

TROY, the city where Aeneas' journey begins, is different from the other cities of the Aeneas' Route as it was considered either fictional or lost until the 19th century. Identified as the mound of Hisarlık on the Asian shore of the Dardanelles by Heinrich Schliemann, the authenticity of the site is debated to this day. Another unique aspect of the ancient city is the fact that its cultural significance mostly relies on its presence in the Homeric poem the *Iliad* (750-700 BC), which narrates part of the legendary story of the Trojan War. As a city that according to Herodotus witnessed the beginning of the Eastern-Western conflict, **various civilizations through history have had a desire to claim the city and the story as a part of their cultural identity.**

IN TURKEY

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the country entered a period of shifting from a multicultural empire to a nation state, which created the need to **define a nation and an alternative to the Ottoman Identity.** During the early years of the Republic, several theoretic attempts were made to connect Turks with previous Anatolian civilizations, among which were schools of thoughts such as **New Hellenism and Blue Anatolianism**, which emphasized Classical antiquity and "being Mediterranean". Parallels were drawn between the Trojans and the Turks, especially after the Battle of Gallipoli (1915-1916). Despite not being considered a part of Turkish identity, Troy and Homer have great importance for tourism today and they are still celebrated through festivals and organizations, such as the annual Troia Festival.

IN EUROPE

Despite Europe's geographical distance from the Anatolian region, throughout history different early European tribes and nations have tried to lay claim to Troy and Greece through art and literature. There was a tradition of using and - for all intents and purposes - rewriting the *Aeneid* to **legitimize claims of dominion** over different regions that continued into the Medieval period. It was in this era that Europeans began pushing the narrative of a timeless Eastern - Western conflict to use as a scapegoat for their wars and conquests. Later in the Age of Imperialism (in the 19th and 20th centuries) European countries continued to push the East - West conflict to justify battles against Eastern countries.

The Trojan Horse was only a myth, but its legacy has had a long lasting impact on literature and art.



Reconstruction of the famous Trojan Horse in Çanakkale, Turkey

IN LITERATURE

The fascination with **Troy** and with **Aeneas** is almost obsessive if one reflects on the value of Troy in the world of literature. Troy and Aeneas were present in **English literature:**

Shakespeare's play *Troilus and Cressida* (1602); in Carthage's history and mythology: Aeneas' romantic relationship with Dido, and his journey through Carthage. Therefore, both Troy and Aeneas represent a part of the cultural and historical identity of various European and Mediterranean nations. This can be attributed to a number of factors that are based mainly on Troy's depiction and its fall: a thriving, peaceful and wealthy city, painted like Plato's ideal city Atlantis, was decimated to dust in a brief amount of time, and left no trace or proof of its existence but its surviving people who managed to flee, and among them was Aeneas.

Johann Heinrich Tischbein, *Venus Rescues Paris from his Duel with Menelaus*, 1757



In artwork, European painters depicted the Trojans in their own image, and made little effort to paint clear distinctions between the Trojans and the Greeks.

IN ART

During the period of **New Imperialism** in Europe, with the discovery of important archaeological sites such as that of Troy by Heinrich Schliemann, Europe gained a new fascination with Greek and Trojan artifacts. European would use these artifacts (often illegally removing them from their countries of origin) to connect their own heritage to the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean. Viewing themselves as the legitimate claimants to Ancient Greece, they believed that they had to "protect" the ancient heritage of the Mediterranean from the inhabitants of the East.

TROY has had a long-term impact on the heritage of both Eastern and Western nations that can be traced throughout history. Virgil's *Aeneid* helped immortalize the myth of Troy, and it was mostly through this epic that different leaders and countries made their claims of Trojan ancestry, as they now associated it with being "Roman". While these ancestral claims are more than likely fiction rather than fact, they give clear insight into how important the legacy of Troy has been before and after Virgil wrote his poem. With both endless artistic and literary renditions of the myths surrounding the Trojan War and its aftermath, the city of Troy and the myth of the Trojan War continues to be embraced as cultural heritage amongst different cultures.



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Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme "Aeneas Route"