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Brill's New Jacoby

Bias (439)

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Diogenes Laertios 1.85

Translation

Subject: **Genre: Poetry; Politics**

Source Date: **3rd century AD**

Historian's Date: **6th century BC**

Historical Period:

ἐποίησε δὲ (scil. Bias) περὶ Ἴωνίας, τίνα
μάλιστα ἂν τρόπον εὐδαιμονοίη, εἰς ἔπη
δισχίλια.

He (**Bias**) wrote a poem of two thousands
verses on **Ionia** and how it would
become prosperous.

Commentary

The attribution of a poem **On Ionica** to **Bias** is in all likelihood linked to his inclusion in the famous group of the Seven Sages. Indeed, most of the legendary Wise Men have been attributed poetical works known only by their title. The writing of poems became a feature of the characters of wise men as political experts through antiquity to the classical period. Therefore, most scholars rightly state that this work is inauthentic: see A. Barnabe, 'Los filosofos presocraticos como autores literarios', *Emerita* 47 (1979), 357-94, especially 363, O. Barkowski, 'Die Sieben Weise', *RE* 53 (1923), col. 2242-64, A. Busine, *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce antique* (Paris 2002), 41-3, J. Bollansée, *Hermippos of Smyrna and his Biographical Writings. A Reappraisal* (Leuven 1999), 27-8. Note that R.P. Martin, 'The Seven Sages as Performers of Wisdom', C. Dougherty and L. Kurke (eds), *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece* (Cambridge 1993), 108-28, especially 118, still suggests that the works attributed to the Sages are to be considered authentic.

Biographical Essay

Bias of Priene appears to have been a leading figure of his city and the whole of **Ionica** during the first half of the sixth century BC. **Herodotus** presents him as a political expert: **Bias** advised the **Ionians** who had assembled on **Panionium** to make their way to **Sardinia** in order to elude the victorious **Persians** and establish a city there when circumstances were favourable (1.170). **Bias** is also said to have led a diplomatic mission in order to resolve the conflict between **Samos** and **Priene** (**Aristotle** F576 Rose). According to **Diogenes Laertios**, he received special honours after his death (1.85, 88). Since the course of the fifth century, he was considered as one of the Seven Sages. As with these others, a large number of legendary anecdotes were attributed to him.

Bibliography

O. Crusius, 'Bias (10)', *RE* 3 (1897)BNP, cols. 383-9

K.-J. Hölkamp, 'Bias', *BNP* 2 (Leiden 2003)BNP, 622-3

P. Von der Mühl, 'Was war Bias von Priene?', *MH 22* (1965)BNP, 178-80

Busine, Aude (Bruxelles)

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