

UNA GENEALOGIA FESTIA IN CINETONE SPARTANO. DATI PER UNA CRONOLOGIA

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ABSTRACT

This article examines a Cretan genealogy present in the work of the Spartan poet Cinaethon (VII-VI B.C.) and reported by Pausanias (VIII 53.5). This genealogy considers Rhadamanthys to be the son of Hephaistos, who was in turn son of Talos, son of Kres the king of the Kouretes and eponym of the Cretans. Using new arguments in support of Ludolf Malten's old proposal of reading Phaistos (eponym of the city of Phaistos) instead of Hephaistos, the article proceeds to the historical analysis of the fragment, evaluating the role of archaic Phaistos in the creation of a genealogy which exalts the name of its eponym as a descendant of the more antique inhabitants of the island, the Kouretes, and father of the «true» Rhadamanthys.

The politico-cultural milieu of the genealogy is identified in the Phaistos of the end of the VIIth century BC, which made itself an autonomous polis and established a cult to an important figure in kouretic and pre-Olympian Cretan mythology, Rhea. From the end of the VIth century BC the establishment, in the area of Phaistos, of the motif of Europe and the labours of Herakles evidently marks the decline of the Kouretic motifs exalted in the genealogy of Cinaethon: Rhadamanthys becomes a son of Europe, Phaistos a son of Herakles.

The construction of the so-called Temple of Rhea in Phaistos (last quarter of the VIIth century BC) and the assertion of the «Olympian» and «Heraklean» motifs (VI-Vth centuries BC) thus also become useful cut-off points for reconsidering the chronology of the poet Cinaethon of Sparta.