

AENEAS IN THE TROAS AND LATIUM REGIONS

Mythology and Archaeology

“On the Steps of Aeneas: a common cultural heritage between Italy and Turkey” was funded by the European Union in collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

The project, developed by the Aeneas Route Association, in partnership with the Sapienza University of Rome and the Municipality of Edremit (Türkiye), as part of the Common Cultural Heritage between the European Union and Turkey (IPA-II), constitutes one of the many international collaboration activities promoted and coordinated by the Association.

In the belief that culture plays a fundamental role in promoting dialogue and cooperation, it integrates two main objectives: the dialogue between civil society and institutions and the enhancement of a common European culture. The project activities include the creation of an interactive digital platform called ARISTE (Aeneas Route Information System for Tourism and Education) on the theme of the journey of the Trojan hero.

One of the main components of the project was the International Conference held in Edremit (Turkey) on October 26, 2021, “Aeneas in the Troad and Lazio: mythology and archeology”: the proceedings are published in this volume. The summary of the conference results will be also available in an informative form through the ARISTE platform for dissemination to a larger audience and to schools.



The Conference participants at Troy excavation

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“On the Steps of Aeneas: A Common Cultural Heritage
Between Italy and Turkey”

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edited by Sandra Gatti



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“On the Steps of Aeneas: A Common Cultural Heritage Between Italy and Türkiye”

Aeneas in the Troas and Latium Regions: Mythology and Archaeology

Proceedings of the International Symposium
Edremit, 26 October 2021

Project Coordinator: arch. Giovanni Cafiero

Project Assistant: dott.ssa Elisa Falcini

dott.ssa Sandra Ottaviani

Proceedings Editor: dott.ssa Sandra Gatti

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Following the certification of the Aeneas Route as Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, the Aeneas Route Association promoted the project ‘On the Steps of Aeneas: A Common Cultural Heritage Between Italy and Türkiye’, in partnership with Edremit Municipality and Sapienza University of Rome. This project seeks to promote and further develop common cultural heritage activities jointly implemented by Turkish and EU Institutions. The overall objective of this grant scheme is to further improve civil society dialogue through culture, arts and cultural heritage as well as international cooperation for cultural heritage and to promote cultural values and assets in Türkiye.

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INTRODUCTION

Aeneas' journey unfolds from East to West through the Mediterranean Sea. After fleeing from burning Troy destroyed by the Achaeans, Aeneas sails westwards from the shores of Antandros with a small group of companions. The destination, on the shores of Latium, will be reached after long wanderings. There Aeneas will establish the city of Lavinium, where he will be venerated as "Pater". Aeneas' son, Ascanius, will establish the mythical Alba Longa on the Albans Hills and from his lineage will be born Romulus, the legendary founder and first king of Rome according to the myth.

Aeneas' route unfolds across the Mediterranean Sea, an interconnected and unified sea since ancient times, crossed by countless routes of peoples and small groups of individuals, driven to travel for the most different reasons, like wars or trade, famine or conquest, and even in search for a new future. The myth of Aeneas - like the legends of *nostoi* of the Homeric heroes - is thus the echo of a very ancient Mediterranean characterised by lively mobility, profound settlement changes, the rapid evolution of social systems, and the contact, and sometimes the clash, between different groups and cultures, in a framework really very distant from the stability that will establish itself with the Roman Empire.

Aeneas, whose destiny is also marked by sacrifice and sorrow, is nevertheless also the symbol of the encounter between different worlds and of hope in the future.

The mythical voyage of Aeneas was fully recounted in Virgil's Aeneid poem; the myth, however, has deep and ancient roots and is developed, with many variations, in sagas and literary tradition from the Homeric poems onwards, throughout antiquity. But if in Homer's Iliad, Aeneas is a warrior destined, yes, to save himself, but to perpetuate the lineage of Dardanus and to reign over the Trojans (Iliad, XX, 302-308), in the Virgilian poem the *myth* of Aeneas becomes *mythology*, a 'tale of myth' (Hegel's "secondary epos"); it becomes a symbolic heritage that the poet uses to

express his own vision of the world and history: a long journey through time that from the Trojan War ends in the age of Augustus, the apex of Rome's greatness, as is evident in Book VI of the Aeneid.

The Trojans' journey to a new homeland is therefore a route arisen from myth and developed by history and literature, ancient and modern, but it is also a real itinerary, that winds its way in archaeological sites of extreme interest and great importance, places of great environmental and scenic value, all linked by the common thread of the Aeneas' route. From 2021 it is also a Cultural Route, certified by the Council of Europe, because it tells through archaeology, nature and literature a compelling story in which we can all recognise ourselves.

The rich mythical and historical heritage of Aeneas's route, which has deeply pervaded the whole of European culture, is now also concretely reflected in some of the archaeological sites touched by the itinerary, where signs - buildings, cults, inscriptions, artefacts - of the memory of his legendary passage can be found. In this context, the two regions that constitute the starting and finishing areas of the tale, the Troad in Turkey and Latium in Italy, have taken on particular importance in recent years. Here archaeological research has made it possible to acquire important data that sheds new light on the presence of the legend in ancient culture, traditions and religiosity.

The conference held in Edremit on 26 October 2021, promoted by the Aeneas Route Association as part of the activities of the 'On the Steps of Aeneas' project, brought together scholars dealing with the myth of Aeneas from a literary and philological perspective, as well as archaeologists specialising in the places in the Troad and Latium connected with the mythical journey.

In this context Troy is a major protagonist. The myths and epic tales of Troy, destroyed by the Greeks after a long siege more than three thousand years ago, the exploits of Achilles and Hector, the overwhelming passions, the death of young heroes have always left a deep mark on our memory and imagination. But Troy was not only myth, it was also reality. It was not just one city, but ten cities, overlapping one on top of the other on the same strategic site, the hill of Hissarlik in the Çanakkale region, a short distance from the sea and overlooking the Dardanelles strait: an uninterrupted settlement sequence over more than 3,000 years, that had relations with the Hittites as early as 1600 BC and that documents the relations

between Anatolia, the Aegean, and the Balkans, a point where at least three cultures met.

The Trojans' sea voyage begins at Antandros, one year after the fall of. On the beach of Antandros Aeneas built the fleet of twenty ships, using the wood of Mount Ida sacred to the Great Mother, the goddess Cybele. Of the ancient city, in addition to the necropolis, we know the walls and an extraordinary late-ancient villa overlooking the sea, but much is still to be discovered. Nevertheless, it is intense the suggestion of the place, dominating the gulf nestled in the woods of Mount Ida.

The end point of the mythical journey is Latium. Even the ancient city of Lavinium, according to legend founded by Aeneas, has only been partially investigated and certainly much remains to be discovered. However, the extraordinary results of the decades-long excavation campaigns of the Sapienza University of Rome, the sanctuary of 13 altars (VI-IV century B.C.), the huge tumulus which was probably the heroon of Aeneas – the symbolic burial site of the divinized Trojan hero - and the extraordinary archaeological finds today exposed in the Municipal Archaeological Museum, represent the most important elements that give substance to the myth linked to the foundation of the city by the Trojan hero. The myth itself contributed to make Lavinium the origin place of Roman people when the tradition of the direct lineage of Romulus, the founder of Rome, with Aeneas became widespread.

But other archaeological research, including in particular that carried out in Ardea, just south of Lavinium, makes it possible to reconstruct on this stretch of the Latium coast a 'Trojan topography', located on nodal and strategic landings already frequented by the Mycenaean, which involves ancestral cults of the most ancient Latium and of which traces remain for a long time in the legends of the origins of some important Latin centres. And then Rome, for which Aeneas represents the first origin, the progenitor of a people with a grandiose history of civilisation and conquest, foretold by Anchises to his son in the Underworld (in Book VI of the Aeneid). The inexhaustible soil of the heart of the city of Rome (the Palatine Hill, the Capitoline Hill and the Caelian Hill), has in recent years yielded exceptional new evidence from the protohistoric period (late Bronze Age and early Iron Age), relating both to dwellings and defensive structures as well as buildings and installations of a sacred nature, which shed new light on the earliest and most ancient settlement of Rome, and which seem to give

archaeological consistency to the myth of a founder, the one that tradition identified with Romulus, heir to the Trojan progeny of Aeneas. Augustus also intervened directly to emphasise the lineage of his own person and of the Julian family through the power of images and with monumental building works, particularly in the area of the Circus Flaminius and in the Campus Martius in Rome. Aeneas was drawn not only on the Ara Pacis, but also portrayed in a statue in the Forum of Augustus, in the gallery of the ancestors. And in Rome, according to the testimony of the historian Procopius (*Goth.* IV, 22), writing in the mid-6th century AD, 'the ship of Aeneas' was still preserved and exhibited.

These and many other topics were addressed during the conference, which represented an important opportunity for in-depth study and scientific comparison. There are still many questions and many issues that remain open and will require further study: but we believe that with the conference a common research path has been started, in the wake of a fruitful international collaboration, which will certainly be able to offer valuable results for an ever broader knowledge of the Aeneas route.*

Sandra Gatti

**For the organisation of the conference and the realisation of this volume, the usual efficient and generous collaboration of Elisa Falcini was invaluable. I would like to thank her for her professionalism and also in particular for her linguistic mediation, which facilitated relations and communication between Turkish and Italian scholars. My thanks also go to Daniele Fortuna for his kind support and availability. Finally, I would like to thank Daniela Caretti, who did an excellent job on the graphics for this volume.*