

# Portents, Prophecies, and Dreams in Diodorus Books 14–17

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PORTENTS AND PROPHECIES were generally reported as historical events by the ancient historians; for they were a part of everyday life.<sup>1</sup> Herodotus and Thucydides both reported earthquakes at Delos, for instance, and oracles uttered at Delphi. They differed in their attitude towards them. Herodotus said of the earthquake as follows: “and in this I suppose the god showed to mankind a portent of the evils to come” (6.98.1). And he regarded Amphilytus, “an utterer of oracles,” as inspired by a deity (1.62.4–63.1 θεία πομπή χρώμενος). In the belief of Herodotus the deities were active in human life and in the natural world (3.40.2, 108.2). Thucydides had reservations. The earthquake at Delos “was said and was thought to be a sign of future events” (2.8.3); and the report of Apollo saying at Delphi that the Spartans would win if they used their full strength was qualified by the phrase “so it is said” (1.118.3). He revealed his own scepticism, when he commented on the oracles about the length of the Peloponnesian War being “thrice seven years” and in these instances only were oracles securely confirmed by the event.<sup>2</sup> He did not include the deities in his history.

<sup>1</sup>Portents are well defined by E. Kearns in *OCD*<sup>3</sup> 1227 as “phenomena seen as in some way indicating the future.” Prophecies include unknowing casual statements which proved to be prophetic. I omit omens obtained by human initiative, e.g. in making a sacrifice and analysing the parts of the victim.

<sup>2</sup>Thuc. 5.26.3 τοῖς ἀπὸ χρησμῶν τι ἰσχυρισαμένοις μόνον δὴ τοῦτο ἔχυρῶς ἔσυβάν. At 2.17.2 he gave a rationalising explanation of a Delphic oracle.

Dreams were in a different category. Herodotus believed that certain dreams were divinely sent. Thus the dream of Croesus about his son foreshadowed the dreadful vengeance of the deity and was duly fulfilled (1.34.1 ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις; 1.43.3). And he reported at length the dreams which Xerxes and Artabanus experienced (7.12.1–19.1). Thucydides, however, did not include dreams in his history.<sup>3</sup>

After this preliminary review I consider the position in the Greek sections of each of the books of Diodorus individually as regards reports of portents, prophecies, and dreams.

### 1. *Reports of these items*

Diodorus 14, covering the years 404–386, is remarkable in that it does not have any mention of portents, prophecies, or dreams in the account of Greek affairs. Because it is very different, as we shall see, in Book 15, the absence of them must be due to the source which Diodorus was following.<sup>4</sup>

Book 15 has an extraordinary number of portents and prophetic utterances in the account of Greek affairs. Earthquakes and tidal waves destroyed two cities in Achaëa (15.48). A comet of exceptional brilliance was seen in the heavens for many nights (50.2). There was a total eclipse of the sun (80.2); it occurred on 13 July 364. Various sayings were thought to have been prophetic. In 378 Agesilaus justified his avoidance of battle with the Boeotians on the grounds that such a battle

<sup>3</sup>In the *Hellenica* Xenophon follows the views both of Herodotus and of Thucydides. Thus he stated his belief that the gods pay attention to punishing the unrighteous (5.4.1) and that the god caused the Battle of Mantinea to be inconclusive (7.5.26). Sometimes he qualified his statements by adding “as it seems” (6.4.3 ὡς ἔοικε, τὸ δαιμόνιον ἤγεν) and “they say” (7.1.31 of thunder and lightning λέγουσι αἰσίους αὐτῷ φανῆναι). He reported the scepticism of some who said that some portents before the Battle of Leuctra were “tricks” by the Theban leaders (6.4.7 τεχνάσματα) but without expressing his own opinion.

<sup>4</sup>Although there were dramatic events and an eclipse in Xen. *Hell.* 4.3.10 and Plut. *Ages.* 17.

might be disastrous for Sparta (33.2). "An ancient saying," that Helice in Achaëa would be in danger when Ionians should sacrifice on the altar of Posidon, was thought to foreshadow its destruction (49.2 παλαιὸν λόγιον). Another "ancient saying," it was thought, foreshadowed Sparta's loss of hegemony (54.1). Oracular utterances from Delphi were reported: one to the citizens of Clazomenae and Cyme (18.2), and another to the Ionians (49.1). Some Boeotian "oracle-mongers" stated that the Lacedaemonians must be defeated by the tomb of the daughters of Leuctrus and Scedasus (54.2 χρησμολόγοι τινές).<sup>5</sup> "Many other such sayings were reported" (54.4).

Diodorus reported most of these matters with the initial comment that they were divinely inspired. The earthquakes and tidal waves were "devised by some divine force" (48.1 θείας τινὸς ἐνεργείας).<sup>6</sup> The comet was a divine indication that Sparta was about to lose her hegemony (50.2 τὸ θεῖον προεσήμαινε). According to some diviners the eclipse of the sun foretold the death of Pelopidas (80.3 τῶν μάντεών τινες). The saying of Agesilaus was thought to have been a divine oracle (33.2 θεῶν τινὰ χρησμόν). The other sayings and oracular utterances were reported without comment but obviously with respect.

However, a very different attitude was reported by Diodorus also. The earthquakes and the tidal waves which destroyed two cities in Achaëa were attributed by "the physicists" (οἱ φυσικοί) "not to the divine will but to certain physical circumstances" (15.48.4). The appearance of the comet was due to physical causes "according to some of the physicists" (50.3);

<sup>5</sup>"Leuctrus" is a mistaken addition by Diodorus; see P. J. Stylianou, *A Historical Commentary on Diodorus Siculus Book 15* (Oxford 1988) 394–395. The oracle was "spoken of" at the time according to the contemporary Xenophon (*Hell.* 6.4.7 χρησμός ὁ λεγόμενος), and was retold with varying details by Plutarch (*Pel.* 20.4–21.1, *Mor.* 856F), Pausanias (9.13.5–6), and Aelian (fr.77).

<sup>6</sup>Later, in 15.49.3–6, there is a more specific statement, namely "they say" that Posidon was taking his revenge for an act of sacrilege.

for they maintained that such appearances occur of necessity at certain times and that they are foretold for instance by the Chaldaeans. A remarkable scepticism was shown by Epaminondas in the preliminaries to the Battle of Leuctra, when the Thebans were undecided whether to stay in their city or to go out and fight a battle. It was then that a blind herald, meeting Epaminondas, urged the citizens to capture runaway slaves and keep them in the city (52.3); and a breeze blew a ribbon from a spear and deposited it on a grave of some Lacedaemonians (52.5). While many took these portents to mean that they should stay in the city, Epaminondas disregarded them and led his army out. But because his soldiers were superstitious, he tried to overcome their fears by arranging a set of omens which favoured a march out of the city. Agents of Epaminondas reported that the weapons in the temple of Heracles had disappeared and had been taken by heroes going forth from the city to fight. Another agent said he had come from the cave of Trophonius, and that the god had ordered the Thebans to institute a festival<sup>7</sup> in his honour after winning a victory at Leuctra (53.4).

These two attitudes—of belief in divine providence and of attribution to physical causes—appear side by side in some passages. Thus “the older men took the words of the blind herald to be an omen of the future,” but the younger men kept silent (15.52.4). When the breeze dislodged the ribbon, “some of the elderly protested, forbidding any advance by the army”; but Epaminondas advanced, reckoning the principles of honour and justice to be superior to the omens (52.6). The elderly were described as “the piously inclined” (48.4 οἱ εὐσεβῶς διακείμενοι) and they were contrasted with “the physicists” (οἱ φυσικοί).

In Book 17, covering the Greek events of 360–336, portents were reported and standard explanations were given. Most of

<sup>7</sup>That such a festival was celebrated at Thebes is known from inscriptions (e.g. IG VII 155, 1711).

them were associated with the Third Sacred War and its aftermath. In 356 when Philomelus seized Delphi, an eagle flew down from the temple and preyed upon the pigeons, taking some from the very altars. This was interpreted to be a sign that Philomelus and the Phocians would control the situation at Delphi (16.27.2 σημεῖον). But in 347/6, when Phocians dug for treasure round the tripod, there were great earthquakes, the gods foretelling the punishment of the sacrilegious robbers (56.8 φανερώς τῶν θεῶν προσημαίνόντων). During the aftermath lightning struck the siege-engines which Phalaecus and his mercenaries were erecting in Crete; they were set on fire and Phalaecus with some mercenaries were burnt to death by "the divine fire" (63.3 τοῦ θεοῦ πυρός). A large number of Phocians who took refuge in a temple of Apollo at Abae in Phocis were burned alive by a fire. This was one of many "divine events" and was due to "some divine foresight" (58.5 θεῖα and θεῖα τινι προνοίᾳ). The Phocian general Onomarchus had a dream which he thought to be favourable to himself, whereas in fact it foreshadowed the greater sufferings of the Phocians (33.1).

The other portents concern the last acts of Philip and his death. Early in 336 he asked the Pythian priestess at Delphi whether he would conquer the King of Persia. The oracular response was interpreted by him as favourable, whereas in fact it indicated his assassination (91.2–3 συμφέρον ἐξεδέχετο τὸ λόγιον). A speech by an Athenian herald in honour of Philip contained a remark, whereby "the supernatural power indicated the impending attack on Philip through some divine forethought" (92.2 θεῖα τινι προνοίᾳ διεσήμαινε τὸ δαιμόνιον τὴν ἐσομένην ἐπιβουλήν εὐθὺς τῷ Φιλίππῳ). There were other divinely inspired words (ἕτεραί τινες ὥσπερ ἐνθεάζουσαι φωναί). One of them was uttered at a state banquet (92.3).

Book 17, dealing with the career of Alexander, has a great number of portents. In the interval between the arrival of Alexander outside Thebes and the beginning of his attack Diodorus

reported "certain sayings of diviners and signs of the gods (17.10.2 φήμαις τισὶ μάντεων καὶ θεῶν σημείοις). The portents were a spider's web, large and iridescent like a rainbow, in the temple of Demeter; the statues in the market-place sweating; the marsh at Onchestus bellowing; a bloody ripple on the surface of the spring at Dirce; and not in Boeotia but at Delphi blood-stains on the roof of a shrine dedicated by Thebes from the spoils of the war against Phocis.<sup>8</sup> The spider's web had been observed three months earlier, and when consulted the Delphic oracle had confirmed then that it was a sign from the gods "to all men and especially to the Boeotians."<sup>9</sup> "Those who busied themselves with the interpretation of portents" said that the gods were clearly indicating the coming disaster to the city (τῶν θεῶν φανερωῶς σημαίνοντων). Total destruction of Thebes followed (10.6).

Tyre was the scene of further portents. When Alexander's mound was within bowshot of the city walls, a tidal wave cast a sea-monster of incredible size onto the edge of the mound, from which it later swam away. When the loaves of bread for the Macedonians were broken apart, the edges had a bloody appearance. Each side thought that the sea-monster indicated support by Posidon. Diodorus made no comment on the bloody bread. Then a Tyrian had a vision of Apollo saying that he would leave the city. Thereupon the Tyrians tied down the statue of Apollo with golden cords (41.6–8).

<sup>8</sup>The identity of this shrine is uncertain: see C. B. Welles in the Loeb edition (VIII 146–147 n.1) and P. Goukowsky, *Diodore de Sicile XVII* (Paris 1976) 173.

<sup>9</sup>The three months takes us back to July 335. At that time there were rumours that Alexander had been killed in the Balkans (Just. 11.2.8; Arr. *An.* 1.7.2; Ael. *VH* 12.57), and the Thebans then approached Athens and some Peloponnesian states for help in the rising which they were planning. But Alexander was first in the field in October 335, and help did not reach Thebes in time. The accuracy of Diodorus supports the argument for the authenticity of the Delphic oracle which is advanced by H. W. Parke, *A History of the Delphic Oracle* (Oxford 1939) 253.

As Alexander was leaving Troy, he entered the precinct of Athena. There the sacrificing priest noticed that a statue of a former governor of Phrygia was lying on the ground in front of the temple. There were other favourable portents. The priest reported them to Alexander (17.6). During the journey across the desert to the shrine of Zeus Ammon a rainstorm relieved the drought, and when they lost their way two crows cawing on their righthand side indicated the route (49.4–5). In southern Pakistan, when the enemy used a lethal poison and the wounded were dying, Alexander had dream, in which a snake appeared and showed to him a plant which would be a cure.

The interpretation of the fallen statue was that Alexander would be victor in a great cavalry battle, and that this was being revealed to him by the gods, and especially by Athena who would collaborate with him in his successes. The portents on the journey to Siwa were thought to be due to “divine providence” and to the desire of Zeus Ammon to welcome Alexander (49.4 θεῶν προνοία). Alexander found the plant which the snake had revealed to him and used it to effect a cure for the wounded, including Ptolemy. This too was attributed to “divine providence” (103.7).

After the death of Hephaestion in 324, “the divine power began to indicate the end of Alexander with many strange portents and signs” (116.1 τὸ θεῖον ἐσήμαινε τὴν τελευτὴν αὐτοῦ, πολλῶν καὶ παραδόξων οἰωνῶν καὶ σημείων συντελουμένων). Diodorus described two of them: an Asian prisoner putting on the royal dress and diadem and sitting on the royal chair, and a sailor rescuing the king’s diadem which had fallen into the water and swimming back with the diadem on his own head (116.2–6). Alexander consulted his diviners (οἱ μάντις). They bade him execute the prisoner, and on the second occasion to sacrifice at

once to the gods.<sup>10</sup> He did not sacrifice; for he began drinking with Medius, fell ill and died (117.1–3).

## 2. *The sources of Diodorus for these reports*

When we compare the geographical and military details in the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 4.2–8 and those details in Diodorus 14.79.8–80.8, it is evident that the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* was being very closely followed by Diodorus for the events of 396–395. Since Diodorus sometimes followed one main source throughout one of his own books, it is probable that the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* was his source for the whole of Book 14. This is the opinion of Bruce in his *Commentary*, and it is accepted in *OCD*<sup>2</sup> 766 and *OCD*<sup>3</sup> 1088 and by Buck (“the Oxyrhynchus Historian seems to be the principal source for the Greek material in Books 13 and 14 of Diodorus”).<sup>11</sup>

We can check this opinion in the matter of portents etc. in *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*. They are indeed absent in the surviving fragments of that work. There is one sacrifice, of which the adverse omens dissuaded Agesilaus from crossing the river Meander. Since this sacrifice is mentioned both in *Hell.Oxy.* 7.4 and in Diod. 14.80.5 at the same point, it is certain that the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* was indeed being followed by Diodorus at that point.

What source or sources was Diodorus following in his Book 15? His use of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* ended with Book 14 at 386; for the character of Book 15 was entirely different. Moreover, it is generally believed that the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*

<sup>10</sup>The order to sacrifice was emphatic: “to complete sacrifices to the gods on a magnificent scale with all speed.” But it is almost neglected by critics; for in the same sentence Diodorus had Alexander called away to join Medius.

<sup>11</sup>I. A. F. Bruce, *An Historical Commentary on the Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* (Cambridge 1967) 21; R. J. Buck, *Boiotia and the Boiotian League 421–371 B.C.* (Alberta 1994) xvii.



ended with the King's Peace of 386.<sup>12</sup> On the positive side it has been maintained, continually from the time of C. A. Volquardsen (1868) to the latest writer P. J. Stylianou (1998), that the principal source for the Greek affairs of Book 15, which ended with the events of 362/1, was Ephorus.<sup>13</sup> I have added a further point in favour of Ephorus from my analysis of the sources of Book 16;<sup>14</sup> for it is clear that Diodorus followed the last part of Ephorus 22 for some of the opening chapters and also Ephorus 24 for the Persian narrative in 16.40.3–52.8. This is explicable only if Diodorus had been following Ephorus for the last part of Book 15.

That Diodorus used a secondary source for Greek affairs in Book 15 has been maintained for instance by Vial in her *Commentary* (x: "il est certain que pour les affaires de Grèce il a consulté au moins deux sources distinctes"). This is clearly the case with the great number of portents and oracular utterances, and with the contrasting views of the pious and of the scientists; for in the numerous fragments of Ephorus' *Histories*, there are no portents and the only oracles are concerned with

<sup>12</sup>It has been proposed by Stylianou (*supra* n.5) 119, citing other authors, that the direct source of Diodorus was Ephorus and that the resemblance between Diodorus and the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* was due to Ephorus having copied a passage of that work. But this proposal is not compatible with two passages in Diodorus 14 which show that Ephorus was not his main source but his secondary source. In 14.2 Diodorus wrote that in killing Alcibiades "Pharnabazus wished to gratify the Lacedaemonians" but "Ephorus having reported other reasons for the plot" Diodorus went on to give a summary of the account in Ephorus 17. Then in 14.22.2 Diodorus gave the number of Artaxerxes' troops as "400,000 including cavalry as Ephorus says." In the first passage Diodorus began with the version of his main source, and he then added the version of his secondary source, Ephorus. In the second passage the citation of Ephorus is best explained if one supposes that Diodorus distrusted the figure in his main source and therefore cited the figure from his secondary source, Ephorus.

<sup>13</sup>See C. Vial, *Diodore de Sicile XV* (Paris 1977) ix, "Depuis C. A. Volquardsen ... on admet que la source principale de Diodore est Ephore pour le livre XV."

<sup>14</sup>In "The Sources of Diodorus XVI," *CQ* 31 (1937) 79–91.

the period of the returning Heracleidae and with the foundation of Halieis (*FGrHist* 70 FF 16, 56).

We must consider also the destruction of Bura and Helice which is described by Diodorus in 15.48–49 under 373/2, a date confirmed by Aristotle, *Meteor.* 343b19. A contemporary writer, Callisthenes, dated the appearance of a comet before the destruction (Sen. *QN* 7.5 *antequam*). However, Diodorus placed it after the destruction in his year 372/1, and he was thus able to describe it as a divine portent foretelling the defeat of Sparta in 371/0 at Leuctra (τὸ θεῖον προεσήμαινε). The fullest surviving description of the destruction of Helice is that of Heraclides Ponticus, a contemporary (Strab. 8.7.2 = fr.46a Wehrli). His date, namely in the winter two years before the Battle of Leuctra, agrees with that of Aristotle. Heraclides attributed the destruction to “the anger of Posidon” (κατὰ μῆνιν). That anger had been incurred as follows according to Heraclides: Ionian refugees from Helice asked the people of Helice to let them have the statue of Posidon or at least a copy (ἀφίδρυσιν) of his temple in Helice. The people of Helice refused. Thereupon the Ionians appealed to “the council of the Achaeans” (τὸ κοινὸν τῶν Ἀχαιῶν), and the council approved the request of the Ionians. Even so the people of Helice did not comply (οὐδ’ ὡς ὑπακοῦσαι). Polyaeus attributes the destruction of Helice to the anger of Posidon but for a different reason (8.46).

Our concern is to identify the source used by Diodorus in his description. The first claimant is Heraclides Ponticus.<sup>15</sup> His account is echoed in that of Diodorus in the following points. The destruction was at night. The Ionians sent envoys to take copies (ἀφιδρύματα) of the altars (of Posidon) at Helice. These envoys obtained the approval of the council of the Achaeans (τὸ κοινὸν τῶν Ἀχαιῶν), but the people of Helice opposed the request

<sup>15</sup>That Heraclides was Diodorus’ source was held so strongly by F. Wehrli, that he printed Diod. 15.48 as a fragment of Heraclides: *Die Schule des Aristoteles* VII (Basel 1953) fr.46b. Stylianou was prepared to consider the possibility (*supra* n.5: 378).

(ἀντέλεγον). This excited the anger of Posidon (μηνίσαντα), and it brought about the destruction of Helice. These resemblances are compatible with Heraclides being the source followed by Diodorus. But they are not conclusive. For the destruction of Helice was "the subject of much enquiry" (48.4 μεγάλης ζητήσεως), and other writers in their accounts will have mentioned the same points as Heraclides did.

Moreover, the differences between the two accounts show that Diodorus was not following Heraclides' account. The order of the events was different. Diodorus began with a consultation of Apollo at Delphi and the issuing of an oracle to the Ionians. Next came a consultation of the council of the Achaeans. It was only after the council's approval that the people of Helice refused to grant the request. On the other hand Heraclides made the envoys of the Ionians go first to Helice. There the request was refused. The envoys then obtained the approval of the council of the Achaeans. Even then the people of Helice continued to refuse. These differences indicate that Diodorus was not drawing on the account of Heraclides.<sup>16</sup>

The most remarkable feature of Diodorus' account is the contrast between a physical interpretation and a pious interpretation (15.48.4 οἱ φυσικοί as contrasted with οἱ εὐσεβῶς διακείμενοι). The same contrast is made in response to the appearance of the comet: it was called "a divine portent" (50.2 τὸ θεῖον προεσήμαινε), but "for some of the physicists" (τῶν φυσικῶν) it was due to physical causes (φυσικὰς αἰτίας) which occur "of necessity at appointed times." There is nothing of this in Heraclides' fragments. But the same contrast appears in Plutarch's *Lysander* 12. There too the subject is the appearance of a comet, which fell to the earth at Aegospotami, probably ca 467.<sup>17</sup> It was later thought to have been "a portent foretelling

<sup>16</sup>Wehrli did not notice these differences in his book.

<sup>17</sup>This date is proposed by M. Schofield in *OCD*<sup>3</sup> 85.

the defeat of Athens" in 405. But at the time Anaxagoras declared that the fall of the comet was due to an interruption in the circular motion which had been keeping it in the heavens (*Lys.* 12.2). That view was supported by Daimachus of Plataea in his *On Piety* (Περὶ εὐσεβείας), in which he described the behaviour of the comet and its fall to earth where it was seen as a large stone. It is clear from the title of the treatise that Daimachus reported the view of the piously inclined as well as that of Anaxagoras, one of the early physicists whom Aristotle called οἱ φυσικοί. It is then probable that Diodorus was drawing on Daimachus of Plataea for his account in 15.48.1–50.3, except that Diodorus placed the appearance of the comet after the destruction of Helice and thus made it a portent for the fall of Sparta at Leuctra in 371.

My conclusion, then, is that for Greek affairs in Book 15 Diodorus followed as his principal source Ephorus, and as his secondary source Daimachus of Plataea; and that he obtained his plethora of portents etc. from the latter.<sup>18</sup>

In Book 16 Diodorus used a single source for his continuous report of the portents which occurred during the Sacred War and during the punishment of the sacrilegious participants (16.61–64.3). That source was the monograph of Demophilus, the son of Ephorus. His work was described by Diodorus as running "from the capture of the shrine at Delphi ... for eleven years down to the annihilation of those who divided the sacred property among themselves" (14.3). Other writers made it a war of ten years (e.g. Aeschin. 2.131, 3.148; Duris *FGrHist* 72 F 2; Paus. 9.6.4, 10.3.1). Since the narrative of Diodorus extended over eleven years (from 357/6 in 16.14.2 to 346/5 in 59.4 and

<sup>18</sup>Ephorus borrowed material from the works of Daimachus, Callisthenes, and Anaximenes (of Lampsacus who lived ca 380–320 B.C.): see *FGrHist* 70 T 17. This implies that the elder Daimachus was writing around the central part of the fourth century.

64.3), it is certain that Diodorus followed the monograph of Demophilus.<sup>19</sup>

The source from which Diodorus derived his reports of the Pythian oracle and the remarks by an Athenian herald concerning Philip was most probably the *History* of Diyllus of Athens, who flourished around 300 B.C. Diodorus reported that his *History* began in 357/6, was in 26 books (βύβλοι 14.5), and of them the second volume (σύνταξις 76.5) began in 341/0. Such details were unusual in Diodorus. The explanation for them is evidently that Diodorus was using Diyllus at the time and noted these details himself.

In Book 17 the portents began three months before the destruction of Thebes. I have argued<sup>20</sup> that the chapters concerning Thebes, namely 17.8.2–14, were derived from Cleitarchus' *Histories of Alexander*. Within the account the description of the portents in 17.10 and the Theban reaction to them are firmly embedded. Thus whereas "those who busy themselves with the interpretation of portents" declared that the gods were foretelling the destruction of the city, and that a solution should be sought by diplomacy, "the Thebans' spirits were undaunted." This short-sighted courage was characteristic of the resistance which Diodorus following Cleitarchus described.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand Diodorus reported in a restrained style the fallen statue at Troy "together with some other favourable omens" (17.17.6 οἰωνῶν αἰσίων). The interpretation by the sacrificant that a victory was being foretold by the gods and

<sup>19</sup>Diodorus resumed the length of eleven years at 16.59.1: "after lasting ten years (διαμείνας ἔτη δέκα) it came to an end (κατελύθη)," i.e. in the eleventh year. Diodorus was thoroughly confused in 16.28.1 under his year 355/4 when he wrote that the Sacred War lasted for nine years, i.e. on inclusive reckoning down to 347/6. See my remarks (*supra* n.14) 84–85.

<sup>20</sup>*Three Historians of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1981) 15–16 (hereafter *THA*).

<sup>21</sup>The portents which Diodorus mentioned except for the bloodstains on a building at Delphi (10.5) are reported also by other writers: e.g. Paus. 9.6.5–6, Arr. 1.9.8, Ael. *VH* 12.57.

“especially by Athena who would cooperate in his [Alexander’s] successes” is historically sound in that the victory at the Granicus followed, and that Alexander paid particular honour to Athena after the battle and subsequently.<sup>22</sup> The probable source of this account was the history of Diyllus, as I suggested in *THA* 38.

The portents at Tyre as seen by the Tyrians are fully integrated into the narrative. The tidal wave and the enormous sea-monster were sent “by the gods to them in their peril,” as were other strange happenings (παρὰ τῶν θεῶν). The latter included the vision by a Tyrian of Apollo saying that he would leave the city. This Tyrian narrowly escaped being stoned as a traitor “by the younger men,” but the god-fearing Tyrians tied the statue of Apollo to its plinth with golden cords (17.41.7–8). In my analysis I identified the source as Cleitarchus. This identification is supported by such sensational details as the threatened stoning.<sup>23</sup> There was also a sensational portent for the Macedonians in the form of bloody-looking loaves. This portent was mentioned also by Curtius (4.2.14), who added the interpretation by Aristander, and another portent—streams of blood flowing within flames—was thought by the Tyrians to foreshadow Macedonian losses (4.2.13).

Accounts of the portents which occurred during the journey to Siwah were written by contemporaries of Alexander, namely Aristobulus (Arr. 3.3.3, 3.3.6, 3.4.5), Callisthenes (Strab. 17.1.43 [813]), and Ptolemy (Arr. 3.3.5, 3.4.5). The account of

<sup>22</sup>After the battle Alexander himself went to Troy, adorned its temple with dedications, and promised to build there a most magnificent temple (Strab. 13.1.26 [593]). He made the same promise in his last plans (Diod. 18.4.5).

<sup>23</sup>Curtius reported the sea-monster (4.4.3–4) and the vision of Apollo (4.3.21–22); he gave further details including the statue of Apollo having come as spoil from Syracuse to Tyre. Since the origin of the statue according to Timaeus was Gela (Diod. 13.108.4 = *FGrHist* 566 F 106), this passage in Curtius cannot be drawn from Timaeus. Plutarch described the vision of Apollo and the binding of his statue to its plinth, and he added another dream by Alexander concerning a satyr (*Alex.* 24.6–9).

Aristobulus seems to have been followed by Curtius and by Arrian; for both start their account by attributing to Alexander a strong desire (*ingens cupido* and *πόθος*), and they ended with a spring running hot and cold and Alexander returning to the Mareotic Lake. Strabo reported that Callisthenes described two crows as guides; this was evidently the common version as in the account of Aristobulus (Arr. 3.3.6 ὁ πλείων λόγος).<sup>24</sup> And Plutarch cited Callisthenes for the behaviour of the crows at night (*Alex.* 27.4). Ptolemy substituted snakes for crows and made Alexander return direct to Memphis (Arr. 3.3.5, 3.4.5). The account of Diodorus for the journey resembles that of Curtius, but his description of the Bitter Lake and of the Cities of Ammon (17.49.6) is unique. Diodorus seems to have taken that description from another—unknown—source.<sup>25</sup> He did not draw on Ptolemy's account.

The dream of Alexander which enabled him to cure Ptolemy and others was reported by Diodorus (17.103.3–104.2), Strabo (15.2.17 [723]), Justin (12.10.2–3), and Curtius (9.8.20–27). The incident was placed in southern Pakistan by Diodorus, Justin, and Curtius, but “among the Oreitae” by Strabo, who cited Aristobulus as his source repeatedly for the coastal region of southwestern Asia.<sup>26</sup> Therefore Diodorus did not use the account of Aristobulus. On the other hand, since both Diodorus and Curtius gave fulsome praise of Ptolemy and had Alexander see in his dream a snake carrying a plant, they had a common source. This source was in my opinion Cleitarchus; for the style is characteristically sensational, Cleitarchus when residing in

<sup>24</sup>Curtius wrote of *complures corvi* rather than of two crows, probably through carelessness, not through a change of source (4.7.15).

<sup>25</sup>In particular “the cities of Ammon” is hardly compatible with “the huts of the Ammonii (*tuguria*)” in Curt. 4.7.20. For a full discussion of the visit to Siwah see P. A. Brunt, *Arrian I* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1976) 467–480.

<sup>26</sup>For Aristobulus' interest in poisonous and curative plants see Strab. 15.1.1–21 (694).

Egypt had a motive for flattering Ptolemy, and Cleitarchus is cited by Curtius at 9.8.15.<sup>27</sup>

The portent of a man sitting on the vacant throne of Alexander was narrated not only by Diodorus but also by Plutarch (*Alex.* 73.7–74.1) and by Arrian citing Aristobulus as his source (7.24.1–3). Since Diodorus and Plutarch agreed in attributing the absence of Alexander to his playing ball and then being rubbed down with oil, whereas Aristobulus had Alexander absent holding a military parade, it is evident that Diodorus and Plutarch did not follow Aristobulus. The man who sat on the throne was according to Diodorus a local, that is a Babylonian, prisoner whose chains fell apart of their own volition; according to Plutarch a Messenian called Dionysius, whose chains were loosened by the god Sarapis and who was then ordered by the god to sit on the throne; and according to Arrian a quite obscure person, “some say a prisoner under arrest.”<sup>28</sup> The source of Plutarch was evidently Cleitarchus; for he liked to introduce the Egyptian god Sarapis into the account, and he is surely responsible for the sensational portents—crows in the air killing one another and a donkey kicking a lion to death. Diodorus, then, did not use Cleitarchus. The conclusion is that he followed the account of Diyllus for this episode.<sup>29</sup>

In Diodorus 17.116.4 the man who had sat on the throne was executed κατὰ τὴν (τῶν μαντέων) κρίσιν ἀπέκτεινεν, “according to the judgement” of the diviners. This may be accepted as historically correct, since the source was Diyllus. Plutarch

<sup>27</sup>See *THA* 67. Goukowsky (*supra* n.8) 142 n.1 “cet éloge de Ptolémée ... provient sans doute de Clitarque”; see also his article in *REA* 71 (1969) 320–337. Cleitarchus may have invented the plant-carrying snake; for Aristobulus according to Strabo said that it was a bystander who showed the plant to Alexander.

<sup>28</sup>In citing this version as a report (λόγος) Arrian in his Preface indicates that it was not the version of either Ptolemy or Aristobulus.

<sup>29</sup>See my arguments in *THA* 76 and *Sources for Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1993) 143.



cited the judgement of the diviners as an order, whereupon Alexander "made away with him," *i.e.* had him killed; for that is the meaning of ἀφανίζω (LSJ *s.v.* I.1). Arrian, citing Aristobulus, reported that the man was tortured (7.24.3).

The portent of the swimmer wearing Alexander's diadem is told by Diodorus (17.116.5–117.1) and by Arrian (7.22.1–5). Their accounts differ. According to Diodorus Alexander was lost in one of the skiffs (ἀκάτια) for three days and three nights, alone and afraid that he would never escape from the marshes; and according to Arrian a part of the fleet was lost and Alexander sent a pilot to retrieve it. According to Diodorus Alexander's diadem was detached by a branch; but according to Arrian Alexander was steering his trireme when his cap (καυσία) and diadem were blown off by a gust of wind. According to Diodorus Alexander was advised by his diviners to "make magnificent sacrifices with all speed." According to Arrian "most writers" reported that Alexander gave the swimmer a talent but had him decapitated, as the diviners prescribed; and he added that the swimmer was said by Aristobulus to have been a Phoenician sailor and that he was given a talent and a flogging, and further that some writers said the swimmer was Seleucus. This account by Arrian agrees with the account given in *Syr.* 56 by Appian, a contemporary of Arrian, but without mention of a flogging. Arrian and Appian evidently used a common source.

That common source was Aristobulus. For Arrian's remark that Alexander was steering his own trireme (7.22.2) echoes the statement in Strabo that Aristobulus had Alexander steering his own ship (16.1.11 [741]). On the other hand, the account of Diodorus is much more sensational and his timing of the episode is different; for whereas Arrian placed it some weeks before the onset of Alexander's fatal illness (7.22.1, 7.24.4), Diodorus placed the order to sacrifice and Alexander's departure to join Medius in the same sentence (17.117.1). His

implication is that his failure to make the sacrifice was punished by the gods forthwith.<sup>30</sup>

The account of Arrian is certainly the correct one, since it is based on the *History* of Aristobulus, a contemporary observer. The largely fictitious account of Diodorus should be attributed to Cleitarchus, for the sensational details are typical of his writing, and the changing of the date of the episode is an example of that disregard for historical accuracy, of which Cleitarchus was held guilty by Curtius and Quintilian.<sup>31</sup>

The order of the two portents—first the vacant throne and then the swimmer wearing the diadem—was given by Arrian correctly, since he was following the account of Aristobulus (7.22.2, 7.24.1). Cleitarchus, however, reversed the order of the portents, so that the account was more sensational (in Diod. 17.116.2, 5).

### 3. *The method of Diodorus in selecting and using his sources*

Let us start with the narrative of the Peloponnesian War from 431 to 411 in Book 12.38 to Book 13.42.4. He tells us unusually that his source for the causes of the war was Ephorus (12.41.1).<sup>32</sup> The implication is that for the start at least of the hostilities he followed a source other than Ephorus. That in fact he used other sources is stated by M. Casewitz. There are close resemblances between the text of Diodorus and that of Thucydides which indicate that Diodorus was making use of Thucydides. The identity of other sources is uncertain.

Of portentous events Diodorus described the plague at Athens, and the purification of Delos in language reminiscent of

<sup>30</sup> There was the same inference in the case of Cleitus. For Cleitus failed to complete his sacrifice (Plut. *Alex.* 50.4), and Alexander also did not sacrifice to Dionysus (Arr. 4.8.2, 4.9.5; Curt. 8.2.6).

<sup>31</sup> See also my arguments in *THA* 76.

<sup>32</sup> He probably obtained the name of the engineer Artemon at 12.28.3 from Ephorus, since that name was attributed to Ephorus by Plutarch (*Per.* 27.3). See M. Casewitz, *Diodore de Sicile XII* (Paris 1972) xiii–xv.

Thucydides. The difference is that Diodorus said that the Athenians attributed the plague to “the deity” (58.6 τὸ θεῖον), *i.e.* Apollo, whereas Thucydides treated it as a secular event (2.47.3–53) while recording the beliefs of some others in some oracles (2.54). In 426, when great earthquakes and tidal waves occurred, the Lacedaemonians turned back at the Isthmus of Corinth “being afraid of the divine powers” (12.59.1 δεισιδαιμονήσαντες), whereas Thucydides commented on the physical causes of the tidal waves in relation to the earthquakes (3.89). When there was an eclipse of the moon on 27 August 413 and the diviners<sup>33</sup> said the Athenians must delay their departure, both Diodorus and Thucydides attributed the agreement of Nicias to his “fear of the gods” (δεισιδαιμονία); but Diodorus was alone in reporting that Demosthenes and his associates “were also compelled to agree out of respect for the divine power” (13.12.6).

Our conclusion is that for Greek affairs Diodorus used three or more sources for the events of 431 to 411. One was Thucydides, another was Ephorus, and a third made its own comments on the portentous events. We may note that in the numerous fragments of Ephorus’ *History* there is no mention of such events or of oracles for the historical period, and that his work was unsensational; it is then a certain inference that he did not record portentous events.

In Books 13.45 to 14.110.4, covering the events of 411 to 386, Diodorus followed one principal source for Greek affairs (Thucydides having ended at 411), namely the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* as we have seen (section 2 above). Portents, prophecies, and oracles are not present in the fragments of that work; therefore they do not occur in these chapters of Diodorus. As a secondary source he used Ephorus’ *History* either to supplement

<sup>33</sup>These officials attended every army, much as chaplains do today.

his principal source, as at 13.41.3, or to provide a variant account, as at 14.11.2.<sup>34</sup> He made no use of Xenophon's *Hellenica*.

For Book 15, covering the years 385 to 361, Diodorus had to choose a new principal source, since the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* ended in 386, and his choice was Ephorus (see section 2). Since the work of Ephorus was dull,<sup>35</sup> Diodorus adopted a livelier secondary source, namely Daimachus of Plataea, whose treatise *On Piety* provided plenty of portentous events. Hence the plethora of portents, for instance before the Battle of Leuctra, in Book 15. Because Diodorus was using this treatise, he reported the differing views of the pious and the physicists, although they were not relevant to his own history.

Book 16 covered the years 360 to 336. In his Proem Diodorus declared that the central theme was to be the deeds of Philip. The most comprehensive work on that subject was the *Philippica* of Theopompus. Diodorus did indeed mention it as comprising 58 books of which 5 were no longer extant in his time (16.3.8); but he did not adopt it as his principal source, presumably because radical abbreviation would have been laborious. Instead he continued with Ephorus as long as he was available for Greek affairs (at 16.2–4, 7.2–8.7, 14.1–2). He then abbreviated the monograph of his son Demophilus on the Sacred War and its aftermath (noted in 16.14.3). He now needed a source which would provide the history of Greek affairs apart from the Sacred War for the years 356 to 345 and then the history of events to the death Philip in 336. His choice was the work of Diyllus of Athens, which consisted of 26 books covering events in Greece and in Sicily from 357 to 297 (as noted in 16.14.5 and 21.5). It fitted his chronological need, and it was of a convenient

<sup>34</sup>Concerning the death of Alcibiades there were several variant accounts according to Plutarch (*Alc.* 39 fin.).

<sup>35</sup>Isocrates as teacher of Ephorus and Theopompus said that Ephorus needed the spur (*FGrHist* 70 F 28).

length for him to abbreviate.<sup>36</sup> The account of the Delphic oracle and of the corresponding Athenian song before Philip's death were appropriate to Diyllus, whose centre was Athens and who studied the memoirs of kings (*FGrHist* 73 τ 4). For the assassination of Philip Diodorus did not include the allegation of complicity by Olympias and even Alexander which was made in Justin 9.7 and in Plutarch *Alex.* 10.6–7. I have argued elsewhere that the source used by Justin and Plutarch was Satyrus.<sup>37</sup>

Thus in Book 16 Diodorus moved successively from one source to another—namely from Ephorus to Demophilus to Diyllus—and there is no indication that he used any secondary source to each of these.

In Book 17 the central theme was the career of Alexander. Since Diodorus regarded Alexander as the greatest figure in history down to his time of writing *ca* 30 B.C. (17.117.5), he intended this book to be the centrepiece of his *History*. What source should he follow? There were three full-length accounts by contemporaries of Alexander: by Cleitarchus who had not been on the expedition, and by Ptolemy and by Aristobulus, who had served with Alexander. The account by Cleitarchus was the most popular in the time of Diodorus; Cicero judged him to be “a better orator than historian.” Diodorus, however, did not adopt any of these as his principal source. No doubt he found them unduly long for his purpose, and in addition they did not include events in Greece during the absence of Alexander. Instead, he continued with the *History* of Diyllus, which gave a shorter account of Alexander's career and included events in Greece. It was relatively unsensational. For instance, as reflected in the narrative of Diodorus, Diyllus attributed the death of Alexander to illness, and not “as some authors” did<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup>For my arguments see *THA* 32–35 and *Philip of Macedon* (London 1994) 13–14.

<sup>37</sup>In *THA* 88–89 and *Sources* (*supra* n.29) 9.

<sup>38</sup>So Justin 12.14, Curt. 10.10.14–19, Plut. *Alex.* 77.1 and *Mor.* 849F.

to poisoning by one of Antipater's sons (17.117.5f; cf. Arr. 7.27).

As a secondary source Diodorus used the *History* by Cleitarchus. The identification is revealed by two figures: the 440 talents of loot from the sack of Thebes in Diod. 17.14.4 occurs as a fragment of Cleitarchus in Athenaeus 4.148D–F, and the 80,000 Indians slain in Diod. 17.102.6 occurs in Curtius 9.8.15 as a citation from Cleitarchus (*FGrHist* 137 FF 1, 25). It may be inferred also from the extravagant praise of Ptolemy in Diod. 17.103.7; for Ptolemy was king when Cleitarchus lived in Egypt.

The conclusion of this final section is that Diodorus did not follow any preconceived principle in selecting and using his sources for Greek affairs. Thus for the period 411 to 386 he followed the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* closely, and he made only occasional use of Ephorus to supplement his narrative in Book 13.45–107. On the other hand, for the period 386 to 361, when he was using Ephorus as his principal source, he made large additions from his secondary source, namely Daimachus of Plataea. Then for the reign of Philip he moved from Ephorus to Demophilus to Diyllus, and there was no question of a secondary source. The result was an uneven and unsatisfactory account. Finally for the reign of Alexander he reverted to his original method, following Diyllus as a principal source and drawing liberally on his secondary source, Cleitarchus. Thus his method varied to meet each situation. It is this which makes the study of his selection and his use of sources so interesting, especially in regard to portents, prophecies, and oracles. Moreover, the study of these items sheds a new light on the sources used by Diodorus in the four books 14–17.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>I have not discussed the article of Ph.-J. Derchain and J. Hubaux, "Le fantôme de Babylone," *AntClass* 19 (1950) 367–382, because it required the emendation of ἠφάνισεν in Plut. *Alex.* 74.1 to ἠφανίσθη.