Craige B. Champion, *Cultural Politics in Polybius's Histories*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2004. Pp. xv + 328. ISBN 0-520-23764-1. US$49.95 / UK£32.50.

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In this monograph on Polybius' *Histories*, Champion aims to situate the historian's diverse representations of Romans in the historical and ideological contexts of the second century BC. The key themes of the book are the position of the Romans between Hellenism and barbarism, the notion of a degeneration of societies, and the issue of Polybius' multiple readerships. The author wishes to 'redress [the] relative lack of scholarly attention to Polybius's actual narration, and to understand Polybius's collective representations in treating the *Histories* as a political document' (p. 23). Since Eckstein's *Moral Vision* (1995) few books have been dedicated to Polybius.[[1]] *Cultural Politics* pays welcome attention to this important historian by offering an ambitious re-interpretation of his work.[[2]]

Champion's book provides an alternative approach to an old matter of scholarly discussion: Polybius' attitude to Rome.[[3]] Instead of trying to detect a pro- or anti-Roman stance in the *Histories*, Champion chooses to contextualise Polybius' diverse representations of Romans as strategic responses to his target audiences. The author argues that at times the historian engages in a politics of cultural assimilation of the Romans to Hellenism (presenting them as a civilized people possessing Hellenic virtues), while in other passages he applies a politics of cultural alienation (when suggesting Roman barbarism). The combination of these rival strategies, it is claimed, results in a politics of cultural indeterminacy. By combining opposing images of Rome, Polybius conformed to the opinions of both the Roman senatorial aristocracy and the political elite in Greece, whilst at the same time securing his own position. Before turning to a discussion of Champion's thesis and approach, I shall offer a chapter-by-chapter outline of his book.

Part One (pp. 13-63) concentrates on 'Historical and Historiographical Contexts' and provides the interpretative framework for Champion's analysis of Polybius' collective representations in Part Two. Chapter 1 (pp. 15-29) offers an introduction to Polybius and his place in ancient historiography, and clarifies Champion's approach to Polybius as an 'indirect historian'. Chapter 2 (pp. 30-63) discusses the usage of concepts of Hellenism and barbarism throughout Greek history, and focuses specifically on Greek views of Romans and Roman views of Greeks. Champion concludes that Polybius must have 'found himself in a difficult position in which he had to steer a careful course between the Scylla of Greek opposition to Roman power in his homeland and the Charybdis of the uncertainties concerning Greek culture on the part of his Roman captors' (p. 63).

The central part of *Cultural Politics* -- Part Two (pp. 65-169) -- is dedicated to the 'Text and Narrative' of the *Histories*. Champion's reading of book 6 -- in Chapter 3 (pp. 67-99) -- as 'an ideological maneuver in the cultural politics of Hellenism' (p. 75) is crucial to his interpretation of Polybius' work as a whole. The author suggests a strong link between Hellenic virtues and pure forms of *politeia* on the one hand, and between degenerate forms of state organisation and 'barbarian' characteristics on the other. Book 6 is said to leave Rome's cultural identity indeterminate since it incorporates Rome into the Hellenic realm of rationality by presenting her as a model Greek state, while also marking her off by stressing that the Romans were different from the Greeks. The Romans 'appear by the very degree of their quasi-Hellenic virtues as something alien to the Greek reader' (p. 96). It is important that the Romans could be presented as different from the Greeks without ending up as barbarians. This should warn us against applying too rigid a Hellenic-barbarian dichotomy to Polybius' text.

Next, Champion analyses Polybius' representations of Romans and Achaeans in the historical narrative of the *Histories*. Chapter 4 (pp. 100-43) treats the first five books, in which Romans and Achaeans display Hellenic virtues like temperance and rational behaviour, whereas among their opponents one finds irrationality and unbridled individual passions, the hallmarks of barbarism. This model of opposition does not work for the Carthaginians as well as it does for others, as Champion acknowledges (for example, on page 117). Chapter 5 (pp. 144-69) discusses passages in the fragmentary books 7-15, 16-29, and 30-39 which refer to degeneration. With the exception of some individuals, Romans and Achaeans alike can be seen to move away from *logismos* (rationality), toward the degenerate state of ochlocracy and barbarism. In this process the

Romans are subject to the same forces as the Achaeans; their parallel trajectories are considered by Champion as 'an exercise in the politics of cultural assimilation' (p. 168). For the sake of his argument, Champion perhaps puts a little too much stress on the parallels rather than the differences between Romans and Achaeans (although he does refer to the latter briefly, p. 138f., n. 155).

Part Three, 'Ideological and Political Contexts' (pp. 171-233), studies more closely the relationship between Polybius' representations of Romans and the opinions of his Greek and Roman audiences. In Chapter 6 (pp. 173-203) it is argued that Polybius' representation of the process of degeneration of Rome is in line with Roman aristocratic conventions. However, the historian also expresses anti-Roman criticism expounded by his fellow Greeks; not only in the historical narrative (especially in three speeches: 5.104.1-11; 9.32.3-39.7; 11.4.1-6.8) but also in his own voice (12.4b.1-12.4c.1), Champion argues, Polybius calls the 'Hellenic' virtues of the Romans into question and suggests that they were *barbaroi* all along, thus engaging in a politics of cultural alienation. Chapter 7 (pp. 204-33) considers Polybius' diverse representations of Romans as a response to realities both at Rome and in Greece, and discusses the historian's personal position between Achaeans and Romans. Champion concludes that Polybius' commitment to historical truth 'did not preclude a politically motivated manipulation of Greek politico-cultural discourse' (p. 238). With an eye to his own position and perhaps his eventual repatriation, Polybius 'sailed a careful course between Greece and Rome, arriving ultimately . . . in a safe harbor' (p. 239).

Besides elaborate footnotes, *Cultural Politics* contains three appendices (pp. 241-259): (A) an analysis of terms used in the *Histories* to describe ochlocracy and barbarians, (B) a list of occurrences of *barbaros* and its cognates, and (C) a study of *logismos* and related words. An extensive bibliography (pp. 261-82)[[4]] is followed by three useful indices (pp. 283-328): a general index, an index locorum, and an index of Polybian terminology.

Cultural Politics touches upon important aspects of the history of Rome and Greece in the second century BC, and deserves praise for offering an interpretation of the *Histories* as a whole and for appreciating the work within its Greek and Roman contexts. In a book which promises to redress the lack of attention to Polybius' actual narration, more quotations of relevant passages throughout the book (rather than in the appendices) might have been welcome, especially for readers who are not very familiar with the text of the *Histories* . That said, Champion's argument is well formulated and easy to follow.

It has long been acknowledged that the *Histories* contain both positive and negative representations of Romans, and the concepts of Hellenism and barbarism have also been applied to Polybius' text before.[[5]] The novelty of Champion's work lies in its approach to the historian as someone who 'ingeniously manipulated the politico-cultural language of Hellenism' throughout his work (p. 235). *Cultural Politics* provides a contextual approach which is more literary than historical; it studies Polybius' representations of Rome in relation to the opinions of his target readerships rather than in relation to the historical events described. In line with this, Champion deliberately treats the *Histories* as a unity, ignoring its different stages of composition and the effects this may have had on (changing) representations of Rome (cf. pp. 10-12).

Not all of Polybius' representations of Romans can be viewed from the perspective of a Hellenic-barbarian dichotomy (note the above-mentioned cases of the Carthaginians and of Roman exclusivity), but Champion seems to solve this issue by using cultural indeterminacy not only as a term for the sum of assimilation and alienation, but also as a separate strategy in itself (thus allowing for a position of the Romans outside the Hellenic-barbarian continuum). The case for rationality as a reflection of Hellenism thus loses some of its strength; 'barbarian' opponents act rationally, and the Romans are different from the Greeks for rational reasons. Champion's conclusion that some elements of Polybius' text conformed to opinions of 'pro-Romans' and that other passages (containing 'indirect' criticism) would have been welcome to 'anti-Romans' seems correct and does not come as a surprise. But to what extent should conflicting images of Rome be seen as a cultural politics applied by Polybius, and to what extent as a reflection of described historical realities? Did not the Romans and their opponents (including the Macedonians, about whom Champion is relatively silent in his work) through their behaviour and self-representation engage in a 'cultural politics' themselves?

My reservations are subordinate to my overall appreciation of Champion's book as a stimulating impulse to the discussion of Polybius' attitudes to Rome. *Cultural Politics* will be of interest not only to students and scholars of the *Histories*, but also to those working on the concepts of Hellenism and barbarism or on ancient historiography.

NOTES

[[1]] A. M. Eckstein, *Moral Vision in the 'Histories' of Polybius* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1995). Eckstein's work was reviewed by Champion for the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (BMCR 95.07.06). An important recent publication (or rather a collection of re-published articles) on Polybius is F. W. Walbank, *Polybius, Rome, and the Hellenistic World* (Cambridge 2002), which opens with a useful review of Polybian studies from 1975 to 2000.

[[2]] The book seems based -- at least partly -- on Champion's doctoral dissertation: *The Indirect Historian: The Depiction of Group Character in Polybius' Histories, 1-6* (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1993). Cf. two of Champion's recent articles: '*Histories* 12.4b.1-c.1: An Overlooked Key to Polybios' Views on Rome', *Histos* 4 (2000a) (on-line journal: www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos/); and 'Romans as BAPBAPOI: Three Polybian Speeches and the Politics of Cultural Indeterminacy', *Classical Philology* 95 (2000b) 425-44. Champion also recently edited *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources* (Malden, Oxford, and Carlton 2004).

[[3]] For previous works on the topic see references in *Cultural Politics* p. 4 (n. 4) and in Walbank [[1]] 18-20.

[[4]] In which, however, the following relevant items are missing: F. Millar, 'Polybius between Greece and Rome', in J. T. A. Koumoulides and J. Brademas (edd.), *Greek Connections: Essays on Culture and Diplomacy* (Notre Dame, Indiana 1987) 1-18; M. Dubuisson, 'La vision polybienne de Rome', in H. Verdin, G. Schepens, and E. De Keyser (edd.), *Purposes of History: Studies in Greek Historiography from the 4th to the 2nd centuries BC* (Leuven 1990) 233-45; and, concerning the wider context of the position of Romans in relation to Greeks, A. Erskine, *Troy between Greece and Rome* (Oxford 2001).

[[5]] H. H. Schmitt, 'Hellenen, Römer und Barbaren: Eine Studie zu Polybios', *Wissenschaftliche Beilage zum Jahresbericht 1957/8 des humanistischen Gymnasiums Aschaffenburg* (Aschaffenburg 1957/8); Eckstein [[1]] 119-25, and 129-40, where it is also noted that Polybius ascribes to the masses 'traits strikingly similar to those he attributed to . . . barbarians' (p. 129); A. Erskine, 'Polybios and Barbarian Rome', *Mediterraneo Antico* 3.1 (2000) 165-82.