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G. B. Bowersock, Greek sophists in the Roman Empire

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Présentation de la fiche

Coteb023_f0806

SourceBoite_023-18-chem | Philosophes. Sophistes.

LangueFrançais

TypeFicheLecture

RelationNumérisation d'un manuscrit original consultable à la BnF, département des Manuscrits, cote NAF 28730

Références éditoriales

Éditeuréquipe FFL (projet ANR *Fiches de lecture de Michel Foucault*) ; projet EMAN (Thalim, CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne nouvelle).

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Notice créée par [équipe FFL](#) Notice créée le 19/03/2021 Dernière modification le 23/04/2021

G. Bowersock

Greek Sophists in Roman Emperors

IX

1 Plutarch
Dion de Prusa

OTHER LITERARY MEN

IN his biographies of the sophists Philostratus found space for men whom he could not truthfully denominate sophists; yet their achievements were such as to warrant inclusion.¹ The rhetorical prowess of Dio of Prusa and Favorinus the Gaul induced Philostratus to write their biographies. From a historical aspect his decision may be justified no less. The careers of those philosophers and their contacts with the Roman government exhibit, as has already emerged, much in common with the careers and contacts of the greater sophists. It was inevitable that it should be so, for the liaison between politics and literature does not recognize all distinctions in literary activity. If the sophists provide the most illuminating careers for the inspection of a Roman historian, these can nevertheless be paralleled in certain aspects by the careers of other contemporary literary men who belonged to the age of the Second Sophistic but stood apart from the movement itself.

With Dio of Prusa Plutarch can profitably be compared. Both men, offspring of good provincial families, went to Rome as students of rhetoric in the early years of the reign of Vespasian; both men were again in the city under Domitian, and there is reason to think that both, who bitterly hated that emperor, returned to the East without his favour.² With their experience of Rome and of Romans, Dio and Plutarch served to instruct the cities of Asia Minor and Greece in the proper conduct of civic affairs within the framework of the Roman

¹ *VS*, p. 484. Cf. pp. 10-11 above.

² On Dio, see the still authoritative account of J. von Arnim, *Leben und Werke des Dio von Prusa* (1898). On Plutarch, see C. P. Jones, *JRS* 56 (1966), 74 and the forthcoming book by Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, which will replace the relevant parts of K. Ziegler's article in *P-W* 21; also R. H. Barrow, *Plutarch and his Times* (1967), p. 38.



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Voltaire 1750

Le philosophe de Ferney