

Abstract for 13th Confèrence of the FIEC 2009.

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Preferred panel: “Continuity and Change in Late Antiquity”

Title of the paper: “Greek hero cults devoted to ancient philosophers before the rise of pagan holy men: the evidence from Diogenes Laertius”

Length: 20 minutes

Outline of the content:

We have some evidence of Greek hero cults devoted to ancient philosophers in Classical and Hellenistic times, studied by L.R. FARNELL, *Greek hero cults and ideas of immortality*, Oxford 1921, P. BOYANCÉ, *Le culte des Muses chez les philosophes grecs*, Paris 1972, and, more recently by D. CLAY for Epicurus (“The cults of Epicurus”, *Cronache Ercolanesi* 16, 1986, pp. 12-28). However, it is possible to find further evidence by reading Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of the eminent philosophers*. It is very interesting to observe that many ancient philosophers received some kind of hero cult, although most of them are vilified in their biographies, especially in the moment of dying. Moreover, this cult is defined rather as an apotheosis than as the typical hero cult that Greeks usually devoted to their historical or semi-historical citizens, like poets or cultural founders.

This paper collects and discusses all the data on heroisation or divinisation of ancient Greek philosophers in Diogenes Laertius, in order to define and classify how this process functioned, at least in the most extended mentality that the biographical genre allows to study. It will also let us see the continuities and changes that the concept of philosopher as divine has experimented during the IVth century and thus the rise of the so-called pagan holy men.