

MANUSCRIPT 14

Diodorus Siculus, fl. 49 B.C.

Bibliotheca historica, I-V (here numbered I-VI), in the
translation of Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459)

MS. 14

Italy (in Latin)

Ca. 1450-1460

Little is known of the life of Diodorus Siculus. He was born at Agyrium in Grecian Sicily, probably in the early first century B.C. His only known literary work is a history of the world in 40 books, called the βιβλιοθήκη ιστορική, or "Historical Library," which he is known to have been composing in the period 60-35 B.C. Some of the material for this work was obtained by personal investigation (Diodorus visited Egypt and Rome, and possibly other places, to gather information), but for the most part it is a compilation from earlier historians whose works have not survived.

Of the original 40 books of the Bibliotheca, books 1-5 and 11-20 have come down in complete form, while fragments of the others have been preserved in quotations by other authors. The translation by Poggio covers the first five books, which he numbers as six, beginning a new book at chapter 42 of book 1. This portion of the work is devoted to Egypt, Arabia and the East, and Greece in the period before the Trojan War.

Poggio's translation of Diodorus was done at the suggestion

of his employer, Pope Nicholas V (1447-55), who relieved him of secretarial duties for the purpose; it was part of Nicholas' program of opening the stores of Greek wisdom to the West. The translation was finished in late 1449. Poggio states both in his preface to it and elsewhere that he was not interested in simply making a literal translation of his author; rather, he wanted to reproduce Diodorus' text in the natural idiom of the Latin tongue. This meant pruning out what Poggio felt were superfluous words and phrases (which were acceptable in Greek but not in Latin) and in general rewording the sentences so that the finished product would read like an original Latin composition instead of a translation. He had done this a few years earlier when translating Xenophon's Cyropaedia, but owing to criticism on that occasion he was less bold in handling Diodorus' text. This manuscript has special interest in that it was written by a scribe that worked for Poggio. Another copy of this text can be found in MS. 241.

Bibliographical note:

Diodorus Siculus, tr. Poggio, Historiae priscae (Bologna, 1472)

----, The Library of History (Loeb Classical Library, London and New York, various dates)

Louise Ropes Loomis, "The Greek Studies of Poggio Bracciolini", Medieval Studies in Memory of Gertrude Schoepperle Loomis (Paris and New York, 1927)

Ernst Walser, Poggius Florentinus (Leipzig and Berlin, 1914)

E. J. Goodspeed, A Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Libraries of The University of Chicago (Chicago, 1912)

DESCRIPTION. Folio, on paper, written probably in Florence ca. 1450-1460 : 284 X 205 (183 X 108) mm. : collation, iii, 1-19¹⁰, iii = 190 ff. + vi (numbered 1-199 [200], numbers 51 and 119 being repeated and numbers 100, 180-189 omitted) : 30 long lines ruled in dry point : catch-words in center of bottom margin. One watermark is close to Briquet 6654, 6656, and 6658 (1452-3, 1468, and 1451, resp.). Eighteenth-century red-brown calf, gilt, with the arms of Cardinal Braschi-Onesti (later Pius VI).

2° folio: A lectoribus

Fol. 1 (originally in red caps): Prohemium in libros Diodori Siculi quos Poggius Florentinus Latinos fecit ad Nicolaum quintum summum pontificem beg. Nullus antea quantum uis preclarus. Ends (f. 2) ipse diodorus loquatur;

Fol. 2 (red caps): Diodori Siculi historiarum priscarum a Poggio in Latinum traducti incipit liber primus beg. [M]agnas merito gratias. Bk. VI ends (f. 199^V) scribetur a nobis. FINIS.

SCRIPT. Written in a humanistic cursive with a bluntish pen; one principal hand of text. Leading features are: fat a and d, g in 3 strokes including tick (see f. 150^V, l. 14, gestabat), r usually straight, final s often long, second stroke of x hooked at top and extends below line. E is often e', N's crossbar joins the right-hand stroke at the middle, Q has a long bent tail, S's middle curve is horizontal, ligatured CT occurs. Joins between a, i, m, etc. and a following m or n are often avoided. According to Dr. A. C. de la Mare, the same scribe, who worked for Poggio, also wrote Florence Ricc. 759 and Vat. Ottob. lat. 2251 (see file

on MS. 1). Marginal notations (mostly indexing entries) principally in a skilful humanistic minuscule, with 3 other cursive hands, two 15th cent. and one 16th cent.

DECORATION. Spaces left for initials at the beginning of each book were not filled in. Headings to books in red capitals, those on f. 1 gone over in black because of fading. Some text capitals heightened in red.

PROVENANCE. From the Marchese Taccone Coll. (?), Naples; obtained from Calvary (1891).