

# 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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Mythology and Archaeology

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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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## *Mythology and Archaeology*

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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## THE PLACES OF AENEAS IN ROME

### Abstract

The places in Rome associated with the mythical figure of Aeneas and his Romulan progeny are quite numerous and all cluster around the original settlement on the Palatine. In fact, the literary tradition and the archaeological documentation give us a historical palimpsest of exceptional value for the topographical and architectural reconstruction of the places of the myth, still intact in the Republican age, renewed under the principate of Augustus and always present in the collective memory of the Roman people, until the end of the ancient age. The fundamental source is Book VIII of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which allows us to reconstruct, step by step, the places that Aeneas saw on his arrival in Rome, welcomed by the arcade Evander. The present communication, focuses on the recent findings on the Palatine Hill, discussing how there is an exceptional connection between written sources and archaeological documentation, despite the due differences.

**Keywords:** Aeneas, Rome, Palatine, Romulus

As it is known, reading the *Aeneid*, and in particular the passage concerning the prayer dedicated to Cybele recited by Aeneas (Book III, vv. 19-120), we learn that Aeneas' journey to the west begins under the auspices of the Great Mother of the Gods, at the sacred cave of the goddess at Mount Ida where he takes refuge after leaving Troy in flames<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Although the iconographic theme of the escape of Aeneas from Troy is already present in the vase painting of the 6th and 5th centuries BC in Greece and Etruria, for the representation of the epilogue of the journey in a Roman environment, it will be necessary to wait for the end of the Republican age when the narration of the achievements of the Trojan hero will also be linked to the Romulean myth of the foundation of Rome, as in the case of the famous and discussed cycle of frescoes in the Tomb of the Statilii. For a complete repertoire of the iconography of the myth, compare Dardenay 2012.



The hero's journey will not only be across places, but also across time, and his final arrival at the landing below the Cermalus is the basis of the myth of the Trojan origins of Rome<sup>2</sup>.

The tradition that attributes the Roman lineage to the action of Aeneas could date back to the end of the sixth century BC. with the first mention in Stesichorus (6th century BC) of a journey by Aeneas to the west. More evident is the tale in Hellanicus<sup>3</sup>, accepted, treated and reinterpreted by Latin historians such as Naevius, Fabius Pictor, Ennius, Cato<sup>4</sup>. The Roman annals, written in Greek, dating back to the second half of the third century BC, seem in fact to incorporate the lessons of Greek historians or lyricists such as Hellanicus of Lesbos and Damastes of Sigeus of the final years from the fifth century BC<sup>5</sup>, later merged into the works of Timaeus of Tauromenion or Licophron of Chalcis, both from the fourth century BC<sup>6</sup>. It is evident how much the acceptance of a common origin of the Greeks and Romans was more or less instrumental to the representation of Rome in a context of expansion and consolidation of the aristocracies of the city. It is in this cultural context, therefore, that Trojan myth-historical line of the origin of Rome which acts as a counterpart and addition to the most ancient tradition of the Latin myth would have spread.

On the level of the story that merged in the Aeneid, perhaps through the lesson of Stesichorus as documented in the *Tabula Iliaca* preserved

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<sup>2</sup> LENTANO 2020.

<sup>3</sup> For an extensive discussion of the issue, see DE LUNA 2012 with the previous bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> Compare MORA 1999.

<sup>5</sup> DE LUNA 2012.

<sup>6</sup> While the version of Aeneas founder of Rome had a wide echo in Greek writers, the Sicilian historian Timaeus of Tauromenion, who wrote around 300 BC and after him Lycophron of Chalcis show that they know the Penates of Lavinium and their direct Trojan origin and attest to the existence of the legend in the Latin city (as reported in his book I of him by Dionysius of Halicarnassus). An examination of the literary sources therefore leads us to believe that while the legend of Aeneas as the founder of Rome is most likely an autonomous Greek invention dating back to the fifth century BC, the legend of Aeneas in Lavinium instead seems to be a creation that develops from the beginning of the third century BC.

in the Capitoline Museums in Rome<sup>7</sup>, it is not by chance that there is full agreement between the Virgilian places of the origins of Rome according to the Romulean myth and those in which Aeneas is welcomed<sup>8</sup>.

After the landing on the river bank, the meeting between Aeneas and Evander takes place: the exile from Arcadia, mythical son of the nymph Carmenta, establishes the city of Pallanteum (name later transformed into Palatine Hill) in the places where Rome will rise. Evander and his son Pallas welcome the Trojan hero in the landing place, the future port in the Foro Boario. They then tell Aeneas about the clash between the monster Cacus and Hercules which took place in the area, and they show him the Ara Maxima, the place of worship dedicated to Hercules, now archaeologically identified with a large tuff slab found under the apsis of the Church of S. Maria in Cosmedin<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore Aeneas admires the Carmentalis Gate<sup>10</sup>, dedicated to the divine mother of Evander, and the immense forest linked to the name of Romulus and again he is shown the Lupercal, the cave at the foot of the Cermalus/Palatine town dedicated to the Latin divinity of Faunus Lupercus; finally, the sacred forests between the Palatine Hill and the Capitoline Hill (fig. 1)<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> As it is known, the *Tabulae Iliacae* are stone tablets carved with the figurative narration of Homeric poems. Of them nineteen replicas are known, among which the most complete and best preserved is the *Tabula Capitolina*, at the center of which are represented the scenes from *Ilioupersis* accompanied by the relevant inscriptions; a long inscription proposes the summary of the books VII-XXIV of the poem.

Other depictions are scenes from the *Iliad*, while at the base of the central panel two other friezes narrate episodes from the *Little Iliad* and the *Ethiopian*. Inscriptions accompany the scenes and, again in the central panel, the topics covered are specified (Homer's *Iliad*, the *Ethiopian* of Arctinus of Miletus and the *Little Iliad* of Lesches of Pyrrha) and the reference sources, in particular Stesichorus. The name of Theódoros, the craftsman considered the author of the relief, completes the detailed information (for a detailed description of the depictions of the *Tabula Capitolina*, see FIORINI 2006). The dating of these documents varies from the first century BC to the 1st century AD, just as the sources of reference appear to be variable (compare SCAFOGLIO 2005).

<sup>8</sup> The author sacrifices the correct chronology of events to the reader's ability to place those same events in the geographical space, thereby providing credibility to the myth.

<sup>9</sup> On the altar dedicated to the cult of Hercules Invictus in the Foro Boario, see COARELLI 1996; more details in COARELLI 1988, in part. 61-77.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding the topographical location and the hypothetical reconstruction of the city gate that opened in the circuit of the Servian walls, see COARELLI 1996a.

<sup>11</sup> Verg., *Aen.* 8.102. On the Virgil's description of the way of Aeneas's visit under the guide of Evander, see CARANDINI 2003, in part. vol. II, 523-524.





Fig. 1 – Rome. The Palatine Hill

The story, as well as for the myth of the origins of Rome linked to the two twins (fig. 2), once again takes place in the valley between Capitoline and Palatine hills, in the Velabro area and at the foot of Cermalus, where the sources place the Lupercal<sup>12</sup>. A representation of these places is in the well-known Pompeian panel with the origins of Rome from the house of M. Fabius Secundus (V, 4,13)<sup>13</sup>, in which the story unfolds on several records from the moment of the seduction of the young vestal Rhea Silvia by the god Mars until the epilogue of the story in front of the Lupercal cave, where the she-wolf breast-feeds the divine twins. The recent discovery of a circular hypogeum room with a richly decorated vault (fig. 3), located at the foot of the Palatine in axis with the Augustan complex, has allowed to hypothesize its identification

<sup>12</sup> On Lupercal and the cult of the Luperci see CARAFA 2006, with previous bibliography.

<sup>13</sup> BRAGANTINI 1991; CAPPELLI 2000.



Fig. 2 - Fresco from the House of M. Fabius Secundus in Pompeii with a depiction of the myth of Rome: from the seduction of Rhea Silvia (top) to the arrival of the twins in the Lupercal cave Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. (da Cappelli 2000, fig. 15)

with the Lupercal in the monumental arrangement operated by Augustus (*Res Gestae*, 19)<sup>14</sup>.

In the same Virgilian narrative, Aeneas would have introduced the cult of Athena to Rome, taking with him in the Escape from Troy in flames the Palladium, the *xoanon* of Athena Pallas which resided in the most important temple of Troy, rescued by the hero from the fury of destruction<sup>15</sup>.

Sources, such as Cicero (*pro Scauro*, 48), recall that since the royal age the Palladium in Rome was kept in the temple of Vesta in the Forum, therefore

<sup>14</sup> The underground environment located at the foot of the Augustan complex has also been variously interpreted as a nymphaeum and, although still unexplored, the photographic recordings carried out in remote control have allowed a preliminary publication of the decorative apparatus of the vault: compare BOLDRIGHINI 2019.

<sup>15</sup> On the entwined versions of the sacred Trojans saved by Aeneas, see LAGIOIA 2006.



Fig. 3 - Ceiling of the circular hypogeum of the Augustan age hypothetically identified with the Lupercal.

included among the sacred objects dating back to Romulus, such as the lituus and the spear thrown in the place where the city would have originated<sup>16</sup>. Although only hypothetically, an image of the Palladium is perhaps in the fragment of an insular Greek marble head belonging to a statue of armed Athena smaller than life-size, perhaps found from the area of the Palatine Hill and now preserved in the Palatine Museum (fig. 4)<sup>17</sup>. Further in Rome and the inhabited area of the Palatine/Cermalus with its acropolis, important testimonies of the myth of Aeneas are to be referred

<sup>16</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant.Rom.* XIV 2, 5) regarding the Gallic fire of 390 BC: *In Rome a certain sacred hut of Mars, set up near the summit of the Palatine, was burned to the ground along with the houses around it; but when the sites were being cleared for rebuilding it preserved intact, in the middle of the burned ashes all around, the symbol of the foundation of the city - a staff curved at one end, such as herdsmen and shepherds use* (trans. in T.P. Wiseman 2015, 108).

<sup>17</sup> Compare PARIBENI 1963; PARIBENI 1964. It is a fragment of an original archaic sculpture depicting an Athena Promachos, now exhibited in the Antiquarium of the Palatine Hill (inv. 475881).



to the city of Lavinium which has restored a particularly rich documentation.

The mythological panorama recalled up to now finds a stimulating suggestion in the archaeological evidence of the two final stages of Aeneas' journey. As it is known in the settlements of Rome and Lavinium, an important number of archaeological remains of necropolis and referable settlements at the phases of the Lazio culture ranging from the late Bronze to the entire Iron Age (XI-X/VI century BC), and already in the VII/VI century.

B.C., for Lavinium the attendance of places, such as the *Templum Solis Indigetis* located at the mouth of the Numicus river, or the so-called Heroon of Aeneas is witnessed<sup>18</sup>.

Equally complex is the protohistoric panorama that seems to emerge from the examination of the data coming from the most recent archaeological investigations in the sector under consideration.

In partial confirmation of the sources and of what must still have been present and perceptible in the urban fabric of Rome in the Augustan age, the numerous archaeological findings that occurred, in particular on that part of the Palatine hill, show for this area a continuity of settlement and a sacred vocation of the places since the earliest times<sup>19</sup>. The controversial Vaglieri excavations of 1907 on Cermalus brought to light the evidence of settlements and burials near the Caci Stairs, including a sacellum interpreted as a place of memory of the so-called Casa Romuli, that



Fig. 4 - Fragment of a statue of Athena Pallas in the Palatine Museum

<sup>18</sup> On the subject, see the contribution of Alessandro Maria Jaia in this volume.

<sup>19</sup> Evidence in this sense is obtained from the results of the twenty-year excavations of the Sapienza University in the area of the complex of the Temple of Vittoria and Sanctuary of the Magna Mater, where the presence of sacred buildings is witnessed, without interruption, at least from the VI-V centuries B.C. (compare *Scavi del Palatino* 1).



Fig. 5 - Remains of the huts in the area between the *Scalae Caci* and the *Clivus of Victory* (image Davico – 1948)

is the hut that already symbolized in ancient times the place where the shepherd Faustulus would have welcomed the twins Romulus and Remus (fig. 5). Associated with it, it is a pit variously interpreted as a tomb by Vaglieri, or rather as a foundation pit in connection with the hut itself (fig. 6)<sup>20</sup>. Confirming the sacral significance of the place, the hut/sacellum has always been respected by the new constructions (fig. 7), both in the construction of the temple of Victoria (296-294 BC) and subsequently in the

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<sup>20</sup>For the events and controversies surrounding Vaglieri's discoveries, see GUIDI, SALVATORI 2014. A rereading of the archaeological evidence of the protohistoric phase in the light of a re-examination of the excavation data of Vaglieri and Puglisi in ANGELELLI, FALZONE 2001.



Fig. 6 - Cermalus, south-west area of the Palatine. Place of worship identified as the Casa Romuli (9/8th century BC) built in opus quadratum at the beginning of the 3rd century BC.

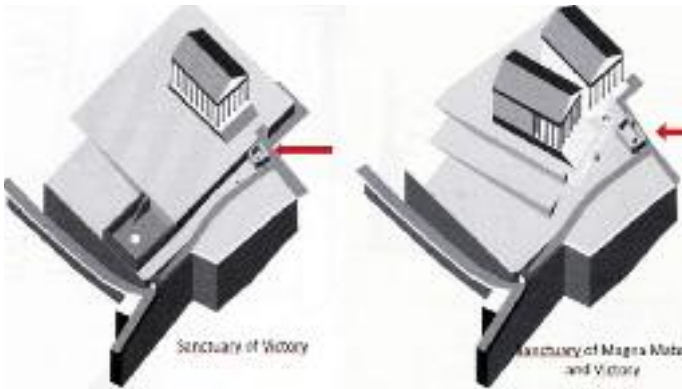


Fig. 7 - Cermalus South-West area of the Palatine. Casa Romuli Axonometric reconstruction of the place of worship and its relation to the Temple of Victory (296-294 BC) and the Temple of Magna Mater (204-191 BC)

great stalls of the sanctuary of the Magna Mater (204-191 BC)<sup>21</sup>. The large circular hut measuring approximately 20 square meters, brought to light in the excavations of the early 1900s, is of particular importance; moreover, its

<sup>21</sup> Compare *Scavi del Palatino 2*.





Fig. 8 - Palatine - House of Livia: burial of the 2 Phase Latial Culture (10-9th century BC) found in the below levels of the eastern sector of the house, preserved by early imperial structures (in the Palatine Museum)

function seems to combine the liturgical-cultic one of a sacellum dedicated to a female divinity and parent of the Latin pantheon (Ops, Vica Pota, Fauna) to the residence of the head in his position as *rex sacrorum*. The presence of high-ranking individuals in this area of the Palatine/Cermalus is testified by an incineration found in 1954 in the excavations carried out by Gianfilippo Carettoni under the levels of the house of Livia. The burial dates back to the beginning of the Iron Age (Latial phase IIA - 10th century BC). The presence of a very rich grave goods, currently on display in the Palatine Museum, has allowed us to hypothesize the burial of a high-ranking male figure, perhaps a priest or a political leader (fig. 8)<sup>22</sup>.

For this period, the Palatine seems to be configured as a series of scattered nucleuses of huts that extend from the plateau to the east and north-east slopes of the hill, perhaps skimmed by the watercourse that in prehistoric times marked the valley between Celio and Palatine. The excavations carried out in recent years by the Sapienza University of Rome (fig. 9) on the north-eastern side of the hill, have brought to light the remains of terraces along the palatine slope and of huts belonging to two distinct chronologies, which can be classified respectively in II and in the third phase in Latium region (referable to the 9th century BC) placed directly in contact with the geological bank and immediately below the levels of the imperial building commonly known as the Baths of Elagabalus (fig. 10)<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> DE SANTIS 2001; DE SANTIS 2014.

<sup>23</sup> QUONDAM 2011.



Fig. 9 - Northeastern slopes of the Palatine. Archaeological surveys "Sapienza" University of Rome



Fig. 10 - Northeastern slopes of the Palatine. Remains of hut (post holes, hearth) from the late Iron Age in one of the rooms of the Severian horreum (image "Sapienza")



Fig. 11 - Cermalus South-West area of the Palatine. Village of huts under the levels of the south side of the Magna Mater Temple. Phase III A-B of Latium culture (770-730 BC). So-called Romulean phase

It is probable that the high grounds of the Palatine and the Capitoline hills were frequented since XIII-XII century BC for their strategic importance as a place of control of the Tiber River route that was connected to the sea. Moreover, the Capitoline settlement has an uninterrupted continuity of life from the 13th century BC and is also characterized by the presence of fragments of Mycenaean pottery and metallurgical activity, as evidenced by the important traces documented in the levels below the Protomoteca of the Palazzo Senatorio<sup>24</sup>.

In the subsequent phases, it is worth to say that, during the period III A and A/B of the Latial culture (770-730 and 730-700 BC), the intensification of the built-up area on the northern slope of the Palatine and a structuring in proto-urban forms, with a wall of which an urban gate has been hypothesized to be recognized as the Porta Mugonia, that is the access to the inhabited area from the “via delle Carinae” which connected the Palatine to the Esquiline, is reported<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> LUGLI, ROSA 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Compare CARAFA *et al.* 2014; for the findings from the excavations of the Sapienza University along the northern slope of the Palatine, see *Santuario di Vesta* 2017.





Fig. 12 - Cermalus, South-West slope of the Palatine. Terracing with huts



Fig. 13 - Cermalus, South-West slope of the Palatine. Nucleus of Huts recently brought to light

Returning to the Cermalus/Palatine hill, in the area of the so-called Casa Romuli<sup>26</sup>, the ancient circular hut dating from the early 9th century, was replaced during the 8th century BC from three smaller rectangular huts (fig. 11). An emblematic case is represented by the huts recently found at the southwestern end of the Cermalus (fig. 12). Below these structures, excavated in the virgin soil on the side of the hill, an articulated system of

<sup>26</sup> PENSABENE 1993.

underground tunnels with wells was intercepted, interpreted by some scholars as a sacred place dedicated to underworld divinities (*templum sub terra*) (fig. 13). In communication with the three-armed tunnel is a small circular space, in which the *mundus* (that is, the foundation pit of the city, symbolic center and meeting place between heaven, earth and the underground world) was recognized (fig. 14)<sup>27</sup>. These underground corridors were connected with the surface by means of various vertical conduits that could be functional to accommodate the libatory sacrifices. For the entire complex, identification with the temple of Pales was improved, the ancient protohistoric divinity protector of herds and pastoral activities that summed up both the characteristics of



Fig.14 - Cermalus, South-West slope of the Palatine. Worship area: the huts above it so-called area of the sanctuary of Pales

the female gender and those of the male gender, venerated in historical times the April 21, the date on which the feasts of the Palilia began (date on which the birth of Rome is still celebrated today).

Pales is the eponymous divinity from which the name of the hill where it was venerated, the Palatine Hill, derives. In this phase, the built-up area of the Palatine, in its proto-urban form, as already mentioned, has now

<sup>27</sup> Compare COLETTI *et al.* 2008.

extended to the northern slopes of the hill up to the valley of the Forum. It is at this moment that the mythical figure of the founder enters, which symbolically sanctions the unification of the towns under a single head or founder, to whom tradition has attributed the name of Romulus. To him, in fact, the foundations of the Roman monarchical state in which the king is joined by an assembly of aristocratic peers, the division of the people into curia, that is a sort of administrative districts, and the institution of primitive cults are traced back. The immediately following kings will be an expression of the conquered communities: Numa, of Sabine origin, is the initiator of cults founding the Roman religion such as that of Vesta; Tullus Hostilius, of Roman descent, and Ancus Marcius, Sabine who extended the power of the city to the sea. These first kings will be followed by the dynasties of the Etruscan kings of Corinthian-Tarquinian origin, after which, following an aristocratic revolution, the republican regime, which will last for six centuries, will be established.

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