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Disentangle religious facts from Lycophron's poetic Daunia

Abstract:

This paper focuses on a particular passage of Lycophron's *Alexandra* and tries to investigate the relationship between the poem and religion with respect to female characterisation in the Greek world. Lycophron refers to a premarital ritual performed in Daunia and mentions women holding a *rhabdos*. This paper aims to understand why Lycophron singles out a staff and the role of this object in relation to the female religious sphere. Taking into account the iconographic repertoire belonging to Daunia and other Southern Italian areas, the paper will explore the possibility of considering a *rhabdos* as an object symbolizing the transition from maidenhood to womanhood rather than material expression of priesthood. At the same time, the paper also aims to show how *Alexandra* is a fundamental text for the investigation of the relationship between Greek literature and religion in the Hellenistic age.