necessarily move at a variety of paces with a variety of focal lenses. The sheer volume of peoples, places, and events that Polybius had to contend with in his account of Rome's rise to Mediterranean hegemony necessitated him to pick and choose which matters to highlight, which to pass over briskly, and which to omit—and omissions are unavoidable. The micro-narratives represent events that are highlighted and brought to center stage, so to speak. The types of content that caused Polybius to slow narrative speed and narrow the focus of his account can be categorized as follows: 1) battles—including sieges, 2) conspiracies, 3) speeches, and 4) unique events worthy of mention (a rather miscellaneous category). These topics often prompt Polybius to provide a focused micro-narrative that is both more detailed in its description of events and slows the flow of narrative time. Distinct from these four categories of micro-narrative are the many occasions when Polybius “pauses” the narrative, so to speak, and either offers authorial commentary or digresses on a topic external to the main thread of events (such as geography). These pauses represent a complete stop of narrative speed, where a segment of narrative time corresponds to zero story time (Genette, 1980, 93-94). There exists a close relationship between the slow narrative time of micro-narratives and the stillness of narrative pauses in the *Histories*, and these often represent Polybius' narration of a story “with exposition”. The connection between micro-narratives and these narrative pauses will be examined below. Before we turn to the micro-

narratives themselves, let us first examine the relationship between macro and micro-narratives, specifically, the interaction and transition between the two in the course of actual narrative space.

An excellent example of how these micro-narratives can interact with the macro-level narrative in which they are imbedded is offered by Polybius' account of Scipio Africanus' capture of New Carthage in 209. This narrative episode, stretching from 10.2-20 relates a period of time that includes Scipio's actions in Spain from his arrival there to the aftermath of his capture of New Carthage. By "narrative episode" I mean a discrete, sustained narrative of a related series of events that form a coherent whole. These narrative episodes are hybrids of macro-narrative, micro-narrative, and interpretive, narrative stops, or paratexts. Let us now consider the example of Scipio's capture of New Carthage. Polybius begins with a summary of Scipio's character and some of the more notable events of his early life—a sort of narrative pause common in the *Histories*. Having expended five pages on the character of Scipio, Polybius transitions to the actual narrative of events in Spain at 10.5.10 by assuring the reader that what he has said about Africanus will be borne out by the narrative itself.<sup>11</sup>

Chapter six (one and a half pages) describes Scipio's encouragement of his soldiers, his arrangement of the defenses of Rome's allies north of the Ebro, and his decision to march on New Carthage. Scipio's speech—one of the classes of micro-narrative that will be discussed below—represents a near narrative pause. The remainder of this passage briefly deals—in only a few lines—with Scipio's disposition of troops prior to his march south. After this brief burst of narrative, Polybius devoted chapter seven (one page) to an analysis of Scipio's reasons for marching on New Carthage and the logic behind his strategy. This digression constitutes a narrative pause, but since it does not actually relate story material, I do not consider such

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<sup>11</sup> ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ἔσται τοῦτο συμφανὲς ἐπ' αὐτῶν τῶν πράξεων.

digressions as micro-narratives. In chapter eight (one and a third pages), the geography of New Carthage, its strategic importance, and its defensive capacity are examined.

Polybius again advances the narrative in chapter nine (one page) and describes the march of Scipio and his army south to New Carthage. The account of Scipio's advance against New Carthage operates as high-speed macro-narrative. Polybius describes Scipio's seven-day march and arrival at New Carthage in laconic fashion: "arriving on the seventh day, he bivouacked to the north of the city" (10.9.7).<sup>12</sup> In this way, seven days of story time is essentially related in zero narrative time, only the duration of the march is mentioned. This one example of an ellipsis in the narrative. At the end of chapter nine, Polybius informs the reader of his intention to now describe the siege of the city, but then devotes chapter ten (one and a half pages) to a physical description of New Carthage more detailed than the one provided in chapter eight.

Thus far, Polybius' narrative of Scipio's campaign in Spain has been more concerned with the interpretation and explanation of events than with the narrative itself. Only two and a half pages (chapters six and nine) out of twelve are devoted to the actual unfolding of Scipio's campaign—and portions of these narrative sections demonstrate rapid narrative speed. Even if the five page discussion of Scipio (chapters 2-5) is left out of the calculations, Polybius has devoted only two and a half pages out of seven pages to the actual narration of events. Although the actual narrative may play a subsidiary role in Polybius' account of events in Spain prior to Scipio's arrival at New Carthage, the assault and capture of the city itself is the centerpiece of the narrative episode.

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<sup>12</sup> ἀφικόμενος δ' ἑβδομαῖος κατεστρατοπέδευσε κατὰ τὸ πρὸς ἄρκτους μέρος τῆς πόλεως. For doubts that the march from the Ebro to New Carthage could be made in as few as seven days, see Walbank, 1967, p. 204-5, note on 10.9.7.

Now that he has provided the reader with necessary geographic information, explained the bold and insightful character of Scipio, and briefly related how the Roman army came to stand before New Carthage, Polybius enters into a micro-narrative of the assault on the city that spans chapters eleven through fifteen—seven pages! The two and a half pages of narrative in chapters six and nine cover a period of over seven days, whereas the seven pages of chapters eleven through fifteen cover a period of only three days. This drastic decrease in narrative speed is characteristic of the micro-narratives that Polybius embeds in his macro-narratives.

In the narrative of Scipio's campaign against New Carthage, we are clearly confronted with two levels of narrative. Chapters six and nine operate at the level of macro-scale narrative (here, *πραγματεία*) with one micro-narrative speech, and cover both an undefined period of preparation time and a specific seven day period of travel that is described only in a superficial manner. Chapters eleven through sixteen operate at the level of a micro-narrative that narrows the geographical scope of the story and slows in narrative speed. Polybius' narrative of this siege presents the reader with a detailed and set-by-step account of how Scipio captured New Carthage. Throughout the *Histories*, these two levels of narrative commonly interact in this manner. The macro-level narratives provide the structural skeleton of Polybius' text, while the micro-level narratives provide the action that adorns the broader sweep of the history.

One of Polybius' great strengths as a narrator of historical events is his ability to streamline a complex web of events into a coherent, linear narrative that leads the reader both from one geographical region to another, and also forwards and backwards in time. He also seamlessly blends the various narrative levels of the *Histories* in a manner that masks the complexities of the narrative's structure. The first section of narrative in *Histories* (1.6-12) demonstrates this amply.

Polybius devotes the first five chapters of the *Histories* to his *prooimion*. In chapter six, he eases into his narrative with the φιλόσ narrative—discussed above—of Rome’s expansion in Italy from 387 down to its siege of Rhegion in 271. In chapters seven through twelve, Polybius greatly slows the speed of his narrative and focuses on events at Rhegion and Messene beginning with the capture of the latter by a group of Campanian mercenaries in 288 or 283<sup>13</sup> and ending with Rome’s first military intervention in Sicily in 264. This segment of narrative—which is bracketed by a φιλόσ macro-narrative before and a methodological digression after, and thus operates as a discrete narrative episode—covers a period of story time either twenty-four or nineteen years in length and has a narrative time of seven pages. This narrative segment constitutes the first part of the προκατασκευή macro-narrative section of the *Histories* and is filled out with several micro-narratives, such as the account of the Battle of the River Cyamosorus. Polybius’ transition between the introductory φιλόσ narrative and the more detailed προκατασκευή is masterful in its subtlety.

Polybius concludes chapter six—the introductory φιλόσ narrative—with the Romans in control of the entire Italian peninsula south of the Celt-controlled Po Valley and besieging Rhegion:

γενόμενοι δὲ παραδόξως ἀπάντων ἐγκρατεῖς καὶ ποιησάμενοι τοὺς τὴν Ἰταλίαν οἰκοῦντας ὑφ’ αὐτοὺς πλὴν Κελτῶν μετὰ ταῦτα πολιορκεῖν ἐνεχείρησαν τοὺς τότε κατέχοντας τὸ Ῥήγιον Ῥωμαίους (1.6.8).

The Romans, unexpectedly becoming the possessors of everything and making those inhabiting Italy—except for the Celts—under their rule, after these things undertook to besiege the Romans at that time clinging to Rhegion.

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<sup>13</sup> The exact date of this event is not certain (Walbank, 1957, p. 52, note on 1.7.2).

The first section of chapter seven—the beginning of the προκατασκευή narrative—introduces Sicilian events into the narrative by connecting them to the last Italian events mentioned in chapter six:

Ἴδιον γάρ τι συνέβη καὶ παραπλήσιον ἑκατέραις ταῖς περὶ τὸν πορθμὸν ἐκτισμέναις πόλεσιν· εἰσὶ δ' αὗται Μεσσήνη καὶ Ῥήγιον (1.7.1).

Something strange and similar befell each of the cities lying on the strait; these cities are Messene and Rhegium.

This phrase ties together the narrative threads of chapters six and seven both in terms of content (i.e., Ῥήγιον) and geography (ἑκατέραις ταῖς περὶ τὸν πορθμὸν ἐκτισμέναις πόλεσιν). The overlap of these two chapters disguises the transition between the macro-narratives. The subsequent narrative clearly demonstrates that we have stepped back in time (from 271 to either 288 or 283), but this chronological disjunction is smoothed by a deliberate overlap of geography and content. The subsequent narrative of what happened to Messene (1.7.2), which picks up in 288 or 283, neatly refers back to the end of Polybius' transitional statement: ...εἰσὶ δ' αὗται Μεσσήνη καὶ Ῥήγιον. [1.7.2] Μεσσήνην... The reader has thus traveled through space and time—from Rhegium in 271 to Messene in 288 or 283—in a manner that maintains the continuity of the general narrative and avoids any sharp disjunction or disruption of the reader's progress from one narrative level to another.

The Italo-centric nature of the introductory φιλός narrative meant that Polybius had passed by—in terms of story time—the events in Sicily that were so important to his explanation of how and why Rome first invaded the island. Clearly Polybius felt it necessary to present Rome's expansion to the point when they were about to cross to Sicily prior to explaining the causes of the crossing. This method renders the narrative given in the προκατασκευή narrative segment more straightforward. But as a result, Polybius had to insert what Genette termed an

*anachronie*—or a “discordance between the two orderings of story and narrative” (Genette, 1980, 35-36)—into the narrative. Such anachronies had been present in Greek literature from its inception—Homer does this at the beginning of the *Iliad*—and Polybius employs the narrative technique to good effect. His smooth transition from the φιλός narrative to προκατασκευή narrative prevents this temporal dislocation from breaking the flow of the story.

Near the end of chapter seven (1.7.10), the narrative of events at Messene and Rhegion catches up with where Polybius left the reader at the end of chapter six (the siege of Rhegion in 271) and the remainder of the chapter relates the fall of Rhegion to the Romans. Chapter eight picks up with events in Messene and this narrative thread continues through chapter twelve and concludes with Polybius’ account of Rome’s acquisition of Messene and the outbreak of the First Punic War. Thus the second narrative of Sicilian events created by the *anachronie* of chapter seven flows seamlessly back to the end of the introductory φιλός narrative and progresses to fresh story time. The προκατασκευή of the *Histories* is intended to contextualize Polybius’ account of The Second Punic War and the primary narrative timeframe of the *Histories* (220-146) presented in the πραγματεία. The events of the First Punic War provide a background to Roman military power that is necessary to understand the subsequent expansion of Roman hegemony in the East, and Polybius artfully elides his account of Rome’s subjugation of Italy with his account of her first serious strides towards overseas dominion.

All writers—be they of fiction or non-fiction—must rely upon ellipses and omissions, and the grand scope of the *Histories* meant that Polybius was forced to gloss over and omit numerous events and details, notwithstanding the massive length of the text. As a result, several types of narrative had to be employed; different narrative styles for different situations and types

of content. As we have seen, the macro-narratives structure and develop the story. Next we will consider the micro-narratives that flesh out the *Histories*.

## Chapter Two: Types of Micro Narrative: Content Selection and Narrative Crafting

We have seen that in developing his accounts of events, Polybius employed several types of narrative to render events into a coherent, linear account. Beneath the macro-narratives are the micro-narratives. This second class of narrative reflects the types of historical content that most interested Polybius and that he deemed most essential to both to an understanding of events and to the education value of the *Histories*. As stated above, there are four classes of events that often elicit from Polybius a detailed description: 1) battles—including sieges, 2) conspiracies, 3) speeches, and 4) unique events worthy of mention.

That Polybius shows a heightened interest in battles is not surprising. He was, after all, a retired military man writing for an audience of men engaged in similar activities. The great battles of the period covered by the *Histories* understandably receive detailed accounts. These battles were significant to Polybius' history both as factors of historical causation and as instructive examples of battle tactic. Battles such as those at Trasimene, Cannae, Ilipa, and Cynoscephalae<sup>14</sup> provide lessons for military commanders that are valid even today,<sup>15</sup> and were especially relevant in antiquity when the technologies and formalities of warfare were relatively similar to those employed in these battles. As one of Polybius' stated purposes in composing the *Histories* was to explain the unprecedented rise of the Roman empire, it was clearly important to record decisive battles fought in that process. But some of these battles offer further commentary on the strengths of Rome than just that they happened to win battles. This reflects the didactic function of micro-narratives in the *Histories*.

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<sup>14</sup> For Polybius' accounts of these battles, see 3.82-84: Trasimene (217); 3.113-117: Cannae (216); 11.20-24: Ilipa (206); 18.21-27: Cynoscephalae (197).

<sup>15</sup> The Battle of Cannae, in particular, has garnered particular attention. Count Alfred von Schlieffen (the mastermind of Germany's pre-World War I mobilization plan against France) and General Norman Schwarzkopf (commander of the coalition forces in the Persian Gulf War) were both heavily influenced by the tactics employed by Hannibal in his most brilliant victory (Goldsworthy, 2001, 180).

The Battle of Cynoscephalae is a good example of this. In his account of this battle, Polybius draws attention to the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Macedonian phalanx and of the Roman manipular legion. The inability of the Romans to face the deployed phalanx head on is demonstrated early in the battle by the rout of the Roman left by the Macedonian right, but the difficulty of actually forming the phalanx under real-world conditions is highlighted when the Roman right encounters and easily routs the Macedonian left, which had not been able to properly deploy in formation. The previously victorious Macedonian right is then flanked by a mere fraction of the Roman right and thrown into utter rout (18.24-26). In terms of story time, the battle (including the richly described skirmishing prior to the main engagement) constitutes perhaps half a day, but occupies seven pages in narrative time (18.21-26).<sup>16</sup> The slowness of this narrative speed reflects both the importance that Polybius attached to the event and his desire to describe the course of events in detail. This detailed narrative of the Battle of Cynoscephalae offers more than just an account of who won. It consciously draws attention to and highlights the distinctive merits of the Roman versus Macedonian styles of warfare and analyzes how and why the Romans overcame the heirs of Alexander. The fact that, following his account of this battle, Polybius launches into a digression on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the phalanx and the manipular legion (18.28-32) demonstrates the significance he attached to understanding not just *that* the Romans won, but *how*.

Polybius' actual narrative of the Battle of Cynoscephalae and his digression on the phalanx and manipular legion complement and reinforce each other. In his narrative, Polybius shows the phalanx and the legion coming to grips in real-world conditions. In the paratext that follows, Polybius provides a theoretical analysis of what the reader has just seen in action—how the Roman legion is superior to the Macedonian phalanx. Polybius' narrative of the Battle of

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<sup>16</sup> This figure does not include the half page narrative of Flaminius' speech at 18.23.2-7.

Cynoscephalae thus performs a number of functions. It serves as an account of an epochal battle that established Rome as the hegemon of Greece, it offers analysis of *how* the Romans were able to defeat the fearsome Macedonian phalanx—the greater flexibility of the Legion—and it provides a historical backdrop against which the subsequent theoretical analysis of the phalanx and the legion can be measured. This is a classic example of the manner in which Polybius uses paratexts to influence the reception and interpretation of the narrative by the reader. Polybius typically preferred to ground theoretical digressions such as this in actual narrative (Walbank, 1967, p. 585, note on 18.28-32).

The second type of event that can prompt Polybius to narrow his narrative scale is acts of subterfuge. The *Histories* (even in its fragmentary form) is full of detailed descriptions of court intrigues, the betrayal of fortified cities in wartime, and conspiracies.<sup>17</sup> I will here examine Polybius' narration of the conspiracy of Bolis and the capture of Achaeus by Antiochus III. This episode is preserved as an isolated fragment and its precise narrative context is uncertain; however, Polybius' description and interpretation of this conspiracy exemplifies the sort of detail-rich micro-narratives that he could construct and the didactic function that such stories could play.

In 214 B.C.E., when Achaeus, the rebellious Seleucid satrap of Asia Minor, was being besieged by the Seleucid king Antiochus III in the citadel of Sardis, a Cretan by the name of Bolis crafted an elaborate scheme to betray him to Antiochus. Bolis had been entrusted with the task of freeing Achaeus by a certain Sosibius, one of Ptolemy IV's courtiers. Through contacts provided by Sosibius, Bolis was able to acquire letters of recommendation from some of Achaeus' closest friends. Feigning that his plan was to help Achaeus escape, Bolis convinced

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<sup>17</sup> For an excellent discussion of court intrigues in books 4 and 5, see McGing (2010). Hannibal's capture of Tarentum offers an example of the detailed manner in which Polybius can describe the betrayal of a city (9.24-29).

him—although Achaëus had tested the Cretan’s trustworthiness thoroughly—to accompany him down a precipitous path out of the citadel. Once Achaëus was in his power, Bolis seized him. This seemingly straightforward series of events receives ten and a half pages of narrative and constitutes an enormous narrative exertion on the part of Polybius—most battles are described in less space! It is true that the capture of Achaëus was an important step in Antiochus III’s consolidation of his grasp over the Seleucid Empire and was certainly an important historical event worth recording. The availability of detailed information regarding these events is also, of course, a prerequisite for writing a detailed narrative—and it does seem that Polybius had a reliable, inside source for these events<sup>18</sup>—but obtaining relevant information seems to not have been burdensome for Polybius on the whole, and certainly there were events about which he had copious details but wrote very little. Lack of source material is by no means the sole explanation for ellipses and omissions in works of historiography (Rood ,1998, 10).

Polybius’ closing paratext on the fate of Achaëus helps explain the detailed nature of this narrative episode. At the moment when the now captive Achaëus is presented to Antiochus, Polybius considers the dramatic change of fortune that the former Satrap has suffered. He emphasizes the irony of the situation, noting that even when Achaëus is bound and on the ground in front of Antiochus he is thought by his own men to still be secure in the citadel of Sardis (8.20.12). Antiochus himself is struck by the drastic and unforeseen reversal of Achaëus. After the execution of Achaëus, Polybius dwells on the lessons to be learned from the fall of Achaëus and offers the following advice:

Ἀχαιὸς μὲν οὖν πάντα τὰ κατὰ λόγον πράξας, ὑπὸ δὲ τῆς τῶν  
πιστευθέντων ἠττηθεὶς ἀθεσίας, κατεστρέψατο τὸν βίον, κατὰ δύο τρόπους  
οὐκ ἀνωφελὲς ὑπόδειγμα γενόμενος τοῖς ἐπεσομένοις, καθ’ ἓνα μὲν πρὸς τὸ

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<sup>18</sup> For Polybius’ sources concerning these matters, see Walbank, 1957, p. 570, note on 5.40. 4-57, and Walbank, 1967, p. 93, note on 8.15-21.

μηδενὶ πιστεύειν ῥαδίως, καθ' ἕτερον δὲ πρὸς τὸ μὴ μεγαλαυχεῖν ἐν ταῖς εὐπραγίαις, πᾶν δὲ προσδοκᾶν ἀνθρώπους ὄντας (8.21.10-11).

Thus Achaeus died. Despite having done everything with care, he was nevertheless overcome by the faithlessness of those whom he trusted. Achaeus provides two useful examples for future individuals concerning personal conduct: first, to trust no-one readily, and second, not to boast in times of prosperity, but, being humans, to expect anything.

Polybius thus smoothly moves from the realm of concrete events to that of theoretical principles. Just as his account of the Battle of Cynoscephalae serves as the real-world proof of the theories advanced in the digression on the phalanx and the manipular legion, the narrative of Achaeus' capture and subsequent fate exemplifies the two principles espoused by Polybius in his closing comments on this episode. The events themselves are important, but just as important are the lessons to be drawn from them. Polybius' use of a paratextual comment to explicitly tell the reader how to interpret the narrative exemplifies one of the functions typically performed by paratexts as they are defined by Genette. In his discussion of the role of the preface as a paratext, Genette (1997, B) states that its function is twofold: "*to get the book read* and *to get the book read properly*" (197).<sup>19</sup> For this particular paratext, the first function is clearly absent—the reader has already consumed the narrative—but the second purpose is clearly at play. Polybius wanted to ensure that his readers would properly interpret this narrative episode. We will return to the story of Achaeus below.

The third type of micro-narrative present in the *Histories* is the speech. Like most ancient Greek historians, Polybius included word-for-word accounts of speeches in his history. Among the fragments of his twelfth book, there survives a brief statement on his view of the role that speeches play in historiography. Speaking of Timaeus' own history, he notes that he composes "public addresses, exhortations, diplomatic speeches, and all other types of discourse which are

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<sup>19</sup> The emphasis is Genette's.

the principal matters of events and hold together the entire history” (12.25a.3).<sup>20</sup> Polybius is here referring to the role of speeches in Timaeus’ text, but it is clear that he viewed them as a critical element of his own history as well. The inclusion of speeches, argues Polybius, elucidates historical events and they help the reader understand the underlying causes of the developments related in the narrative. He describes the function of history and its relationship with speeches thus:

“Ὅτι τῆς ἱστορίας ἰδίωμα τοῦτ’ ἐστὶ τὸ πρῶτον μὲν αὐτοὺς τοὺς κατ’ ἀλήθειαν εἰρημένους, οἳοί ποτ’ ἂν ᾧσι, γινῶναι λόγους, δεύτερον τὴν αἰτίαν πυνθάνεσθαι, παρ’ ἣν ἢ διέπεσεν ἢ κατωρθώθη τὸ πραχθὲν ἢ ῥηθὲν· ἐπεὶ ψιλῶς λεγόμενον αὐτὸ τὸ γεγονὸς ψυχαγωγεῖ μὲν, ὠφελεῖ δ’ οὐδέν· προστεθείσης δὲ τῆς αἰτίας ἔγκαρπος ἢ τῆς ἱστορίας γίνεται χρῆσις. ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐπὶ τοὺς οἰκείους μεταφερομένων καιροῦς ἀφορμαὶ γίνονται καὶ προλήψεις εἰς τὸ προιδέσθαι τὸ μέλλον, καὶ ποτὲ μὲν εὐλαβηθῆναι, ποτὲ δὲ μιμούμενον τὰ προγεγονότα θαρραλεώτερον ἐγχειρεῖν τοῖς ἐπιφερομένοις· ὁ δὲ καὶ τοὺς ῥηθέντας λόγους καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν παρασιωπῶν, ψευδῆ δ’ ἀντὶ τούτων ἐπιχειρήματα καὶ διεξοδικούς λέγων λόγους, ἀναιρεῖ τὸ τῆς ἱστορίας ἴδιον (12.25b.1-4).

It is a specific aspect of history, in the first place, to learn truthfully the things spoken, whatever they might be, and, second, to inquire into the cause, and thereafter, whether the thing done or said either failed or succeeded, since, although plainly relating an event itself pleases us, it does not benefit us. But when the causes are supplied, the product of history becomes useful. For by applying events from similar circumstances to our own time, resources and mental preconceptions for predicting foreseeable and likely events arise. Sometimes these enable us to take precautions and, at other times, imitating previous actions, to more boldly take in hand what may come. But one who omits speeches that were delivered and the cause of events and instead of these relates false enterprises and embellished speeches removes the specific benefit of history.

The narration of events is not sufficient to impart an understanding of historical causation; one needs to interpret the deeds of men with the aid of their words. One must understand the causes of events if one is to learn from them and use them as a correct of one’s own behavior. For Polybius, it is critical not only that historical speeches accompany the narrative, but also that the

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<sup>20</sup> τὰς δημηγορίας καὶ τὰς παρακλήσεις, ἔτι δὲ τοὺς πρεσβευτικούς λόγους, καὶ συλλήβδην πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτο γένος ἃ σχεδὸν ὡς εἰκεφάλαια τῶν πράξεων ἐστὶ καὶ συνέχει τὴν ὅλην ἱστορίαν.

truthful sense of these discourses—and not rhetorical lies—are presented. The didactic function of history demands this.

At numerous points throughout the *Histories*, Polybius pauses the main narrative and includes speeches. Momentous battles often elicit pre-combat exhortations. Sometimes, pairs of exhortations are given, such as at the Battles of Cannae.<sup>21</sup> At other times, such as the Battle of Cynoscephalae, only a single oration is provided (18.23). Diplomatic negotiations sometimes take the form of direct dialogue, as do those between Flamininus and Philip at Demetrias in 198 (18.1-10.2). Orations to political bodies on matters of state can also take the form of direct quotation, as does Hannibal's address to the Carthaginian Senate in 202 (15.19). Polybius' treatment of these speeches is far from uniform. Some receive detailed, word-for-word treatment in first-person format. But, many of the exhortations and debates that are mentioned in the *Histories* are instead related as brief, third-person summaries. It is not uncommon for both first and third-person methods to be employed for the same speech or set of negotiations. Certain orations are covered in great detail—the negotiations between Flamininus and Philip at Demetrias occupy twelve pages—while others are curtly described in half a page or less. These figures represent the approximate ends of the spectrum in terms of the narrative time allotted to speeches.

Prominent speeches or negotiations do not necessarily receive a correspondingly lengthy or detailed presentation. In the προκατασκευή, Polybius refrains from including extended, first-person accounts of speeches. The description of the Carthaginian general Adherbal's exhortation prior to the Battle of Drepana in 249 demonstrates this approach:

τῶν δὲ συλληχθέντων, ἐπεβάλετο διὰ βραχέων εἰς ἔννοιαν αὐτοὺς ἄγειν τῆς τε τοῦ νικᾶν ἐλπίδος, ἐὰν τολμήσωσι ναυμαχεῖν, καὶ τῆς ἐν τῇ πολιορκίᾳ δυσχρηστίας, ἐὰν καταμελλήσωσι προῖδόμενοι τὸν κίνδυνον (1.49.10-11).

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<sup>21</sup> For the speeches delivered prior to Cannae, see 3.108-9 (Aemilius Paulus) and 111 (Hannibal).

With everyone assembled, he attempted, with few words, to instill a hope of victory in their minds if they would dare to fight by sea, and an expectation of hardships in a siege if, foreseeing the danger, they would hesitate to act.

While Polybius' treatment of this speech is briefer than most, the method of summarizing the gist of what was said is employed throughout the extant portions of the *Histories*. It is important to note that the cursory presentation of Adherbal's exhortation is not necessarily indicative of Polybius' knowledge of what was said. The Carthaginian historian Philinus seems to be the primary source for these events, and it is certainly possible that Polybius had access to a more detailed account of the speech and simply chose to relate only a bare account of the exhortation (Walbank, 1957, p. 113, note on 1.49.6-51.12). Even orations of historical significance could receive a similarly succinct, third-person description.

Polybius relates that there was substantial controversy in Rome concerning the acceptance of Messene as an ally and of taking up hostilities against the Carthaginians in his account of the First Punic War. Such an epochal decision is described in barely a third of a page, and no embellished, first-person orations are provided. Polybius' account of these events seems to be based on the narrative of the Roman Fabius Pictor, and—as was the case with Adherbal's exhortation at Drepana—he likely knew much more about the debate than he includes in his own narrative (Walbank, 1957, p. 60, note on 1.11.1). It seems likely that in dealing with Adherbal's speech and the controversy in Rome over initiating the First Punic War, Polybius adhered to his general principle of composition in relation to the *προκατασκευή*—it was to be unadorned and utilitarian. But even in the much more detailed *πραγματεία*, Polybius was willing to pass over orations and negotiations of great importance with little more than an acknowledgment of the event.

In book V, the peace negotiations between Antiochus III and Ptolemy IV that ended the Fourth Syrian War following the Battle of Raphia in 217 are summarized in as brief a manner as Adherbal's exhortation at Drepana had been. The peace talks are summarized thus:

πλὴν παραγενομένων τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἀντίπατρον, βραχέα προσαναταθείς καὶ καταμεψάμενος ἐπὶ τοῖς πεπραγμένοις τὸν Ἀντίοχον, συνεχώρησε σπονδὰς ἐνιαυσίους (5.87.4).

When Antipater and his companions were present (Antiochus' peace delegation), after briefly threatening and criticizing Antiochus for his actions, [Ptolemy] granted a one-year peace.

The Fourth Syrian War was a major conflict between two of the most powerful states in the Hellenistic world, yet Polybius dispenses with the war's conclusion in a few lines. On the whole, it seems that Polybius has compressed the account of events in Syria following the Battle of Raphia provided to him by his sources, and his account of peace negotiations has been likewise truncated (Walbank, 1957, p. 612, note on 5.83-86.6). He seems to have consciously glossed over certain speeches and negotiations, but highlighted and embellished others. Let us now turn to this second class of oration.

Polybius' treatment of the Battle of Zama offers a poignant example of how he could construct detailed, first-person orations. Prior to the battle, Scipio and Hannibal meet to discuss peace terms, and Polybius offers verbatim versions of the negotiations. As far as speeches in the *Histories* are concerned, these orations are rather long (roughly a page and a half each). Hannibal speaks first, and is accorded over one and a half pages of speech in direct quotation. Scipio's response is equally lengthy, and demonstrates one of Polybius' favored techniques of introducing direct quotations. Occasionally, Polybius will jump directly into a direct quotation (as in the case of Hannibal's address at Zama), but sometimes he will begin to relate an address in the third-person and suddenly switch the mode of delivery into first-person. The first quarter

of Scipio's speech (about a third of a page) is presented in the form of a third-person report given by Polybius, but suddenly the oration switches into the first-person and continues in this manner for the remainder of the address. This use of ellipses within speeches enabled Polybius to both quickly mention some points without fleshing them out, while still enabling him to provide a detailed reconstruction of other matters within the same oration. The speeches of Hannibal and Scipio are roughly equal in length (including both parts of Scipio's address) and constitute a balanced pair. This symmetrical presentation is preserved in the pre-battle exhortations of Hannibal and Scipio. After Polybius has described the battle array of the Roman army, Scipio addresses his troops in an oration framed in the first-person that constitutes a page of text. Following this speech, the disposition of the Carthaginian army is related and then Hannibal's address to his troops is presented. This speech is equal in length to Scipio's address, and differs only in that the last half is presented in a third-person summary.

It does not seem a coincidence that the pre-battle speeches of a battle as major as Zama receive such attention. They collectively draw attention to the magnitude of the Second Punic War that is about to be ended, and build suspense before the final clash. It is possible that Polybius had access to some source material for these speeches (perhaps from the Scipio family), but ultimately it is unclear how much historical validity can be assigned to their content as it is presented—and the verbiage of the first-person sections raises serious questions of authenticity. Polybius elsewhere (2.56.10-11) condemns the fabrication of speeches in historical works and stresses the importance of recording what was actually said, but it seems he must be referring to the general content and not to specific verbiage. As Walbank has pointed out, Polybius at one point (29.12.10) implies that he employs his own verbiage in reporting certain speeches (Walbank, 1972, 45). It is possible that Polybius devoted so much space to the orations of

Hannibal and Scipio at Zama not because he possessed detailed accounts of what was said—although this is possible—but rather because the magnitude of the event warranted such detail. In other words, Polybius could have presented Adherbal’s speech at the Battle of Drepana in as lengthy terms as he did the speeches at Zama—but Adherbal’s speech at Drepana was a relatively minor exhortation at a much less important battle in the less detailed προκατασκευή. It thus seems likely that the speeches of Adherbal at Drepana and the pair of speeches Zama represent Polybius’ practice of selectively incorporating the historical information available to him in his sources within the *Histories*.

The fourth and final type of event that prompted Polybius to slow the rate of his narrative and to provide a more detailed account—unique events of an extraordinary nature—is not as neatly defined as the first three (battles, acts of subterfuge, and speeches). This category reflects the tendency of Polybius to provide detailed narratives of unusual or noteworthy events of a miscellaneous nature. It is in the case of such events that Polybius’ affinity for story-telling becomes particularly apparent. Some of these episodes, although by no means irrelevant to the overall course of the *Histories*, occasionally receive a disproportional amount of space in the narrative in relation to their historical significance. Even in the less detailed προκατασκευή, Polybius crafts elaborate micro-narratives of unique events. One of the most embellished of these is his account of Hannibal the Rhodian’s exploits.

In 250, During the First Punic War, the Romans were besieging the port-city of Lilybaeum, one of Carthage’s last strongholds in Sicily. The city had been cut off by land, and the Roman fleet was blockading the harbor. At this point, Hannibal the Rhodian, a prominent Carthaginian citizen, offered to run the blockade and slip into Lilybaeum’s harbor so that communications might be re-opened between Carthage and the city. Polybius develops this story

in a dramatic manner that both builds suspense and sets the stage for the conclusion of this micro-narrative. After Hannibal offers his services as a blockade-runner, the boldness and danger of the operation is explained: “They [the Carthaginians] listened to his offer eagerly, but they did not have faith because the Romans were anchored with a fleet at the entrance of the harbor-mouth [of Lilybaeum]” (1.46.5).<sup>22</sup>

Contrary to the expectations of the Carthaginians and the Romans, Hannibal not only sails into Lilybaeum, but also slips back out despite the efforts of a Roman task-force assembled by the Consul specifically with the objective of intercepting him. Hannibal’s escape is presented as a spectacle, with both the Consul and the entire Roman land army waiting and watching to see if Hannibal will be captured (1.46.8). By focalizing the narrative perspective through the gaze (quite literally) of the men assembled on the shore, Polybius brings his readers into the narrative and presents Hannibal’s escape as a spectacle for the reader, just as it was for the Romans looking on in suspense.<sup>23</sup> In relating the details of Hannibal’s escape, Polybius is not content to merely describe how the Rhodian escaped the Romans, but also includes a description of how he taunted the trailing Roman ships, and concludes: “he [Hannibal] sailed off having opposed the entire fleet of the enemies with one ship” (1.46.12).<sup>24</sup> Such a suspenseful, theatrically described scene is not the work of a long-winded reporter, but rather of a skillful composer of gripping narrative.

Following his detailed description of Hannibal’s first entry and exit from Lilybaeum, Polybius inserts an ellipsis that builds suspense in anticipation of the stories’ conclusion.

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<sup>22</sup> οἱ δὲ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας μὲν ἀσμένως ἤκουσαν, οὐ μὴν ἐπίστευόν γε διὰ τὸ τῶν στόλων τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ἐπὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὸν εἴσπλον στόματος ἐφορμεῖν.

<sup>23</sup> For a general discussion of focalization, see Rood, 1998, 11-14. Davidson offers an analysis of how the focalization of a narrative through the gaze of a participant can create a more vivid scene for the reader, and Polybius’ use of this technique (24).

<sup>24</sup> ἀπέπλευσε καταναστάς μιᾷ νηὶ παντὸς τοῦ τῶν ἐναντίων στόλου.

καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν ἤδη πλεονάκεις ποιῶν ταῦτὸ τοῦτο μεγάλην χρεῖαν παρείχετο, τοῖς μὲν Καρχηδονίοις ἀεὶ τὰ κατεπεύγοντα διασαφῶν, τοὺς δὲ πολιορκουμένους εὐθαρσεῖς παρασκευάζων, τοὺς δὲ Ῥωμαίους καταπληττόμενος τῷ παραβόλῳ (1.46.13).

And hereafter, doing the same thing several times, Hannibal provided this great service, on the one hand continuously relating urgent matters to the Carthaginians and, on the other, both rendering the besieged in good spirits and astounding the Romans with his audacity.

The use of both ἀεὶ and the present participles ποιῶν, διασαφῶν, παρασκευάζων, and καταπληττόμενος emphasize that this was a prolonged period of story time that has been compressed into a brief segment of narrative time. At this point Polybius pauses the micro-narrative and explains that, in addition to the fine build of his ship and the skill of his rowers, Hannibal's intimate knowledge of the shoals around Lilybaeum enabled him to navigate the swiftest course into the harbor ( 1.47.1). A detailed description of how he set up for such a run and his general method of navigating the shallows is also given (1.47.2). This digression helps explain how Hannibal was able to evade the Romans, but it also delays the resolution of the episode and builds suspense. It is also stated that several other captains who knew the local waters were emboldened by Hannibal and executed the same maneuver (1.47.3). It is important to note that these other blockade-runners receive no more than a brief mention from Polybius, and their only significance to the story is that the capture of a well-built ship that was attempting to sail out of Lilybaeum provided the Romans with a ship swift enough to run down the Rhodian.

After Hannibal was captured, the Romans manned his ship (as it was exceptionally swift) and employing both it and the earlier captured blockade-runner, “they obstructed these bold attempts and those sailing into Lilybaeum” (1.47.10).<sup>25</sup> After the protagonist Hannibal has been removed, an ellipsis ties off the loose-ends of the blockade-running affair. This is the story of Hannibal the Rhodian—both the inception of his enterprise and its fall—and his fellow

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<sup>25</sup> οὕτως ἐκώλυσαν τοὺς κατατολμῶντας καὶ πλέοντας εἰς τὸ Λιλύβαιον.

blockade-runners play a decidedly ancillary role in the narrative. Thus Polybius here presents us with a highly crafted, literary account of how the Carthaginians attempted to maintain contact with their forces in Lilybaeum, and how the Romans finally put a stop to these efforts.

Polybius certainly valued practical, historically-based narrative, but, ultimately, he was a writer reproducing the reality of events in a literary construction that must—by its very nature—contain only a fraction of the real-world events in a highly selective and subjective manner. The narratives and speeches that we read in the *Histories* are, on the whole, some of the most reliable re-creations of any period of historical reality produced in the ancient world, but they are still the literary constructions of Polybius and must necessarily reflect the author's own perception, knowledge, and presentation of events more than they reflect the events themselves. The web of macro and micro-narratives that compose the *Histories* demonstrate how Polybius coped with the problem of sorting through an incredible amount of historical material and strove to make sense of and represent over one-hundred years of Mediterranean history—a period of history that includes millions of events that were experienced by millions of individuals—in a continuous narrative relying solely upon the power of literature. In the next chapter, we will look at the instructional motive that affected Polybius' selection and presentation of events in the *Histories* and his use of didactic *exempla*.

### Chapter Three: Polybius' Use of ὑποδείγματα

Polybius believed that history should be instructional, and he often said so (c.f. 1.1.2, 1.35.1, and 1.35.6-10).<sup>26</sup> As we have seen, he viewed speeches as essential to historiography precisely because they enabled the reader to understand the motives of individuals and the causes of events—and thus to learn from them. Polybius is not generally considered to have been a writer of *exempla*, or ὑποδείγματα. In *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius* Eckstein (1995) ignores the role of ὑποδείγματα. He examines the values espoused by Polybius in his paratextual remarks, but gives no attention to the narrative-driven methods used by Polybius to impress these same values on his readers. His discussion is largely confined to Polybius' direct statements of judgment. He offers no analysis of how Polybius poignantly presents certain individuals and events in specific ways to make specific points. Paratextual statements in the *Histories* consistently rely upon ὑποδείγματα present in the narrative, and no discussion of the didactic goal of Polybius can be complete without an explicit understanding of this relationship. Some material seems to have been included in the *Histories*—or at least included in more detail than it otherwise would have been—precisely because it offered ὑποδείγματα that readers could learn from.

In the sixth book of the *Histories*, Polybius describes the political, social, and military institutions that enabled the Romans to subjugate Greece and to bring the whole of the Mediterranean basin under their hegemony. Following his account of the Roman aristocratic funeral, Polybius reflects on the effect that funeral eulogies have on young Romans. These accounts of the heroic deeds of past Romans inspire acts of bravery and selflessness in the

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<sup>26</sup> See Eckstein for a brief overview of Polybius' commitment to instruction through historiography, and his possible pessimism concerning the success of such efforts (271).

service of the state. Polybius is aware of many stories told by the Romans about such exploits, but states that one example (ὑπόδειγμα) is sufficient to demonstrate this point (6.54). What follows is the story of Horatius Cocles' defense of the Tiber bridge.<sup>27</sup>

As Roller (2004) has noted, the story is completely stripped of historical context—Horatius' enemies are not even identified (2). Polybius did not include this story to inform his readers about the defense of Rome against the Etruscans, but rather to display a certain trait (i.e., willingness to face death in the name of the state) that Polybius claims is characteristic of the Romans. It is thus fitting that Cocles is the only character named—he is, in fact, the only individual. He fights against two nameless, nationless opponents (δύο τῶν ὑπεναντίων, 6.55.1); he is alarmed by a host of similarly faceless enemies (πλήθος ἐπιφερόμενον εἶδε τῶν βοηθούντων τοῖς πολεμίοις, *ibid*). Even his fellow Romans are barely mentioned (βοᾶν ἐπιστραφέντα τοῖς κατόπιν ὡς τάχος ἀναχωρήσαντας διασπᾶν τὴν γέφυραν, 6.55.1). Cocles is the key element of this narrative, and any other characters who might distract the reader from the exemplary hero are effectively downplayed. Polybius had employed a similar strategy in his narrative of Hannibal the Rhodian's exploits (see above).

In a work of historiography as detailed as the *Histories*, this ahistorical setting can at first seem odd, but when the narrative of Cocles is read as an exemplary tale and not as a historical narrative, this makes sense. Polybius primes the reader to interpret this story as such. Following his claim of the selfless desire of Romans to serve the state, he explains that “Many such stories

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<sup>27</sup> Polybius' account of Horatius Cocles is the earliest version of this story that has survived. Walbank, 1957, p. 740, note on 6.55.1-4. cf. Dion. Hal. 5.24, Livy. 2.10, Val. Max. 3.2.1. It is worth noting that in each of these other accounts, Cocles survives. It is impossible to determine whether Polybius had access to an earlier version of the story in which Horatius died and the later sources either have altered the tale or received an already altered version, or if Polybius has tampered with the story to better make his point. Given the general historical veracity of Polybius' text, and the more fantastic nature of the authors who preserve alternative versions, he must have learned the story as he transmits it. Given the number of stories that he could have employed in making his point, it seems unlikely that Polybius would have selected a story that did not support his statements and then altered the tale instead of simply selecting a different figure who fit the present needs.

are reported by the Romans, but one will be sufficient at present as an example (ὑπόδειγμα) and a proof of what has been said” (6.54.6).<sup>28</sup> The historical context and significance of the event are not important; Horatius Cocles serves as an ὑπόδειγμα of how Romans act. This is exemplary story-telling at its purest.

The context of the Cocles narrative within the text of the *Histories* helps to explain the unusually ahistorical nature of that narrative. Book six is an ethnographic analysis of the Romans and the Roman state, and thus fundamentally differs from the majority of the books that compose the *Histories* and which are primarily focused on historically-based narrative. It is usually the case that the narrative introduces theoretical digressions, such as the digression on the phalanx and the legion that follows the narrative of the Battle of Cynoscephalae. But in book six, the theoretical constitutes the body of the text, and narrative is instead inserted to back up the abstract. It is not surprising that the most ahistorical and pure use of an ὑπόδειγμα occurs in this book. Polybius certainly uses ὑποδείγματα to make theoretical points in the narrative-based books, but the Cocles story represents the most pure example of exemplary story-telling in the *Histories*.

The narrative-episode of Cocles is further interesting because Polybius is relating what he has identified as an *exemplum* that the Romans look to for moral instruction. He is telling us that this story is important to the Romans and wants his readers—whom he intended to be Greeks (Walbank, 1972, 3-4)—to learn about the Romans by learning about an ὑπόδειγμα that they themselves learned from (at least according to Polybius). This is, admittedly, an exceptional use of an ὑπόδειγμα in the histories, but it clearly demonstrates that Polybius viewed them as didactic tools that he could employ to make a point to his readers. Furthermore, as has already

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<sup>28</sup> πολλὰ μὲν οὖν τοιαῦτα καὶ περὶ πολλῶν ἱστορεῖται παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις ἐν δ' ἄρκοῦν ἔσται πρὸς τὸ παρὸν ἐπ' ὀνόματος ῥηθὲν ὑποδείγματος καὶ πίστεως ἕνεκεν.

been mentioned, Polybius has subjectively selected this sole ὑπόδειγμα from a pool of similar ὑποδείγματα. This is an exceptional example of the control exerted by the author over the content that appears in the text. In a historical narrative there is generally less room for subjective selection than in a theoretical digression, but it should always be remembered that the content included in the *Histories* is the result of Polybius' careful and critical selection of material.

Throughout the *Histories*, Polybius plays the role of an active narrator who interprets the events he relates, as was pointed out above in the analysis of micro-narratives. Let us re-visit the example of Achaeus' capture by Antiochus III and examine its function as an ὑπόδειγμα in the *Histories*. The body of this micro-narrative is completely grounded in history. Unlike the story of Cocles, Polybius here provides historical details that are not necessary to the core narrative. For instance, when the Cretan Bolis receives letters from two of Achaeus' acquaintances that Bolis will use to gain Achaeus' trust, these individuals are specifically named—Nicomachus and Melancomas—even though they play no active role in the story and, had they remained nameless, would have operated just as effectively in the narrative (8.15.9-10). This stands in stark contrast to Polybius' treatment of characters in the story of Cocles. The *Histories* was certainly intended to convey historical information to its readers, and in this context the inclusion of historical details, such as the names of Nichomachus and Melancomes, is not out of place. This is the normal format of ὑποδείγματα in the text.

Although Polybius' account of Achaeus' capture is clearly a narrative intended to convey historical information, it also functions as a didactic ὑπόδειγμα that transcends the immediate historical context. The conclusion of this narrative smoothly transitions from the concrete to the abstract.

Ἀχαιὸς μὲν οὖν πάντα τὰ κατὰ λόγον πράξας, ὑπὸ δὲ τῆς τῶν πιστευθέντων ἠττηθεὶς ἀθεσίας, κατεστρέψατο τὸν βίον, κατὰ δύο τρόπους οὐκ ἀνωφελὲς ὑπόδειγμα γενόμενος τοῖς ἐπεσομένοις, καθ' ἓνα μὲν πρὸς τὸ μηδενὶ πιστεύειν ῥαδίως, καθ' ἕτερον δὲ πρὸς τὸ μὴ μεγαλαυχεῖν ἐν ταῖς εὐπραγίαις, πᾶν δὲ προσδοκᾶν ἀνθρώπους ὄντας (8.21.10-11).

Thus Achaeus died. Despite having done everything with care, he was nevertheless overcome by the faithlessness of those whom he trusted. Achaeus became a not useful example for future generations concerning two aspects of personal conduct: first, to trust no-one readily, and second, not to boast in times of prosperity, but, being humans, to expect anything.

The term ὑπόδειγμα indicates that Polybius has left behind his concrete, historical narrative and entered into a didactic meditation. The phrase “being humans, to expect anything” especially captures the universal, philosophical spirit of this conclusion. Achaeus is an example for all men in all times, since the human condition is universal. In this context, the passage on the utility of history cited in the discussion of speeches (see above) is particularly relevant. The objective of describing a discrete historical event has been temporarily left behind in favor of abstract exhortation. The purpose of this ὑπόδειγμα is different from that of the Cocles’ story. In the latter, Polybius was seeking to provide an example to demonstrate a generalization about the Romans. In the case of former, the demise of Achaeus provides an instructive lesson that Polybius draws to the attention of his readers. This latter type of ὑπόδειγμα is the more common in the *Histories* and demonstrates the didactic function that Polybius intended his history to serve. The moral that Polybius draws from the demise of Achaeus is a recurring theme in the *Histories* and is expressed elsewhere in very similar terms.

The defeat of Marcus Regulus and his legions at the Battle of Tunis in 256 is interpreted in a manner parallel to the capture and death of Achaeus. Although the circumstances surrounding the downfall of each man were quite different, the similarity of Polybius’ analysis is unmistakable.

Ἐν ᾧ καιρῷ πολλά τις ἂν ὀρθῶς ἐπισημαινόμενος εὖροι πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίου συντελεσθέντα. καὶ γὰρ τὸ διαπιστεῖν τῇ τύχῃ, καὶ μάλιστα κατὰ τὰς εὐπραγίας, ἐναργέστατον ἐφάνη πᾶσιν τότε διὰ τῶν Μάρκου συμπτωμάτων (1.35.1-2).

There was much accomplished in this time that one noting correctly would find for the correction of human life. For the unreliability of fortune—especially in times of success—was shown most visibly to all at that time by the misfortunes of Marcus.

Although the term ὑπόδειγμα is not used here, Polybius is marking him out as a negative example of a principle that he clearly intends his readers to learn from—to distrust good fortune and to not assume that initial success promises ultimate victory. Following his initial interpretation of Regulus' defeat, Polybius continues to dwell on the usefulness of historical study for personal improvement for nearly a page (1.35.3-10). The parallel between Polybius' treatment of the fates of Regulus and Achaëus is striking. The theme that one must never become overconfident in success is paramount in Polybius' analyses of these events. In his analysis of Achaëus' death, he notes μὴ μεγαλαυχεῖν ἐν ταῖς εὐπραγίαις (8.21.11.), and in his conclusion to Regulus' fall he states that καὶ γὰρ τὸ διαπιστεῖν τῇ τύχῃ, καὶ μάλιστα κατὰ τὰς εὐπραγίας (1.35.2). The term εὐπραγία is clearly a buzz word for Polybius in this context. Success can be ephemeral and one cannot become careless when things are going well. The expressions μὴ μεγαλαυχεῖν and διαπιστεῖν τῇ τύχῃ have the same sense, even if the exact verbiage varies. The prudence of not trusting anyone too readily is absent from the story of Regulus, but the precept that one should not feel secure in prosperity is present in both accounts.

Polybius also stress the universally applicable nature of these examples. The statements κατὰ δύο τρόπους οὐκ ἀνωφελὲς ὑπόδειγμα γενόμενος τοῖς ἐπεσομένοις [...] πᾶν δὲ προσδοκᾶν ἀνθρώπους ὄντας (8.21.10-11) and Ἐν ᾧ καιρῷ πολλά τις ἂν ὀρθῶς ἐπισημαινόμενος εὖροι πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν τοῦ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίου συντελεσθέντα (1.35.1)

both demonstrate that Polybius saw a common element in the human experience that made it worthwhile for his readers to examine and learn from the successes and failures of others.

This precept—that one’s fortunes can change unexpectedly—is, of course, an old Greek concept (e.g. Herodotus, 1.32.9). Polybius saw this principle being expressed in historical events and repeatedly stops to educate his readers on this point. Thus historical events can have a double significance in the narrative of the *Histories*. They certainly represent actions and deeds of the real world, but they also offer ὑποδείγματα that can show the reader how to better conduct his own life—so long as he understands the causes and effects of events and applies his understanding of these to his own life.

Polybius frequently took the time to halt his narrative and explain to his readers the lessons of history via paratexts. The fact that he devotes an entire page to his interpretation of Regulus’ defeat is all the more striking when it is considered that this narrative pause occurs in the προκατασκευή—the account of the actual battle occupies only a page and a half of narrative time! The fall of Regulus is too important and instructive an ὑπόδειγμα for Polybius to pass over it without interpretation. This is a clear example of Polybius using a paratext specifically to fulfill a didactic agenda, and again reflects the ever-present power of the author to shape both the historical events that are included in the text and how they are presented to the reader.

Paratextual interpretation further enabled Polybius to offer specific readings of narratives to his audience and thus color their reception of the text. It is passages like this that best demonstrate the great significance that Polybius placed upon the educational value of history, and the ways in which this conviction influenced the presentation of interpretation of events in the *Histories*.

## Chapter Four: Polybius' Methods of Arranging Content and Narratives

The composition of the *Histories*, a work that describes the events of a one-hundred and nineteen year period that span the Mediterranean, posed serious problems for the organization of numerous narrative threads into a coherent whole.<sup>29</sup> In any given Olympiad, year, or campaigning season, a myriad of events simultaneously occurred in every region described by Polybius. Concurrent events in divergent regions can be related chronologically or geographically. Although he admits that the chronological method is not perfect (e.g. 25.24a, 32.2.1-6, and 32.11.6), Polybius chose to structure the majority of *Histories* in annalistic fashion, relating all the events of a given period before moving onto the next, but the first five books were structured geographically. Polybius also was not opposed to bending this method for the sake of clarity and style (Walbank 1972, 113-14).

It is significant that in book seven—which picks up events in the year 216—he abandons the more straightforward geographical method in favor of keeping all of his narrative threads synchronized. According to Polybius, the year 217 was the critical moment when the events of the world began to flow into one organic current: “That moment (217) and that conference<sup>30</sup> first intertwined Greek, Italian, and Libyan events” (5.105.4).<sup>31</sup> In reality, Polybius seems to have been premature in asserting such an early date for the intertwining of events (cf. Walbank, 1957, p. 629, note on 5.105.4-10), but, for the purposes of analyzing his narratology, this is a moot point. What is important is that when Polybius resumes his main narrative in book seven he begins organizing his narratives chronologically. Thus Polybius adapts the organization of his

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<sup>29</sup> If one reckons from the beginning of the First Punic War in 264 down to the conclusion of the Achaean War in 146. The *πραγματεία*—what Polybius considered to be the history proper—covers only the period from 220 down to 146, an only slightly less daunting period of seventy-four years.

<sup>30</sup> The peace conference at Naupactus that ended the Social War (220-217).

<sup>31</sup> Τὰς μὲν οὖν Ἑλληνικὰς καὶ τὰς Ἰταλικὰς, ἔτι δὲ τὰς Λιβυκὰς πράξεις, οὗτος ὁ καιρὸς καὶ τοῦτο τὸ διαβούλιον συνέπλεξε πρῶτον.

narratives to fit his conception of the relationships between these narratives. When events in different regions are unrelated to one another, the organization of these events in the *Histories* reinforces the divisions between them. When Polybius sees events in different regions as being interconnected, the organization of events emphasizes their connectedness. The specific instances where he employs one method or the other reflects his conception of the material in question and demonstrates the sophisticated narratological strategies utilized in the *Histories*.

Thucydides had divided his history into cycles of winter and summer seasons, relating events of each season as the years of the war turned. Xenophon also followed this general practice, at least in his treatment of the Peloponnesian War. Later historians, including Ephorus, Appian, and—to add a much later writer—Procopius, all preferred the method of arranging their material geographically. Procopius goes so far as to relate events in the East from 408-549 C.E in the first two books of his history, developments in Africa from 395-546 C.E. in the second and third book, and affairs in Italy from 474-553 C.E. in books four through eight. Procopius' account of events in such far flung regions (from Mesopotamia to Africa and Italy, with occasional mention of Spain) that occurred over such a span of time (one-hundred and fifty-eight years) provides a history parallel in scope to that of Polybius. The divergent organizational methods of each writer demonstrate amply both the strengths and the weaknesses of each approach. Procopius' three main narrative threads—the East, Africa, and Italy—are almost completely separated from each other, although superficial cross-references occasionally occur (e.g., Procopius, 2.14; 6.24). The individual narratives are coherent and uninterrupted—ideal if the reader is solely interested in the events developing in one of the three regions. The drawback of Procopius' geographical approach is that it is laborious to construct a synchronized cross-section of the events occurring across the Mediterranean at any given time.

This, of course, was the opposite of what Polybius wanted to do. His goal was to present the coming together of the world's events into one stream, under the sole rule of Rome. He wanted to emphasize the interconnectedness of Mediterranean events, and thus the chronological method of narrative organization suited the *Histories* well. Yet the happenings of the entire Mediterranean world had to be sorted and organized in some manner aside from merely the chronological. Events that occurred simultaneously in the real world cannot be presented simultaneously in a written text. There must be some method of arranging these concurrent events. To this end Polybius adopted the custom of relating the events of various regions of the world in a specific order, working roughly clockwise around the Mediterranean until all the noteworthy events of the year or Olympiad had been described. The general order of regions is: Italy, Sicily, Spain, Greece, Asia, Egypt, Africa. In this way Polybius was able to keep his history more or less chronologically synchronized—thus emphasizing the interconnectedness of events—while dealing with the essentially localized nature of every event by adopting a subsidiary, geographical narrative structure below the main, chronological one.

In practice, this system could be modified to fit the *ad hoc* demands of the narrative. If a particular region offered no noteworthy event during a specific period, it could be passed over in silence. Sometimes the interconnectedness of events in two regions compelled Polybius to upset his normal order. An example drawn from book thirty-two demonstrates this point. Section 32.9-10 deal with events in Italy, but then the narrative moves directly to Asia in chapter eleven. Polybius actually defends this departure from routine by commenting that in order to adequately conclude his narrative of events in Italy during this time (158-157) he had to move directly to affairs in Asia. (32.11.) At another point, the entire reign of Ptolemy IV (213-204?) and events in

Egypt are narrated in a continuous thread. Polybius again excuses this anomalous narratological decision by claiming:

Ἴσως δέ τινες ἐπαπορήσουσι πῶς ἡμεῖς τὰς ἄλλας πράξεις ἀπάσας κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν γράφοντες τὰς καταλλήλους περὶ μόνων τῶν κατ' Αἴγυπτον ἐν καιρῷ τῷ νῦν ἐκ πλείονος χρόνου πεποιήμεθα τὴν ἐξήγησιν. ἡμεῖς δὲ τοῦτο πεποιήκαμεν διὰ τινὰς τοιαύτας αἰτίας (14.12.1-2). <*Polybius explains that nothing noteworthy occurred during Ptolemy's reign*> διόπερ ὑπέδραμεν οὕτω κάμοι τῷ γράφοντι ῥαδίαν ἔσεσθαι καὶ τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν εὐμαθεστέραν τὴν διήγησιν, εἰ μὴ κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἐπιψάυων μικρῶν καὶ οὐκ ἀξίων ἐπιστάσεως πραγμάτων ἀποδιδόην τὸν λόγον, ἀλλ' εἰσάπαξ οἷον εἰ σωματοειδῆ ποιήσας τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως προαίρεσιν ἀπαγγείλαμι περὶ αὐτῆς (14.12.5).

Some will ask why, since I usually record contemporary events year by year, at this time only I have fashioned a narrative about Egypt that covers a long period of time. I have done this for these reasons. <*Polybius explains that nothing noteworthy occurred during Ptolemy's reign*> Therefore, it seemed to me that the account would be easier for the writer and more intelligible for the readers if I did not handle it year by year and did not relate a story of intermittent, unworthy deeds, but instead make the whole matter into a single unit once and for all, so that I might relate the very character of the king.

The special nature of events in Egypt during this period convinced Polybius that it was better to turn to a primarily geographic style of organization. He preferred to relate contemporary events as they occurred, but the reign of Ptolemy was just not worth the effort. It could be disposed of with a sustained narrative. The special pleading given by Polybius emphasized that such deviations from a chronologically-based narratological organization must have been rare in the portions of the text that have not survived.

Polybius sought to explain how the events of the world had coalesced into an organic unity, and he organizes his narratives chronologically in order to emphasize this oneness. The fact that Polybius intentionally chose the chronological method of organization for this purpose is demonstrated by his structuring of material in the first seven books of the *Histories*, where he arranged his material geographically. In the προκατασκευή, the scope of the text is generally

very narrow. Chapters one through sixty-four of book one focus on the First Punic War (264-241), and center almost completely on Sicily. Occasionally events in Italy and, more substantially, Africa come to the fore (e.g. Regulus' invasion, 1.29-34). The remainder of book one (1.65-88) focuses on the Mercenary War in Africa (240-237), with some coverage of developments in Sardinia (1.79.1-6, 1.88). Book two has a slightly wider perspective, detailing events in Illyria (233-228), Spain (238-221), and Greece (284-220). The grand scope of the *πραγματεία* is not present in these introductory books, and the events that are related form completely separate narratives. Developments in Sicily, Africa, Illyria, and Spain are related from 264 down to 221 in book one and in the first thirty-six chapters of book two. The remainder of book two (2.37-71) describes events in Greece by going back in time to 284 and then relating developments down to 220, slightly later than where the narrative of events in the West had ended. For the *προκατασκευή*, Polybius chose to arrange his narrative geographically. Each narrative thread is clearly developed, but little effort was exerted to draw connections between these events.

Even in the first three books of the *πραγματεία* (books III-V), Polybius organizes his material geographically. Book three focuses solely on the opening stages of the Second Punic War (218-201) in Spain and Italy and culminates with the Battle of Cannae (216). Books four and five cover the events of the Social War (220-217) in Greece. This conscious division of material into two discrete narratives that ignore chronological overlap and instead emphasize geographical location disconnects the events presented in book three from those in books four and five. For this specific period, Polybius prefers to organize his narratives geographically. This allowed him to construct fluid, uninterrupted narratives and avoids the difficulties of

chronological organization—such as interrupting one narrative arch to relate contemporary information pertinent to a separate narrative. This produced streamlined and engaging narrative.

Polybius clearly appreciated the advantages of geographically organizing material, and he employed this method in the first five books of his history and at in his account of the reign of Ptolemy IV. He himself admits that the chronological approach entails complications. Thus he apologizes in book fifteen:

“Ὅτι ἐπεὶ πάσας καθ’ ἕκαστον ἔτος τὰς κατάλληλα πράξεις γενομένας κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐξηγούμεθα, δῆλον ὡς ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι τὸ τέλος ἐπ’ ἐνίων πρότερον ἐκφέρειν τῆς ἀρχῆς, ἐπειδὴν πρότερος ὁ τόπος ὑποπέση κατὰ τὸν τῆς ὅλης ὑποθέσεως μερισμὸν καὶ κατὰ τὴν τῆς διηγήσεως ἔφοδον ὁ τὴν συντέλειαν τῆς πράξεως ἔχων τοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὴν ἐπιβολὴν περιέχοντος (15.24a).

Because when I set forth all contemporary events happening region by region and year by year, it is clearly necessary to relate the end of some events earlier than the beginning. For example, when—according to the arrangement of subjects in the whole work and the general plan of the narrative—a region where the conclusion of events occurs would occupy a place in the whole text earlier than the region that saw the origin and beginning of the events.

By organizing the latter books of the *Histories* primarily by chronology, and secondarily by geography, Polybius occasionally encounters narratological difficulties that would not have occurred in a text with geographically structured narratives. Continuous, geographically-organized narratives are easier to compose and to read (and Polybius used them when he could justify this approach) but he viewed a chronological organization of narratives as essential when the events of the world constituted a single narrative thread. In this way, Polybius organized the matters related in the *Histories* in a manner that reinforced his thesis of their initial disunity (prior to 217) and their eventual unity (under Rome). He was well aware of both types of narrative organization, and he manipulated the presentation of historical events to reinforce one of the

goals of the *Histories*—to show how the disparate regions of the entire Mediterranean had coalesced into one organic whole.

## Conclusion

Polybius valued the study of history as a means of understanding the world and learning to avoid the mistakes of others. He repeatedly stresses the importance of preserving the real deeds and words of events in his history, as the educational value of history rests on a foundation in the real world. Despite his commitment to faithfully representing historical events, Polybius' *Histories* is a highly literary text that cannot be interpreted as a straightforward, infallible record of the past. Both the selection and arrangement of historical content are subjective processes. The events and individuals that are included were not reproduced as they were in the historical moment—such a feat is, of course, impossible in any medium—but instead were filtered through Polybius' imperfect knowledge, biases, and agendas.

The drastic variations in narrative speed represented by the various macro and micro-narratives employed by Polybius testify to the unavoidable inclusion of numerous ellipses and omissions. The reader is confronted with what Polybius deemed to be important or worthy of mention. That already selective group of events is itself drawn from the selective and imperfect group of events that Polybius himself actually had knowledge of. The fragmentary nature of the *Histories* has added a further level of selectivity to the text, but that is, of course, no fault of Polybius.

The didactic aims of Polybius frequently influenced his selection and presentation of material. The use of ὑποδείγματα and their active interpretation through paratextual comments is meant to influence the reader's interpretation of the text and prompt certain responses to the material (e.g., Regulus acted in an overconfident way and his defeat should be viewed as a cautionary tale). The interpretation espoused by the author may be valid, but it is nonetheless

foreign to the actual events of the past and influences our own understanding of what happened—for better or for worse.

The arrangement of, and transitions between, the narratives that constitute the *Histories* represent another example of the all pervasive power of Polybius over his literary re-creation of the past. He arranged his narratives both geographically and chronologically depending upon his immediate need and/or inclination. Even if the reader is aware of the real world order of the events described, the presentation of these events in the text can nevertheless influence the connections that the reader forms between discrete events. At the very least, Polybius' decision to organize contemporary events geographically in books I through V and chronologically beginning with book VII betrays his appreciation for the effect that a text's organization can have on the reader's reception of its contents.

Of all the historians whose works have survived from antiquity, Polybius certainly ranks as one of the most thorough, perceptive, and reliable. But the literary nature of the *Histories*—and Polybius' shortcoming as a historian—have to be accounted for. The literary world created by Polybius can teach us much about the past, but we must always remember that it is *his* world, and that when we enter it, we are playing by his rules.

Appendix A

Book	Number of Extant Pages	Complete?
I	130	Yes
II	98	Yes
III	161	Yes
IV	117	Yes
V	145	Yes
VI	77	No
VII	23	No
VIII	52	No
IX	56	No
X	70	No
XI	43	No
XII	58	No
XIII	11	No
XIV	19	No
XV	53	No
XVI	48	No
XVII	Lost	No
XVIII	71	No
XIX	<1	No
XX	15	No
XXI	60	No
XXII	28	No
XXIII	24	No
XXIV	18	No
XXV	7	No
XXVI	3	No
XXVII	21	No
XXVIII	25	No
XXIX	26	No
XXX	38	No
XXXI	37	No
XXXII	17	No
XXXIII	17	No
XXXIV	29	No
XXXV	7	No
XXXVI	19	No
XXXVII	<1	No
XXXVIII	29	No
XXXIX	9	No
XXXX (index)	Lost	No

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