

Champion (2004) has recently argued for the presence of a "politics of cultural indeterminacy" in Polybius: Romans are more "Greek" or more "barbarian" according to Polybius' needs, and sometimes belong to a *tertium genus*, with a superabundance of rationality that clearly makes them "not barbarian," even if they still are "not Greek." If so, we should reassess Dionysius of Halicarnassus' famous Aeolism (see in general Gabba 1991 esp. 190-216; Delcourt 2005 esp. 81-115). Dionysius recognizes the problem that the authority of Polybius' previous Roman history poses for his own (e.g. *AR* 1.7.1). How does he counter the idea of culturally indeterminate Romans? In particular, when Dionysius attributes quintessentially Greek attributes such as *paideia* to the Romans, how does he exclude the possibility that this merely places them in a *tertium genus* outside the categories of "Greek" and "barbarian"?

A key element of Dionysius' strategy for meeting this challenge is his presentation of the Etruscans. It has been noted that his careful differentiation of Etruscans from Greeks (esp. *AR* 1.29), in particular his insistence on the Etruscans' autochthonous origins (*AR* 1.30), emphasizes Rome's unusual status in the region as a Greek colony (see exhaustively Briquel 1993, with full earlier bibliography). Yet Dionysius also perceives the ancient Etruscans as civilized and knowledgeable (1.30.3), capable of playing a civilizing role in Italy (*AR* 1.27.2), and even capable of imparting knowledge to Greeks (*AR* 1.25.1). In this respect, the ancient Etruscans have a role parallel to the "Greek" educating role that Dionysius attributes to Rome in his own day (*AR* 1.6.5; *Orat. Vett.* 3: see Hidber 1996 75-81). Etruscans therefore are not simply "barbarians." Rather they belong to a *tertium genus* (as Polybius' Romans sometimes do) against which Dionysius can define Romans as decisively Greek.

Given, however, that Dionysius perceives Rome as containing an Etruscan element (e.g. *AR* 1.89.3), how can he dissuade the reader from seeing Romans as thereby taking on some of the attributes of this *tertium genus*? The central element in his response to this challenge is his depiction of Tarquinius Priscus. Tarquinius' status begins as indeterminate; he is of mixed Greek and Etruscan origins, and educated in both Greek and Etruscan *paideia* (*AR* 3.46). But the narrative (from *AR* 3.47 on) later defines him as Roman (and so Greek). Ultimately, Tarquinius' defeat of Etruscan opponents allows Dionysius to present Rome's acquisition of Etruscan institutions as the spoils of conquest (*AR* 3.60-61), and so neutralize the threat that they pose to Rome's Greekness. Even the *tertium genus* can be conquered, absorbed, and hellenized.

Works cited:

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