

AENEAS: AN ETRUSCAN FOUNDATION LEGEND

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This paper establishes that there existed a considerable interest in the story of the escape of Aeneas and Anchises from Troy in southern Etruria in the last two decades of the sixth century B.C. It considers the Attic vases and Etruscan clay figurines which support this view. There follows a consideration of the commentators who discuss how this legend may have reached Rome. I then present my own research into the vases and how this may reflect on the views of the commentators. I follow this with a summary of how ancient authors present the legend. This leads to a discussion of the possible origins of the Etruscans. The paper ends with the conclusions which I have been able to draw from all the relevant evidence.

The area of southern Etruria in the sixth century B.C. stretched north from just outside Rome to Vulci. It included the important Etruscan towns of Vulci, Tarquinia, Cerveteri and Veii. Also important to this discussion is the Latin settlement of Lavinium due south of Rome, which was occupied by the Etruscans in this period. It is at Veii that clay figurines showing Aeneas carrying Anchises on his back were found in the Campetti sanctuary of Veis/Ceres.¹ There has been much scholarly debate on the dating of these figurines. Suggested dates range from the sixth to the first century B.C. There are some such as Haynes who believe that they date from the period after the Roman capture of Veii in about 396 B.C.,² since this would mean that the Romans brought the myth with them when they occupied the site. After a consideration of all the evidence I am persuaded by the date of the early fifth century given by Martinelli and Paolucci.³ More significant than the figurines is the representation of the myth on vases. The earliest of these vases is an Etrusco-Corinthian vase from 610 B.C., the last an Attic red-figure vase from 450 B.C. The vast majority are Attic black-figure amphorae from the last two decades of the sixth century B.C. The most popular source of these vases is Vulci.⁴ Beazley lists about one thousand black-figure vases from Vulci.⁵ Of these there are three hundred and eighty which have representations of gods and two hundred and forty one with representations of Herakles. He also lists about eight hundred red-figure vases from Vulci.⁶ He gives a total of one thousand three hundred black and red-figure vases from the rest of southern Etruria. Most of these vases were discovered in the early nineteenth century during the period of plundering of tombs by Lucien Bonaparte and others. It is worth noting that they also smashed many vases at this time in order to keep the prices for vases high.

In 1941 Bérard claimed that the myth had its origins in a substratum of Pelasgian immigrations to Italy.⁷ In the following year Perret wrote that the Aeneas myth has its origins at the time of Pyrrhus (280-275 B.C.).⁸ In 1951 Bömer dismissed both these

¹ *LIMC* Vol I, 2, 330 *Aineias* pl. 96 .

² Haynes (2000) 205.

³ Martinelli and Paolucci (2006) 75.

⁴ For example, in the British Museum, London B 173 (BAD 6547*), and London B 280 (*ABV* 589.1; BAD 331258*) .

⁵ *ABV* 721 (index entry for Vulci).

⁶ *ARV*² 1719 (index entry for Vulci).

⁷ Bérard (1941).

⁸ Perret (1942).

theories.⁹ He claimed that, based on the known representations (the clay figurines and eleven vases), the myth arrived in Etruria in the late sixth century and was also known in Rome about that time. One of the most important commentaries was the article of Schauenburg in 1960.¹⁰ He accepted Bömer's theory, but thought the date of the figurines was a problem, as they more likely dated from the late fifth century. He produced much more evidence from the vases, listing fifty eight vases in all – fifty two Attic black-figure, five Attic red-figure and one Etruscan red-figure. He gave the earliest black-figure as 520 B.C. and latest red-figure as 450 B.C. The vast majority are black-figure amphorae from the last two decades of the sixth century B.C. Of those with a known provenance nineteen were from Southern Etruria and nine from elsewhere in Italy or Sicily. There was only one vase with a known provenance from outside Italy. This is Agora P6180 which was found in a well near the Bouleuterion in the Agora and was almost certainly never exported.¹¹ Schauenburg believed that it was fair to assume that the vases without provenance came from Etruria, southern Italy or Sicily, that the vases were almost certainly made at the request of the buyers, and that it was not surprising if some were sold in Sicily and southern Italy en route to Etruria. 'No-one today should any longer question that the legend of Aeneas was known in the late sixth century in Etruria and thereby also in Rome. The absence of finds from Rome is not an objection. ... Bömer's thesis is correct. It is equally certain that the myth reached Rome from Etruria.'¹² He believed that the Roman myth of Aeneas emerged in the late archaic period. He pointed out that after the vases the myth was shown on Parthenon North Metope 28 (447-2 B.C.), but then not again till some coins from Segesta about 241 B.C. (though perhaps from the first century B.C.). In the first two centuries A.D. there was renewed interest in representing the group, though Kreousa was no longer part of it in accordance with Virgil's *Aeneid*. The group became a symbol of *pietas Romana*, and the Julian family claimed descent from Aeneas.

A different view was expressed by Alföldi in his two works.¹³ He was determined to prove that the myth came to Rome from Latium. He claimed that the myth and cult of Aeneas at Lavinium in Latium was ancient, perhaps as early as the seventh century B.C. He believed that the Etruscans replaced Odysseus with Aeneas as a foundation hero when they began to see the Greeks as enemies rather than trading partners in the fifth century B.C. He also believed that the Latins adopted Aeneas as a direct result of the Etruscan invasion of Latium and Campania, though this was not until the sixth century and not as early as the seventh as he claimed. 'The extraordinary popularity of Aeneas in Etruria, as revealed in the survey by Schauenburg, reflects the immense respect with which a founder-hero was regarded. ... What I really mean is, however, that Aeneas was celebrated in some cities of Southern Etruria as their founder-hero: precisely in the cities which were in turn the overlords of Rome.'¹⁴ Yet in spite of this statement, he avoids the obvious conclusion that the story came directly to Rome from Southern Etruria, because he wants to prove that the myth reached Rome through Lavinium.

⁹ Bömer (1951).

¹⁰ Schauenburg (1960).

¹¹ Moore and Philippides (1986) pl. 62.

¹² Schauenburg (1960) 187.

¹³ Alföldi (1971) and (1957).

¹⁴ Alföldi (1971) 284.

Quinn in 1969 mentioned the figurines and *an*¹⁵ Etruscan amphora.¹⁶ Galinsky wrote two works on the topic in 1969 and 1992.¹⁷ ‘What we can safely deduce from the evidence, however, is that Aeneas was well known and perhaps even favoured by the Etruscans. By the fifth century, Rome had reached its early heyday while being under Etruscan domination. That, in my opinion, is the basis for the association of Aeneas with Rome in Hellanicus and his sources, most likely Greeks familiar with Rome.’¹⁸ He claimed that Greeks, such as Hellanicus, wanted to show that all barbarians originated from the Greeks or were subdued by them. He did not support Alföldi, as he felt that there is no evidence of an Etruscan cult of Aeneas, or that Lavinium would have adopted it if there was. Yet he stated that Aeneas was known in Rome as a hero of the Etruscans and believed that the Romans would hardly adopt Etruscan Aeneas at the time of the beginning of the republic. ‘Whereas the first occurrence of the Aeneas legend at Rome, as exemplified by Hellanicus and Damastes, reflects the Etruscan influence at Rome, its revival, starting in the later fourth century, is an expression of the Roman supremacy over Latium.’¹⁹ He concluded ‘The claim of Trojan ancestry had reflected the political and cultural aspirations of the Romans in the third century B.C.’²⁰ It seems to me, however, to be just as probable that the myth was known and accepted in Rome during the Etruscan period of domination as that it became popular there for the reasons put forward by either Alföldi or Galinsky.

Horsfall in 1987, while discussing the evidence of the vases and figurines, concluded ‘The inferences to be drawn from this body of material have shown a decided tendency to diminish in scale and importance: there is clear evidence for familiarity with Aeneas, but no proof whatever that the Etruscans venerated him as a founding hero, no certainty that he was the object of a cult, and consequently no reason to suppose that they imposed him either upon Lavinium (Alföldi) or upon Rome (Galinsky).’²¹ Yet, he, too, seems to contradict himself. For though he agrees that Dury-Moyaers²² is correct in saying that it is implausible to suppose that Aeneas was not known a few miles to the south (i.e. in Rome), he thinks that such knowledge would be via Lavinium through its many contacts with Greece. This seems to ignore the strong links between the Greeks and the Etruscans as well as the much more obvious link between Etruria and Rome. He links the idea of a founding hero to the idea of *pietas*, but this needs to be treated as a separate issue. There may well have been a founding hero myth long before the concept of *pietas* was adopted.

Cornell in 1995 stated that there were coins showing the myth from Aineia in the Chalcidice in the sixth century B.C., though Price in *LIMC*²³ believes that they are early fifth century B.C.²⁴ Though Cornell admitted that the vases show that the myth was well known in Etruria, he felt that there was no evidence that it reached Rome from there, as it is not certain that the Etruscans ruled Rome in the sixth century B.C. He sided with those who think that the myth came to Rome from Lavinium. He believed that both Aeneas and Romulus, probably in a combined story, were known in Rome before the end of the sixth century B.C. Haynes in 2000 only mentioned the

¹⁵ My italics.

¹⁶ Quinn (1969) 38.

¹⁷ Galinsky (1969), and (1992) 93-108.

¹⁸ Galinsky (1992) 97.

¹⁹ Galinsky (1992) 160.

²⁰ Galinsky (1992) 241.

²¹ Horsfall (1987) 18.

²² Dury-Moyaers (1981) 173.

²³ *LIMC* (1990) Vol I, 1, 388.

²⁴ Cornell (1995).

figurines, but thought that they represented Roman views of a Trojan ancestry from the time after the capture of Veii about 396 B.C.²⁵ In a chapter on the Trojan War in their 2006 book, Bonfante and Swaddling did not even mention the myth or the evidence of the vases and figurines.²⁶ In fact, of the most recent commentators only Horsfall, Cornell and Stephen Harrison²⁷ refer to the extent of the vases found. It is as if it has ceased to be an issue at all.

As a result of my own research I have been able to identify seventy vases which show the Aeneas/Anchises myth, twelve more than Schauenburg identified. I found an extra eight in *LIMC* and an extra four in Beazley.²⁸ The provenance of twenty seven (39%) could be shown to be from Italy or Sicily with seventeen (24%) from southern Etruria. There is still only one vase with a provenance from outside Italy and Sicily (Agora P6180). There are thirteen other representations of the life of Aeneas, such as his involvement with Paris in removing Helen from Sparta, but there are examples of all these other incidents from outside Italy and Sicily. The Aeneas/Anchises myth is the second most popular Trojan War scene from southern Etruria. The Judgment of Paris is the most popular with ninety eight, but we have provenances for twenty other versions of this myth outside Italy and Sicily such as Eleusis and Marseilles. It can be concluded that the views put forward by Bömer and Schauenburg are correct. Most commentators, even when putting forward opposing views, at least agree that there was a foundation legend of Aeneas in southern Etruria in the late sixth century B.C.

I turn now to the Aeneas legend in ancient sources. In Homer's *Iliad* during the duel between Achilles and Aeneas, Poseidon says that Aeneas will not die at Troy, as he and his descendants will rule the men of Troy.²⁹ He does not say where he will rule them. Aeneas is mentioned in other poems of the Epic Cycle. In a fragment of *Cypria*, Aeneas with his wife Eurydice (Kreousa) takes refuge in Troy after Achilles has raided his cattle.³⁰ In *Iliu Persis* Aeneas and his family leave Troy before the sack.³¹ Hesiod in the *Theogony* states that Aeneas is the son of Anchises and Aphrodite, but he also states that the children of Odysseus rule the Tyrrhenians.³² There is then a considerable gap from the eighth to the mid sixth century B.C. when Stesichorus mentions that there is a Troy in the west.³³ Though this is the first text to mention the western migration of the Troy refugees, Stesichorus is not mentioned by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in his survey of the Aeneas legend.³⁴ In the fifth century a fragment of Hellanicus states that Rome is a foundation of Aeneas, but later Ascanius returns to Troy to settle.³⁵ A century later the historian Timaeus, who had visited the sanctuary of the Penates at Lavinium, wrote that Rome was a foundation of Aeneas, but he put the foundation at the same time as the foundation of Carthage (814 B.C.).³⁶

²⁵ Haynes (2000) 205.

²⁶ Bonfante and Swaddling (2006).

²⁷ *OCD*³ 23 (S.J. Harrison).

²⁸ I also made use of many volumes of the *CVA*.

²⁹ Hom. *Il.* 20.156-352.

³⁰ West (2003) *Cypria* Fr 23.

³¹ West (2003) *Iliu Persis* Fr 1.

³² Hes. *Theog.* 1008-10.

³³ *PMGF* Fr 205.

³⁴ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.45ff.

³⁵ *FGrH* 4 F 31.

³⁶ *FGrH* 556 F 59-60.

The earliest known Roman writer to mention the story is Naevius in his *Bellum Punicum* in the third century B.C.³⁷ In the fragments which remain the wives of both (presumably Aeneas and Anchises) leave Troy in tears with many fine men following them. An old man (presumably Anchises) addresses the group relying on his *pietas*. Here is the first link between the legend and the Roman virtue of *pietas*. Because of the fragmentary nature of the remains of Naevius, we have to rely on Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid* for further knowledge of what the *Bellum Punicum* included.³⁸ Servius suggests that Naevius linked the Trojans to the foundation of Rome and made Romulus the grandson of Aeneas. Ennius writes that Aeneas' daughter Iliia married Tiber.³⁹ He too made Romulus the grandson of Aeneas. Cato, writing his *Origines* in the second century B.C., gave the date of Rome's foundation as 751 B.C. He seems to have introduced Lavinia, Amata, Turnus and Mezentius into the Aeneas legend.⁴⁰ Sallust in the first century stated that Rome was founded by the Trojans under Aeneas joined by the Aborigines of the area.⁴¹ Finally in the second half on the first century B.C. Virgil wrote the *Aeneid* which established the version of the legend which is best known to us today.⁴² In his story Aeneas settles in Lavinium after marrying Lavinia, the daughter of the local king Latinus. From there his son Ascanius (Iulus) moves the settlement to Alba Longa, from where many years later his descendant Romulus founds Rome.

One of the most important commentaries on the Aeneas legend, as told in the *Aeneid*, is that of Wilhelm.⁴³ He believes that Virgil's use of Dardanus with an Etruscan origin gives a special place to the Etruscan contribution in the *Aeneid*.⁴⁴ There are hints along the way that this connection will be made in the second half of the epic. In 1.378-80 Aeneas says to Venus that the *Penates* have been snatched from the enemy and that he seeks his homeland Italy. In 2.781-2 the ghost of Creusa tells Aeneas that he will come to the western land where Lydian Tiber flows. This links the Tiber to modern Turkey (Lydia). In 3.96 Apollo tells Aeneas to seek his ancient mother, though he and Anchises do not initially understand where this is meant to be. The *Penates* in Aeneas' dream tell him that Dardanus is sprung from Italy (3.167). This is the first mention of the Etruscan origin of Dardanus. At 3.503 Aeneas states that Dardanus is the founder of Hesperia. In 4.365 an angry Dido says that Aeneas cannot be descended from Dardanus, the founder of Troy. During his meeting with his father in the underworld Aeneas is told of the Dardanian offspring by Anchises (6.756). When the Trojans have finally reached Italy, Aeneas says that '*hic domus, haec patria est*' (7.122). It is worth bearing in mind that the fact that this is his home and his homeland could refer to what will happen in the future rather than a return to a place of origin. In Virgil, Dardanus is son of Jupiter and Electra, daughter of Atlas king of Italy and wife of the Etruscan Corythus. He went to Troy from Etruria (7.205-11; 7.239-44; 8.134). This goes against the version of others, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who claimed that he was from Arcadia. Virgil also points to the link of Iasius, Dardanus' brother, and the *Penates* to Etruria. Thus the *Penates* are returning home with Aeneas (7.120-3). Wilhelm concludes (with regard to the catalogue)

³⁷ Warmington (2006) Vol. 2 Naevius *Bellum Punicum* Fr 1.5-13.

³⁸ Thilo and Hagen (1961).

³⁹ Warmington, E.H (2006) Vol. 1 *Enn. Ann.* 1 Fr 56.

⁴⁰ Cato, *Orig.* 1.

⁴¹ Sall. *Cat.* 6.1.

⁴² Verg. *Aen.*

⁴³ Wilhelm (1992) 129-45.

⁴⁴ I have found that there are seventy five uses of *Dardanus* and related forms in the *Aeneid*, most of them in the second half of the epic.

‘Aeneas has returned home to lead his Etruscans to an Augustan victory’ (Wilhelm (1992) 141).

This leads to the inevitable question of the origin of the Etruscans. Spivey writing in 1997 stated that ‘Etruscan specialists are by and large agreed that the roots of Etruscan culture were indigenous; ancient theories of the foundation of Etruria by immigrants from the east are now usually discounted.’⁴⁵ Beekes, however, in 2003 mounted a convincing argument that the Tyrsenoi (Etruscans) came from Lydia in Mycenaean times, as Herodotus suggests (*Histories* 1.93-4), though he shows that Lydia in Mycenaean times was in the area of the Propontis, with the Trojans on their western boundary.⁴⁶ In Herodotus’ time Lydia had moved further south and this caused him some confusion. Recent DNA evidence has supported the idea that there may be a link between Anatolia and Etruria.⁴⁷ Pellecchia in 2007 showed that DNA from Etruscan cattle was identical to that of cattle in Anatolia.⁴⁸ He showed that these cattle must have reached Italy by sea, as there were no examples of the same DNA from a land route between the two places. In 2007 Achilli *et al.* produced evidence that DNA from inhabitants of Murlo in Tuscany was identical to that of people in Anatolia.⁴⁹ During the Mycenaean period there were famine and wars which drove the Tyrsenoi from Anatolia and might have coincided with Aeneas’ and his followers’ flight from Troy. He might have joined them and settled in Etruria too. This would give a reason for Aeneas being a foundation legend in southern Etruria. Spivey might need to reconsider his position.

What conclusions can be drawn from the evidence of this paper? First, it can be said that Aeneas was the subject of a foundation myth in southern Etruria in the late sixth century B.C. Secondly, a case can now be made for the movement of peoples in Asia Minor to Italy in the late Mycenaean Age. It is possible that Aeneas and the Trojan survivors were among these migrants. This would account for the popularity of Aeneas/Anchises vases in southern Etruria. Thirdly, a strong case can be made for that foundation myth being known in Rome during the period of Etruscan rule in the sixth and early fifth centuries B.C. The fragments of Stesichorus and Hellenicus seem to link Troy to Rome. Fourthly, there may have been a cult worship of Aeneas in Latium in the fourth century B.C., but probably not before that date, though Stephen Harrison says that such a cult remains to be proved.⁵⁰ Fifthly, the myth was a well established theory by the end of the third century B.C. Both Naevius and Ennius link the Trojans to Rome. Sixthly, in the late second century B.C. the family of the Iulii Caesares claimed descent from Iulus, son of Aeneas and grandson of Venus. By the time of Virgil (70-19 B.C.), the story of Aeneas escaping Troy and coming to Italy, and the link through him to the Julian family seem to be well established.

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Abbreviations

ABV Beazley (1956).

ARV² Beazley (1963).

⁴⁵ Spivey (1997) 7.

⁴⁶ Beekes (2003).

⁴⁷ I am grateful for the comments offered after my paper which suggest that this evidence should be treated with caution.

⁴⁸ Pellecchia (2007); Achilli *et al.* (2009).

⁴⁹ Achilli *et al.* (2007).

⁵⁰ *OCD³* 23 (S.J. Harrison).

- BAD* Beazley Archive Database (www.beazley.ox.ac.uk), where * marks an on-line illustration.
- CVA* *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* (1925-)
- LIMC* *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (1990) Zürich: Artemis
- OCD*³ *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition (1996) Oxford: Clarendon Press
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