

## Description for the general public

„Noble birth, in the case of a nation or a state, means that its members or inhabitants are sprung from the soil, or of long standing” writes Aristotle in his Rhetoric (1360b) describing the phenomenon and the rules of *eugeneia* – a good origin. In ancient Greece many communities, groups and institutions (especially the *poleis* and the *ethne*) declared to be descendents of specific gods and heroes. The foundation myths and their heroes were very important for the Greeks and they referred to them on various occasions. They were crucial for creating the city's image, for its cult and also for the politics – by myth the Greeks justified alliances as well as aggressions.

The intriguing question of the mythical genealogies of *poleis* and *ethne* was researched intensively. There still lacks, however, an analysis of another group declaring a mythical ancestry – the *gena*. Many aristocratic families claimed to be descendants of gods and heroes, most willingly the Trojan-war heroes. Among them were ruling dynasties, like the spartan Agiads and Euripontids or the messenic Aipitides, whose special provenance was linked to their unique position. But particularly interesting are the „ordinary” aristocratic *gene* – usually very influential, but still „one among many” *polis*'s powers - who instead of identifying with the city's ancestor, cultivated their own, separate genealogical identity. Such an identity certainly brought them some advantages – prestige and maybe some cultic position, but also generated problems – mostly condemned the aristocrat to a perpetual conflict with the *polis*.

The theme of mythical genealogies of the *gene* is very important, as it gives a good base for a better understanding of some big issues of the Greek culture. Most of all we have here an interesting example of the conflict of private and public identity within the Greek *polis*. Thus, we can see the functioning of the *polis* not from its ideal side, but from the perspective of the things that do not fit into its system. Important too will be the question of the private religiosity within the *polis*. Finally the issue of myth and tradition in a man's life and activity will be raised.