

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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“Grant Scheme for Common Cultural Heritage:
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(TR2016/DG/03/A2-03-EuropeAid/167523/ID/ACT/TR)
“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

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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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Sandra Gatti

THE PLACES OF AENEAS IN LAZIO BETWEEN MYTH AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Abstract

The myth of Aeneas is confirmed in Lazio both by the ancient literary tradition and by the archaeological documentation, but these two sources of information do not always seem to agree. Apart from Lavinium and Rome, according to the stories, one of them was founded by Aeneas and the other one by the descendants of his lineage, the existence of the Trojan myth is also confirmed in other places in present-day Lazio, both in Etruria, in particular in Veii, where there is no lack of evidence of a veneration of the Trojan hero, and in the ancient Latium Vetus inhabited by the Latins. Here, especially in Ardea, archaeological research has brought to light an extraordinary sacred complex in which the deified cult of Aeneas was probably also present. The contribution offers a synthesis of knowledge on this complex aspect.

Keywords: Lavinium, Ardea, Lanuvium, Veii, Latium, Aeneas.

In ancient times, many different traditions of the legend of Aeneas overlap, handed down by Greek authors (such as Hellanicus of Lesbos, Damastes of Sigeum, Timaeus of Tauromenion) and Latins authors (Fabius Pictor, Cato, Varro, etc.), from which mostly vague echoes have reached us¹: “there are

¹ Among the immense bibliography on the myth of Aeneas in Italy, we point out only some of the main studies: GALINSKY 1969, 43-143; ZEVI 1981; CASTAGNOLI 1982; POU CET 1989; ZEVI 1989; GRUEN 1992, 6-51; ERSKINE 2001, 131-156; NELIS 2001; GRANDAZZI 2008; BETTINI, LENTANO 2013, in part. 132-189; LENTANO 2020; especially for Lazio AMPOLO 1992; for a summary of the various mythographic fields connected with the cities of ancient Lazio see PALOMBI 2010 e PALOMBI 2018, with previous bibl. On the traditions of the myth of Aeneas prior to Virgil, compare MICCO 2016; lastly, on the relevance of the figure of Aeneas, CORDANO 2021.

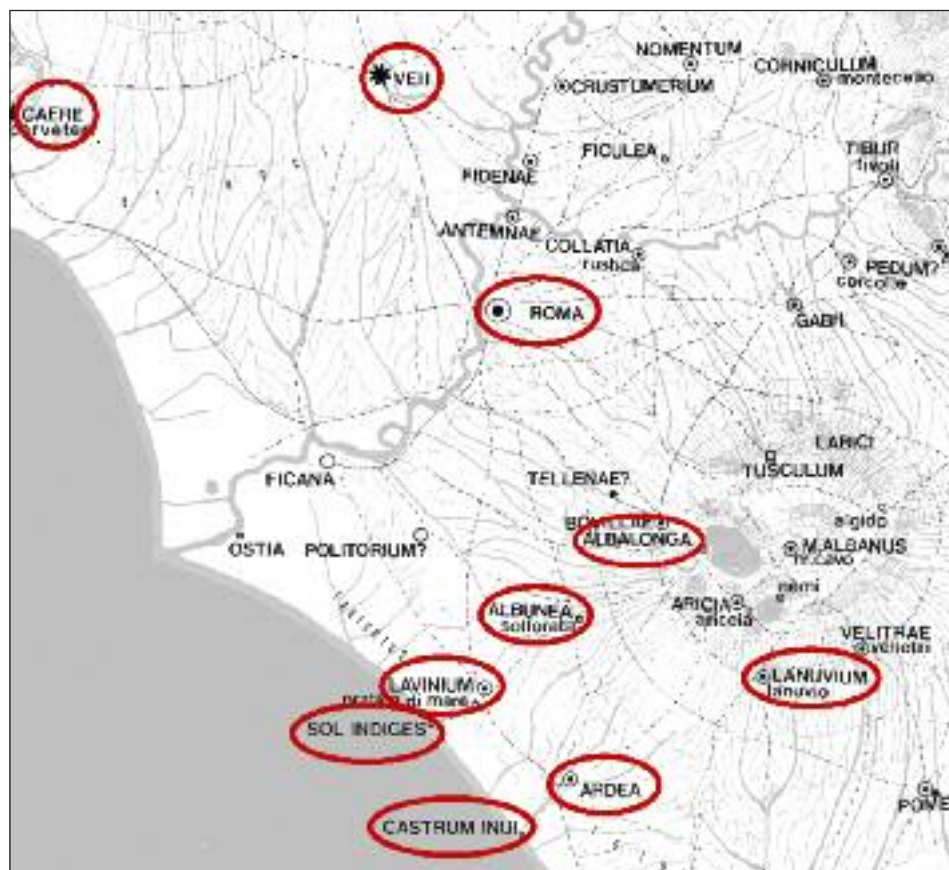


Fig. 1 – Map of Lazio with the places mentioned in the text (drawing from Quilici 1975, re-elaborated)

many journeys of Aeneas”, in the words of Mario Lentano². Only two narratives are complete: that of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, very articulated, and that of Virgil, which do not always comply, evidently because they are derived from different sources, or, in Virgil’s case, because it is the result of a free poetic reworking. The different versions also concern the story of the arrival of Aeneas with his companions in Latium (fig. 1).

In the tale of Dionysius³ the Trojans arrive on the coast in the Laurentian territory, in a place called Troy, where Aeneas makes a sacrifice to

² LENTANO 2020, 105 and, more generally on this aspect, 86-121; furthermore CASALI 2010.

³ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.*, I, 64. On the story of Dionysius of Halicarnassus compare VANOTTI 1995.

Sol Indiges. Here, the wonders that the oracles consulted had indicated during their journeys as a sign of the achieved goal occur. First to quench their thirst, springs suddenly pour out (near which the Greek historian remembers two altars, one oriented to the east and the other to the west, which he defines as “Trojan structures”); then, very hungry, Aeneas and his companions even eat the “*mensae*”, the tables (flat bread) on which they had arranged the food; finally the pregnant sow they are about to sacrifice to the gods in a ritual sacrifice of thanksgiving manages to escape.

Aeneas, with some of his own, chases her because he understands that the animal is the one indicated by the prophecy, the one that would show him the place where to establish his new city. After a run of 24 stadiums (about 4,400 meters) towards the interior, the sow stops to give birth to thirty pigs: a divine voice suggests to Aeneas that this is the destined place, the end of his journey, and that after as many years as the number of new puppies, a second city, even bigger and more prosperous (the future Alba Longa), will be founded by his lineage. Aeneas then sacrifices the sow and the little ones and starts the construction of the city to which he will give the name of Lavinium: the walls, buildings and temples. The sacred building in which the Penates (the homeland gods brought from Troy) are deposited is described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the highest place of the city and in the appearance of a hut (*kaliàs*): therefore, probably a round building located on the acropolis. Those lands are inhabited by the Aboriginal people: their king, Latinus, is alarmed upon their arrival, but in a dream a god appears to him inviting him to welcome foreigners. Trojans and Aborigines thus stipulate a pact of mutual respect and alliance, and together they fight against the Rutuli of the nearby city of Ardea, led by their king Turnus. Latinus gives his daughter Lavinia in marriage to Aeneas, from which the name of the new city will derive. The two populations unite customs, laws and rites, and call themselves with the common name of Latins. On the death of Latinus, Aeneas becomes the king and must again face the Rutuli, who were allied with the Etruscans whose king is Mezentius. Aeneas disappears during the battle, and since his body is no longer found, he is believed to have been taken among the gods, or perished in the Numicus river, and the Latins erected a monument in honor of him.

To the detriment of geographic coherence, Virgil, on the other hand, brings Aeneas to the mouth of the Tiber⁴ to introduce a variant to the myth functional to highlight the link between Aeneas, Lavinium and Rome: in the tale of the Aeneid, Rome does not exist yet, but it is prefigured by the village of the mythical Arcadian king Evander, located on the Palatine Hill, whose name derives from Pallantium, a city of Arcadia. Once off the ships, the tired and hungry Trojans even eat bread used as tables of food and Aeneas then realizes that their journey is at the end, because the prophecy of the Harpy Celaeno has come true, according to which they would arrive in the land destined for them by the Fate, just when they would eat the tables. From the mouth of the Tiber Aeneas sends an embassy to the Latin king in the Laurentian territory⁵, who offers hospitality to foreigners, accepts their gifts and promises his daughter Lavinia in marriage to Aeneas. In the Virgilian poem the foundation of Lavinium, mentioned by many other sources, is announced several times, but it remains a future event, which will follow the end of the war against the Rutuli and the death of Turnus, the episode with which the Aeneid ends⁶.

The site of the city of Lavinium, identified since the sixteenth century, starting from the 1950s has been the subject of a dense archaeological exploration that has brought to light various sectors of the urban area, necropolis, sanctuaries and monuments, some of which gave substance to the myth of its foundation by the Trojan hero, including, above all, the archaeological area with the sanctuary of the Thirteen Altars (VI-III century BC); the large tumulus in which the heroon of Aeneas was recognized - the symbolic tomb (cenotaph) of the Trojan hero; the sanctuary of Minerva, the Minerva Tritonia remembered by Virgil, which led to the discovery of hundreds of terracotta statues of offerings⁷.

⁴ On the literary aspect of the landing at the mouth of the Tiber, see DEL VIGO 2021.

⁵ No ancient author provides information on the location of the city of the Latin king: Titus Livius (I, 1) speaks of the Laurentinum territory (*in agrum Laurentinum*), while Virgil indicates it as *urbs Laurens*: as suggested by Ferdinando Castagnoli (*Enea nel Lazio* 1981, 157) the city of Latin "is an imaginary city, without a name, introduced for narrative reasons".

⁶ Vergilius, *Aen.*, I, 1-7; I, 258-260; II, 293-295; XI, 130-131; XII, 193-194.

⁷ There is a vast bibliography on Lavinium: for a summary, see here the contribution of Alessandro Jaia in this volume.

The place where Aeneas landed on the Laurentian coast is described in some elements by the Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus (I, 55, 1-2):

“For while their flee lay at anchor off Laurentum and they had set their tents near the shore, in the first place, when the men were oppressed with thirst and there was no water in the place (what I say I had from the inhabitants), springs of the sweetest water were seen rising out of the earth spontaneously, of which all the army drank and the place was flooded as the stream ran down to the sea from the springs. Today, however, the springs are no longer so full as to overflow, but there is a little water collected in a hollow place and the inhabitants say it is sacred to the Sun; and near it two altars are pointed out, one facing to the east, the other to the west, both of them Trojan structures, upon which, the story goes, Aeneas offered up his first sacrifice to the god as a thank-offering for the water”⁸.

This place where the Trojans make the sacrifice to the god Sol Indiges, has been unanimously recognized in a place, located on the ancient coast line, near the mouth of the Numico torrent, in the port area of Lavinium, where the excavations of the last years carried out by Sapienza University of Rome led to the discovery of a temple dating back to the end of the sixth century BC, which in the third century BC was enclosed within a large fortified enclosure, becoming a military stronghold in the defence of the coast⁹.

But in recent years, after the important findings near Ardea, about 10 km south of Lavinium, a different topographical reconstruction has been hypothesized, which has opened up new scenarios on the spread of the cult of Aeneas and on the places of myth in Lazio.

Ardea¹⁰ was the most important city of the Rutuli people, who, in the story of the Aeneid, fight a bloody war against the Trojans of Aeneas who arrived in Latium, since their king Turnus was the promised husband of Lavinia

⁸ Translation by Earnest Cary, 1937.

⁹ JAIA 2009a; JAIA 2009b; JAIA 2017b, 268-270; see also the contribution of the same author in this volume.

¹⁰ From the extensive bibliography on the city, only the main works or the most recent works are pointed out: TORTORICI, MORSELLI 1981; MORSELLI 1982; ARDEA 1983; BOURDIN 2005; MANCA DI MORES 2017; MARRONI 2017.

and the heir to the throne of the Latins. The city, thanks to its strategic position on the Latium coast and its port, had to play a leading role in the trade of mid-Tyrrhenian Italy since the archaic period¹¹ and probably precisely this determined the foundation in Ardea, by Rome, of a colony of Latin law as early as 442 BC, in order to romanize the territory and acquire control of the maritime traffic of which the city was the fulcrum¹².

To Ardea is attributed a very ancient origin, as according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus¹³ it was founded by Ardeias, son of Ulysses and Circe, while a particularly important role is also assigned to it in the narratives connected with the myth of Aeneas and with the origins of Rome¹⁴. In fact, it is at the same time the city of the Rutuli, whose king, Turnus, is the antagonist of Aeneas; but it is a “Trojan”¹⁵ city also because, according to some ancient authors, in Ardea there was a sanctuary of Aphrodite, the divine mother of Aeneas¹⁶.

About Ardea’s connection with the Aeneas saga, there are now new archaeological clues.

Just outside the city, along the ancient coast line, at the mouth of the Fosso dell’Incastro, the excavation campaigns promoted by the Territorial Superintendency of the Ministry of Culture have led to the discovery of an archaeological site of extraordinary interest, where *Castrum Inui* was recognized¹⁷, the town remembered by many ancient authors, including Vir-

¹¹ As attested by the Greek historian Polybius (III, 22), Ardea is in fact mentioned in the text of the first treaty between Rome and Carthage, dating back to 509 BC, in which the respective areas of maritime dominion of the two cities in the Tyrrhenian Sea were established.

¹² MARRONI 2017, 128; ZEVİ 1995, 139.

¹³ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* I, 72

¹⁴ See *Enea nel Lazio* 1981, 11.

¹⁵ Ov., *Met.*, XIV, 571-580, links the origin of the name of the city to the Trojan saga.

¹⁶ Plin., *Nat. Hist.*, III, 5, 56, remembers on the Latium coast only the sanctuary of Aphrodite of Ardea; Strabo, *Geogr.*, V, 3, 5, on the other hand, mentions in the same passage two Aphrodisia of the Latins, one near Ardea, later destroyed by Samnites, and another at Lavinium, under the care of the Ardeates. On this topic, compare COLONNA 1995; TORELLI 2011, 231-234; ZEVİ 1989, 254-256, with previous bibliography; MARRONI 2017, 130. DI MARIO 2007, 101-112, recognizes the Aphrodisium in the sanctuary of *Castrum Inui*.

¹⁷ About *Castrum Inui*: DI MARIO 2007; DI MARIO 2009; DI MARIO 2012; DI MARIO 2016a; DI MARIO 2016b; TORELLI 2011; TORELLI 2012; TORELLI 2016a; TORELLI, MARRONI (eds.) 2018; DI MARIO, RONCHI 2018.

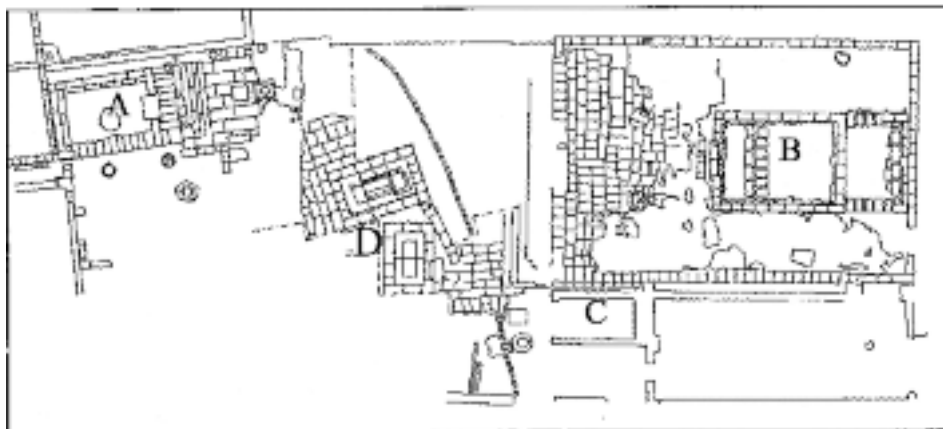


Fig. 2 - Sacred area of Castrum Inui. A) republican temple; B) late archaic temple; C) sacellum of Aesculapius; D) altars (drawing from Di Mario 2012, re-elaborated)

gil himself: it is in fact mentioned in the *Aeneid* by Anchises, whom Aeneas meets in Hades, in the long prophecy on the future glories of the Trojan lineage¹⁸. The vast area (fig. 2) includes two distinct sectors in terms of chronology and functions: a landing port dating back to the 1st century BC and III century AD and an important place of worship, whose life lasts from the mid-6th to the 1st century BC. Inside the latter, surrounded by a quadrangular fortification typical of a *castrum*, various sacred buildings and altars enclosed in a mighty enclosure (*temenos*) have been brought to light. Temple B (fig. 3), the most impressive temple, is dated to 480-470 BC and it was dedicated to *Inuus*, a mysterious and ancestral local divinity of the Rutuli in the archaic age¹⁹. Inside it, excavations have highlighted the presence of an older, smaller temple dating from 540-530 BC (fig. 4). Next to the podium of the temple there is a cistern, obliterated in the second century BC from the construction of building C. In addition, on the north side of the stairway of the temple, a well was discovered, dating back to the first phase of the building, from which a rather small source flows²⁰.

¹⁸ Verg., *Aen.*, VI, 775: Anchises illustrates to his son the glorious future of his descendants, who will be protagonists of great enterprises and of the construction of many cities of Latium; among these - besides Rome - he also names *Castrum Inui*.

¹⁹ The ancient name of the place would derive from the name of this ancient divinity (*Castrum Inui* = fortified camp of Inuus). For bibliographic references, see note 12.

²⁰ DI MARIO 2016a.

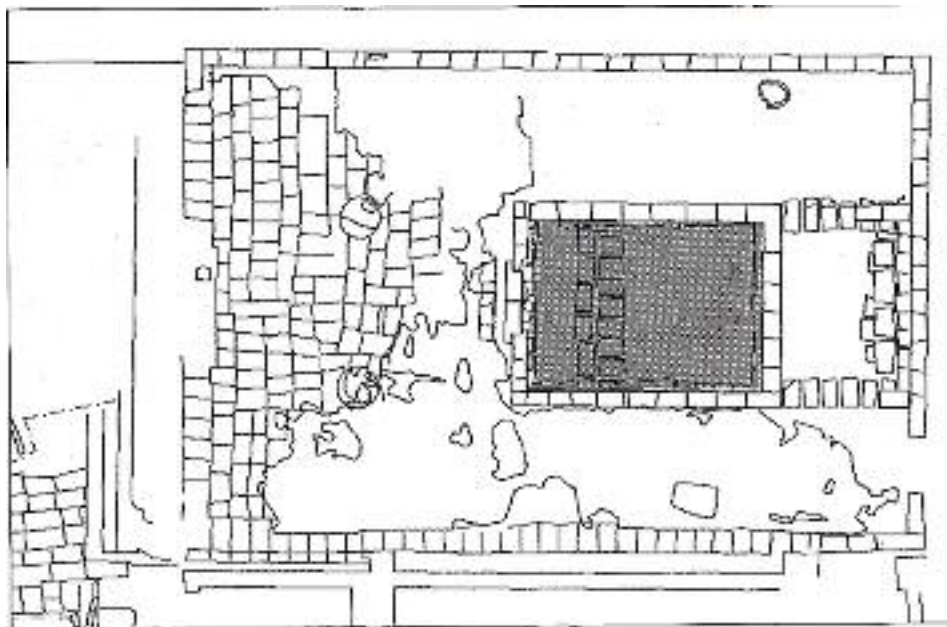


Fig. 3 – Castrum Inui, plan of temple B. In dark grey the archaic oikos (from Di Mario 2012)



Fig. 4 – Castrum Inui. The podium of Temple B (Author photo)

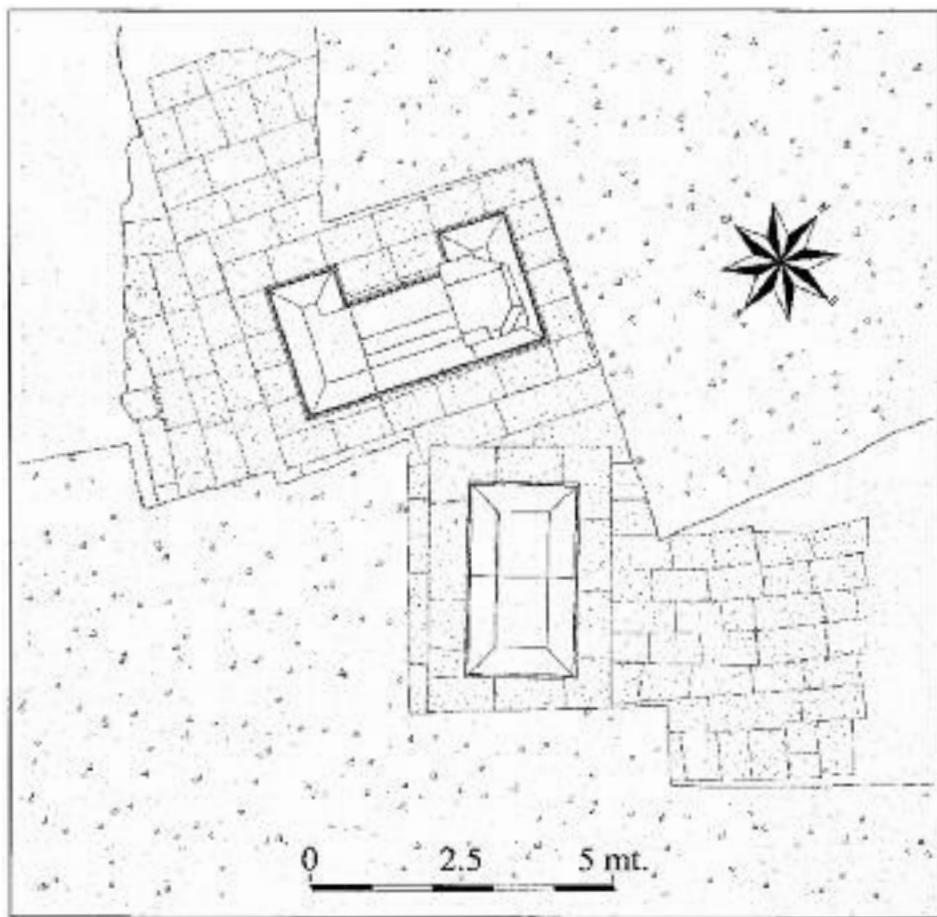


Fig. 5 – Castrum Inui. Plan of the altars in front of Temple B (from Di Mario 2012)

In the area in front of temple B there two altars were built in the fourth century BC facing east and west respectively, with opposing “cushion” profiles, very similar to those of Lavinium (fig. 5; fig. 6). In front of temple B there is a second building, temple A (fig. 7), built in the first half of the second century BC, facing north-east, initially attributed to the god Veiovis²¹, later identified with a place of heroic worship reserved for the deified Aeneas, Aeneas Indiges, ancestral forefather²². In this building the Trojan

²¹ TORELLI 2012, 485-486.

²² TORELLI 2016b, 638.



Fig. 6 – Castrum Inui. The altar without lateral projecting parts in front of temple B (Author photo)



Fig. 7 – Castrum Inui. Temple A (Author photo)

hero would in fact be depicted in the decoration of the pediment, where, among the terracotta statues of a series of divinities (Dionysus, Hercules, Minerva and Venus), there is a half-naked male figure in the center, larger than the others, in which Aeneas should be recognized, welcomed into Olympus as an idealized hero. The excavation also brought to light the ritual foundation pit of the temple, in which the remains of the sacrifices of a large number of oxen and pigs were laid down and this element was read as confirmation of the building's consecration to a heroic cult, that of Aeneas²³.

The sanctuary also includes a little temple dating back to the Augustan age (building C; fig. 2), which must have been dedicated to the god Aesculapius, as indicated by the discovery of a small cult statue of this divinity inside the cell; the building stands on a large vaulted cistern.

In order to understand this important site, that passage from Dionysius of Halicarnassus mentioned above has been recalled by some scholars (in particular Mario Torelli)²⁴. His description of the landing place could actually conform to many landing places on the Tyrrhenian coast, with similar characteristics, characterized by an environmental context with springs, ponds and lagoons and by the presence of a sanctuary dedicated to the Sun²⁵: among these, therefore, in addition to the sanctuary of Sol Indiges at Lavinium, also the sanctuary of Castrum Inui. In favor of the recognition of this second site with the place indicated by the locals at Dionysius of Halicarnassus as the point of Aeneas' landing, not only the two altars facing one east and the other west would be decisive, but also the fact that the god Inuus, whose etymology would be related to that of Indiges, is actually an ancestral divinity identifiable with the Sun god; the epithet of Indiges, moreover, always associated with Aeneas (except in rare cases), would be the Latin equivalent of the Greek ἥρωας (hero)²⁶. Further evidence would be represented both by the well discovered next to the stairway of the temple from which water flows, precisely the miracu-

²³ TORELLI 2016a, 200.

²⁴ Compare DI MARIO 2007; DI MARIO 2009; especially TORELLI 2011; TORELLI 2014.

²⁵ TORELLI 2012, 479.

²⁶ DI MARIO 2007, 104; TORELLI 2012; TORELLI 2016b, 639-640. Identification with the god Sun is based on a passage from Macrobius, *Sat.*, I, 22.2.

lously poured spring that quenched the thirst of the Trojans as soon as they landed, and by the cistern below the shrine of Aesculapius, to be identified precisely with the “cavity” seen by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in which the waters of the spring would have collected (ὀλίγον ὕδωρ ἐν κοίλῳ χωρίῳ). According to this hypothesis, therefore, a part of the ancient tradition had to recognize *Castrum Inui* as the place where Aeneas landed. However, there were some highlighted significant elements²⁷ that may contrast with this reconstruction, such as the fact that the orientation of the altars to the east and west is also common to other sanctuaries dedicated to solar deities, such as Apollo. Furthermore, Pliny the Elder²⁸, describing the Latium coast from north to south, names Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, then Laurentum, then the sanctuary of Sol Indiges and immediately after the Numicus river, finally Ardea. Therefore, the sanctuary of the landing of Aeneas would be located near Lavinium, and not in Ardea, which is obviously a different and more southern place. Another element that does not seem to be underestimated is that the text of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, referred to several times, explicitly indicates “Laurentum” as the landing place²⁹: this was not a city, but a territory that revolved right around Lavinium³⁰, while Ardea, which was the main center of the territory of the Rutuli, would actually have been at its limit, right on the southern border.

Another place in ancient Latium vetus connected with the myth of Aeneas is the Solforata area (Tor Tignosa)³¹ (fig. 8), a site characterized by sulphurous springs and lakes, located about 8 km from Lavinium along the very ancient road that from the coastal landing to the mouth of the Numicus, after Lavinium, reached the Alban Hills, where the main sanctuary of the Latin people, dedicated to Iuppiter Latiaris, was found. At the Solforata since the fifth century BC there was a place of worship connected with the

²⁷ LA REGINA 2014a; also compare JAIA 2009b; JAIA 2013.

²⁸ Plin., *Nat.Hist.* III, 56-57.

²⁹ Livy (*Ab Urbe Condita* I, 1, 4) also writes that Aeneas landed in the Laurentian territory and that this place is also called Troy (“ad Laurentum agrum tenuisse. Troia et huic nomen est”). Thus, also Festus, 504 L, and Appian, fragm., I, 1. On the subject see CASTAGNOLI 1967. On the toponym Troy, common to various places, see MUSTI 1981.

³⁰ CASTAGNOLI 1967, 237.

³¹ On the site compare QUILICI 1996; GRANINO CECERE 1992, 127-129.



Fig. 8 – View of the Solfatara at Pomezia (Roma)

sulphurous waters, documented by architectural terracottas, votive objects and an altar³², in which it was proposed to recognize the locality of *Albunea* mentioned by Virgil³³, the wood with mephitic springs seat of the oracle of the god Faunus, which predicts to the king Latinus the arrival of Aeneas, the one predestined to become the husband of his daughter. Three tuff stones with inscriptions also come from the site, dated to the end of the IV-beginning of the III century BC, reminiscent of female divinities: *Neuna*, *Neuna Fata* (perhaps the same goddess with the attribute of *Fata*: “she who spoke”) and *Pauca Martia*: dark Latin divinities, perhaps oracular (*Tria Fata*: the three destinies) whose identification with the Fates was proposed. A fourth block (fig. 9), perhaps a small altar, bears a controversial inscription that is not easy to read, interpreted by most³⁴ as *Lare Aineia d(onom)*. It would therefore be a dedication to Aeneas, qualified as Lar and therefore intended as a deified (and beneficial) soul of an exceptional character. The document would prove that Aeneas was venerated in the sanctuary of Solforata as the heroised ancestor of the Roman people. Other authoritative

³² CASTAGNOLI 1984; POCETTI 1998, 84.

³³ Verg. *Aen.* VII, 81-89.

³⁴ GUARDUCCI 1956; GUARDUCCI 1971; NONNIS 2012.

archaeologists³⁵, however, re-examining the inscription have formulated a different reading, *Lare(bus) A. Venia. Q. f.*: it would therefore be a dedication to the Lares gods by a private woman, moreover datable two centuries later.

Some brief mention also to the presence of the myth of Aeneas - and to the archaeological documentation connected to it - in Etruscan territory.

In the narration of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, after the death of the king Latinus and the marriage with Lavinia, Aeneas becomes king and must again face the Rutuli, who have allied themselves with the Etruscans led by the king of Caere (Cerveteri) Mezentius.

He is a character who appears in numerous sources. The historian Cato was the first to talk about him, at the beginning of the second century BC, about the Latin feast of the *Vinalia priora* (April 23, opening of the new wine³⁶), on the occasion of which a very ancient mythical episode was remembered: the "tyrant" (*tyrannus*) Mezentius, with an act of cruelty, would have imposed on the Latins as a tribute the dedication and delivery of the first fruits of the wine produced by them, actually destined for Jupiter, so as to be able to enjoy an honor equal to a divinity; Aeneas would be able to get it back. The story, ignored by Virgil, was well known and often resurfaces, even if with some variations, in the antiquarian tradition:



Fig. 9 – Tufa stone inscribed from Tor Tignosa (from Nonnis 2012)

³⁵ KOLBE 1970, but later above all LA REGINA 2014a; LA REGINA 2014b, with previous bibliography.

³⁶ SCHILLING 1954; MARCATTILI 2017, 429-438.

according to Cato Mezentius helps Turnus, who is defeated by Aeneas³⁷; after the death of this Mezentius he is killed by Ascanius. In Dionysius of Halicarnassus³⁸ after the death of Aeneas Mezentius besieges the Latins, but then surrenders and becomes their ally. According to Titus Livius³⁹ he is defeated by the Latins, but survives Aeneas. According to Virgil⁴⁰, on the other hand, Mezentius, defined as a “contempt for the gods”, is a king in exile and Aeneas kills both him and Turnus.

These are the stories of the ancient authors. But the historicity of the figure of a character named Mezentius seems to be carved by an inscription in the Etruscan language, engraved on an impasto vase (fig. 10), dated to 680-640 BC. and probably coming from Cerveteri, now in the Louvre Museum in Paris, whose text is: *mi Laucies Mezenties* (“I am of Laucius Mezentius”), which documents this very rare noble with an Italic



Fig. 10 – Cup of impasto from Cerveteri with engraved inscription. VII sec. BC (Paris, Louvre Museum)

roots⁴¹. Virgil, therefore, by inserting the figure of Mezentius, killed by Aeneas into the Aeneid, in some way draws on a very ancient historical reality, in which precisely in Caere, in the seventh century BC, there is a gens *Mezentie* (of Italic or perhaps Latin origin), belonging to the ruling class, which has the same name as the Etruscan king linked to the myth of Aeneas.

In the Etruscan territory the myth of Aeneas is also present in Veii. Located only about 15 km north of Rome, it was the Etruscan city most intensely and

³⁷ Cato, fr. 9 P apud Serv. ad Aen. I, 267; fr. 10 P apud Serv. ad Aen. IV, 620; fr. 11 P apud Serv. ad Aen. VI, 760.

³⁸ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.*, I, 64.

³⁹ Liv., *Ab Urbe cond.*, I, 3.

⁴⁰ Verg. Aen. VII; VIII, 481-495; X, 762-908.

⁴¹ GAULTIER 1989. For the linguistic aspect, see DE SIMONE 1991.

from very ancient times in relation to Rome, to which it contested the dominion of the lower Tiber, where the landing from the sea and the salt pans were located. However, it was precisely this proximity that meant that over time Veii, unlike the other important Etruscan cities, developed a consonance, and almost an overlap, culturally and religiously, with both Rome and the other Latins.

In Veii, some terracotta statuettes depicting Aeneas with Anchises on his shoulders (fig. 11) were found in various places of worship in the city, some dating back to the 5th century BC. Also, in the large sanctuary in loc. Campetti, north-west of the urban center, of a “thermal-therapeutic” character, a very particular fragment of a clay statue (32 cm long) was discovered, dating back to the end of the 6th - first half of the 5th century (fig. 12). BC. It is a sort of “bundle” that depicts a folded cloth wrapped around something rigid, fastened by ribbons, which was carried on the head by a character of which only the two hands remain, painted red and therefore male, according to the archaic figurative convention⁴². This object was reconstructed as part of the wrapping in which Anchises, holding it on the head with both hands, while sitting on



Fig. 11 – Terracotta statuette depicting Aeneas and Anchises. From Veii, sanctuary of Portonaccio. Second half of the 5th century BC (Roma, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia)

⁴² For an in-depth analysis, see COLONNA 2009, to whom we owe the following considerations and hypotheses on Veii.

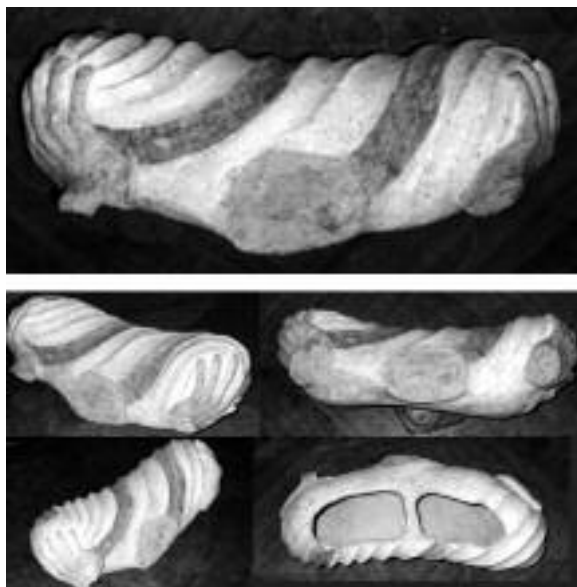


Fig.12 – Fragment of a clay statue from Veii, loc. Campetti (from Colonna 2009)

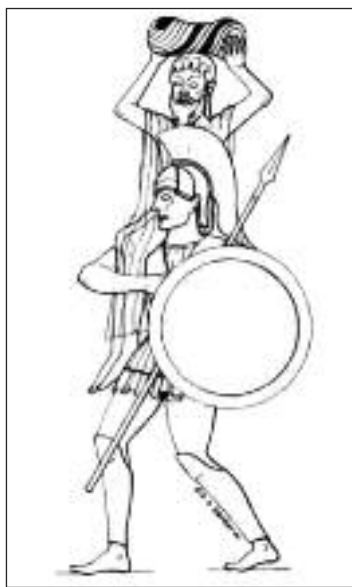


Fig. 13 – Reconstruction of the clay group depicting Aeneas and Anchises from Veii, loc. Campetti (from Colonna 2009)

the shoulders of Aeneas, would have transported the sacred objects (the *sacra*, according to the ancient authors “the images of the homeland gods wrapped in *pepli*”, hence the Penates) carried away from Troy in flames (fig. 13)⁴³. It is the same pose (of very ancient tradition) that will be adopted in the Augustan age for the group of Aeneas, Anchises and Ascanius that was in the place of honour of the left exedra of the Forum of Augustus in Rome. These findings - the statue of Anchises, perhaps in a group with Aeneas and Ascanius, and the small votive statuettes of Aeneas with Anchises on his shoulders⁴⁴ - have therefore suggested the existence of a cult of Aeneas in Veii (unique among all the Etruscan cities) and of a bond with the Trojan hero on the most remote origin of their city, of which he was

⁴³ Licofr., *Aléxandra*, verses 1262-1266: see COLONNA 2009, 59.

⁴⁴ Other scholars (such as Mario Torelli) have argued that the statuette cannot be prior to the fourth century BC and therefore the re-enactment and cult of Aeneas in Veii should be inserted in the Roman phase of the city, brought by the Roman colonists sent to the Veii territory, perhaps as a symbol of “exile”. For the discussion on this topic and the related bibliography see COLONNA 2009, 63, and particularly note 70; MARRONI 2017, 136.

perhaps considered the distant founder, just like in Rome and thanks to the intense cultural exchange that Veii had both with Rome and with the Latins. The tradition would have established itself in the Etruscan city at the beginning of the fifth century BC, at the time of the most severe conflict with Rome, which would later lead to the conquest of Veii in 396 BC.

The cult would have arrived in Veii from Lavinium: of the relations between the aristocracies of the two cities, already in the archaic period, there is archaeological evidence in two inscriptions of a gift, one found in Veii in the sanctuary of Apollo, the other in Lavinium in an aristocratic tomb, with identical text, which bears the name of the same person as the author of the gift (*Mamarce Apunie*). These documents testify to an exchange of gifts, with probable friendships, between the family of Lavinium, owner of the tomb, and the Etruscan *Apunies* family ⁴⁵.

In Lazio we also have a case in which archaeological discoveries open new and broader horizons than those told by ancient authors. This is the Latin city of Lanuvium (today Lanuvio), located on the Alban hills, famous for its important sanctuary of Iuno Sospita (= propitious) Lanuvina, characterized by a goat skin on the head.

According to the historian Appian (born in Alexandria in Egypt under the reign of Emperor Trajan)⁴⁶ the city was founded by Diomedes⁴⁷, the mythical king of Argos who fights with all the other Greeks in the Trojan war and then, together with Ulysses, steals the Palladium; according to the legend, he also arrives in the West in Daunia, in present-day Puglia in southern Italy, where established three cities. Instead, an extraordinary archaeological discovery traces the foundation of Lanuvium back to the arrival of Aeneas' Trojans in Lazio. In Sicily, in Taormina, some fragments of the plaster that covered the recesses intended to house the scrolls of the library, probably from the city's gymnasium, were found, on which short captions are painted on the authors and on the content of the works that were present in the shelves⁴⁸. On one of these fragments there is a text relating to the Roman historian Fabius Pictor, who lived in the second half

⁴⁵ COLONNA 2009, 69; BIELLA, MICHETTI 2018.

⁴⁶ *Bell.Civ.* II, 20.

⁴⁷ Compare PASQUALINI 1998.

⁴⁸ On this topic, refer to MANGANARO 1974.



Fig. 14 – Male head in marble from Centuripe (Sicilia) (from Patané 2016)

of the third century BC, considered the father of Roman annalist historiography. His work, unfortunately lost, was written in Greek and narrated the arrival of Heracles in Italy and the journey of Lanoios, a native of Centuripe in Sicily, an “ally” of Aeneas, who would accompany him to Latium and establish Lanuvium. A marble head, identified with this character, was found in Centuripe⁴⁹ (fig. 14). A further element, which seems to confirm this story about Lanoios, is represented by an inscription which preserves part of a decree that renewed a treaty of friendship between Centuripe and Lanuvio, based on the “blood relation” between the two cities (συγγένεια)⁵⁰. We do not know why, among all the cities of ancient Latium, Lanuvium itself had this singular mythical tradition, so far unknown to the other nearby cities: in any case it is a very important epigraphic documentation, which sheds an unexpected light on a chapter of ancient history, not remembered in any other way by the sources and of which otherwise we would never have known anything⁵¹. Certainly, this tradition of ancient origins from a companion of Aeneas, even if Sicilian

⁴⁹ Compare PATANÉ 2016.

⁵⁰ MANGANARO 2006.

⁵¹ On the subject BRIQUEL 2001.

and not Trojan, somehow unites Lanuvium with Rome, also linked to the lineage of the Virgilian hero⁵².

But the presence of Aeneas in Lazio does not stop at the cities where he is directly involved in mythical tales, but it also extends to other cities where he is indirectly summoned on, through descendants that have perpetuated themselves in Alba Longa, the city that was established by his son Ascanius on the Alban Hills and which, in the literary tradition, would become the motherland of a number of other cities in Lazio and, generations later, the homeland of Romulus, the founder of Rome⁵³.

Archaeological research has so far failed to identify the site. Schliemann himself, who managed to locate Troy, tried to find the city⁵⁴, so much so that for this purpose he obtained from the General Directorate of Antiquities an authorization to “dig in search of Alba Longa”, but without success, perhaps because Alba never became a real “city” in the classic sense of the word. According to tradition, in fact, when it was still a system of small villages it would have been destroyed by the third king of Rome, Tullus Hostilius (672-640 BC of the traditional chronology), who would have transferred the Albanian population to Rome with its *Penates*, those in which was recognized as the *nomen latinum*, unifying the two peoples⁵⁵.

The tradition which was commonly accepted and disseminated by ancient writers therefore attributes the foundation of Lavinium to Aeneas, the foundation of Alba Longa to his son Ascanius and to Romulus and Remus, descendants of the dynasty of the Latin kings of Alba, the foundation of Rome⁵⁶. Through various adjustments, the main of which is attributed to Virgil, Ascanius was then identified with *Iulus*, the ancestor of the gens *Iulia*, so that Julius Caesar and his adopted son Octavian, later emperor Augustus, could boast a prestigious descent from the dynasty semi-divine

⁵² ZEVI 2011.

⁵³ On Alba Longa, refer to PASQUALINI (edited by) 1997, PASQUALINI 2013; PASQUALINI 2016; GRANDAZZI 2008 with previous bibliography; ZIOLKOWSKI 2009.

⁵⁴ DE ROSSI 1875; MEYER 1969, 248-249 and 395; GRANDAZZI 2008, 235-238.

⁵⁵ PASQUALINI 2016.

⁵⁶ For the places of Aeneas in Rome and the related archaeological documentation, see the contribution of Alfonsina Russo in this volume.

of Anchises and Aeneas, son of Venus. The continuity between Aeneas and Augustus, and the importance of Actium's victory, as the crowning achievement of the mission assigned to the lineage born from the merger of Trojans and Latins, was the subject of Virgil's work.

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