

WHERE EUROPA BATHED

The story of Europa being carried to Crete by Zeus in the shape of a bull is often referred to in antiquity (the references are conveniently collected by Lucie de Brauw 1940) But it is not often specified where they went in Crete Lucianus (*Dial Mar* 15) says that it was the Dictaeon cave Mostly, however, Gortyn is thought to be the place of the action

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More specific is Solinus (11 9), who says that she was taken to the river Lenaeus near Gortyn This name has been corrected to Lethaeus, after Strabo (X 478) Another river is mentioned by Antigonus of Carystus (*Mirab* 163 (179)), who does not name the river but mentions it because of a curiosity: Καί περι τοῦ κατὰ τὴν Κρήτην ὕδατιοῦ, οὗ οἱ ὑπερκαθίζοντες, ὅταν ὑετὸς ᾗ, διατελοῦσιν ἄβροχοι, παραδεδῶσθαι δὲ τοῖς Κρησίῳ, ἀπ' ἐκείνου λούσασθαι τὴν Εὐρώπην ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ Διὸς μίξεως 'And about a small water in Crete, where those who sit at its bank, when it rains, do not get wet, there is a tradition among the Cretans that Europa bathed in it after her union with Zeus' (δέ is problematic) The curious fact about the river, without mention of Europa, is also found elsewhere; formerly it was ascribed to Sotion (*Flum* 4), now it is simply called Paradoxographus Florentinus 4 (Giannini 1966, 316) Here it says: ἐν Κρήτῃ ὄχετός ὕδατός ἐστιν, ὃν οἱ διαβαίνοντες ὕοντος τοῦ Διὸς ἄβροχοι διαβαίνουσιν ἐφ' ὅσον ἐν τῷ ὄχετῷ εἰσιν 'In Crete is a channel of water, which those who cross/follow it, can cross/follow without getting wet when it rains as long as they stay in the channel'

The question, of course, arises, which water is meant One might think of a subterranean water or river, but these were well known to the Greeks, so that one would not expect such a curious description of them Also, mostly there is no place to sit or be at the water of underground rivers One might think of a lake in a cave, like lake Melissani in Kefalonia, but I do not know of such a cave in Crete Also, the word ὄχετός does seem to refer to a river rather than to a lake in a cave And if a cave was meant, our source would have said so So we have to look for a water that has a kind of roof over it that protects one from rain I suggest that this refers to the Gorge of Samaria, in the west of Crete, running towards the south coast, west of Sfakia The gorge is 17 km long, 3 to 40 meters wide, and the rocks rise up from 300 to 600 meters; "at some points they are so sheer that there is barely any sunlight" (Bowman 1969, 230) You may also be well protected against rain in such spots

The gorge, now called after the deserted village of Samaria (φαράγγι της Σαμαριάς) was formerly called the Gorge of Ayia Roumeli, after the village at the end near the sea I have not found any mention of this gorge in antiquity Neither Bowman, nor Cameron (1988, 246) give any mention of it, nor did Pashley (1837 II 263ff) or Bursian (1872, 2 545), though all mention what is known from antiquity Nor does De Brauw (1940, 96), Willetts (1962, 167), Faure (1964) or Spanakis (330-334), who is very complete It may well be that the gorge escaped the attention of modern research until very recently, for, while today it is visited by thousands of tourists a year (Cameron 246), in 1969 Bowman wrote that it takes two to four days to make the journey (including the organisation of the logistics) and that "you are not likely to see anyone during the passage except a stray shepherd" So the gorge was relatively unknown (except to the local population) up to very recent times, and the two references cited

about the curious river are not daily reading either. It is therefore not surprising that the connection has not been made earlier. Near the village of Ayia Roumeli, at the southern end of the gorge, there was in antiquity a city of some importance, called Tarrha. The river which flows through the gorge is now called Tarraios, but in antiquity this word is only found as an epithet of Apollo (see below). We may, then, assume that it was called 'Gorge (φάραγξ, βάραθρον?) of Tarrha'.

The gorge is quite impressive; it is the largest in Europe. "It is easy to believe in the gods and goddesses of nature as you pass through such a gorge" (Bowman 232). There are parallels, perhaps, for what happened to Europa in this place. There is the story that Zeus united near Tarrha with Karne, who became the mother of Britomartis. The latter, of course, is a goddess of importance, equated with Diktunna, the Cretan Artemis. Whether this happened near the river is not known. Then, Apollo married Akakallis, who is called a daughter of Minos, at or near Tarrha. Apollo was so much at home here that he was known as Apollo Tarrhaios.

As to the alternative that the union of Zeus and Europa was situated at the Dictaeon cave, one might think that the imposing gorge induced people to transfer the union here (also because of the other weddings near Tarrha), but one might as well think that the Dictaeon cave, being a famous place of worship of Zeus, later attracted the story. The same holds for Gortyn: it was simply a very important city, which at one time may have claimed the story. But such speculations are not very useful.

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