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 H. J. W. Tillyard  
 Excerpt  
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## CHAPTER I.

### ANCIENT AUTHORITIES FOR THE HISTORY OF AGATHOCLES.

HISTORICAL authority is of two kinds, literary and material. For the life of Agathocles the chief extant writers are Diodorus Siculus, Justin, and Polyænus; and it will make easier a true understanding of the history about to be narrated, if a short account of these writers be presented, with such facts as can be discovered as to the original sources from which they drew.

Considering the importance of Agathocles' reign, there is a remarkable dearth of material remains. No building, graven stone, or bust is left to commemorate him. Of his coins indeed a long and valuable series has come down. These have been ably discussed by expert writers<sup>1</sup>, and the subject forms no part of the plan of the present work.

One important, but, as it happens, rather puzzling document remains to be mentioned. This is the new fragment of the so-called Parian Marble, lately found on the island, and published in 1897<sup>2</sup>. This inscription gives a system of Greek chronology from the death of Philip II to the year 299. The system itself reached down to 264.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Head, *Hist. Num.* 158 ff. and *Coinage of Syracuse*, 42 ff. Evans, note in Freeman, *Hist. of Sicily*, iv. Suppl. v. (with plate). P. Gardner, *Types of Greek Coins*, 184 and pl. XI. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ath. Mitt.* xxii. 183 ff.

Although this example of early dating is naturally of very great value, it has not by any means the authority of an official document, and its evidence does not necessarily outweigh the literary account in case of disagreement.

### 1. EXTANT AUTHORITIES: DIODORUS.

Diodorus Siculus was born at Agyrium and lived in the time of Julius Caesar and Augustus. His great *World's History* claimed to be a record embracing all noteworthy events from the earliest legendary days down to the beginning of Caesar's wars in Gaul. Diodorus says that he took thirty years to gather facts and ideas for his work; and that in this time he visited many of the fields where his history was enacted. The compiler of so huge a work must inevitably have followed received accounts without much discrimination. As a Sicilian he seems to have followed with some zeal the career of Agathocles, so that the portions of his work bearing on the subject in hand are very good specimens of his manner and arrangement. As a rule he is clear and reasonable, but sometimes he seems to be giving a patchwork of statements from different authorities regardless of order<sup>1</sup>.

The general plan of Diodorus' work is annalistic. Each year is opened with the Roman consuls and the Athenian archon; and the events of each part of Europe are given in order. The drawbacks of such an arrangement are clear; for sometimes a series of acts had to be broken because it overlapped the end of the year; and the

<sup>1</sup> Examples in the Agathoclean books. xix. 3, Agathocles' warlike deeds told twice, §§ 2 and 4. xix. 107, in § 2 Diodorus begins an account of Agathocles' treatment of Gela: he breaks off to tell an altogether separate story, coming back to Gela in § 3. Other examples might be given, but they will be noticed as they occur.

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system made it very easy both for writer and reader to lose all continuity in tracing the history of any particular country.

To obviate this unpleasantness Diodorus had two devices: either he could overleap the end of the year and follow his topic without a break; or else he could hold over a portion of his facts until the person concerned did something noteworthy, and then the overdue part could be tacked on as a special digression. Of the former course examples will be found in Agathoclean history<sup>1</sup>, and of the latter there are several striking cases. The life of Agathocles, up to his rise to the tyranny, is all given under the year 317: the early life of Acrotatus, and the start of Ophellas<sup>2</sup>, are treated in the same way. By these means the reading becomes pleasanter, but the exact dating is lost, so that in some cases the chronology is uncertain.

Besides this strictly historical part of his work Diodorus sometimes brings in passages of another kind. Speeches were not much to his taste; indeed he specially deplores their too common use<sup>3</sup>. The speeches of Agathocles when he was chosen general in the Syracusan assembly, and on the African coast when he burnt his ships, as also the invitation carried by Orthon to Ophellas, are all reported in a summary fashion. Reflexions and diatribes of the historian himself are, on the other hand, fairly common. They usually relate to the wickedness of Agathocles, or to the fickleness of fortune, or else to the wrath of heaven as smiting evildoers. Thus for example the slaughter of the Syracusan nobles in the Timoleon-teum, the fall of Messena, the fate of Ophellas and the

<sup>1</sup> D. xix. 70—72, and elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> Now often spelt Ophelas.

<sup>3</sup> D. xx. 1.

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failure of Bomilcar, the treachery of Agathocles after Gorgium, are commented upon with correct sentiment. Examples of the judgment of heaven will be given when Timaeus' share of Agathoclean history is reviewed.

There is furthermore an anecdotal element in Diodorus' work, for which the historian must be on the watch. The taste for stories, ruses and sayings of well-known men grew to a great extent in the later Hellenistic age, and fairly ran riot under the Roman Empire. To satisfy this craving for learned tittle-tattle the fashion arose to make collections of "stratagems," "apophthegms," and the like, such as are known in the works of Plutarch, Valerius Maximus, Frontinus and Aelian. One of these anecdote-mongers, named Polyaeus, is an authority for parts of Agathocles' life, and will be mentioned below.

If this paltry branch of letters had any serious aim, it was to supply tales and instances for the use of public speakers and students of oratory. Now whether Diodorus drew from such a collection or not, there are certainly ruses and stories in his work, that betray themselves firstly by their trifling nature, and again sometimes by their irrelevance to the narrative which they are meant to enliven. Such passages as Agathocles' escape from Gela, his flight from Acestorides, his make-believe shields and caged owls, the remarks on his bearing in public, and his jests in the assembly and out of it, besides the myth of his birth and childhood, are among the clearest examples<sup>1</sup>.

With these stories there is only one safe way of dealing. Every case must be weighed on its own merits, without any foregone conclusions. All anecdotes are not false, and it is worth while at least to search for underlying facts.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 26, 48, 49, 59, 112, below.

## 2. JUSTIN.

The second authority extant, far behind Diodorus in length and detail, is the abridgement of Trogus, drawn up by Justin. Pompeius Trogus lived in the reign of Augustus. He wrote a work called *Historiae Philippicae*. In name the book dealt with Macedonia, but all kinds of side-issues were entered upon, and the book was brought down to Roman times. The work is lost; but short summaries of the forty-four books remain. From these it is seen that Trogus devoted the end of his twenty-first book and most of the twenty-second and twenty-third books to the history of Agathocles. Justin himself wrote about Agathocles in his twenty-second and twenty-third books.

From a note of Justin at the beginning of his history it is easy to see in what spirit the summary was made. Disowning any serious aims, Justin says that he took from Trogus such passages as seemed to him specially interesting<sup>1</sup>. For this reason a good deal of purely rhetorical ornament, quite out of place in an abridgement, is allowed to stand, while a whole series of facts is summed up in a single phrase<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Praef. § 4 *Horum igitur quattuor et quadraginta voluminum...cognitione quaeque dignissima excerpsi, et omissis his quae nec cognoscendi voluptate jucunda, nec exempla erant necessaria, breve veluti florum corpusculum feci.*

<sup>2</sup> The following are some of the obviously rhetorical passages in the Agathoclean books of Justin. xxii. 3, 2—5, Complaints to the Carthaginian senate about the conduct of Hamilcar. These are no doubt true, though the form is rhetorical. 4, 3, Agathocles' speech to the Syracusans before his start: also partly historical. 5, 2—13, Speech to the troops on landing in Africa; especially § 8, on a coming siege of Carthage, and §§ 12, 13, about glory—pure rhetoric. 7, 9, Bomilcar's speech. 8, 5, Agathocles' speech to the mutinous. 8, 9, Exclamations of the soldiers after Agathocles' flight. xxiii. 2, 6—13, Theoxena's farewell.

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The style of Justin is clear and simple<sup>1</sup>, so that in a few cases he is a more satisfactory guide than Diodorus. His frame of mind is always unfriendly to Agathocles<sup>2</sup>.

Justin's own date is doubtful; but as he is mentioned by Jerome and by Orosius, he cannot have been later than the beginning of the fifth century.

### 3. POLYAENUS.

Polyaenus, the third authority, brought out a book of tricks or ruses, called *Stratagems*. In a high-flown address to the emperors, "Antoninus and Verus," that is, to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, Polyaenus deplored that old age no longer allowed him to share in the glories of the Parthian war. But he felt bound as a Macedonian to do something worthy of his warlike race, and so had put together some stratagems of the men of old to be a hand-book for Roman officers<sup>3</sup>.

The true aim of the collection, however, was simply amusement<sup>4</sup>. Polyaenus begins with the ruses of Pan, Dionysus and Heracles: then he tells of the tricks of the Greek, Roman and foreign warriors; of cities, and lastly of women. Very few of these japes have any historical worth whatever. For not only was Polyaenus careless in

<sup>1</sup> On the style of Justin and Trogus cf. Teuffel-Schwabe, *Röm. Litteratur-Gesch.* i. 602. Peter, H., *Die geschichtliche Litteratur über d. röm. Kaiserzeit*, ii. 224, 298.

<sup>2</sup> The fact that Justin sometimes says a good word for Agathocles (e.g. *xxii.* 1, 9) does not alter his general attitude.

<sup>3</sup> i. 1—3.

<sup>4</sup> The first "stratagem" of Agathocles is an example of the trifling nature of many of the anecdotes. Ἀγαθοκλῆς Σικελίας τύραννος ὁμῶσας τοῖς πολεμίοις παρέβη τοὺς ὄρκους, καὶ κατασφάζας τοὺς ἀλόντας, ἐπιχλευάζων πρὸς τοὺς φίλους ἔλεγεν, "Δειπνήσαντες ἐξεμέσωμεν τοὺς ὄρκους." *Pol.* v. 3, 1.

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following his authorities<sup>1</sup>, but some of the “stratagems” may have been fastened upon the wrong man altogether. The chief use of Polyænus to the historian is that he sometimes records stray facts that would otherwise have been lost. The order of arrangement of Polyænus’ stories on Agathocles is chronologically inverted<sup>2</sup>.

## 4. LESSER AUTHORITIES.

Outside the works of Diodorus, Justin and Polyænus, the only other historical account of Agathocles is found in the writing of Orosius, *Against the Heathen*. This tract was meant to prove that the disasters of the Roman world in the fourth and fifth centuries, so far from being aggravated by the wrath of the Pagan gods whom the spreading of Christianity was believed to have angered, were in truth nothing but the continuation of those woes that had always been the lot of man. Orosius tried to make good his thesis by giving a summary of the world’s history with special stress on all mishaps and calamities. The disasters of Carthage form the ground for the mention of Agathocles, whose African war is shortly related<sup>3</sup>. Although Orosius speaks of Trogus<sup>4</sup>, as well as Justin, as an authority, it would seem from the likeness of his Agathoclean section to the latter’s abridgement, that Orosius only took this matter from the earlier historian

<sup>1</sup> Example: Pol. i. 40, 5. It is related that Alcibiades devised the plan for enticing the Syracusans out to Catana. In Polyænus’ authority, Thuc. vi. 64, 2, the Athenian generals are the authors of the trick. Many other examples are given in Woelflin’s introduction (Teubner text).

<sup>2</sup> This is obvious in the case of 7 and 8 (relating to the same series of events), 5, 4, 3, 2. The context of 1 and 6 is uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> Orosius, *Adv. Pag.* iv. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

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at second hand. Hence for all practical purposes the narrative of Orosius is worthless.

Besides these more or less formal accounts there are a few notices of Agathocles elsewhere. Polybius makes several remarks about him, and there are one or two valuable notes in Strabo and Appian. Of these passages, with such scattered observations as have been gleaned from other ancient writers, use will be made in the proper place.

#### THE EARLIEST WRITERS ON AGATHOCLES.

As our extant authorities, including even Polybius, lived many years after the events of which they wrote, it is the duty of the historian to trace, as far as can now be done, the contemporary sources from which the existing versions may have been drawn. As far as is known, four writers of Agathocles' own age made his life the subject of historical treatment. Of these three were Sicilians, Antander, Callias and Timaeus, and the other, Duris, was a Samian. A contemporary who seems to have mentioned Agathocles was the well-known Athenian orator and statesman, Demochares, the nephew of Demosthenes. He is quoted as an authority for Agathocles' length of life, but it does not appear that he wrote systematically on Agathocles in his history<sup>1</sup>.

If there were other writers on Agathocles' history of his own age, all account of them has perished.

<sup>1</sup> [Lucian] *Macrob.* 10 mentions Demochares with Timaeus as an authority for Agathocles' age at his death: this does not imply more than a passing reference to the event. On Demochares cf. Müller, *F.H.G.* II. 445, and the article in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie d. cl. Altertumswissenschaft*, s.v.

5. THE EARLIEST WRITERS ON AGATHOCLES:  
 ANTANDER.

Antander was an elder brother of Agathocles, and early became one of the foremost men in Syracuse. Before Agathocles became tyrant, his brother was one of the leaders of a Syracusan force sent to help Croton against the Bruttians. Afterwards he was left by Agathocles as joint ruler of Syracuse, while the prince himself was warring in Africa. Antander wished to treat with Hamilcar in 310, on the news of the burning of Agathocles' fleet, but Erymnon dissuaded him. In 307 Antander was bidden by his brother to slay all the Syracusan kindred of the soldiers left in Africa; and he carried out this order with ruthless severity. No further details of his life are known, but he must have lived to a good old age, for in the time of Agathocles' early campaigns he was already a general of the Syracusan army, and yet he outlived Agathocles, who died at seventy-two.

In writing his history Antander was in a way playing Philistus to his brother's Dionysius. The book is only mentioned once. Diodorus says that Agathocles ruled for twenty-eight years, which number was given by Timaeus, Callias and Antander<sup>1</sup>. This one notice does not allow it to be settled whether Diodorus made regular use of Antander's book, or merely referred to it as an authority on particular points, or again knew it only from references in other works.

6. CALLIAS.

The main source of knowledge of this historian is found in the comparison which Diodorus makes between him and Timaeus<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> D. XXI. 16, 5.

<sup>2</sup> D. XXI. 17.

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“Furthermore Callias of Syracuse most thoroughly and rightly deserves to be blamed. He was favoured by Agathocles, and for the rich presents that he received, sold his pen, which should have served the cause of truth, and lost no chance of heaping undeserved praise on his paymaster. Though Agathocles did many deeds of impiety towards the gods, and injustice to men, the historian declares that he was far above the average in godliness and humanity. In short just as Agathocles robbed the burgesses of their goods and wrongfully bestowed on Callias what he had no right to have, so in his books this astonishing historian showers all that is good upon the tyrant. For it seems an easy way of repaying favours, if the historian’s readiness to bestow praise was equal to the eagerness with which he took bribes from the royal house.”

Callias is also mentioned (in the place already quoted) as recording the death of Agathocles and the length of his reign, and as having written twenty-two books<sup>1</sup>.

A further proof of the use of Callias by Diodorus is found in the likeness between Callias’ third fragment and Diodorus’ description of the march of Ophellas<sup>2</sup>. “The wilderness of the Syrtis swarmed with all kinds of snakes, most of them poisonous, and numbers of the people met their death in this way, the aid of friends and leeches proving useless; for many of the snakes had skins of the same hue as the earth on which they lay, so that their own nature was unsuspected; and many trod on the snakes and so succumbed to their deadly bite.”

The Callias passage is as follows; it is taken from Aelian. “Callias in the tenth book of his history of Agathocles says that the snake-bites were deadly, and

<sup>1</sup> D. *xxi.* 16, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Müller, *F.H.G.* *ii.* Callias, 3 and D. *xx.* 42, 2.