

Brill's New Jacoby

Demetrios of Byzantion

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English

Ancient Greek

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FGrH

Diogenes Laertios V 83

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Historian's date: 3rd century BC

γεγόνασι δὲ Δημήτριοι ἀξιόλογοι εἴκοσι ἕβδομος Βυζάντιος, ἐν τρισκαίδεκα βιβλίοις γεγραφῶς τὴν Γαλατῶν διάβασιν ἐξ Εὐρώπης εἰς Ἀσίαν· καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις ὀκτὼ τὰ περὶ Ἀντίοχον καὶ Πτολεμαῖον καὶ τὴν τῆς Λιβύης ὑπ' αὐτῶν διοίκησιν.

Translation

There have been twenty Demetrioι worth mentioning.... the seventh was from Byzantion. He wrote about the migration of the Galatians from Europe into Asia (278/7) in thirteen books, and in eight more books, on the affairs concerning Antiochos ('Soter', king 281-261), Ptolemy ('Philadelphos', king 285-246), and their settlement of Libya.

Commentary on the text

No fragments of Demetrios' two historical works have survived. Jacoby in *FGrH* classifies the titles given by Diogenes as fragments, but their wording, especially in the case of the second work, must have been slightly different. The titles show that the two works were closely related both chronologically and thematically. Diogenes gives as the subject of the first work the migration of the Galatians from Europe into Asia (an event which Pausanias 10.23.14 dates to the Athenian archonship of Demokles, 278/7 BC). The thirteen books of this work would have described – in very great detail – the period immediately preceding and following the crossing (c. 280 until 276 BC); or, if one does not take Diogenes' information too literally, they might have covered the Galatians' invasion of Greece as a prelude to their crossing into Asia, and their invasion of, and final settlement in, Asia Minor, until the moment

when Antiochos I, after the battle of the Elephants (in either 275 or 269/8 BC), assigned to the Galatians territories along the Halys in Phrygia. If one accepts the lower date, Demetrios would have dedicated one book to each year.

As for the second work, its title, *On Antiochos, Ptolemy and their settlement of Libya*, refers in all likelihood to events linked to the revolt organised by Magas of Kyrene against Ptolemy II in 275 BC. Magas, a half-brother of Ptolemy II Philadelphos who represented the Ptolemaic power in Libya, and his Seleukid father-in-law, Antiochos I, united against Ptolemy II; this revolt developed into the so-called first Syrian war (274-271). However, probably because of lack of coordination, Antiochos fought Ptolemy on his own, while Magas, possibly already in 275, reached an agreement with him and was recognized as king of Kyrene under the nominal control of Egypt. This must be what is meant with ‘settlement of Libya’: see further, E. Will, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique* 1² (Nancy 1979), 145-8 and K. Strobel, *Die Galater. Geschichte und Eigenart der keltischen Staatenbildung auf dem Boden des hellenistischen Kleinasien* 1 (Berlin 1996), 250-1. The eight books covered thus the period from c. 275 to c. 272/1 BC.

The Galatians may have constituted a thematic link between the two historical works, because one of the episodes of the war against Magas was the revolt of Philadelphos’ Galatian mercenaries (Kallimachos, *Hymn to Delos* 170-87 and Scholiast to Kallimachos, *Hymn* 4.175-87; Pausanias 1.7.2; discussion in G. Nachtergaele, *Les Galates en Grèce et les Sôtéria de Delphes. Recherches d’histoire et d’épigraphie hellénistique* (Brussels 1977), 184). This is all the more probable if Demetrios’ second historical work was a continuation of the first one; Jacoby, *FGrH* 2D, *Kommentar*, 594, speaks of a ‘Fortsetzung’, and in 2B, *Text*, 889, he numbers the books of the two works continuously, as twenty-one volumes in all. According to this hypothesis, the twenty-one volumes covered – clearly in very great detail – the years from c. 280 BC to c. 272/1 BC. However, the possibility of two independent works should not be dismissed too lightly, especially in view of the late date now assigned to the final settlement of the Galatians after the battle of the Elephants (269 BC: M. Wörle, ‘Antiochos I, Achaïos der Ältere und die Galater. Eine neue Inschrift in Denizli’, *Chiron* 5 (1975), 59-87; see also Strobel, *Die Galater*, 257-61, who reconstructs two main conflicts between Antiochos I and the Galatians, a first one c. 278-275, and another one c. 269). If the first historical work closed on this final settlement, then the second historical work would have offered a more detailed discussion of events that happened during the time-span covered by the first work, but in a different geographical area.

Commentary on T1

Diogenes Laertius (either from Laerte in KiliKia, or, as seems more likely, so nicknamed in an allusion to Odysseus’ epithet *διογενὲς Λαερτιάδης*: see D.T. Runia, s.v. ‘Diogenes 17’, *BNP* 4 (Leiden 2004), 452-455), active in the third century AD, wrote ten books of *Lives of Philosophers*. The fifth book is dedicated to Aristotle and his pupils, among which Demetrios of Phaleron. It is at the end of the life of this Demetrios, after having enumerated all his publications, that Diogenes states that ‘there have been twenty persons named Demetrios worth mentioning’; the list, in which our Demetrios is the seventh, includes all sort of personalities, from painters to philosophers to historians to rhetoricians to poets. It is actually a standard feature of Diogenes’ *Lives of Philosophers* to include, at the end of each biography, a list of other famous persons who had the same name. While there is no reason to doubt the essential correctness of the information transmitted by Diogenes, it is very difficult to trace his sources in detail; but clearly for his lists of homonyms he relied on previous collections.

Biographical Essay

Many ancient authors dealt with the clash between the Galatians and the Hellenistic kingdoms, but for us they are, largely, mere names. For an overview, see G. Nachtergaeel, *Les Galates en Grèce et les Sôtéria de Delphes. Recherches d'histoire et d'épigraphie hellénistique* (Brussels 1977), 49-82 and S. Barbantani, *Phatis Nikephoros. Frammenti di elegia encomiastica nell'età delle Guerre Galatiche: Supplementum Hellenisticum 958 e 969* (Milan 2001), 154-5. This is also the case with Demetrios of Byzantion: about his life nothing is known (see the cautious discussion by A. Primo, *La storiografia sui Seleucidi. Da Megastene a Eusebio di Cesarea* (Pisa - Roma 2009), 104-105). He must be distinguished from the homonymous and contemporary Peripatetic, also from Byzantion, author of a *περὶ ποιημάτων* ('On poems'), who is mentioned as third in Diogenes' catalogue of Demetrioι (Jacoby, *FGrH* 2D, *Kommentar*, 593; cf. also Nachtergaeel, *Les Galates*, 51 n. 121). The historian may have lived at the court of the Ptolemies, and can possibly be identified with the Demetrios listed in *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* 3 no. 5082 as son of Apelles, active as priest of Alexander and the Lagids in Alexandria in the years 220/19 and 219/18, and brother of the head-librarian Aristophanes of Byzantion (so J. IJsewijn, *De Sacerdotibus sacerdotisque Alexandri magni et Lagidarum eponymis*, (Brussels 1961), 83; W. Peremans, E. Van't Dack, L. Mooren, and W. Swinnen, *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* 6 (Louvain, 1968), no. 16910, mention this possibility, without taking position on the question). As pointed out by IJsewijn, *De Sacerdotibus*, 83, it would be appropriate for the historian Demetrios to have been the son of a military commander from Byzantion, who left for Egypt at the time of Ptolemy II to make his fortune as a mercenary. On the other hand, G. Zecchini, 'La storiografia lagide', in: H. Verdin, G. Schepens, and E. De Keyser (eds.), *Purposes of History. Studies in Greek Historiography from the Fourth to the Second Centuries BC* (Leuven 1990), 216, terms Demetrios 'an independent historian'. The information we have does not allow any certainties, but Demetrios' interest in the revolt of Cyrene would be easier to explain on the assumption that he moved to Egypt.

No fragments of his have survived, and were it not for Diogenes' list, not even the memory of his two historical works would have remained. As pointed out by Jacoby, *FGrH* 2D *Kommentar*, 594, Demetrios did not compose his historical works in the tradition of the *Hellenika*, but chose to consider the historical events from a local and personal standpoint: Byzantion was directly involved in the crossing of the Galatians to Asia (on the key role played by the city in the negotiations which led to the Galatians' crossing, cf. Strobel, *Die Galater*, 239-44). The local perspective, centred on Byzantium, is also emphasized by C. Carsana, *Le dirigenze cittadine nello stato seleucidico* (Como 1996), 181. If he then moved to Egypt, he may have witnessed at first hand some of the events of the First Syrian war.

Determining Demetrios' influence on later historiography is close to impossible. According to Jacoby, *FGrH* 2D *Kommentar*, 594, later historians, and in particular Trogus, Diodoros and Pausanias, did not use such ample and extremely specialised works. But this is not necessarily true, at least in the cases of Diodoros and Trogus (Nachtergaeel, *Les Galates*, 52); moreover, Demetrios is one of the probable sources of Polybios for the history of Byzantion (F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* 1 (Oxford 1957), 213, 499). At any rate, in the third century AD Diogenes could still cite his name as that of an important historian.

Bibliography

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