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Oribasius and his Epitomes

The 4th Century AD medical writer Oribasius, who was Julian the Apostate's physician, wrote a series of epitomes and autoepitomes, i.e., epitomes written by the author of the original work (texts ed. H. Ræder *CMG* VI.1.1-2.2 1928-33; VI.3 1926). This group of works offers unique insight into why writers wrote epitomes, especially since they can be seen in the context of Oribasius's career.

Early in his career Oribasius wrote an epitome of Galen's works (now lost apart from the preface) and then his major work, the *Collectiones Medicae*, a large epitome in 70 books of all areas of medicine taken from the 'best' medical writers, particularly Galen. Both works are dedicated to Julian the Apostate. Analysis of their prefaces shows that an epitome can be a form of critical exegesis of earlier works. Furthermore the use of chapter headings with source references contributes a limited doxographical element to the *Collectiones Medicae*. What could be taken for a simple collection of extracts is actually a sophisticated and impressive display of its author's knowledge and understanding of his subject and his predecessors' works.

Later in his career, after a period in exile following Julian's death, Oribasius wrote two autoepitomes of his *Collectiones Medicae* that arrange selected material into new accounts of basic, non-surgical medicine. The *Synopsis ad Eustathium* is dedicated to Oribasius's adult son, who also had medical training. The preface clearly identifies the work as an epitome and prominently displays both the work's connection with the *Collectiones Medicae* and the author's link with Julian the Apostate. It thus serves to promote the careers of both Oribasius and his son.

The preface of the *Libri ad Eunapium* does not present the work as an epitome or mention the *Collectiones Medicae*. although the work does take material from the *Collectiones Medicae* in the same manner as the *Synopsis ad Eustathium*. Instead it establishes a competitive relationship directly with earlier accounts and highlights Oribasius's personal expertise. It raises interesting questions about what makes a work an epitome and how epitomes are distinguished from 'original' works.

The *Libri ad Eunapium* is dedicated to Oribasius's friend, the sophist Eunapius, and alludes to his layman's knowledge of medicine. Oribasius himself makes two main appearances in Eunapius's *Vitae Sophistarum*: the laudatory *Life of Oribasius* and the account of how Eunapius's philosophical mentor, Chrysanthius, died from his own doctors' excessive blood-letting - even Oribasius could not revive him. Eunapius's account persistently 'proves' that he and Oribasius were not responsible for Chrysanthius's medical misadventure. It is tempting to read Oribasius's *Libri ad Eunapium* in connection with this incident as Oribasius's reciprocal defense of his own and Eunapius's reputations.