



DIODORUS SICULUS

DIODORUS SICULUS, Greek historian from Agyrium in Sicily, hence called Siculus (the Sicilian). He came to Rome in the middle of the first century B.C.E. and there wrote his *Bibliotheca Historica*, a universal history in forty books (only 1-5, largely legendary early history, and 11-20, covering 480-301 B.C.E., survive), from the origins to the age of Caesar. The work is a compilation, normally epitomizing one earlier historian at a time, with insertions from Diodorus' other readings and moral reflections of his own, and changing over to another history where the previous one runs out. The quality of his sources varies, and his use of them is often inaccurate. He misreports Herodotus' Median king list (Herodotus 1.95 ff.) and names Pharnabazus instead of Tissaphernes as the satrap active against Athens in the Peloponnesian War (bk. 13) and as warning Artaxerxes II against Cyrus (14.22.1; but correct in 14.80.6), an error not likely to have been in his fourth-century source. Characteristic of more serious errors is his confusion (16.40 ff.) of Artaxerxes III's unsuccessful expedition against Egypt in 351-50 with his successful one of 344-43. His presentation is annalistic, chiefly dating by Athenian archons and Roman consuls, whose entry upon office, by the second century, was six months apart. He also likes to follow a story over many years, while dating it under a particular year in which some significant part of it occurred. Thus the story of Themistocles, from his ostracism (471-70) through his escape to "Xerxes" (Thucydides 1.137 gives Artaxerxes: 465) to his death (probably about 460), is all under 471-70. This makes Diodorus' chronology difficult to use, even when (as is most often the case) it is by his own standards correct. Subject to these limitations, he is important as the only surviving historian who gives an



account of Persian relations with the Greeks between Xerxes' defeat and the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, with some information on the king's administrators in his western provinces; for his account of the first part of the fourth century he is often judged superior to Xenophon, since his ultimate source appears to be the anonymous Greek history which has since been discovered in Oxyrhynchus (*Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*). After minor contributions to the history of Alexander the Great (bk. 17: his longest, probably based on the novelistic work of Cleitarchus), he follows Hieronymus of Cardia in books 18-20, providing our best account of the struggles of Alexander's successors, including Antigonus' conquest of Iran in book 18 and Seleucus' conquest of Babylonia and western Iran (he unfortunately ignores eastern Iran) in book 19.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Loeb edition (Greek and English: *A Library of History*, 12 vols., 1933-67; various editors and translators), with an excellent index, uses the best available texts and includes the surviving fragments of the lost books, found in various Byzantine collections (chiefly Photius and the extracts compiled for Constantine Porphyrogenitus) and varying in length and importance. It gives a bibliography of earlier editions. A Budé edition (Greek and French), with good textual notes and commentaries of varying length, was begun in 1969 and is slowly proceeding. For the most recent treatment, with ample bibliography, see Kenneth Sacks, *Diodoros Siculus and the First Century*, Princeton, 1990. See also E. Schwartz, "Diodorus 38," in Pauly-Wissowa, V, cols. 663-704.