

# Cardiff Historical Papers



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## Hannibal the cannibal? Polybius on Barcid atrocities<sup>1</sup>

At the time when Hannibal planned to march on Italy from Spain with his army, it was foreseen that he would find it very difficult to feed the troops and keep them constantly provided with supplies. The difficulties of the march seemed almost insuperable both owing to the distance and to the numbers and the savagery of the barbarians in the intervening lands. It seems that the problem was more than once discussed in the Council, and that one of Hannibal's friends, Hannibal Monomachos, stated that he foresaw only one way by which it would be possible to reach Italy. When Hannibal asked him for an explanation, he replied that he must teach his troops to eat human flesh and accustom them to this...

Hannibal had nothing to say against the boldness and practicality of this suggestion, but he could persuade neither himself nor his friends actually to adopt it. They say the acts of cruelty in Italy of which Hannibal is accused were the works of this man, but due no less to those of circumstance.

Polybius 9.24.4–8

This important passage has not received the attention it deserves, perhaps because the sensationalism of cannibalism was less appealing to earlier historians.<sup>2</sup> It appears in Polybius' digression on the character of Hannibal (9.22–6), and is the central example in his argument that Hannibal's reputation for cruelty was the product not of his

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the readers at the *Cardiff Historical Papers* for some extremely useful suggestions, and Dr Guy Bradley and Professor Nick Fisher in particular for their support and advice.

<sup>2</sup> For example Walbank, in his magisterial commentary on Polybius, says nothing about the cannibalism. Frank W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), vol. 2, p. 153. Note Tatham's brief attempt to rationalise the story as a misunderstanding of soldiers' slang along the lines of Xen. *Anab.* 4.8.14: 'Soldiers, those enemy over there are the only ones likely to stand against us and our achieving our aims; if possible, we must eat them raw'. Meaburn T. Tatham, 'Livy, 23, 5, 12', *Classical Review*, 2, 7 (1888), p. 226. However, Polybius was perfectly capable of understanding the difference between actual and metaphorical cannibalism, as the present discussion will show.

character, but of external factors: the bad advice of his companions and the nature of the military situation.<sup>3</sup>

Polybius includes the story of the cannibalistic plan in his excursus (*aristeia*) on Hannibal to illustrate the cruel nature of one of the Carthaginian general's companions, a certain Hannibal Monomachos. He uses the episode in two ways: firstly, to challenge the view of Hannibal's cruelty found in other, mainly Roman, writers' accounts; secondly, to pursue a more general argument about the nature of character and the influences upon it. Both elements have been discussed by other scholars to some extent; however, the suggestion that Hannibal seriously considered cannibalism has largely been overlooked.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the suggestion, and the way in which Polybius uses it, sheds light on Polybius as a historian, as well as on the polemic that surrounded the representation of Hannibal in Antiquity. The anecdote will be considered in the context of other stories about Hannibalic cannibalism and cruelty in the Second Punic War. The aim of this paper is not to consider whether Hannibal's army ever did practice cannibalism, but to ask why Polybius chose to include this particular story at this point in the *Histories*. It will be shown that Polybius' contextualisation of the story, both in terms of his argument about the nature of Hannibal's cruelty (*ōmotēta*) and the way in which he makes the story seem

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<sup>3</sup> This discussion of Hannibal's character (9.22–6) survives in a collection of *Virtues and Vices* in the tenth-century Byzantine manuscript known as the Constantine Excerpts, but it appears to follow on from an analysis of generalship that can be placed amongst the surviving fragments of Book Nine. As such, it probably featured in Polybius' narrative sometime in the period 212/11–209/8 BC, at a point when the tide of war was beginning to turn in the Romans' favour. See Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 2.10–11. In his character analysis of the Carthaginian general, Polybius looks back to the beginning of the war (9.24.4–8) and onwards to the increasing number of problems Hannibal faced in Italy after the fall of his ally Capua in 211 BC (9.26).

<sup>4</sup> On Hannibal's cruelty see Howard V. Canter, 'The character of Hannibal', *Classical Journal*, 24, 8 (1928/9), pp. 564–77; Karl Christ, 'Zur Beurteilung Hannibals', *Historia*, 17 (1968), pp. 463–5; see also Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 2.153 for references to earlier scholars who have rejected stories of cruelty. Concerning Polybius on character see Paul Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964), esp. p. 246; Frank W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 92–6; Arthur M. Eckstein, *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 239–54; John Marincola, *Greek Historians (Greece and Rome New Surveys 31)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. p. 146.

plausible, is designed to show his admiration for the general. Moreover, it will be argued that he regarded Hannibal's decision to reject *anthrōpophagia* (cannibalism) not so as much a practical matter, but as a moral one.

It is the combination of pragmatic and moral elements in Polybius' *Histories* that has made them so controversial for modern commentators. Some writers emphasise Polybius' hard-headed and utilitarian purposes in writing history and his lack of interest in ethical matters.<sup>5</sup> Sacks, for example, dismisses Polybius' ethical discussions as little more than unsystematic digressions, of no historiographical relevance.<sup>6</sup> Those who prefer to emphasise Polybius' morality, on the other hand, tend to argue that his ethical stance throughout the *Histories* not only steers his readers to consider the moral dimension in order to improve their virtue, but also dictates his own approach to, and interpretation of, the events and historical personages he scrutinises.<sup>7</sup>

Scholars agree though that Polybius conceives human character to be multi-faceted and subject to change.<sup>8</sup> The relationship between character and external stimuli is dynamic, making it difficult to perceive the true nature of a man of affairs such as Hannibal (Polyb. 9.24.1–2). Polybius' understanding of the historical process favours this dynamic notion, where events are shaped by the characters of prominent men, but also have the potential to mould them. For Polybius, the truest test of

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<sup>5</sup> See André Aymard, 'Le Fragment de Polybe "Sur les traîtres" (xviii, 13–15)', *Revue des études anciennes*, 42 (1940), pp. 9–19; Pédech, *Méthode historique*, p. 219; Walbank, *Polybius*, p. 173; Peter Green, *From Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 278–82.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Sacks, *Polybius on the Writing of History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981), esp. pp. 132–6.

<sup>7</sup> Rudolf von Scala, *Die Studien des Polybios*, vol. I (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1890); Carl Wunderer, *Polybios: Lebens- und Weltanschauung aus dem zweiten vorchristlichen Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Dieterichscher Verlag, 1927), esp. 15–18; Karl-Ernst Petzold, *Studien zur Methode des Polybios und zu ihrer Auswertung* (Munich: Beck, 1969); Burkhard Meissner, 'ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΙΚΗ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ: Polybios über den Zweck pragmatischer Geschichtsschreibung', *Saeculum*, 37 (1986), pp. 313–51; Eckstein, *Moral Vision*; Craig B. Champion, *Cultural Politics in Polybius's Histories* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Walbank, *Polybius*, p. 93; Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, pp. 239–40.

character comes during extremes of fortune or when conditions are toughest.<sup>9</sup> The crossing of the Alps was such a test for Hannibal, for as Polybius suggests, ‘the difficulties of the march seemed almost insuperable’ (9.24.4). The decisions Hannibal made about food-supply for the army had the potential to shape his character and determine the course of the campaign. There would be other difficult choices for him to make, however, and the extent to which Polybius’ observations on Hannibal’s cruelty, advanced in the *aristeia*, are confirmed in his presentation of Barcid atrocities throughout the war will be considered in the final section of this paper. The observations demonstrate that the balance of Polybius’ political realism and ethical stance is skewed towards the latter, whilst his representation of Hannibal’s acts of cruelty in the *Histories* confirms, to some degree, the argument deployed at 9.24. Contrary to the view of Sacks and other ‘pragmatists’, utilitarian interpretations of Polybius’ historical narrative do not reveal the full picture.<sup>10</sup> His ethical digressions, shed light on ‘plainer’ sections of historical narrative, and reveal the complex moral criteria that underpin Polybius’ presentation of events and historical characters.

### **The tradition of Hannibalic cannibalism and cruelty**

The association of Hannibal and cannibalism appears in two variants: Polybius’ is echoed briefly by Dio Cassius (see below); another account is given by the Augustan historian Livy. The differences between the versions are instructive. Livy indicates perhaps how some Romans regarded Hannibal, although he distances himself from the tale by placing it in a speech. He reports that, when addressing an audience at Capua in 216 BC, the consul Gaius Terentius Varro claimed:

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<sup>9</sup> Polyb. 6.2.5–6; Marincola, *Greek Historians*, p. 146.

<sup>10</sup> See n. 6.

The Carthaginian is dragging after him an army that is not even made up of natives of Africa, he has collected a force from the furthest corners of the earth, from the ocean straits, and the Pillars of Hercules, men devoid of any sense of right, destitute of the condition, and almost of the speech of men. Savage and barbarous by nature and habit, their general has made them still more brutal by building up bridges and barriers with human bodies and – I shudder to say it – teaching them to feed on human flesh. What man, if he were merely a native of Italy, would not be horrified at the thought of looking upon men who feast upon what it is impious even to touch as his lords and masters, looking to Africa and above all to Carthage for his laws, and having to submit to Italy becoming a dependency of the Numidians and the Moors?

Livy 23.5.11–13

Varro portrays cannibalism as deeply polluting, impious, and transforming (in rendering the men even more brutal than they were naturally). As such, he reflects Graeco-Roman attitudes to deliberate acts of cannibalism, where those who partook were considered to have entered ‘a savage, non-human, asocial zone’, beyond the recognised conventions of human society, and to have become the predatory enemies of mankind: beasts or monsters.<sup>11</sup> If Varro’s accusation were true, it would be an extremely damning indictment of the barbarity and cruelty of Hannibal and his men, and a confirmation that Hannibal, as Livy asserts, was a man of *inhumana crudelitas* (‘inhuman cruelty’, 21.4, cf. 22.59).

However, by putting the statement into the mouth of Varro – whom elsewhere he reviles as a demagogue (22.26, 34, 38) – and stating that this speech ‘increased the contempt for him’ among the Campanian audience (23.5.2), Livy makes Varro’s

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<sup>11</sup> Barton Kunstler, ‘The werewolf figure and its adoption into the Greek political vocabulary’, *Classical World*, 84 (1991), p. 191; Marcel Detienne, *Dionysos Slain*, trans. Mireille and Leonard Muellner (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), pp. 56–8.

accusations seem exaggerated. Livy's omission of such lurid details in his campaign narratives also suggests that he meant his audience to realise that the claims were stretching reality. Thus, despite the historian's famous character sketch of Hannibal's *inhumana crudelitas* and several specific examples of his cruelties,<sup>12</sup> Varro's accusations are made to seem implausible. For Livy then, Hannibal may have been cruel, but he was not *that* cruel. Whilst undermining Varro's accusations, Livy evidently felt the need to include the bridge-building and cannibalistic atrocities in his narrative, probably because the stories were circulating in some form at the time he was writing.<sup>13</sup>

It may well have been the case that some of the stories were also current when Polybius was composing his work in the mid second century BC, but the inclusion of the suggestion of cannibalism, probably relates more to an interest shown by earlier writers. Like Livy, Polybius rejects the possibility that it happened, since he asserts that Hannibal refused to adopt the 'logistical measure' for the march across the Alps. Thus he could have dismissed, or even omitted, the story. Indeed, the accusations in Varro's speech seem to be the sort of fantastic and sensationalistic assertions of cruelty that Polybius condemns earlier writers for introducing into the reign of Hieronymus of Syracuse (7.7) and the fall of Agathocles in Egypt (15.34, 36).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> e.g. 21.14; 21.57.13–14; 23.19 (which Livy doubts); 24.45; 30.20. On the portrayal of Hannibal in Livy see Christ, 'Zur Beurteilung Hannibals', pp. 469–73.

<sup>13</sup> Appian (*Hann.* 5.28; *Pun.* 63; cf. *Eutrop.* 3.11.1) reports the killing of prisoners after Cannae and goes on to note the construction of a bridge from their cadavers. Florus (1.22.18) also mentions the bridge of Cannae slain. Val Max 9.2 ext. 2 claims Hannibal's army crossed the river Vergellus by using such a bridge. Two other episodes of cannibalism in the Second Punic War, at Saguntum (219/8 BC) and Petelia (215 BC), are not relevant to this discussion, because they represent the conditions of Hannibal's opponents under siege and are reported by rather late and unreliable sources: Saguntum: Petronius *Satyricon* 141; Juvenal 15.114; Augustine (*Civ. Dei*, 3.20, 'as some assert'); Sil. Ital. *Pun.* 2.513–25 (where it is contemplated, but not adopted). Petelia: Petronius *Satyr.* 141 (cf. Sil. Ital. *Pun.* 12.431–2, 'a second Saguntum'). In such accounts, it appears that Hannibal and his army merely create the conditions in which starvation would occur; the story provides the backdrop for those authors keen to linger on the suffering and dilemmas of starving defenders.

<sup>14</sup> Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 2.39. Polybius 7.7 may have Baton and Eumachus in mind in his criticisms. See also Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 2.494–5 on sensationalist accounts of Agathocles. Cf. Polyb. 2.56 for criticisms of Phylarchus' approach to history. Walbank, 'History and

However, Polybius appears to make every effort to persuade the reader that the proposal had been made (see below).

By the time Polybius was writing his *Histories*, Hannibal's cruelty was already a controversial topic (9.22.8). The writer does not specify who was involved in the debate, reporting only that 'among the Romans' Hannibal had a reputation for excessive cruelty (9.26.11), whilst 'they say' that a certain Hannibal Monomachos was primarily responsible for the atrocities in Italy attributed to Hannibal (9.24.8). One might speculate that Roman writers such as Fabius Pictor and Cincius Alimentus, as well as the pro-Carthaginian Sosylus and Silenus, all of whom Polybius consulted, were involved in the debate.<sup>15</sup> Some of the discourse was probably reflected in popular tradition throughout Italy and Greece. The stories of cruelty certainly seem to have circulated early enough to be part of a contemporary discourse, perhaps even a propaganda war, during or soon after Hannibal's campaigns.<sup>16</sup> It is likely that the tradition of cannibalism emerged in this context, and at some point was employed in the condemnation of Hannibal's character.

### **Cruelty, companions, and context in Polybius' Hannibalic *aristeia***

Whilst admitting that the Romans regarded Hannibal as cruel (9.26.11), Polybius deploys the story of Monomachos to counter this. He argues that a man's character is not necessarily revealed by his actions (9.22.8–10), reasoning that this could not be the case because it does not take into account the influence of friends and companions

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Tragedy', *Historia*, 9 (1960), pp. 216–34; Guido Schepens, 'Polybius' criticism of Phylarchus', in Guido Schepens and Jan Bollansée (eds), *The Shadow of Polybius: Intertextuality as a Research Tool in Greek Historiography. Proceedings of the International Colloquium. Leuven, 21–22 September 2001* (Leuven, Paris, and Dudley: Peeters, 2005), pp. 141–64.

<sup>15</sup> Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 1.28–9, 33–4.

<sup>16</sup> On propagandistic claims and counter-claims surrounding Hannibal see Louis P. Rawlings, 'Hannibal and Hercules', in Louis P. Rawlings and Hugh Bowden (eds), *Herakles and Hercules: Exploring a Graeco-Roman Divinity* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2005), esp. pp. 156–9.

or the pressures of circumstance (9.22.10; 9.26.10); he insists that such factors sometimes lead men to undertake actions contrary to their disposition. Polybius deploys several other historical examples to illustrate this,<sup>17</sup> and indeed offers such opinions throughout the *Histories*. He portrays Hieronymus, the young tyrant of Syracuse, being led astray by bad confidants (7.4.4–6 cf. 7.6.7). Similarly, Philip V (7.13.3–14.6) is said to have accepted frequently the counsel of certain advisers, which variously enhanced or harmed his prospects and reputation.<sup>18</sup> In the case of Hannibal, Polybius argues that anyone who studies only his actions in Italy will never perceive his true nature, because his nearest friends differed so much in character (9.24.1). The writer claims, ‘they say that the acts of cruelty in Italy of which Hannibal is accused were the works of this man [Hannibal Monomachos], but due no less to those of circumstance’ (9.24.8).

If Polybius’ argument is based on a case of mistaken identity to a certain extent, then what can be said of Hannibal Monomachos? Polybius portrays him as one of Hannibal’s advisors, and his intimacy with the commander is suggested by their friendship (*philia*). It is less clear what the origins of such ties were; nor is it evident whether he had political connections back in Carthage, or if he was an officer who had risen by merit in the hard years of campaigning in the Spanish theatre. The name Monomachos, ‘Single-combat-fighter’, is otherwise unknown among the Carthaginians, and should probably be regarded as a nickname.<sup>19</sup> Greek and Roman sources sometimes provide such names as an alternative to patronymics; how they

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<sup>17</sup> Other examples are deployed in 9.23: Agathocles of Syracuse, Cleomenes, and Philip V. Polybius argues that even the policies of states such as Athens and Sparta were influenced by their advisors and rulers.

<sup>18</sup> Walbank, *Polybius*, pp. 93–4.

<sup>19</sup> Monomachos could denote gladiator in the Greek of this period (cf. Polyb. 30.25.6; 30.26.1; 31.28.5), but it seems a less plausible way of interpreting the nickname of this Hannibal than someone ‘keen on single combat’ (cf. 1.45.9, 35.5.1). Cf. below n. 23.

came into use is little understood.<sup>20</sup> Of course, the name ‘Hannibal’ appears to have been common in Carthage, and those who possessed it needed to be told apart somehow.<sup>21</sup> Yet it is worth considering whether a Greek tag like ‘Monomachos’ was one that a Carthaginian would have used, or whether it was a translation of a Punic equivalent.<sup>22</sup> It is a suitably martial name for an officer of Hannibal and might have been earned through a notable exploit – after all, in his youth Hannibal had gained a reputation for daring in battle, and single combats could well have occurred between natives and others in the context of the warrior culture of the Spanish theatre.<sup>23</sup>

If Polybius knew of the rest of Monomachos’ career and included it in his *Histories*, the material has been lost. Lenschau suggests that he was ‘Hannibal the Carthaginian’, sent by Hannibal Barca to Syracuse to convince Hieronymus to break his alliance with Rome, and subsequently to Carthage to facilitate further negotiations

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<sup>20</sup> In the First Punic War, Polybius introduces us to ‘Hannibal called the Rhodian’ (1.46.4); in the Second, to Mago the Samnite (Polyb. 9.25 – a *philos* and a man as greedy as Hannibal Barca – who commanded in Bruttium. Hannibal’s greed was attested by ‘the Carthaginians’ and by Massanissa, whom Polybius claimed to have interviewed); in the Third, to Mago the Bruttian (Polyb. 36.5.1).

<sup>21</sup> Note, for example, the commander of a Celtic contingent at Lilybaeum, Hannibal son of Hannibal (Polyb. 1.43.4), who was one of three Hannibals operating in the vicinity of the city in 250/49 BC, the others being Hannibal son of Hamilcar, trierarch and *philos* of Adherbal (Polyb. 1.44.1), and Hannibal the Rhodian (Polyb. 1.46–7).

<sup>22</sup> In modern translations and discussions Bomilcar Basileus is frequently puniced as ‘Bomilcar the Sufete’. For Greek usage of *basileus* to label this chief Punic magistracy see Otto Metzler, *Geschichte der Karthager* II (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1896), pp. 62–6; Victor Ehrenberg, s.v. ‘Sufeten’, in August F. Pauly and Georg Wissowa (eds), *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler) 2, 7 (1931), cols. 645–6. The ‘nickname’ Barca applied to Hamilcar is evidently not a Greek or Roman word, but possibly derives from the Punic *Brq*, which probably meant ‘lightning’ or ‘flashing-blade’. See Liddell-Scott, s.v. *Barkas*; Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 1.119; Serge Lancel, *Hannibal*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 6; B. Dexter Hoyos, *Hannibal’s Dynasty: Power and Politics in the Western Mediterranean, 247–183 BC* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 238, n. 11.

<sup>23</sup> On Iberian and Gallic *monomachiai* and Scipio’s gladiatorial games at New Carthage 206 BC see Louis P. Rawlings, ‘Celts, Spaniards and Samnites: warriors in a soldiers’ war’, in Tim Cornell, Boris Rankov, and Philip Sabin (eds), *The Second Punic War: a Reappraisal (Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, supp. 67, 1996)*, p. 87. Single combat was a common occurrence between Roman officers and western barbarians: Marcellus fought Britomarus in 222 BC (Polyb. 2.34.5; Plut. *Marc.* 7; Propertius 4.10.39; cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.49; Florus 2.4) and in the Third Punic War, Scipio Aemilianus engaged with a barbarian in a *monomachia* (Polyb. 35.5.1–2). See also Stephen Oakley, ‘Single Combat in the Roman Republic’, *Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 35, 2 (1985), p. 392–410. Perhaps some Carthaginians also engaged in this activity. Note that Polybius (1.45.9) claims that the Romans and Carthaginian mercenaries fought so fiercely and with so little organisation at a battle at Lilybaeum in 250/49 BC that it reminded him of *monomachiai*. Interestingly the battle involved a Celtic contingent commanded by a certain Hannibal.

(Polyb. 7.2.2). Livy (24.6.2) reports that this ambassador was ‘a young man’, whilst Polybius indicates that he was Hannibal’s trierarch – often a prestigious position appropriate for a close confidant of the commander.<sup>24</sup> The identification is not secure, however, and the popularity of Hannibal as a name among Carthaginians has led some scholars to reject Lenschau’s suggestion.<sup>25</sup> If the ambassador-trierarch Hannibal was a different individual, then 9.24 may be Monomachos’ only walk-on part in Punic history.

As the singular advocate of a specific policy, Monomachos appears aptly named to serve the rhetorical point for which he is deployed, that is, to exculpate Hannibal from the charge of being naturally and excessively cruel. In order to substantiate his argument, Polybius needed an example of the extreme cruelty of Hannibal’s advisor, and one that would seem plausible to his audience. Although it might derive from Silenus or some sensationalist writer, Polybius does not relate the story in its original context (i.e. the start of the march), but includes it later, in the digression on Hannibal’s character, for a polemical purpose.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, it draws its plausibility from that original context in a number of ways.

Firstly, Polybius emphasises that the march did create problems of supply. On several occasions he iterates that supplies dwindled, losses of baggage animals being particularly severe (3.51.3–6, 53.3, 7, 10, 56.2, 60.3–4). Despite several resupplies en route (3.49.11, 51.12–13), he suggests that the food shortages reduced many of the survivors to a state of wretchedness (3.60.4–7). When it came to the digression in

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas Lenschau in Pauly and Wissowa (eds), *Realencyclopädie*, 7 (1912), col. 2351; Hoyos, *Hannibal’s Dynasty*, p. 263, n. 6. According to Polyb. 2.1.9, Hasdrubal held the position of trierarch under his father-in-law, Hamilcar Barca, and succeeded him to the command in Spain. A certain Hannibal, *philos* of Adherbal, held such a position during the First Punic War (Polyb. 1.44.1).

<sup>25</sup> See Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 2.32; Giovanni Brizzi, *Studi di storia annibalica* (Faenza: Stabilimento Grafico Lega, 1984), p. 15, n. 20. Cf. in this paper n. 21.

<sup>26</sup> Although he is opposed to the sensationalist approach to history in general and criticises such accounts of Hannibal’s crossing of the Alps (3.47–8), he may have drawn on them for some information. See Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 1.381–2.

Book Nine, readers would recall that Polybius had already asserted the difficulties of supply in the Alps. They might then find it credible that Monomachos imagined prior to the march that without resort to anthropophagy, the logistical problems would be insurmountable.

Secondly, by arguing that Hannibal carefully investigated and prepared his route, Polybius attacks other historians' versions of the crossing of the Alps (3.47–48). He claims to have interviewed some of those who took part in the campaign and ascertained that Hannibal used native scouts to provide him with reconnaissance information before the march, so that he had no need of 'some god or hero' to show him the way, an epiphany other writers included.<sup>27</sup> The theme of Hannibal as strategist re-emerges at 9.24 – one of a number of pictures in Polybius of Hannibal and his advisors devising operational strategy, particularly in respect to the invasion of Italy. In this instance he reports that the general's council (*synedrion*) met several times to discuss logistical issues. Elsewhere (3.20.8) we learn that the Romans held not only Hannibal, but also his *synedroi* responsible for starting the war: all of them should have been surrendered to the Romans as the price for peace. This suggests their close implication in his decision-making processes. Prior to Trebbia in 218 BC, Hannibal confided his battle-plan to his brother, Mago, and other *synedroi* (3.71.5). It is they who approved and helped to execute it. After Trasimene in 217 BC, Hannibal again consulted with his brother and *philoï* about the course of the campaign (3.85.6).<sup>28</sup> Indeed, we learn from the list of guarantors (or signatories) in the treaty that Hannibal negotiated with Philip V in 215 BC that not only 'friends', but also members of the Carthaginian senate (*gerousiastai*) – Mago, Myrcan, Barmocar, and

<sup>27</sup> In particular Silenus. See Rawlings, 'Hannibal and Hercules', p. 156.

<sup>28</sup> There may have been some separation between a more intimate circle of Hannibal's *philoï* and a larger group of *synedroi*. Cf. Greg Daly, *Cannae: The Experience of Battle in the Second Punic War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 127–8.

others – accompanied Hannibal into Italy (7.9.1).<sup>29</sup> After Trasimene, Hannibal buried thirty of his men of the ‘highest birth’ (3.85.5).<sup>30</sup>

Hannibal’s officers exerted tight control over their troops in battle and were trusted to execute vital elements of the battle-plans they had discussed and approved collectively.<sup>31</sup> However, Hannibal could overturn their judgements on other matters. Maharbal was rebuked for negotiating a surrender of the Romans who survived the slaughter of Trasimene (3.85). Polybius’ narrative of the Italian campaign becomes fragmentary after Cannae (216 BC), so we do not know whether he reported the episode of Maharbal offering the advice to Hannibal to march on Rome, or, indeed, the former’s candid assessment that Hannibal knew how to win battles but not wars.<sup>32</sup> Yet it would not have been out of keeping for a *philos* of Hannibal to offer his opinion on forthcoming campaign strategy – or at least that is what Polybius, in the Monomachos story, would have us believe. It is, after all, an aspect of good generalship to entertain all bold and practical plans. Despite his youth, Hannibal had been appointed by the army and then by the Carthaginian assembly (3.13) as commander-in-chief because, according to Polybius, he combined a daring spirit with a quick and fertile brain (2.36.3). His capacity for detailed forward planning is

<sup>29</sup> Elias J. Bickerman, ‘Hannibal’s covenant’, *American Journal of Philology*, 73, 1 (1952), p. 7; Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 2.44–5; Lancel, *Hannibal*, p. 117.

<sup>30</sup> Their participation in battle reveals the militarism of the Punic elite. See Walter Ameling, *Karthago. Studien zu Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1993), pp. 151–81 and Arthur M. Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War and the Rise of Rome* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 163–4 and 177. Scholars have realised that Hannibal was formally accompanied and advised by representatives of the Carthaginian state, and that they served as officers in the army, making it less likely that he was acting without the support of the Carthaginian *gerousia*. Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 1.334–5; Hoyos, *Hannibal’s Dynasty*, pp. 51 and 88–9. Indeed, Hoyos has demonstrated that the Barcids had the almost complete backing of the senate and assembly from 237–204 BC. They were, in effect, the military and political leaders of the Carthaginian Empire. B. Dexter Hoyos, ‘Barcid proconsuls and Punic politics 237–218 BC’, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 137 (1994), pp. 246–74.

<sup>31</sup> Adrian K. Goldsworthy, *The Punic Wars* (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 35 and 211–14; Daly, *Cannae*, pp. 127–8 and 133.

<sup>32</sup> Livy 22.51.1–4; cf. Plut. *Fab. Max.* 17.2; Cato *Orig.* 4.13. There is no indication in Book Three that Polybius knew of the story; he *may* have chosen to begin Book Seven with a discussion of Hannibal’s plans after the aftermath of Cannae. On Maharbal’s advice see B. Dexter Hoyos, ‘Maharbal’s *Bon Mot*: authenticity and survival’, *Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 50, 2 (2000), pp. 610–14.

emphasised in Polybius' polemical analysis of the crossing of the Alps (3.47–8) and in a digression on generalship (9.12–16) where Polybius argues that the ability to undertake careful planning is something all generals should possess or acquire (9.14.1–5). A commander should consult with those whom he can trust and who are intimately involved in the plan (9.13.2–3). Given that a general's consultation with his *synedroi* is an important aspect of forward planning, the Monomachos anecdote serves to demonstrate that, in planning the march across the Alps, Hannibal was conforming to Polybian standards of good generalship and rationality (*logismos*).<sup>33</sup> In Polybius' presentation of Hannibal's war-council and planning processes, the story is made to seem entirely plausible: a *synedros* puts his proposal to the council on the important issue of supply; it is discussed and, in this case, rejected by the other *synedroi* and the commander.

If Hannibal was acting as a good general by considering it, why did he reject the plan? After all, Polybius has led the reader to understand that there were supply problems on the march, and although there might be doubts about the practicality of capturing enough people *en route* to feed (even *in extremis*) an army of 40,000 or so, he asserts that Hannibal found the suggestion 'bold and practical'. Polybius does not state explicitly why Hannibal demurred. It is only in the much later version of the story, related by Dio Cassius, that a reason is supplied:

When, owing to the numbers in Hannibal's army, preparations proved inadequate ... and, because of this, someone suggested to him that the soldiers be fed on human flesh, he did not take the plan amiss, but said he feared that one day, through lack of such bodies, they might turn to eating one another (*allēlophagia*).

Dio frg 14.57.3

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<sup>33</sup> For Polybius on generalship see Daly, *Cannae*, pp. 117–19. On Polybius' positive appraisal of Hannibal's generalship see Pédech, *Méthode historique*, pp. 217–19. On Hannibal's *logismos*: Champion, *Cultural Politics*, pp. 255–8.

According to Dio, Hannibal is keen to preserve this culinary boundary, not because of morality or piety, but simply because his army might eventually eat itself. It is unclear where Dio obtained his version of Hannibal's response. It may be a later rhetorical flourish added to an account deriving ultimately, from Polybius, or it is possible that Polybius omitted or even suppressed an element that existed in his original source(s).

### **Polybius on cannibalism and Hannibal's choice**

In order to understand Hannibal's choice as it appears in the *Histories*, it is necessary to understand Polybius' view of cannibalism. It seems clear that he could have included the view expressed in Dio, since the scenario of soldiers first eating their prisoners and slaves and then turning on one another is to be found in a lurid episode in Polybius' work (1.85.1). The episode is doubly relevant because it took place amongst rebels who had been besieged by Hannibal's father, Hamilcar Barca, at Prion – a gorge in the Tunisian highlands (c. 238 BC) – during the so-called 'Truceless War' (241–237 BC).

This is the only instance of *actual* cannibalism in the extant parts of the *Histories*, and Polybius appears to have believed that it did occur. Whilst he probably followed a pro-Carthaginian account of the revolt of Carthage's veteran soldiers and Libyan subjects after the First Punic War,<sup>34</sup> he also took the opportunity to advance his own argument about the effects of extreme cruelty, in which the Prion episode plays an important part. In Polybius' view, the rebellion 'far excelled all wars in cruelty (*ōmotēta*) and the transgression of common law (*paranomia*)' (1.88.7). It became a 'truceless war' because the actions of the protagonists degenerated to the point where they did not even respect the sanctity of heralds and where both sides

<sup>34</sup> Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 1.65 (probably not Philenus); 1.131 the source is unidentified: 'He is a military historian, rather less competent than Philenus, but sharing his enthusiasm for the Barca family, and hostile to the mercenaries'.

were refused permission to bury their dead.<sup>35</sup> Polybius represents the extremity of the rebels' position and their descent to *allēlophagia* at Prion as divine retribution for their violation of human and divine laws (*adikia* and *asebeia*). At the start of their mutiny, they tortured and mutilated 700 Carthaginians they seized during negotiations.<sup>36</sup> This atrocity resulted not only in the hardening of Carthaginian attitudes (1.81.1; 82.2), but also in the intimidation and elimination of moderates from their own ranks, whose bodies were 'mangled as if by wild beasts' (1.80.10). The rebels' mutilation of their prisoners provides Polybius with an opportunity to analyse the human condition and the causes of the incurable tumours that afflict men's souls, which can make them so savage (*apothērioun*) as to extinguish their humanity (Polyb. 1.81.5, 10); indeed, 'at the end, no beast is more wicked or cruel than man' (1.81.7). Polybius (1.82.2) states that Hamilcar Barca, whose initial policy of moderation was superseded by events, realised that there could be no cure other than extermination. Polybius agrees with his prognosis, for he suggests (1.84.10) that Hamilcar received the support of divine providence (*to daimonion*) in his operation to trap the rebel army in the gorge of Prion and, through siege, to reduce them to 'feeding on each other' (*estheien allēlōn*).<sup>37</sup> Polybius clearly believed that their cannibalism was a punishment for, as well as a symptom of, their violation of human and divine laws (*paranomia* and *asebeia*, 1.84.10–11). Their *asebeia* had been turned upon themselves and their annihilation by the Carthaginian elephant corps (1.85.2–7) was not only

<sup>35</sup> Polyb. 1.65.6; 1.81.3; 1.82.2; 1.82.10; cf. Aeschin. 2.80; Dem. 18.262.

<sup>36</sup> A fragment (Polyb. 38.8.[2]) survives in which Scipio Aemilianus accuses Hasdrubal of *asebeia* for his treatment of the Roman prisoners during the siege of Carthage in the Third Punic War. At 36.9.15 Polybius defines *asebeia* as sin against the gods, parents or the dead, but this is clearly open to modification, since 38.8.(2) augments this definition to include those who torture prisoners to a slow death.

<sup>37</sup> Polyb. 1.84.9–85.1. Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 1.147 (cf. 20–1) equates *to daimonion* at Polyb. 1.84.10 with the retributive aspects of *tychē* at 4.81.4; 20.7.2 and elsewhere.

fully justified, but an exemplar (1.84.10) offered up by Providence.<sup>38</sup> Porphyry (*de abstinentia* 2.57) also comments on this episode, reporting that Hamilcar justified the elephant attack by stating that, ‘the rebels could not mingle with his men without sacrilege’. Cannibalism was an extreme form of pollution in Greek thought and, indeed, in the minds of such Hellenised Phoenicians as Porphyry and, arguably, Hamilcar.<sup>39</sup> Varro’s also asserted its transforming and polluting effect (see above). Such pollution, as Detienne recognised, led to the mercenaries’ portrayal as the enemies of humanity.<sup>40</sup> These men were beasts, fit only to be destroyed by other beasts: Hamilcar’s elephants.<sup>41</sup>

Having established his attitude to the cannibalism of those who were excessively cruel, Polybius perhaps expected his reader to understand why Hannibal rejected the plan of teaching his troops to practice *anthrōpophagia*. The danger Hannibal faced in allowing them to become man-eaters was not practical, but moral. Hannibal inherited the same Carthaginian system that had produced the mercenary revolt. His troops were from those regions that, Polybius argues, by bad customs and upbringing, rendered the rebels of the Truceless War cruel and beastlike, even to each other (1.81.10). The Carthaginian military system inherently promoted a mix (*tyrbē*) of tongues and characters (1.67.3): it was actively encouraged, yet it had the potential, when the leaders were ruled by *hybris* and lust for power (*pleonexia*, 1.81.11) – as

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<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in comparing Philip and Antiochus to allelophagous fish, Polybius argues that their impiety (*asebeia*) and cruelty (*omōtes*) caused *Tychē* to give them exemplary chastisement (in the form of the Romans). Polyb. 15.20; Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 2.474.

<sup>39</sup> On Barcid familiarity with Hellenistic language and culture see Hoyos, *Hannibal’s Dynasty*, p. 281, n. 8; Rawlings, ‘Hannibal and Hercules’, p. 160.

<sup>40</sup> Detienne, *Dionysos Slain*, p. 59.

<sup>41</sup> According to Appian’s account of the campaign against the Numantines, Scipio Aemilianus refused to join battle against such ‘wild beasts’ when he could reduce them to eating themselves out of hunger (*Hisp.* 16.97).

happened with the rebel leaders – and the anger (*orgē*) of the soldiers became inflamed, to turn warriors into wild beasts (*apothērioun* 1.67.6).<sup>42</sup>

The moral danger to Hannibal was posed by the choices he would have to make in his leadership of the army and conduct of the war. These would determine whether he and his army would become cruel and impious beasts.<sup>43</sup> The image of commanders who unlocked their bestial androphagy through acts of cruelty and impiety appears to be one that Polybius finds ‘good to think with’, and he employs it as a tool for didactic allegory on several occasions. He explains, for example, that Philip V, in his massacre of the Messenians and subsequent actions, ‘if he seemed to have gained a taste for human blood and the slaughter and betrayal of allies, did not actually turn from man to wolf, as in the Arcadian myth mentioned by Plato, but from king into a bitter (*pikros*) tyrant’.<sup>44</sup> The Megalopolitan Polybius here alludes to a piece of local mythology that had found its way into Plato’s discussion of tyranny (*Rep.* 8.565d–e).<sup>45</sup> The Arcadians apparently believed that those who ate human meat would become werewolves, and their early king Lycaon was so transformed after performing human sacrifice.<sup>46</sup> Whilst not actually drinking human blood or eating human flesh, Philip, just as if he were Plato’s tyrant, had taken a step on the road to bestiality in his massacre of fellow Greeks. Polybius further employs the wolf metaphor to describe Philip’s actions in Caria, where ‘he lived the life of the wolf, as

<sup>42</sup> On mercenaries posing a threat to themselves and the social order see Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, pp. 125–9; cf. also pp. 174–7 on the Truceless War.

<sup>43</sup> For the view that Polybius thought armies tended to be reflections of their commanders see Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, p. 192–3 and n. 113.

<sup>44</sup> Polyb. 7.13.7–8. *Pikros* carries the resonance of a bitter taste. Liddell-Scott, s.v. *pikros*.

<sup>45</sup> von Scala, *Studien des Polybios*, I, p. 20, n. 2 and p. 99; Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 2.61; Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, p. 90, n. 15.

<sup>46</sup> Apollodorus 3.8.1; Paus. 8.2.1–6; Ovid *Metamorph.* 1.228 ff. Pausanias’ description of the action of Lycaon implies consumption of parts of the victim, as was usual in Greek sacrifice; Ovid’s version has a meal of human flesh prepared for Jupiter, whilst Plato (8.565e) relates how human entrails were mixed with those of sacrificial victims. See Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 83–93 and 103–9. On Greek lycanthropy see Richard Buxton, ‘Wolves and werewolves in Greek thought’, in Jan Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 60–80; Kunstler, ‘Werewolf figure’, *passim*.

the saying goes. By preying on some and thieving, by putting pressure on others, and contrary to his own nature, by cringing to others, since his army was starving, he sometimes managed to obtain supplies of meat, sometimes figs and sometimes inadequate amounts of corn' (16.24.4–5). Despite the evident necessity of feeding his troops, Philip is condemned by Polybius for his actions; wolf-like,<sup>47</sup> he is portrayed as the enemy of humanity, menacing civilised communities, and – like a tyrant who preys on his own people – devastating the territory of Alabanda, 'as if it were enemy land' (16.24.8).

Polybius employs strongly condemnatory language in his analysis of the actions of Philip elsewhere. He argues that by agreeing to carve up the kingdom of young Ptolemy Epiphanes, both Philip and Antiochus acted worse than tyrants, who, at least, dreamed up pretexts (15.20.3). Their actions were 'savage (*ōmotēs*) towards men' and 'impious (*asebēs*) to the gods', being, in fact, so 'unscrupulous and bestial' (*anedēn kai thēriōdōs*) that they could be described by the proverb about the lives of fish: 'although of one tribe, the destruction of the smaller is the food and life of the larger' (15.20.4). By referring to myths and proverbs, Polybius draws on a common strain in Greek thought that metaphorically, if not actually, men became beasts once they lose sight of human values. 'Zeus ordained', says Hesiod (*W&D* 276–8), 'that it would be the fish, birds and beasts that would eat one another (*allēlōn esthiō*) since they do not possess rightness (*dikē*)', a value humans shared with the divine. Lawlessness (*adikia, paranomia*), then, was akin to bestiality, and the deliberate

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<sup>47</sup> Note that to sustain his metaphor, Polybius chooses to head the list of supplies with the predator's meat (*krea*) whilst suggesting that the cultivator's corn (*sitaria*) was less than sufficient.

actions of tyrannical rulers or the inflamed passions of a rebel army could turn men (metaphorically, if not always actually) into allelophagous beasts.<sup>48</sup>

On one level, then, Hannibal's rejection of the anthropophagic plan serves to enhance his reputation and reveal his character. Apparently Polybius assumes that Hannibal, like his father at Prion, would refuse to be tainted by the unholiness and bestiality of the practice. Indeed, when his men were rendered 'in their external appearance and general condition more like beasts than men' by the privations of the crossing of the Alps, Polybius asserts that it was Hannibal who 'made every provision to restore the body and spirit of the men' (3.60.6–7). Throughout his account of the war, Polybius emphasises how Hannibal exercised great skill as a general in controlling and maintaining his army.<sup>49</sup> According to Aelian (3.4), Polybius in his *Tactics* defined good generalship as the imposition of order upon a mob. Armies are successful when they have been moulded into shape by the general. Polybius regarded generalship as the best opportunity for a man to demonstrate his mastery over chaos, disorder, and the barbarism of his soldiers, as Eckstein observes.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Hannibal's rejection of the advice of Monomachos creates an implicit contrast with the wolf-like Philip, who, in Polybius' view, succumbed to the bad advice of his companions and came to act like a cannibalistic tyrant.<sup>51</sup> The effect is to include Hannibal among the civilised leaders of the world.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> On *adikia* in Polybius see Champion, who notes several examples applied to tyrants, mob rule and barbarian societies. Champion, *Cultural Politics*, p. 241. See p. 244 for further discussion and references to *theriodes* and *apotherioumai*.

<sup>49</sup> 3.44.10–13; 54.2, 55, 87.1–3, 111.1; 11.19.3–5; Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, p. 168–9.

<sup>50</sup> Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, pp. 162–3.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Lucilius (*Satires* frg. 952–3), who calls Hannibal 'that old sly-boots, that wolf'.

<sup>52</sup> Pédech, *Méthode historique*, p. 217; Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, p. 177.

### Polybius and Barcid atrocities

Polybius clearly admired Hannibal's judgements and the outcomes of many of his actions.<sup>53</sup> He was, however, confronted by a number of Hannibal's deeds that other writers considered excessively cruel. As we have seen, Polybius had recourse to the argument that Hannibal's conduct was the result of external pressure, rather than his own true (civilised) character, but the attempt to shift the blame for Hannibal's cruel acts in Italy onto Monomachos seems rather like scapegoating and, moreover, does not appear clearly thought through. Polybius argues that a single piece of advice reveals the character of Monomachos (9.24.3), yet all the actions of Hannibal Barca in Italy do not reveal his. Polybius' contention is that the commonly accepted view of Hannibal's cruel character was due, in part, to the actions of his companions. In this instance, however, neither Hannibal nor his *synedroi* are willing to go to the extremes that Monomachos proposes. So the council of Carthaginian *gerousiastai* and the trusted *philoï* who give Hannibal advice do have some redeeming features, and Monomachos, the single-fighter, is portrayed as the only advocate of the inhuman and impious policy of *anthrōpophagia*. Polybius seems to be trying to have it both ways though: he argues that bad advice inevitably changes a man's character and asserts that it was his advisors (and the difficult conditions he faced) that adversely influenced Hannibal's character;<sup>54</sup> but he shows Hannibal rejecting Monomachos' evil advice, and is evasive about the specific atrocities Monomachos is supposed to be responsible for – at least in the extant parts of the *Histories*. If Hannibal's actions and reputation are shaped partly by his friends, then Monomachos' actions and reputation for cruelty must equally be a product of *his* companions. Surely the commander-in-chief, who issues instructions and should have some element of control, ought

<sup>53</sup> Pédech, *Méthode historique*, pp. 217–19; Champion, *Cultural Politics*, p. 117, n. 62.

<sup>54</sup> Polyb. 9.26.1. See Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, p. 240.

therefore to take some of the blame for the activities of his subordinates, including Monomachos. Regardless of whether this man actually perpetrated cruelties in Italy or was an officer who has become a scapegoat in the rhetoric of Polybius (and possibly his sources), the blame for the atrocities committed must rest, to some extent, with Hannibal Barca. After all, this is where most of the extant authors seem content to place it.

Whilst his argument about the influence of companions is not wholly convincing, particularly in the attempt to blame Monomachos, Polybius does have a get-out clause. Although he accuses Monomachos of *some* of the acts of cruelty, Polybius claims that *other* atrocities attributed to Hannibal were due to the pressures of circumstance (9.24.8, 26.1–10), arguing (9.24.3) that his entire narrative of the war justifies this theory. Polybius' overall treatment of Barcid cruelties therefore needs to be compared with his argument in 9.24. Towards the end of his digression on Hannibal's character he points out that, particularly in the years after the fall of Capua (211 BC) when other allies wavered and several Roman armies simultaneously campaigned against him, Hannibal was forced to pull back and consolidate, withdrawing garrisons and breaking obligations he had made to protect certain communities (9.26.2–6). In Polybius' view, breaking agreements guaranteed by oaths sworn to the gods left him open to accusations of impiety (*asebeia* 9.26.8), whilst charges of cruelty (*ōmotēta*) seem to relate to the attendant and sometimes forced evacuation of populations, as well as to the plunder of allied and abandoned cities (9.26.6–7). Polybius readily admits that Hannibal sanctioned these acts and that they caused great offence amongst the allies because robbery, murder, and violence accompanied them (9.26.9). He emphasises, however, that both departing troops and incoming (presumably Roman) soldiers perpetrated the crimes and that the inhabitants

who remained in such afflicted cities had to live with the suspicion of their being loyal to the enemy (9.26.9–10). He implies that in these cases, Hannibal, a good general forced to yield to circumstance, has received the blame for some of the traditional pastimes of the soldiery.<sup>55</sup>

Polybius' inclusion of the cannibalism story suggests that earlier accounts of Hannibal's cruelties went beyond the accusations of treaty-breaking and forced transplantations of populations from cities. They may have included stories of the massacre or mistreatment of prisoners. Appian, for example, records that Hannibal (*Hann.* 3.14; cf. Zonaras 8.26) had some 5,000 prisoners executed when he made the famous night escape involving oxen with burning faggots tied to their horns. On another occasion, Hannibal apparently burned the wife and children of Dasius.<sup>56</sup> Valerius Maximus (9.2 Ext. 2) wrote of exhausted prisoners being abandoned on the march, the foreparts of their feet hacked away. Had he chosen to mention them, it is possible that Polybius might have blamed such brutalities on Monomachos.

That is not to say that Polybius excludes examples of the deliberate mistreatment of prisoners by Hannibal entirely. Prior to the battle of Trebbia, Hannibal organised death or victory *monomachiai* between Gallic prisoners (3.62–3). Polybius says that he *deliberately* treated them in a malicious (*kakon*) way by binding them in heavy chains; their bodies became disfigured by blows and they suffered much from hunger (3.62.4). The redeeming feature of this treatment in Polybius' eyes is its exemplary purpose: the contests provided not only entertainment but also education (*paideia*) for the troops,<sup>57</sup> for they showed them the meaning of defeat or

<sup>55</sup> Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, pp. 125–9 and 166–9.

<sup>56</sup> App. *Hann.* 5.31; cf. Livy 24.45 who claims Hannibal was disguising his avarice towards Dasius' estates with this act of cruelty.

<sup>57</sup> On *paideia* as a Hellenistic virtue important to Polybius' ethical position and historical purpose see von Scala, *Studien des Polybios*, I, pp. 18–19; Meissner, 'Polybios', pp. 338–46; Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, pp. 248–50.

victory – a point made by Hannibal in a speech in which he justified this treatment of the prisoners to his men (3.63).<sup>58</sup> This is an example of what Davidson terms a ‘didactic arena’, revealing Polybius’ intention to use his writing to educate his readership through the representation of events and the reaction to the spectacle of its witnesses.<sup>59</sup> Such a set piece would suggest to the audience that when Hannibal did act cruelly, he did so with justification. Furthermore, Polybius makes Hannibal himself argue that his treatment of the prisoners was due to the pressure of circumstance – of needing, at the point of engaging the Romans for the first time in Italy, to convince his army of the serious consequences of defeat (3.63.1–2). The argument appears to be aimed as much at Polybius’ audience as at Hannibal’s men. Readers of the argument on cruelty in the Hannibalic *aristeia* (9.24.3, 10; 9.26) might recall how the lesson of the *monomachiai* in Book Three, in which prisoners were forced to destroy one another, seemed on the surface an act of cruelty but was, in fact, a rational act of skilful generalship, driven by the need for Hannibal to get his army successfully through the extreme test of battle.

Polybius’ attitude to other atrocities, particularly the massacre of prisoners by Hannibal, is also shaped by the argument of circumstance. He does not relate the killings of prisoners after Cannae or of stragglers on the march (see above), which suggests either that he did not think they occurred or that they were not relevant enough to his purposes to be included. Instead, he describes how, after victories at Trebbia (3.77.3–7) and Trasimene (3.85.1–5; Livy 22.7; App. *Hann.* 2.10), Hannibal

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<sup>58</sup> The prisoners were forced to fight each other for the chance to win a horse, a cloak, and to wear panoply that Gallic kings usually donned for such single combats (3.62.5–6). Although displaying an understanding of Gallic warrior ethos, which appreciated the glory to be earned in victory or martial death, Hannibal exploited it for his own ends. See Rawlings, ‘Celts, Spaniards and Samnites’, p. 89. Polybius emphasises that the victors and the vanquished together were regarded as ‘fortunate’ by the spectators (3.62.10–11). In winning or being slain, these prisoners were to be delivered from their misery: captivity, pain, and hunger.

<sup>59</sup> On the multiple perspectives of the participants, the observing soldiers, the general, the historian, and his readership in this episode and elsewhere see James Davidson, ‘The Gaze in Polybius’ Histories’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 81 (1991), pp. 14–16.

freed non-Roman prisoners in an attempt to portray himself as a liberator and to encourage the allies to revolt.<sup>60</sup> Although he kept the Romans on minimum rations (3.77.3), at least after Cannae Hannibal attempted to ransom those who had fallen into his hands (6.58; Cic. *off.* 3.113 ff.; cf. Livy 22.58–61). However, Polybius does reveal that directly after Trasimene, on his march to the Adriatic coast through Umbria and Picenum, all men of military age encountered on the route were killed, ‘owing to his deep-seated hatred of the Romans’ (3.86.11). Polybius notes that these orders were like those given on the assault of a city when victory was assured.<sup>61</sup> He makes little more of these actions, and it is not clear whether he thought this became standard policy or represented a brief outburst of bloodletting in the flush of a victory. Even if the latter is suggested by the comparison with the sack of a city, this episode seems to contradict Hannibal’s actions immediately after the battle, and may in fact have dented his image and discouraged potential defectors.<sup>62</sup> It is usually explained as an instance of the wrath of the Barcids.<sup>63</sup> This it may well be, but the ‘hatred of the Romans’ displayed on the march to the Adriatic is an aspect that Polybius chooses to gloss over in his analysis of Hannibal’s cruelty at 9.22–6.

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<sup>60</sup> Trebbia: 3.77.3–7. Trasimene: 3.85.1–5; Livy 22.7; App. *Hann.* 2.10. If Monomachos proposed exocannibalism, which would have had to have been performed on captured enemies, it was a notion that appears to run counter to Barcid policy. Hamilcar’s original programme of leniency towards and recruitment of defeated enemies during the initial stages of the Truceless War was a practice he recommenced in Spain (Diod. 25.10.1), and it was also a central feature of Hannibal’s policy in Italy. Rawlings, ‘Hannibal and Hercules’, pp. 168–70; James S. Reid, ‘Problems of the Second Punic War: III. Rome and her Italian allies’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 5 (1915), pp. 87–124, esp. pp. 92–3.

<sup>61</sup> Later in the year (217 BC) Hannibal did indeed take a city, Gerunium, by storm and ‘destroyed its inhabitants’ (Polyb. 3.100.4). This passes without comment, but Polybius has already prepared the reader for the normality of the act with the statement about the march to the Adriatic (3.86.11): ‘for as at the capture of cities by assault, the order had been given to put to the sword all adults that fell into their hands’. On the commonality of the practice in siege warfare (by Carthaginians and Romans) in Italy see A. Ziolkowski, ‘*Urbs direpta*, or how the Romans sacked cities’, in John Rich and Graham Shipley (eds), *War and Society in the Roman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 69–91, citing, in particular, Livy 21.57.13–14 (the sack of Victumulae by Hannibal in 218 BC). Cf. App. *Pun.* 63, where a relative of the consul Cornelius Lentulus claimed that Hannibal destroyed Roman allied cities, and depopulated 400 towns during his campaigns in Italy. On the normalcy of the practice in Greek siege warfare see William K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, vol. 5 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 203–23.

<sup>62</sup> Reid, ‘Problems of the Second Punic War: III’, p. 93.

<sup>63</sup> Christ, ‘Zur Beurteilung Hannibals’, p. 464; cf. Champion, *Cultural Politics*, p. 120, n. 72.

Elsewhere Polybius acknowledges that motives of anger and hatred allow one to view Hannibal's actions as justified, since 'in any such case the final assessment of good or evil lies not in the actions themselves, but in the different reasons and different purposes of those who do them' (2.56.16). The author claims that one might be 'outraged if someone beats a free man, but if this happened to one who had struck the first blow, we consider he has been rightly punished' (2.56.14). Polybius considers the Carthaginians' anger and their desire for vengeance a just motive for the war: 'if we take the cause of the war to have been the seizure of Sardinia and the tribute then extracted, we must admit that the Carthaginians had good reason (*eulogos*) for entering into the Hannibalic war, since having yielded only to circumstances, they now availed themselves of circumstances to be avenged on those who had injured them'.<sup>64</sup> Thus 'hatred of the Romans' seems to Polybius a sufficient and self-evidently just reason for Hannibal's bloodletting after Trasimene.<sup>65</sup>

Polybius' attitude to Hannibal's cruelties in Italy appears to conform to his argument of circumstance advanced in the Hannibalic *aristeia* (9.22–6). The acts seem acceptable from Polybius' moral perspective too: hatred and vengeance are sometimes justified; violence to prisoners, when it serves the higher purpose of *paideia* – in educating men of their true situation and so encouraging them to rise above it, as at Trebbia – can even be considered an aspect of good generalship.

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<sup>64</sup> 3.30.4; cf. 3.10. See John Rich, 'The origins of the Second Punic War', in Tim Cornell, Boris Rankov, and Philip Sabin (eds), *The Second Punic War: a Reappraisal* (*Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, supp. 67, 1996), esp. pp. 7–9 on this passage. Rich observes that Polybius thought the Carthaginians were justified in taking revenge when they had the opportunity. Note that at 2.36.6 Polybius calls the war one of revenge. Walbank, *Historical Commentary*, 1.215; cf. Arthur M. Eckstein, 'Hannibal at New Carthage: Polybius 3.15 and the power of irrationality', *Classical Philology*, 84, 1 (1989), p. 8, who overlooks the *eulogia* of Punic vengeance of 3.30 in his discussion. On the execution of prisoners see Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, vol. 5, pp. 203–23, esp. p. 203: 'no uniform practice' was apparent amongst Greeks for when such actions were considered appropriate or otherwise. On vengeance in Greek warfare see Jon E. Lendon, 'Homeric vengeance and the outbreak of Greek wars', in Hans van Wees (ed.), *War and Violence in Ancient Greece* (London and Swansea: Duckworth and the Classical Press of Wales, 2000), pp. 1–30.

<sup>65</sup> Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, p. 169 and n. 218.

## Conclusion

Polybius' treatment of Monomachos' advocacy of cannibalism deserves to be recognised as an important contribution to the historian's representation of Hannibal. It reveals some of the subtleties and complexities of Polybius' historical method and lends support to those who see Polybius' approach to the great captains of his age as largely ethically driven.<sup>66</sup>

Ultimately Polybius rejects the tradition of cannibalism, but he avoids the straightforward option of dismissing it as a wild exaggeration. Instead he asserts its plausibility because, coming from the cruel Monomachos and coupled with his own (and broader Greek) attitudes to cannibalism, it serves his dual polemical purpose. On the one hand it supports his argument about the dynamic inter-relationship between character and external stimuli; on the other it adds weight to his contention that Hannibal has been unfairly represented as excessively cruel. In his attack on this 'flawed' approach to character analysis, Polybius' argument is not entirely convincing. This is because the example, beyond being impractical, does not demonstrate one of the main points of his argument, which is that his companions' advice did violence to Hannibal's character. In fact, since Hannibal rejects the plan to resort to cannibalism, it suggests the opposite. Furthermore, his argument falls foul of its own logic, such that Hannibal ought to take some responsibility for shaping the character of his subordinates. Nevertheless, in arguing that the pressures of circumstance forced the Carthaginian to act against his will, Polybius is able to shift some of the blame onto Hannibal's soldiers. One might suggest that this shows that the general fails to exert sufficient control over their actions, but elsewhere (including in the march across the Alps), Polybius argues that Hannibal kept their bestial

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<sup>66</sup> See Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, esp. pp. 249–50, 254–7, 273–6, and above n. 7.

potential in check in exemplary fashion. Even when confronted with Hannibal's voluntary actions, Polybius argues that although they might seem cruel to some observers, they were justified. In mistreating Gallic prisoners, Hannibal demonstrated his ability to show his men the true nature of their situation and to inspire them to victory, and this serves in turn to educate Polybius' audience. In massacring those men of military age he encountered after Trasimene, he took advantage of the situation to right a wrong, that is, to obtain vengeance for the Romans' deeds. In these instances, Hannibal's character appears as much governed by Polybian morality as by military necessity. Indeed, the *practicality* of becoming cannibalistic is defeated by Hannibal's moral considerations: he could not *persuade himself* to adopt the plan because of the implicit moral danger that it posed to him and his men. Whilst not always effectively presented, Polybius' treatment of Hannibal's reputation for cruelty demonstrates his willingness to imagine the Carthaginian not just as a practical commander, but also as a moral one.

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