

REVIEW

DIODORUS ON THE FOURTH CENTURY: THE ALTERNATIVE VERSION

Phillip Harding, ed. and trans., *Diodoros of Sicily: Bibliothek Historike, Volume I, Books 14–15: The Greek World in the Fourth Century BC from the End of the Peloponnesian War to the Death of Artaxerxes II (Mnemon)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xlix + 309, 12 figs. Hardcover, £74.99/\$99.99; ISBN 978-1-108-49927-9. Paperback, £17.99/\$23.99; ISBN 978-1-108-70634-6.

Traditionally, classical scholars have viewed with great ambivalence the *Bibliothēkē* ('Library') of Diodorus Siculus, composed as the Roman Republic was drawing to a cataclysmic close. On the one hand, Diodorus offers the only continuous historical narrative that has survived from antiquity of the Greek world and (especially) his native Sicily for the crucial period between the Persian Wars and the struggle for power among Alexander the Great's Successors. On the other hand, previous generations of scholars have dismissed him as a plodding and lazy copyist, incapable of exercising his own historical judgment and content to follow mindlessly one source at a time. Over the last few decades, however, Diodorus has (to some extent) been vindicated as a serious (if not necessarily first-rate) historian who consulted multiple sources and formulated his own consistent moral viewpoint that underpins his historical narrative.¹ This new translation of Books 14 and 15 contributes to the ongoing reassessment of Diodorus as an intellectual figure worthy of study in his own right, rather than as the imperfect conduit of his much more competent (but now regrettably lost) sources.

Books 14 and 15 of Diodorus cover virtually the same historical period as the so-called 'Post-Continuation' section of Xenophon's *Hellenica* (2.3.11–7.5.27). Diodorus begins Book 14 with the rule of the Thirty in Athens in 404/3 BC, recognising (like Xenophon) that the collapse of the Athenian hegemony after their defeat in the Peloponnesian War represented an end of an era (14.2.4). But whereas Xenophon concluded his *Hellenica* with the Battle of Mantinea in 362/1, making the disillusioned comment that it brought no resolution to the ongoing conflict and turbulence that relentlessly gripped the Greek *poleis* (7.5.27), Diodorus ends Book 15 with a short narrative of events in

¹ See esp. Sacks (1990); Sulimani (2011); Rathmann (2016); Muntz (2017); and the essays contained in Hau–Meeus–Sheridan (2018).

Greece and the wider Mediterranean world that occurred in the aftermath of the battle (15.89–95) in order to bridge the gap to the accession of Philip II of Macedon (as he states at 15.1.6 and 15.95.4), the subject of Book 16. But a more significant difference between the two is the scope of their historical works. As one would expect from the author of a *Hellenica*, Xenophon confines his narrative to events involving the mainland Greeks. Diodorus, however, as the author of a history designed to be universal in both time and space (as he says explicitly in the course of his methodological section at 1.3), includes full coverage of the entire known world down to his own times, including his native Sicily (generally omitted by Xenophon) and Rome (the dominant Mediterranean power of his day). Furthermore, even where they cover the same events, Diodorus' version is often very different from that of Xenophon. Therefore, Books 14 and 15 of Diodorus comprise a valuable alternative account of the period covered by Xenophon's *Hellenica*,² and also offer the only extant account of the career of Dionysius I of Syracuse, one of the most significant (and colourful!) figures of the fourth century.

A prolific scholar of Greek historiography, political history (focusing particularly on the fourth century), and epigraphy (and the author of several previous works of translation to boot),³ Phillip Harding is ideally positioned to provide the first (annotated) translation into English (based on the Greek text of the recent Budé editions) of these important books of Diodorus' *Bibliothēkē* since that of the Loeb Classical Library, published in the 1950s (and inconveniently divided between two volumes).⁴ Since that time, the only other English translations to appear are those of Peter Green: selections from Books 14 and 15 as an appendix to the *Landmark Xenophon*, and 14.1–34 as the final section of his translation of Diodorus' narrative of the fifth century.⁵ Harding's aim is to offer an up-to-date translation that strikes a balance between readability and the 'rather monotonous and uninspired' style of Diodorus' original Greek (ix). In this aim, he succeeds admirably.

² Because Diodorus had access to contemporary sources for the period from the Peloponnesian War to Philip's accession, his narrative of the fourth century offers a true 'alternative version' to Xenophon's *Hellenica* in a way that his narrative of the fifth century does not provide to the accounts of Herodotus and Thucydides; see the *caveat* of Tuplin (2006).

³ In the interests of full disclosure, I should note that Professor Harding supervised my MA thesis at the University of British Columbia in 1987, although we have not collaborated on any scholarly projects since then.

⁴ Oldfather (1954); Sherman (1952).

⁵ Strassler (2009); Green (2010) 445–93 (for Books 14–15). Harding does not mention the latter, although he does allude (7 n. 8) to Green's translation of Diodorus 14.1.3, which is not included in the *Landmark Xenophon* (to which he attributes it).

Compare, for example, *Harding's* rendition of the preface to Book 14 (1.1–2) with those of *Oldfather* (Loeb) and *Green*:

Harding: It is understandable, I suppose, that all men object to hearing critical statements against themselves. Indeed, even those who are so thoroughly aware of their own wrongdoing that denial is impossible are, nevertheless, very angry when found fault with, and attempt to talk their way out of the accusation. So, it is absolutely necessary for everyone to be careful not to commit any base act, but especially necessary for those who aim for leadership or have experienced some outstanding good luck. For, since the way of life of such men is totally open to view on account of their distinction, it cannot hide its own lack of understanding. So, let no man, who has achieved any prominence, hope that, if he commits great crimes, he will get away forever unpunished. Indeed, even if he escapes the reckoning of punishment during his lifetime, he should expect that the truth will catch up with him later on and will proclaim in an outspokenly frank way [with *parrhesia*] details that have been unspoken for a long time.

Oldfather: All men, perhaps naturally, are disinclined to listen to obloquies that are uttered against them. Indeed even those whose evil-doing is in every respect so manifest that it cannot even be denied, none the less deeply resent it when they are the objects of censure and endeavour to make a reply to the accusation. Consequently all men should take every possible care not to commit any evil deed, and those especially who aspire to leadership or have been favoured by some striking gift of Fortune; for since the life of such men is in all things an open book because of their distinction, it cannot conceal its own unwisdom. Let no man, therefore, who has gained some kind of pre-eminence, cherish the hope that, if he commits great crimes, he will for all time escape notice and go uncensored. For even if during his own lifetime he eludes the sentence of rebuke, let him expect that at a later time Truth will find him out, frankly proclaiming abroad matters long hidden from mention.

Green: All men—possibly by nature—object to hearing hostile criticisms of themselves. Even those whose wickedness is so entirely manifest that it cannot be denied nevertheless resent it when they incur obloquy and make every effort to counter the accusation. For this reason, we should all take the greatest possible care to avoid base actions, especially those of us who cherish ambitions for high office or have received some notable favor from Fortune. The life of such men is, of course, a matter of public record, and because of its exposure in every detail, cannot

conceal any personal lapses. Thus no one who has attained any measure of eminence should assume, if he is guilty of serious crimes, that he will finally get off undetected and free of censure. For even if he escapes a harsh verdict during his own lifetime, he must expect that at some later date the truth will catch up with him, freely trumpeting abroad matters long kept silent.

Of the three translations, Harding's best captures the straightforward and largely unembellished style of Diodorus' Greek, even in his prefaces, where one might reasonably expect rhetorical flights of fancy. He also avoids vocabulary that might be considered archaic (such as 'obloquy', found in both Oldfather and Green) and what are in my view occasional over-translations in his two predecessors.⁶ Nevertheless, in a twenty-first century context, it is a little surprising to find the word 'man' employed to translate passages referring to human nature where the noun does not explicitly appear in the original Greek. Furthermore, the parenthetical reference to *parrhēsia* is a little awkward, and the loaded nature of the term perhaps requires a short note of explanation. Finally, both Harding and Oldfather miss the precise nuance of the noun *ἄγνοια*, which in this passage appears to have the sense of 'mistaken conduct' (and is therefore rendered by Green as 'lapse') rather than its primary meaning of 'lack of awareness'.⁷

The volume opens with a brief introduction, where Harding surveys what can be discerned of Diodorus' life, the models and plan for his *Bibliothēkē*, his view of history, his sources and how he used them, an explanation of the various chronological systems (including the difference of several years between the Greek chronographers and the Varronian chronology that is at play in Books 14 and 15) that he was attempting to reconcile (not always successfully) in the *Bibliothēkē*, his literary style (or perhaps, more properly, lack thereof), and the overall character of his work. On the whole, Harding capably conveys 'the Essential Diodorus' to the average undergraduate or lay reader of Greek historiography (the presumed intended readership of this translation), for whom this oft-cited but seldom-read author is hardly a household name. In particular, he offers a succinct and sensible response to the thorny question of Diodorus' sources, arguing that he was not a 'mere copyist', but 'read, absorbed, and digested a body of material and then produced his own version in his own words' (xxxviii). The lack of original thought in the rather trite moralising prefaces to each book does not demonstrate that Diodorus was a

⁶ E.g., Green's rendition of *ἴσως εἰκόσ* as 'possibly by nature'; Oldfather's rendition of *τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιστιμῆσεως λόγον* as 'the sentence of rebuke'. Similarly, Harding's 'totally open to view' strikes me as more faithful to Diodorus' *περίοπτος* than either Oldfather's 'in all things an open book' or Green's 'a matter of public record'.

⁷ Cf. LSJ s.v. *ἄγνοια* II with Dem. *Cor.* 133; Pol. 27.2.2.

plagiarist, but rather that he ‘was simply in tune with the intellectual climate of his time’ (xxxvi). Harding is careful, however, not to go too far in the rehabilitation of Diodorus’ reputation, observing that the *Bibliothēkē* contains numerous errors, including omissions, compressions, and abridgements, quite apart from his infamous inability to synthesise differing chronological systems. In line with his target non-specialist readership, Harding does not attempt to engage with the large body of modern scholarship on Diodorus, except in places where he judges that it will shed light on the issues involved (cf. xxv n. 1)

Harding takes a similar approach in the extensive notes to the translation, where his intent is not to enter into debates in modern scholarship, but to demonstrate where Diodorus differs from Xenophon and the other ancient sources for this period, including epigraphical documents (ix–x). That said, however, the notes also do include explications of the historical events covered in these books, introductions to the personages with whom his intended readership may not be familiar, elucidations of Diodorus’ historiographical practices, and occasionally more specialised discussions of his use of particular vocabulary or readings in the manuscript tradition. The subject matter covered ranges from a usefully succinct explanation of the Satraps’ Revolt (246 n. 1317) to the date of the Gallic sack of Rome (130 n. 693) to plague narratives in ancient literature (86 n. 435) to the Diodoran *topos* of the gallant death of commanders in battle (235 n. 1269) to the politically charged nature of the term *philoī* (16 n. 55). The notes also contain some astute observations, such as the comment that Diodorus’ compressed narrative of the origins of the Corinthian War misleadingly leaves the impression that the Spartans were the aggressors (97 n. 494). Harding is especially adept at teasing out the motivations of the historical personages in these books, as in (for example) his comments on Dionysius I (e.g., 89 n. 441 and 227 n. 1210), Epaminondas (232 n. 1252), and Mausolus, who ‘was definitely playing his own game’ (247 n. 1323). Last but not least, there are the occasional delightful flashes of humour, such as his description of the time of Deucalion as a ‘watershed moment’ in Greek mythical history (131 n. 700). Harding’s explanatory notes are concise and helpful, and undoubtedly will illuminate the historical period and Diodorus’ aims and methods for the lay reader, as well as providing stimulating food for thought for specialists.

Naturally, a single commentary (particularly one focused upon comparing Diodorus’ narrative of this historical period with the other ancient sources) cannot expand upon every single detail in the text. (I always joke with my students that Murphy’s Law of commentaries dictates that the one burning question that they have will be precisely the one that is not addressed.) On the whole, Harding does an excellent job of providing a historical context for Diodorus’ narrative and there are remarkably few missed opportunities. One that I noted, however, is that he does not comment upon Diodorus’ apparently interchangeable use of Carthaginians and Phoenicians for the foreign enemy

against whom Dionysius I mounted successive campaigns for much of his reign (thereby allowing him to frame his tyranny as the ‘liberation of Greece’). An explanatory note analogous to the one on the term ‘Sicilians’ (*Sikeliōtai*) might have been helpful (61 n. 327) to avoid any confusion for the non-specialist reader. Furthermore, it is perhaps inevitable that a few (very minor) lapses occur in a commentary that is so truly comprehensive (a consideration that should perhaps elicit more empathy from those who are critical of the perceived poor execution of the massive undertaking that Diodorus set himself in the rather more difficult working conditions of the first century BC).⁸ Finally, a few of the references could be updated.⁹ I cannot emphasise enough, however, that none of these comments should be construed as detracting from the immense value of this volume as a resource to Books 14 and 15 of the *Bibliothēkē*, especially for those approaching Diodorus for the first time.

In addition to the introduction, translation, and detailed notes, the volume contains a series of relevant maps (xiii–xxiv), which are sufficiently large and

⁸ There is some inconsistency as to whether or not names that Diodorus either misspells or gets otherwise wrong are corrected in the translation: e.g., Sphodriades (for Sphodrias: 174 and n. 902) and Theripides (for Herippidas?: 176 and n. 918) are retained, whereas Nicophemus (for Nicodemus: 97 and n. 501), Arrhidaeus (for Tharraleus: 210 and n. 1116), Alexander the nephew (for Polydorus the brother; 211 and n. 1125), and Tegea (for Tegyra: 235 and n. 1273) are emended. References are not given to every author included in *Brill’s New Jacoby*; e.g., Anaximenes of Lampsacus (*BNJ* 72) at 230 n. 1234 and 245 n. 313 (these two notes should cross-reference one another). There are a few places where further cross-referencing would be beneficial; e.g., n. 899 (173) on Iphicrates could reference his famous destruction of the Spartan *mora* at 14.91.2; the reference to the Battle of Tegyra in n. 965 (184) could reference Diodorus’ later allusion to it in his narrative (15.81.2); n. 1303 (243) on the death of Xenophon’s son Gryllus at Mantinea could reference the likelihood that he died in an earlier engagement (n. 1291). As for the ‘few fragments’ that survive from Philistus’ history (16 n. 60), there are over seventy. ‘Koroneia’ in the italicised summary to the content of 15.52 (201) should read ‘Khaironeia’ to match the reading advocated in nn. 1070 and 1077. Perdikkas was the brother-in-law as well as the nephew of Ptolemy of Alorus (231 n. 1245; cf. n. 1182). The note on Isocrates’ students (229 n. 1233) could perhaps include Clearchus of Heraclea (cf. n. 1277) and Timotheus (cf. n. 1278).

⁹ In addition to the Barrington Atlas (which probably ought to be included in the list of abbreviations at the beginning), comments upon individual *poleis* could include Hansen and Nielsen’s magisterial *Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (2004). On Ephorus (xxxvii–xxxviii), see now Parmeggiani (2011) and the essays contained in de Fidio–Talamo (2013–14). While it is true that the fragments of Ctesias have not yet been updated in *Brill’s New Jacoby* (xxxix n. 34), in any case Jacoby has now been superseded by Lenfant’s superb Budé edition (2004). For scholarship on the dithyramb (62 n. 332) that is more recent than Pickard-Cambridge (1952), see, e.g., Kowalzig and Wilson (2013). For the fragments of Philoxenus of Cythera (63 n. 333), see now Fongoni (2014). On the so-called Dorian Invasion, see, e.g., Malkin (1994) and Hall (2002), both of which are more recent than Desborough (1966). On Ptolemaios (Ptolemy of Alorus, 222 n. 1182), see now Carney (2019), esp. 58–75.

detailed actually to be helpful. Like the Loeb and the Budé editions, Harding includes the list of contents for each book transmitted along with the text in the manuscript tradition, although it is unclear whether they were composed by Diodorus himself or by later scholars. Unlike the Loeb and Budé editions, however, Harding helpfully adds in italics the topics that are not included in these lists (which are by no means comprehensive), and notes where the details do not correspond with the main narrative. I found it interesting (although possibly not significant, given the uncertainty as to whether Diodorus himself composed these lists) that many of these italicised passages in the contents for Book 14 involved imperialistic behaviour of the Spartans, the Athenians, and Dionysius I, the main objects of criticism in this book (as Diodorus states at 14.1–2). At the end of the volume, there is a detailed chronological outline for the historical events covered by Books 14 and 15 (from 404/3 to 360/59 or 359/8), a glossary of Greek and Latin terms, and a bibliography of works of modern scholarship. The volume is beautifully produced and reasonably priced,¹⁰ making it an attractive option for classroom use.

Harding's annotated translation of Books 14 and 15 of Diodorus will undoubtedly become required reading for anyone interested in the history of fourth-century Greece prior to the Macedonian conquest. The only *caveat* is that Harding (deliberately, as noted above) does not engage with modern scholarship, and so an up-to-date comprehensive historical commentary, especially of Book 14, remains a major *desideratum* for specialists.¹¹ It is excellent news that this volume is the first of a projected three-volume set of Books 14–20 of Diodorus' *Bibliothēkē* to be published by Cambridge University Press. I look forward with great anticipation to the publication of the other two volumes, one on Philip II of Macedon and Alexander the Great (Books 16 and 17) and the other on the Successors to Alexander (Books 18–20). These volumes, along with the new Oxford World's Classics translation of Books 16–20 by Robin Waterfield, will render Diodorus' narrative of the fourth century and the rise of Macedonia accessible to a whole new generation of readers.

University of Alberta

FRANCES POWNALL
frances.pownall@ualberta.ca

¹⁰ The only misprint I found was the lack of a period before 'For' at 14.50.3.

¹¹ For Book 15, there is P. J. Stylianou's exhaustive 1998 Oxford commentary (to which Harding himself sends those in search of fuller treatment of the issues raised in it: 145 n. 740), but his approach to Diodorus is now very outdated, as is evident from his comment on the very first page: 'For the cardinal fact about Diodorus is that he was a second-rate epitomator who generally used first-rate sources'. The relevant volumes of the ongoing Italian series of historical commentaries on Diodorus have not yet appeared.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Carney, E. D. (2019) *Eurydice and the Birth of Macedonian Power* (New York and Oxford).
- Desborough, V. R. d'A. (1966) *The Last Mycenaeans and their Successors* (Oxford).
- de Fidio, P. and C. Talamo, edd. (2013–14) *Eforo di Cuma nella storia della storiografia greca: Atti dell'incontro internazionale di studi, Fisciano-Salerno, 10–12 dicembre 2008*, 2 vols (Naples).
- Fongoni, A. (2014) *Philoxeni Cytherii Testimonia et Fragmenta* (Pisa and Rome).
- Green, P. (2010) *Diodorus Siculus: The Persian Wars to the Fall of Athens* (Austin).
- Hall, J. (2002) *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago).
- Hansen, M. H. and T. H. Nielsen, edd. (2004) *Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford).
- Hau, L. I., A. Meeus, and B. Sheridan, edd. (2018) *Diodoros of Sicily: Historiographical Theory and Practice in the Bibliothek* (Leuven).
- Kowalzig, B. and P. Wilson, edd. (2013) *Dithyramb in Context* (Oxford).
- Lenfant, D., ed. (2004) *Ctésias de Cnide: La Perse; l'Inde; autres fragments* (Paris).
- Malkin, I. (1994) *Myth and Territory in the Spartan Mediterranean* (Cambridge).
- Muntz, C. (2017) *Diodorus Siculus and the World of the Late Roman Republic* (New York and Oxford).
- Oldfather, C. H. (1954) *Diodorus Siculus VI: Books XIV–XV.19* (Cambridge, Mass. and London).
- Parmeggiani, G. (2011) *Eforo di Cuma: studi di storiografia greca* (Bologna).
- Pickard-Cambridge, A. W. (1952) *Dithyramb, Tragedy, and Comedy* (Oxford).
- Rathmann, M. (2016) *Diodor und seine Bibliothek* (Berlin and Boston).
- Sacks, K. S. (1990) *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton).
- Sherman, C. L. (1952) *Diodorus Siculus VII: Books XV.20–XVI.65* (Cambridge, Mass. and London).
- Stylianou, P. J. (1998) *A Historical Commentary on Diodorus Siculus, Book 15* (Oxford).
- Strassler, R. B., ed. (2009) *The Landmark Xenophon's Hellenika* (New York).
- Sulimani, I. (2011) *Diodorus' Mythistory and the Pagan Mission* (Leiden and Boston).
- Tuplin, C. (2006) 'Review of Peter Green, *Diodorus Siculus, Books 11–12.37.1: Greek History, 480–431 BC — The Alternative Version* (Austin, 2006)', *BMCR* 2006.07.53.