

BOOK REVIEW

POLYBIUS, *The Histories, Volume I: Books 1–2*. Trans. by W. R. PATON, revised by F. W. WALBANK and Christian HABICHT. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2010. Pp. xxxviii + 466. \$24.00/£15.95. ISBN: 978-0-674-99637-3.

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W. R. Paton's Loeb edition and E. S. Schuckburgh's translation have for long been the basic English-language texts of Polybius' *Histories*. Both are very good. Now the Loeb edition is much better. Harvard University Press has brought out new, revised editions of Books 1–4 (volumes 1 and 2), revised by the late F. W. Walbank, acknowledged dean of Polybian studies, and Christian Habicht, one the world's preeminent Greek epigraphers.

Paton's Greek text is for the most part reliable, based on Th. Büttner-Wobst's excellent Teubner edition. Paton died suddenly in 1921 before finishing the work; it was first published in the following year with neither a sufficient general introduction nor explanatory notes. In order to correct these deficiencies, Walbank agreed to revise the entire Loeb edition (in six volumes) as early as 1964 and began work on it four years later. But realization of the project was delayed for nearly half a century. Walbank's revision was essentially completed when he died in October 2008, and Habicht undertook to carry out the final details, writing the introduction, revising indexes, and bringing the explanatory notes and bibliography completely up-to-date.

The introduction includes sections on Polybius' biography, the history's scope, Polybius' use of sources, his treatment of historical agents' speeches, his ideas on historical causality, the historian's job, historical reliability, and historiographical principles, as well as his views on Fortune (*Tyché*). The final sections discuss Polybius' writing style and the reception and transmission of his work. The only desideratum would be a separate section on the thorny problem of Polybius' views on and moral assessment of the Roman Empire (on this and other issues in the *Histories*, see now the excellent general introduction by Brian

McGing, *Polybius' Histories* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010)). Running notes at the bottom of each page of the translation provide cross-references in Polybius' text, essential geographical information, pertinent epigraphical evidence, references to key modern scholarship, and pointers to the detailed discussions in Walbank's great commentary.

The vast erudition of Walbank and Habicht are frequently apparent in their silent corrections of Paton. For example, at 1.37.4–5, on the rising of the constellations Orion and Sirius, Paton's nonsensical note that Sirius rises in July, Orion in December, is replaced by the correct interval between the rising of the two constellations as approximately from 4 to 28 July (255 B.C.). I have one quibble, however, about the translation of 1.11.1–2. Following Paton, Walbank and Habicht have the popular assembly at Rome take the momentous decision to cross to Sicily under arms in 264, after the Senate deferred, mired in a moral quandary. Polybius' Greek (οἱ δὲ πολλοί) is actually ambiguous, forcing the reader to decide whether he is referring to a majority in the Senate or in the *comitia* that took the decision.

Overall the quality of the volumes is superb; they are everything we should expect from these two scholars. Anyone with an interest in Polybius, Roman republican history, the Hellenistic world, or ancient Greek historiography will eagerly await subsequent volumes.

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