

## BOOK REVIEW

*Polybius Book I, A Commentary.* By DAVID D. PHILLIPS. Ann Arbor: Michigan Classical Press, 2016. Pp. 269. Hardcover, \$65.00. ISBN 978-0-979-97137-2.

Phillips provides a much-needed edition of Polybius' Book I with commentary. This volume includes a brief introduction, Theodore Büttner-Wobst's 1905 text of Book I, a commentary focused on language, and an index. Polybius' text has not been widely accessible to readers in Greek: Büttner-Wobst's 1905 edition alone provides a full critical edition of the extant *Histories*, since the Budé volumes only reach Book 16. Otherwise, a student must use the Loeb text. Polybius' bureaucratic style does not attract readers, as Phillips notes (15–18). Moreover, Polybius does not measure favorably to other Greek historians: Herodotus is often chosen for intermediate or advanced Greek courses, commentaries open Thucydides' text for undergraduate reading, and Xenophon's style is conducive for both intermediate Greek and prose composition courses. Phillips now provides accessibility to Polybius' text, particularly for readers approaching Polybius for the first time. This edition would best reach graduate and advanced undergraduate students.

In the introduction Phillips deploys evidence from the text to discuss Polybius' life and genre. Phillips effectively quotes long and important passages, such as 4.1–4 (8), which both exemplify Polybius' theory on genre and introduce readers to programmatic sections of the *Histories*. Phillips provides cross-references to the commentary and discusses Polybius' complex treatment of *tyche*. This discussion should be read in conjunction with the lengthy note on *tyche* in the commentary at page 89, and I wonder whether these two discussions might have benefitted from consolidation. While Phillips does address Polybius' language at the end of the introduction (14–15), I would have liked a clearer, more extensive section dealing with the idiosyncrasies and difficulties of Polybius' language which dominate the commentary's notes. Some extra front work on this topic would have better supported the commentary and firmly grounded new readers' expectations.

Phillips facilitates use of this commentary by providing the Greek text. However, no apparatus criticus is provided, and thus this edition missed an op-

portunity for students to develop familiarity with textual traditions. The formatting of the text itself—single-spaced, small margins—hinders Phillips’s attempt to bring this text to new, first-time readers. The readers who would benefit from the type of comments in the commentary (such as (1.3) “δῆλον ὡς: supply an intervening ἐστὶ.” 84) would generally require and appreciate space on the text’s pages for their own notes.

The commentary, however, is the highlight of this edition. Phillips’ commentary provides useful notes in several formats: simple translation, citations of dictionary entries for obscure vocabulary, simple grammatical description, extensive grammatical explanations leading a reader through a passage, and cross-references to notes. This variety supports first-time readers in gaining facility with Polybius’ language. Phillips aids students with difficult and non-Attic grammar or vocabulary by giving both the most pertinent English definition and citations to the LSJ so that students can follow and learn how to find such definitions themselves (e.g. (2.3) “ἀδῆριτον: ‘uncontested, undisputed’ (LSJ s.v. ἀδῆριτος 1.2) Note that this is a two termination adjective, as commonly with adjectives beginning with an alpha privative” [85]). Instead of giving an English translation, Phillips sometimes describes the grammar to guide students in their own translations (e.g. “79.14 ἔτι . . . αὐτοῦ: genitive absolute (temporal-circumstantial).” 229). In rather difficult passages, Phillips leads the reader by combining English explanation and translation with reference to the Greek text. His guidance through Polybius’ description of Roman ‘crows’ on ships at 1.22.4–10 is particularly noteworthy (123–124). These sections provide an excellent model for students. Moreover, Phillips explains these sections clearly and coherently. Sentences are loosely diagrammed to show parallelism and clarify the construction, and Phillips begins the commentary by diagramming the difficult first sentence of the *Histories* (83, and e.g. 93, 117, 121–122). Finally, abundant cross-references to other notes call attention to Polybius’ idiomatic style and diction. The index refers only to words listed in the commentary, which facilitates finding similar usages (e.g. for τέλος, 276).

The commentary does not provide much in terms of cultural, historical, or historiographical content. The headings suggest division of the text by content, so that one could read selections; however, the copious cross-references in the notes do not facilitate this. Phillips regularly refers readers to Frank W. Walbank’s 1957–1979 *Historical Commentary on Polybius*, even for simple matters of identification (e.g. (9.1) “Λεπτίνην: on his identity see Walbank 55–56” [100]). While this practice encourages readers to consult a more comprehensive source, it re-

quires students to have easy access to this resource. In the limited instances Phillips provides comments on points beyond language, they contribute to the enjoyment and understanding of the passage. Phillips comments most extensively on *tyche* (89), but I found his notes on law particularly engaging (e.g. 211). Phillips also limits references to literature beyond Polybius (e.g. 154). There are few typographical errors overall (such as on page 96: The Second Samnite War should be emended from 327–204 to 327–304). In a few instances Phillips notes typographical errors from the text but does not specify at which stage in transmission these errors occurred (e.g. 109, 134, 188).

As a whole, the commentary and edition provide a welcome aid for those wishing to access Polybius' text in Greek. The explanations of grammar in the commentary are designed to guide advanced students through the structure of Polybius' language and to develop familiarity with his style. While the text's format and reliance on Walbank's commentary may discourage some students, this volume presents a crucial first step in introducing readers to Polybius' *Histories*.

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