

[Accueil](#)[Revenir à l'accueil](#)[CollectionBoite_023 | Notes de la fin de sa vie pour ses derniers livres.](#)[CollectionBoite_023-18-chem | Philosophes. Sophistes. Item](#)[\[G. B. Bowersock, Greek sophists in the Roman Empire - suite\]](#)

[G. B. Bowersock, Greek sophists in the Roman Empire - suite]

Auteur : Foucault, Michel

Présentation de la fiche

Cote**b023_f0813**

Source**Boite_023-18-chem | Philosophes. Sophistes.**

Langue**Français**

Type**FicheLecture**

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

Références éditoriales

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

Droits

- Image : Avec l'autorisation des ayants droit de Michel Foucault. Tous droits réservés pour la réutilisation des images.
- Notice : équipe FFL ; projet EMAN (Thalim, CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne nouvelle). Licence Creative Commons Attribution - Partage à l'Identique 3.0 (CC BY-SA 3.0 FR).

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

a letter to the emperors in which he recalled his meeting with them two years before, when they were both in the East. The appeal of Aristides survives.¹ It is not excessively long, and it cannot be denied a certain contrived power. The sophist conjured up an affecting picture of Smyrna, the glory of Asia, transformed into a wasteland.² Aristides' appeal was successful, and the emperors had already sent off assistance to Smyrna before the formal embassy even arrived to make its request. Aristides was justifiably proud of what he had done for his city without even leaving Asia; and when, after the accession of Commodus, a rumour reached him that the new emperor was planning another visit to the East, he wrote to urge the desirability of an imperial return to Smyrna to behold the city rising again from the dust. This proposal of Aristides to Commodus constitutes his latest surviving work,³ a fitting indication of the terms on which a senior sophist felt he could approach the ruler of the world.

Other examples of diplomatic activity can be found in the extant materials, although one lacks the engaging details which exist for men like Polemo or Aristides. For instance, it is known that Hadrian much admired Marcus of Byzantium as a result of an appeal for his city on an embassy;⁴ and Alexander the Clay-Plato appeared before Pius on behalf of his native Cilician Seleuceia.⁵ Apollonius of Athens went to Rome to speak before Septimius Severus,⁶ and Heliodorus the sophist made a profound impression upon Caracalla by pleading his case alone when his colleague had fallen ill.⁷

These lesser embassies serve to reinforce the view of sophistic diplomacy already documented by the fuller accounts. The sophists were in a unique position to gain the ear and sympathy of the emperor, and it was in their power thereby to enhance the prestige, beauty, and affluence of their chosen cities. Through their lavish benefactions cities like Smyrna and Ephesus were substantially helped to reach a new level of

¹ Aristid. 19 Keil.

² Ibid., 2: ἀ πῶν πάντα ἐν κόποι. On Aristides' meeting with the emperors in the East, see VS, pp. 582-3.

³ Aristid. 21 Keil. Cf. Behr, op. cit., pp. 113-14, for an argument in favour of a proconsul, not Commodus, as the addressee.

⁴ VS, p. 530.

⁵ VS, p. 570.

⁶ VS, p. 601.

⁷ VS, p. 626.



