

Zeitschrift:	Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica
Herausgeber:	Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft
Band:	56 (1999)
Heft:	2
Artikel:	Fact and fiction, falsehood and truth : D. Fehling and ancient legendry about the seven sages
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DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-43645

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MUSEUM HELVETICUM

Vol. 56 1999 Fasc. 2

Fact and Fiction, Falsehood and Truth

D. Fehling and Ancient Legendry about the Seven Sages

By Jan Bollansée, Leuven

The analysis of Herodotus' source citations which D. Fehling first presented in 1971 and more recently has advocated again in the revised translation into English of the original study¹, has been under heavy fire from modern scholarship. According to the German scholar Herodotus did not write history, but constructed an entertaining narrative based loosely on historical facts: the merest historical detail available to him was enough to trigger his imagination and to make him spin a tale from it. In order to enhance the credibility of the resulting, often wonderful and fantastic stories, yet at the same time to disclaim responsibility for them as well, Herodotus would have invented all sources he refers to. In fact he is said never to have gone anywhere, not even visiting the places he claims to describe firsthand. Now it cannot be denied that Herodotus' method of source-acknowledgement has its peculiarities and lacks consistency², but still Fehling's extreme position is simply untenable. As it is, reviewers (mainly of the English re-edition)³ have been quick to note that he has arrived at his conclusion on the basis of some startling assumptions (he dismisses, for instance, the idea of oral tradition and reduces folk-motifs to strictly literary *topoi*) and, on a more general level, by failing to judge the *pater historiae* as a member of the intellectual milieu of his own time, instead requiring him to meet today's standards of historical research.

All this goes to show that Fehling was no innocent newcomer when, in 1985, he propounded his maverick opinion on ancient legendry about the Seven Sages in the first two chapters of a monograph which furthermore tackled the

1 See D. Fehling, *Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot. Studien zur Erzählkunst Herodots* (Berlin/New York 1971); Id., *Herodotus and his 'Sources'. Citation, Invention and Narrative Art*. Translated by J. G. Howie (translated and updated, Leeds 1989).

2 As R. L. Fowler, "Herodotus and his Contemporaries", *JHS* 116 (1996) 62–87, esp. 82, put it, "there does appear to have been a considerable manipulation of the facts between their discovery and their presentation"; cf. also H. Bowden, rec. "D. Fehling, Herodotus and his 'Sources': citation, invention and narrative art; J. Gould, Herodotus; D. Lateiner, The historical method of Herodotus", *JHS* 112 (1992) 182–184, esp. 183.

3 The list is long; most recently, see e.g. H. Bowden, *loc. cit.* (n. 2); R. L. Fowler, *loc. cit.* (n. 2) 80–86; G. Shrimpton/K. M. Gillis, "Appendix 1. Herodotus' Source Citations", in: G. S. Shrimpton, *History and Memory in Ancient Greece* (Montreal/Kingston/London/Buffalo 1997) 229–265.

subject of the relationship between the Sages and early Greek chronology and which built to a great extent on the conclusions reached in the Herodotos-study⁴. In the scholar's view the constitution of the main features of the ancient legends concerning the Seven Sages – their number, their sayings and the tradition about the Prize for Wisdom – can be traced back to just two key figures. Plato, the earliest surviving author from antiquity to mention the *collegium* (*Prot.* 343a), would effectively have been the first to launch the concept of a group of seven wise men and to link their sagacity to the famous maxims of Delphic wisdom. Kallimachos supposedly was the first to modify Plato's list of seven names, thus establishing what in later times became the most common composition of the group (an issue which was subject to much variation in the fourth and third centuries B.C.), and he is also held to have been the source of the legend of the 'Αγών σοφίας (F 191,32–77 Pfeiffer I).

These conclusions are the result of a professedly painstaking and unprejudiced, yet ultimately excessively conjectural and sceptical and, consequently, erroneous and misleading analysis of all available ancient evidence in regard to the *collegium* and the *Agon*. Not least because so far only one proper review of Fehling's 1985 study in its entirety has seen the light of day (and one which is surprisingly benevolent to the author in regard to the passages that concern us here)⁵, the main shortcomings of Fehling's investigation, which amounts to a questioning of almost all references to fourth- and early third-century writers on the subject, will be laid bare here.

Fehling's position is problematic right from the outset. By adamantly claiming that the *collegium* of the Seven Sages mentioned by Plato was purely an invention of the latter which sprang from a jocular adaptation of data derived from Herodotus, Simonides and Hipponax⁶, he flatly denies the existence of anony-

4 See D. Fehling, *Die sieben Weisen und die frühgriechische Chronologie. Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Studie* (Bern/Frankfurt am Main/New York 1985), and especially p. 9–65 for his controversial survey of ancient traditions regarding the *collegium* of Seven Wise Men. For what it is worth, these pages still represent the most recent comprehensive treatment of the subject.

5 See R. Bichler, rec. "D. Fehling, Die sieben Weisen und die frühgriechische Chronologie", *AA* 42 (1989), col. 187–192.

6 Fehling's wording (*op. cit.* [n. 4] 13), "eine scherhafte Konstruktion"; for the full argument, see D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 13–18. One of the elements which give the joke away, Fehling holds, is the inclusion among the Seven Sages of the obscure Myson and the even rarer ethnic Χηνεύς added to his name: Plato allegedly invented it specially for Myson ("es gab den Ort nämlich nicht"), as would seem to be borne out by the fact that the village is only ever mentioned in connection with Myson and by the uncertainty already of the ancients regarding its exact name and location. True though the first part of this 'explanation' may be (even so, it hardly amounts to a serious argument), at least Pausanias' exact reference (at 10.24.1) to a village located in Oite (that is, the central part of the mountain range due south of the valley of the river Spercheios) corresponding to the ethnic Χηνεύς, would seem to provide sufficient ground for questioning Fehling's doubts in this respect, which are not shared by any other modern scholar (see D. Fehling, *op. cit.* [n. 4] 15 n. 11, for all references).

mous oral traditions and folk tales on the subject, despite the unmistakably folkloristic nature of many features of the ancient stories regarding the Seven. Thus, with a single stroke, he brushes aside the findings of anthropological research in the past few decades, which has shown the oral transmission of information to be a quintessential element of (the early phases of) any human culture⁷.

In regard to the literary side of ancient tradition on the Seven Sages prior to Plato and in the time of the latter, the German scholar also adopts a highly contestable viewpoint. On the one hand he posits that we know the names of every writer active in the pre-Alexandrian period, both those whose works have been preserved in full and those whom we only know through citations. Accordingly, in Fehling's view, it is futile to construct hypotheses about authors prior to Plato who are also said to have written on the topic, but whose works supposedly have failed to leave even the slightest trace in our sources and whom we can no longer even identify by name; in the same train of thought the only advantage writers from the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. have over us is that they had every piece of writing available to them in full, whereas we have to content ourselves with the fragments of some of them.

On the other hand Fehling is convinced that every source reference given by post-Alexandrian authors to writers active in the fifth and fourth centuries is, by definition, a forgery: either a given quotation is invented, or its alleged author as well. His suspicion results from the fact that the three main sources of ancient tradition on the Seven Sages – Diodoros, Plutarch and Diogenes Laertios – all relate variants on the same themes and nevertheless cite no sources or else completely different ones: when considered in combination with the long-standing notoriety, in certain quarters of modern scholarship, of these three authors as highly unreliable and unthinking personalities, this can, in Fehling's opinion, only be taken to mean that their stories and the accompanying source references are all, without exception, pure inventions with no historical basis, contrived by the respective writers in order to conceal their dependence on their direct sources and to convey an impression of originality⁸.

7 This criticism is not new; it has already been levelled against Fehling in a review of his monograph on Herodotos' source citations: see H. Bowden, *loc. cit.* (n. 2) 183. On the unmistakable traces of oral tradition and folkloristic storytelling in Herodotos' work, see J. Cobet, "Herodot und mündliche Überlieferung", in: J. von Ungern-Sternberg/H. Reinau (ed.), *Vergangenheit in mündlicher Überlieferung* (Stuttgart 1988) 226–233 (I owe this reference to an anonymous referee of *MusHelv*). More generally, K. A. Raflaub, "Athenische Geschichte und mündliche Überlieferung", in: J. von Ungern-Sternberg/H. Reinau (ed.), *ibid.* 197–225, discusses the continued existence, at Athens, of oral tradition besides the burgeoning historiography in the late fifth and early fourth centuries B.C., and the incorporation of oral material in historical and rhetorical compositions of that time. For an ethnological investigation into orality, see, for instance, the study by J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London/Madison, Wi. 1985, rpt. London 1988).

8 As D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 39, sees it, Diodoros (*Bibl.* 9.3; 13.2) was the first to invent variants of Kallimachos' version; Plutarch (*Sol.* 4) drew on Diodoros, added some stories of his own and

Each of the issues touched upon in the previous three paragraphs warrants full treatment, but a few considerations must suffice here. To begin with it is, from a methodological point of view, unquestionably commendable to recognize the great dangers and the large degree of uncertainty involved in invoking anonymous oral storytelling and no longer extant authors in order to reconstruct the obscure origin and development of certain traditions (after all, there is nothing disgraceful about admitting that our knowledge is defective). However, going to the other extreme and dismissing outright the idea that both categories can actually be taken into account as uncertain factors in the process is simply a sterile approach: the sheer number of authors and writings from antiquity which are only known to us through a mere handful of quotations at the most⁹, is enough to dispel any misguided conceptions we might entertain about the limited scope of our knowledge of what the ancients have actually produced in the literary field.

Secondly, Fehling all too eagerly tosses aside the vast majority of references to fourth- and third-century sources, on the basis of hypotheses and assumptions that are no less dubious and gratuitous than the conjectures he claims to be combating in the first place. Already his basic assumption – that Diodoros, Plutarch and Diogenes Laertios alike should have provided the same list of early sources for the various accounts if those sources had really existed – is ill-conceived. It is inappropriate to apply the basic rules of modern historical research (in this case, the conscientious and systematic citing of one's sources) to ancient practice, let alone to draw conclusions regarding the reliability of an ancient author's information from the apparent disregard thereof¹⁰. Besides, if one looks at the varied nature of the works of the three writers and the context in which they bring up the subject, it is clear that one cannot expect them to have dealt with the matter in an equally thorough manner. Undoubtedly Diodoros had not much room for an ample discussion of current legends about the Seven, replete with full source acknowledgements, in his universal history¹¹; similarly Plutarch devoted only one chapter of his biography of Solon to the 'Αγών and the *migratio tripodis*, hence it was not imperative for him to produce a full set of sources¹²; Diogenes Laertios, on the other hand, devoted the entire first book of

invented a reference to Theophrastos; Diogenes (1.27–33) went totally out of his way by thinking up a whole batch of authors as well as new stories in order to conceal his dependence on both Diodoros and Plutarch.

9 A quick glance through the sixteen volumes of F. Jacoby's *FGrHist* is already highly instructive in this respect.

10 Similar criticism of Fehling can be found, for instance, in the reviews of the monograph on Herodotos by H. Bowden, *loc. cit.* (n. 2) 183, and R. L. Fowler, *loc. cit.* (n. 2) 82–83.

11 Admittedly, we must be aware of the fact that Diodoros' book 9 has not been preserved in full, but is known only through the Byzantine *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis*. Having said that, the suggestion that Diodoros sat down to invent stories on his own in order to flesh out his universal history and to cloak his lack of originality, is hardly convincing.

12 He only mentions one, Theophrastos (Plut. *Sol.* 4.7 = T 583 Fortenbaugh et al.). *Pace* D. Feh-

his work to the lives of Greek wise men, and he explicitly announces on two occasions that he will give general notices of the Seven Sages and of the stories about the Prize for Wisdom¹³. Therefore it is perfectly understandable that Diodoros did not mention his sources by name, that Plutarch named only one and that Diogenes Laertios mentioned a veritable plethora of earlier writers.

Thirdly, it is gratuitous to affirm that Diodoros (the earliest of the three to quote authorities) regarded Kallimachos' account of the Sages' contest as the authoritative one and therefore went to great lengths to contrive several variants himself, while in the extant text – the admittedly fragmentary remains of book 9 – there is not so much as the slightest trace of the great poet: to make use of Diodoros-excerptors to solve this awkward incommode¹⁴ is just too opportunistic. Actually the surviving evidence from antiquity seems to confirm Plutarch's indication that Kallimachos' version did not belong to the commonly accepted canon¹⁵: it is known to us only through the fortuitous find of P. Oxy. 1011 and a quotation by the very Diogenes Laertios (1.28–29) who, somewhat contradictorily, has been stigmatized by none other than Fehling as one of the worst forgers around in antiquity.

ling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 38, this quotation easily stands up to close scrutiny, given the interest generated by the traditions concerning the Seven Sages among the Peripatetics in general. This interest, which Theophrastos undoubtedly shared, is borne out by several fragments attributable to Aristotle or members of his school: cf. Aristotle Περὶ φιλοσοφίας F 3 Rose = F 3 Ross = F 3 Untersteiner = F 28–29 Gigon; Dikaiarchos F 30–32 Wehrli I, possibly from a monograph on the Seven Sages; Demetrios of Phaleron F 114 Wehrli IV, from Τῶν ἐπτὰ σοφῶν ἀποφθέγματα; Klearchos F 69–71 Wehrli III, from Περὶ παροιμῶν; Straton of Lampsakos F 146–147 Wehrli V, from Εὐρημάτων ἔλεγχοι. We know furthermore that Theophrastos wrote a work Περὶ τῶν σοφῶν, only the title of which survives (cf. Diog. Laert. 5.48 = T 727,12 Fortenbaugh et al.). F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles. Texte und Kommentar, IV. Demetrios von Phaleron* (Basel/Stuttgart 1968) 69 was somewhat reluctant to make suggestions about the contents of this work and about the (scope of the) treatment of the Seven Sages in it, but in view of the other fragment mentioned above, and since, moreover, we know that Aristotle's successor discussed the Γνῶθι σαντόν in his treatise Περὶ παροιμῶν (cf. Stob. Ecl. 3.21.12 p. 558–559 Hense I), it would seem that such hesitation is not called for. For recent discussion of the Peripatetics' attention to the Seven Sages, see, in addition to Wehrli's comments on the passages just quoted, Montanari in I. Gallo/F. Montanari/G. Messeri Savorelli/A. Carlini, "Hermippus", in: AA.VV., *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini. Testi e lessico nei papiri di cultura greca e latina*, Parte I: *Autori noti*, vol. 1** (Firenze 1992) 249–267, esp. 260–262 (the latter actually assumes that Theophrastos' Περὶ τῶν σοφῶν did in fact deal with the Seven Sages).

13 Cf. Diog. Laert. 1.40 (Περὶ δὴ τῶν ἐπτὰ – ἄξιον γὰρ ἐνταῦθα καθολικῶς κάκείνων ἐπιμνησθῆναι – λόγοι φέρονται τοιοῦτοι; "This seems the proper place for a general notice of the Seven Sages, of whom we have such accounts as the following") and 1.27–33 (*passim*) respectively; the translation given is that of Hicks.

14 Cf. D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 36 n. 59: "Diodor mag Kallimachos' Version genannt haben (...) das konnten die Excerptoren weglassen."

15 Cf. Plut. Sol. 4.8, where there is a reference to the story as given by Kallimachos (albeit without mention of the latter's name) after a survey of the manifold guises of the version which ὑπὸ πλειόνων τεθρύληται.

These general objections aside, there are several specific considerations which can be adduced to the detriment of the argument of the German scholar. Indeed, if we take a renewed look at the individual cases of early sources – from the 5th to 3th centuries B.C., prior to or contemporary with either Plato or Kallimachos – which Fehling has raised doubts about, it appears that the ancient evidence is anything but the nest of falsifications he makes it out to be. Instead, the German scholar can be shown to have built his theory on shaky or downright dubious grounds, to have jumped to conclusions and to have relegated relevant information to an inconspicuous footnote.

Firstly, Athenaios has reported a version of the *Agon* on the authority of the early Hellenistic poet Phoinix of Kolophon which is closely similar to that of Kallimachos¹⁶. Fehling, however, has been hasty in dismissing this testimony. As it appears to him improbable that both poets, “who were almost contemporaries”, dealt with the same story in the same metre, he assumes forthwith that Phoinix could only have touched upon it summarily, *after* Kallimachos’ fuller version – thereby conveniently forgetting that modern scholarship tends to regard Phoinix as the older of the two poets ...¹⁷.

Secondly, the available information suggests that Demetrios of Phaleron, like many other prominent members of the Peripatos in the second half of the fourth century B.C.¹⁸, took a keen interest in the legends concerning the Seven Sages and wrote a lot about them. As a matter of fact, he is credited with the calculation of the archon year corresponding to the Epoch of the Seven Sages and with a collection of *Apophthegms* of the various members of the revered *collegium* (Τῶν ἑπτὰ σοφῶν ἀποφθέγματα)¹⁹. In Fehling’s study, however, very little remains of this. To begin with, the German scholar asserts that the calculation of the epochal year was actually the work of Aristotle. This, however, is a fallacious assumption based on a number of unfounded and cheap claims²⁰. In addition, no mention whatever is made of the fact that the names of the Seven Sages as contained in Demetrios’ collection of sayings correspond exactly with

16 Cf. Athen. 11.495d (= F 4 p. 234 Powell).

17 See D. L. Clayman, *Callimachus’ Iambi* (Leiden 1980) 68–69; P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford 1972) I, 554; II, 1030–1031 n. 136. However, see the commentary of Pfeiffer I (1965: 161) on Kallimachos F 191, line 1 for a second opinion, similar to that of Fehling, on Phoinix’ debt to the great Alexandrian poet.

18 Cf. *supra* n. 12.

19 Cf. *FGrHist* 228 F 1 and F 114. 149 Wehrli IV and of course the respective commentaries.

20 Cf. D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 98–99. 115–117. He gratuitously states that the Stagirite must have been concerned with the Seven Sages in his *Register of Victors in the Pythian Games*. Likewise, there is no ground for his statement that according to Plato the Seven were officially declared Sages by Delphic priesthood while all were physically present, and further, that this could only have happened after Solon had returned from his many years’ journey undertaken in order to secure the implementation of his legislation. Lastly, he rids himself of a divergence between the archon lists of Aristotle and Demetrios by postulating that the latter made the small change “aus irgendeinem Grund” (*sic!*) – a small intervention which conveniently renders futile “a great amount of fruitless discussions and attempts at harmonization ...”

those featured in Kallimachos' first *Iambus*. Surely this gravely upsets the pivotal position within the tradition of the legends about the Seven Sages which Fehling has so generously created for Kallimachos.

His claim is weakened further when we turn to Diogenes Laertios. Fehling has compiled a list of no less than seven early sources, cited on the Sages' *Agon* in the Laertian's first book, which we do not encounter anywhere else in the ancient evidence and whose names (all but one) look suspiciously like derivations from genuine names and, hence, indicate badly cloaked source-inventions by Diogenes – or so it is alleged by the German scholar. Andron (of Ephesos, quoted at Diog. Laert. 1.30–31, 119) is thus held to be a clear modification of the name Androtron (*sc.* the Attidographer), just as Euanthes of Miletos (Diog. Laert. 1.29) is held to be contrived after Euanthes of Samos (known through Plut. *Sol.* 11.2), Daidachos the Platonist (Diog. Laert. 1.30) after Daimachos of Plataiai (Plut. *Syncr. Sol.-Publ.* 4; *FGrHist* 65), Alexon of Myndos (Diog. Laert. 1.29) after Alexandros of Myndos (*FGrHist* 25), Leandrios of Miletos (Diog. Laert. 1.28) after Maiandrios of Miletos (*FGrHist* 491–492), and Phanodikos (Diog. Laert. 1.31–32) after Phanodemos the Attidographer (*FGrHist* 325). The seventh name on the list, which is without a parallel, is Eleusis (Diog. Laert. 1.29)²¹.

This is not all. Fehling has also indicated a few cases in which not the cited source altogether, but 'merely' a reference to a passage of a well-known author is disposed of as a fictitious creation of the Laertian. Thus, he rids himself for instance of the quotation from Eudoxos of Knidos concerning the Sages' Ἀγών (Diog. Laert. 1.29–30 = *FGrHist* IV A 1, 1006 F 1) on the long-standing assumption that Diogenes simply invented most of his so-called 'information', as would be illustrated in this particular instance by the omission of a precise book-title or -number in the reference²².

Now, what looks like an impressive case against Diogenes' reliability on closer investigation turns out to be an unstable edifice which crumbles at first touch. In regard to the six authors' names supposedly contrived after existing ones, it should firstly be pointed out that no less than five are actually bona fide names in their own right – Alexon, Andron, Euanthes, Leandr(i)os and Phanodikos – which, just like the seventh one (Eleusis), simply cannot be disposed of lightly as derivatives²³; one would also have to inquire what Diogenes' point was in inventing an obscure Euanthes of Miletos after an equally un-

21 See D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 29–31, 32–33, 46.

22 See D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 33.

23 In fact, all five names mentioned above are attested several times in the two volumes of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* that have been published so far: cf. the corresponding entries in P. M. Fraser/E. Matthews (ed.), *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, volume I. *The Aegean Islands, Cyprus, Cyrenaica* (Oxford 1987); M. J. Osborne/S. G. Byrne (ed.), *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, volume II. *Attica* (Oxford 1994).

known Euanthes of Samos²⁴. More seriously, Fehling has deceptively simplified the complex problems of accuracy and transmission which surround several of the obscure authors involved. The most striking and flagrant case in this respect is that of Andron of Ephesos, author of a treatise entitled Τρίποδι²⁵.

According to Fehling²⁶ Andron ὁ Ἐφέσιος or Andron ἐν Τρίποδι (“beides ohne Unterschied gesagt”) is only cited in our sources for the Seven Sages or (Pherekydes and) Pythagoras, just as Androton is mentioned by the second century (A.D.) rhetor P. Aelios Aristeides in connection with the *collegium* and Pythagoras²⁷: this doublet cannot be a coincidence and could only have sprung from the Laertian’s duplicity. In three small steps Fehling’s own beguilement can easily be exposed. Firstly, Androton has absolutely nothing to do with the reference to Pythagoras in the speech of Aristeides²⁸, and to claim that the vicinity of the two names alone could have fired Diogenes’ imagination (*sic* Fehling) is an indefensible option. Secondly, Andron is not just cited in our sources for the two topics mentioned above: there are two more passages where he is mentioned, and they both touch upon an entirely different subject, namely, the origin of the Ionic alphabet and the designation of the Greek letters as ‘Phoenician’²⁹. Fehling knows this, but slurs over it, hiding the facts at the back of a footnote³⁰.

Thirdly, it is simply not true that Andron is known to us only through Diogenes Laertios or later tradition depending on the Laertian. Admittedly this

24 Since the second Euanthes is, moreover, as obscure as the first one and, in fact, only known through a chance reference of Plutarch, it would have been a sign of greater intellectual honesty and consistency on Fehling’s part if he had claimed that *both* bearers of the name were invented by the respective authors who cite them.

25 For a new edition, with English translation and commentary, of the remaining fragments, see number 1005 in the recently published first fascicle of *FGrHist* IV A (Leiden/Boston/Köln 1998), which is devoted to the antecedents of biographical writing proper in the Greek world.

26 See D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 33.

27 For Andron, cf. Diog. Laert. 1.30–31 = *FGrHist* 1005 F 2a (on Andron’s version of the Ἀγῶν σοφίας); 1.119 = *FGrHist* 1005 F 4 (Andron mentioning two bearers of the name Pherekydes of Syros); Porphy. *ap.* Eus. *Praep. ev.* 10.3.4–9 = *FGrHist* 1005 F 3 (on the similarity between the miracle-stories reported by Andron and Theopompos on Pythagoras and Pherekydes respectively); Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.129.4 = *FGrHist* 1005 F 1 (all of the Seven Sages being contemporaries of Thales of Miletos); Schol. Pind. *Isthm.* 2.17 p. 216 Drachmann III = *FGrHist* 1005 F 2b (on Aristodemos of Sparta as one of the Seven Sages, according to Andron). For Androton, cf. Aristeid. *Or.* 3.677 p. 518 Lenz/Behr I,3 = *FGrHist* 324 F 69 (where the Attidographer is listed among a number of Greek writers who called the Seven Sages “sophists”).

28 Indeed, the mention of Pythagoras in the *passus* under discussion bears relation to the Herodotean passage (4.95.2) where the Samian sage is referred to as Ἐλλήνων οὐ τῷ ἀσθενεστάτῳ σοφιστῇ (“the greatest wise man among the Greeks”).

29 Cf. Phot. *Lex. – Suda* Σ 77 s.v. Σαμίων ὁ δῆμός ἐστιν ὡς πολυγράμματος, and Schol. Dion. Thrac. p. 184,20 Hilgard = *FGrHist* 1005 F 5–6.

30 D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 33 n. 55, remarks succinctly: “Nur bei Suidas neuer Inhalt.”

holds for the majority of the remaining fragments³¹, but again the two passages dealing with the Greek alphabet serve to falsify Fehling's thesis: there can be *no* (direct or oblique) relation to the work of Diogenes in them, since the latter nowhere in his work addresses the issues concerned. In addition the connection postulated between Diogenes and the Eusebios-*passus* dealing with the close correspondence binding the reports of miracle-stories about Pythagoras and Pherekydes by Andron and Theopompos respectively³², is, to say the least, tenuous. It requires a considerable stretch of the imagination to appreciate the contention that Eusebios (whose reliance on Diogenes is not even an established fact) would have invented this information on the basis of a *mélange* of Diog. Laert. 1.116–117 (the obvious parallel to the passage of the *Praeparatio evangelica*) and Diog. Laert. 1.119 (where the Laertian indeed cites Andron, but on Pherekydes of Syros, not Pythagoras)³³: Fehling overlooks not only the fact that Eusebios is citing Porphyrios as his source there, but also that Porphyrios, in turn, had referred to early Hellenistic sources³⁴ who, for obvious reasons, could not have consulted the work of Diogenes Laertios. In sum, then, the Andron from Ephesos quoted by the Laertian can be shown to be a historical figure who really did write a treatise under the title of *Tripod* and who, among other things, discussed the Seven Sages and the Ἀγῶν σοφίας in it³⁵.

Likewise Fehling's rejection of the historical existence of Leandr(i)os of Miletos, a local historian quoted by Kallimachos himself as the source for his version of the legendary contest (thus Diog. Laert. 1.28 = *FGrHist* 491–492 F 18), can be proven unfounded. The German scholar reached his conclusion on the strength of the same assumption that prompted him to discredit all of Herodotos' source citations: Kallimachos' *adagium* ἀμάρτυρον οὐδὲν ἀείδω (F 612 Pfeiffer I) was only the outcome of the literary device, employed by the *pater historiae* as well, whereby references to sources served as implicit declarations of obvious inventions³⁶. Fehling, now, was undoubtedly right to stress that the context of the oft-cited Callimachean motto “I sing nothing that is unattested” eludes us. However, this observation hardly provides sufficient ground to support the claim that what “the ever playful” Kallimachos really wanted to convey through that phrase was πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί, especially as mod-

31 It can hardly be doubted that both Clemens of Alexandria and the Pindar-scholiast have derived their information from Diog. Laert. 1.30–31.

32 For the exact reference, cf. *supra* n. 27.

33 Cf. D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 33 n. 55: “Eusebius mit Beziehung zu 1,116 (und 1,119 wird Andron zitiert).”

34 For a discussion of the late third-century (B.C.) sources cited by Porphyry in the excerpt from the Φιλόλογος ἀκρόαστις preserved in Eus. *Praep. ev.* 10.3.1–26 (= Porphyry 407T, 408–410F Smith), see K. Ziegler, art. “Plagiat”, in: *RE* 20,2 (1950) 1956–1997, esp. 1980–1982.

35 See the commentary on *FGrHist* 1005 (IV A 1, esp. p. 132–133) for a tentative characterization of this treatise as an early form of cultural history of the Hellenic people, dating from the first half of the fifth century B.C.

36 Cf. D. Fehling, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 23–24 and n. 28.

ern scholarship, over the past few decades, has become increasingly aware of the essentially derivative nature – so typical of a bookish milieu like the Alexandrian intellectual scene – of a great deal of the literary production at the *Museion* in general³⁷. Seen in this light the many references in the extant fragments of Kallimachos (from his scholarly and poetical works alike) to local historians such as Leandr(i)os cannot simply be dismissed, *pace* Fehling, as manifestos of so many inventions – the more so because their existence is invariably attested by independent sources³⁸.

Given that Diogenes' references to Andron of Ephesos and Leandr(i)os of Miletos can be vindicated, it would appear that all of the otherwise allegedly unidentifiable authors singled out by the German scholar as figments of Diogenes Laertios deserve a rehabilitation, or at least that a fresh investigation into their existence is called for³⁹. All in all these conclusions are supported by, and in turn go a long way toward substantiating the now current scholarly view that Diogenes Laertios did not just invent every other source he cites, but really appears to have adopted the standard ancient practice of heuristics⁴⁰.

37 On this particular feature of Alexandrian literature in the early Hellenistic Period, see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford 1968) 102–103; P. M. Fraser, *op. cit.* (n. 17) I, 777–784; P. Bing, *The Well-Read Muse. Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets* (Göttingen 1988) *passim*; A. Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics* (Princeton 1995) 24–25; G. Schepens/K. Delcroix, “Ancient Paradoxography: Origin, Evolution, Production and Reception”, in: O. Pecere/A. Stramaglia (ed.), *La letteratura di consumo nel mondo greco-latino* (Casino 1996) 375–460, esp. 382–390.

38 Two examples will suffice here: for Leandr(i)os of Miletos, cf. *FGrHist* 491–492 F 10–17. 19; for Xenomedes of Keos, whose local chronicle was quoted in the *Aetia* (III F 75,54–55 Pfeiffer I = *FGrHist* 442 F 1), cf. *FGrHist* 442 F 2–3. For an exhaustive enumeration of the many source references found in the remaining fragments of Kallimachos' paradoxographical treatise, see G. Schepens/K. Delcroix, *loc. cit.* (n. 37) 383. Apart from the observation made above, Fehling can be shown to be inconsequent in applying the principles he has laid down for himself. It is his firm belief that we know every single author active in the pre-Hellenistic period by name, through citations in the works of contemporaries or of Alexandrian scholars (cf. *supra*, p. 67); why, then, is Kallimachos' own acknowledgement of a predecessor, which happens to thwart the interpretation of Fehling, so casually dismissed?

39 As it happens, there are at least two more trustworthy cases on Fehling's list of seven sources: on Alexon of Myndos, see Jacoby's *Nachträge* to his commentary on *FGrHist* 25 in *FGrHist* Ia, p. 548; on Phanodikos of Delos, see Jacoby's comments on *FGrHist* 397 (IIIb, p. 208–209, introduction, and 209–210, on F 4). Similarly Diogenes Laertios' reference to Eudoxos' version of the Sages' *Agon* can plausibly be accepted, not least because this polymath intrinsically qualifies as a writer who could well have dealt with the Seven Sages in one of his known works (most likely the Γῆς περίοδος), without necessarily devoting an entire monograph to the subject: see, e.g. F. Gisinger, *Die Erdbeschreibung des Eudoxos von Knidos* (Leipzig 1921, rpt. Amsterdam 1967) 63; F. Lasserre, *Die Fragmente des Eudoxos von Knidos*. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert (Berlin 1966) 266–267; *FGrHist* IV A 1, 1006 F 1.

40 See J. Mejer, *Diogenes Laertius and his Hellenistic Background* (Wiesbaden 1978) 16–29. On Diogenes' working habits (the excerpting process and the citation of his sources) and on the method of literary composition of ancient scholarly works in general, see also D. E. Hahm, “Diogenes Laertius VII: On the Stoics”, in: W. Haase (ed.), *ANRW* II 36,6 (Berlin/New York 1992) 4076–4182, esp. 4077–4082, with references to older literature.

To close the book on Fehling's discussion it may, last but not least, be pointed out that the upshot of his simple, or even simplistic, reconstruction is intrinsically implausible: a mere handful of fourth and third-century writers survive, who actually wrote, in the wake of Plato, on the Seven Sages, and each and every one was a famous and influential man of letters: Ephoros, Aristotle, Demetrios of Phaleron, Anaximenes of Lampsakos, Dikaiarchos of Messene and Kallimachos. At the end of the day it is hard to conceive that such great authors could have been alone in appreciating Plato's joke, then develop it within a historical framework and ultimately elevate it to the status of a constitutive ingredient of Panhellenic culture.

In conclusion we find that Fehling's analysis of ancient tradition on the Seven Sages does rank injustice to the available evidence, which can be proven to be trustworthy after all, and which actually hints at a reality much more complex than that envisaged by the German scholar. There are, therefore, hardly any grounds for abandoning the commonly-accepted view on the subject, according to which the tales about the *collegium* of Seven Wise Men began circulating as folk stories in the late sixth and fifth centuries and were committed to writing shortly thereafter⁴¹.

41 See, for instance, E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, I.1. *Allgemeine Einleitung. Vorsokratische Philosophie (erste Hälfte)* (Leipzig 1919, rpt. Darmstadt 1963) 158–163; O. Barkowski, art. “Sieben Weise”, in: *RE* 2A, 2 (1923) 2242–2264, esp. 2248; H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums. Eine Geschichte der griechischen Epik, Lyrik und Prosa bis zur Mitte des fünften Jahrhunderts* (München 1962) 274–276; B. Snell, “Zur Geschichte vom Gastmahl der Sieben Weisen”, in: O. Hiltbrunner/H. Kornhardt/F. Tietze (ed.), *Thesaurismata. Festschrift für Ida Kapp zum 70. Geburtstag* (München 1954) 105–111 (= B. Snell, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Göttingen 1966, 115–118); A. Lesky, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* (Bern/München 1971) 187–188; F. Wehrli, “Gnome, Anekdote und Biographie”, in *MusHelv* 30 (1973) 193–208; H. Gärtner, art. “Die Sieben Weisen”, in: *DKP* 5 (1975) 177–178; J. F. Kindstrand, *Anacharsis. The Legend and the Apophthegmata* (Uppsala 1981) 33; most recently, see A. H. Griffiths, art. “Seven Sages”, in: *OCD* (1996) 1397.