

**Donald W. Baronowski, *Polybius and Roman Imperialism*.** London: Bristol Classical Press 2011). Pp. xiv + 242. ISBN 978-0715639429.

This book is an investigation into a long debated question: what did Polybius, who wrote the earliest and in many ways the most valuable account of the Roman imperialism of the late third and second centuries BC, himself think about the events he described, and what were his own views on imperialism in general and that of the Romans in particular? Baronowski's approach is in many ways old-fashioned by twenty-first century standards. He is above all a philologist, with a profound concern for the words his author uses and a fascination with questions which have interested scholars for the past hundred and fifty years. The result is that at times he seems to be simply documenting the views of his predecessors and occasionally is drawn into discussions of which the immediate relevance to his argument is not altogether clear; but his nuanced conclusions reveal both the care he has taken with his text and his affection for his author, and *en route* he presents and revives a number of ideas which repay serious consideration.

The book begins with an introductory chapter, containing a brief life of Polybius, a survey of modern views on Polybius' judgement about Roman imperialism and a brief statement of the author's own approach, and ending with three pages on Polybius' conception of Roman imperialism. Baronowski notes that Polybius does not formulate a theory of imperialism but he believes that his views can be recovered from his treatment of the events he describes and, after providing a few examples, he concludes that Polybius 'understood the Roman *arkhe* as a form of domination exercised by a strong country over less powerful states for its own political and economic advantage, a form of domination that might, however, confer benefits on subjects' (p. 13); and that this is how the Romans themselves saw it and that it is compatible with modern conceptions. These few pages underlie much of what follows and it should be noted that they also reveal one of the weaknesses of Baronowski's approach: a tendency to generalise, which conceals important distinctions. There are, of course, a wide range of different notions of imperialism among modern writers, not all of which are compatible with that he ascribes to Polybius; and the idea that 'the Romans' held only one view on the matter, or that Polybius believed that they did, is no more plausible. When Baronowski states that 'according to Polybius, they acted to guarantee the security of Italy from Carthaginian expansionism and to create an opportunity for individuals to acquire large amounts of booty' in invading Sicily in 264 BC (p. 11), he does not mention that it was the first of these motives which (according to Polybius) was discussed by the senate (who could not decide) and the people (*hoi de polloi*) who were won over by the prospect of individual gain (1.11.1–2).

The rest of the book is divided into two parts, the first of which (Chapters 1–3) investigates the attitude of Greek intellectuals (in philosophic, poetic and prophetic and finally historical writings) to imperial domination during the Hellenistic period, and the second (Chapters 4–9) the attitude of Polybius himself to the domination of Rome. Part I is designed to show the context within which Polybius was writing. The first chapter begins with an exposition of Cicero, *De Republica*, Book 3, where the

speeches of Furius Philus and Laelius represent the arguments of the philosopher Carneades, who visited Rome on an embassy from Athens in 155 BC, that self-interest or justice were the proper basis of the policy of a state. Baronowski believes that Laelius' speech also includes ideas drawn from Panaetius, and, although this is more debatable, we learn elsewhere in the *De Republica* that he and Polybius discussed political philosophy with Scipio Aemilianus (*De Rep.* 3.34). His conclusion is that imperialism was a topic that was of interest to philosophers in the mid-second century and that, although some believed that empire should be based on justice and others on expediency, none can be described as opposed to it in principle nor as anti-Roman. Among the poets and the writers of mystical prophecy examined in Chapter 2, some (notably those from Phlegon of Tralles' *Miracula* 3.8–15 and passages from Books 3 and 4 of the *Oracula Sybillina*) clearly represent Rome unfavourably, many poets extolled the new power, and even those who were opposed to Rome were not opposed to imperial domination as such but supported some other candidate. A similar pattern is discerned among writers of histories (Chapter 3): some criticise Roman actions on specific occasions and some support her opponents but only Agatharchides of Cnidos is identified as being opposed to imperialism as such, and even he is perhaps better described, as Jean-Louis Ferrary does, as a resigned realist than specifically anti-Roman (J-L Ferrary, *Philhellénisme et Impérialisme*, Rome: École Française de Rome, 1988, 232–6).

It is against this intellectual background that Baronowski in the second part of the book sets his analysis of Polybius' own views. In Chapter 4 he deals with Polybius' attitude towards legitimate expansion. He begins by noting that 'Polybius considered imperialist expansion in principle to be a noble objective. and regarded as virtuous the men who achieved it' (p. 65) and, while rightly observing that his 'general statements about the Roman empire relate essentially to its importance as an historical phenomenon' (p. 67), argues that he was favourable towards this as he was towards imperialism in general. He believes that Polybius thought that Roman aggression towards neighbouring states began after the Gallic sack of the city in the early fourth century and became stronger after the Pyrrhic wars. This could be seen in the decision to invade Sicily in 264 BC, the aftermath of the first Punic War and the outbreak of the second. It should perhaps be noted that Baronowski believes that Saguntum was 'in the Carthaginian sphere of influence' (p. 70), unlike Polybius, who stated that the Ebro treaty with Hasdrubal related only to the crossing of the Ebro and did not apply to anything else in Iberia (Polybius 2.13.7). That notwithstanding, it is reasonable to think that Polybius' view was that, by the end of the war with Hannibal, the Romans deemed that they were well on their way to the achievement of world domination, which they had aimed for at least since they had confronted Carthage in 264.

Polybius was not, however, as Baronowski points out towards the end of this chapter, invariably enthusiastic of imperial expansion and in particular expects a strong nation or king to put forward a credible explanation of its aggressive actions. The word most usually employed for such an explanation in *prophasis*, which, as Baronowski rightly observes may be true or false. Unfortunately, as is often done, he translates it as 'pretext' though in English this usually means a false justification,

which clouds Polybius' criterion. He is surely right, however, in saying that in Polybius' opinion the Romans usually meet this test, providing justifiable explanations for their actions and, although he is sometimes critical of Rome and individual Romans acting in their own self-interest, he often offers explanations of this rather than outright condemnation.

Chapter 5 deals with the practice of imperial rule. Polybius, according to Baronowski, divides this into three stages: acquisition, expansion and preservation. As Baronowski admits, Polybius never refers to these three together, and it is not clear that he formulated the distinction with the precision implied, but he does indicate that for imperial rule to succeed it must depend on the good qualities of the rulers, and in particular on their moderation and beneficence towards the ruled. Generally, Baronowski argues, Polybius believes that the Romans passed this test, though he was uneasy about the demand that they made that the Carthaginians should move their city inland after the surrender by the latter in 149 BC, or at least in the way in which this demand was presented at a late stage in the negotiations. In the following chapter Polybius' assessment of Rome's enemies is seen to change after the defeat of the Macedonian monarchy in 168 BC, but this is ascribed to his recognition of the overwhelming power of Rome and the futility of resistance to it. Baronowski describes this as part of his didactic purpose in showing the leaders of weaker states how to behave in their relations with stronger rather than Polybius being devotedly pro-Roman. In Chapter 7, in which he looks at Polybius' career as an adviser to Scipio Aemilianus in Africa and an agent of the Roman settlement of Greece after the destruction of Corinth in the 140s, he presents him as an even-handed proponent of Roman policies, not least, in the latter case, because he himself believed in the form of 'moderate' democracies that Rome imposed on the Achaeans. A regrettably brief chapter follows, which in four pages deals with Polybius' occasional description of the Romans as 'barbarians' and with the place of Fortune in the rise and power of Rome (the latter, in particular, would have benefited from fuller analysis); and in the final chapter Polybius' judgement on the future of the Roman power is examined, in which Baronowski presents his author as believing that Rome would be well-regarded as a great imperial power which acted properly for the most part, but would be condemned for those occasions on which it had acted from self-interest rather than from justice. His final conclusions recapitulate his earlier chapters and ends by drawing attention to what he describes as Polybius' 'intellectual distance' from the Romans, whom he admired but was quite prepared to criticise.

It must be said that Baronowski does not present a radically new view of Polybius and that in some places, because of his unrelenting attention to literary text, he underestimates or omits considerations which might have modified his picture. It is only in his conclusions that he mentions the importance for Polybius of his being an Achaean, devoted to his own country (p. 172); and yet it is surely this, rather than his views on Roman imperialism, that shaped his account of Roman policies in Greece after 168 BC, in which he is equally vehemently opposed to both Callicrates, who was excessively subservient to Rome, and Diaeus and Critolaus, who led the Achaean revolt in 147–146 BC, all of whom were his political adversaries. Again it is only on the last page of his conclusions that he mentions, without discussion, the

phrase *pragmatike historia*, which Polybius uses to describe his own work, and, though he does write about the didactic intentions of the historian, there is no full account of what Polybius was attempting to do in writing his history, or indeed the problems involved in determining this, given the fact that so much of it only survives in fragments. All that said, however, Baronowski has given us a detailed and philologically precise account of the views of one of the ancient world's most fascinating historians.

JOHN RICHARDSON  
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH