

The Footsteps of Aeneas: Livy's Quest to Show Rome the Right Path

Livy wrote his first pentad only a year or two after Octavian became Augustus (Luce 1965) and Roman was in the grips of an identity crisis after a turbulent century and two decades of civil war. The whole of Livy's history is ripe for analysis in this context, but I focus on the beginning of the work: the story of Aeneas. Following Luce (1977) in viewing Livy's history as a compilation of moral anecdotes conveyed through notable figures in Rome's past, I examine his story of Aeneas for such *exempla* to compare them to his time of writing. As I also follow Luce (1977) in believing that Livy expressed his own thoughts through his characterizations, I aim to see where Livy diverges from other accounts, and thus where his own moral inclusions are visible. To do so, I contrast his *ab urbe condita* with two contemporary versions of the story of Aeneas: Vergil's *Aeneid* (independent from Livy per Ogilvie 1965) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities* (which first emerged 22 years after Livy's first pentad, *Ant. Rom.* 1.7).

The differences in Livy's version consist of how Aeneas escaped the sack of Troy, his journey to Italy, and his interactions with the native Italians upon his arrival. Through them, Livy depicts Aeneas as peaceful and diplomatic, different from the Greeks, and independent of the will of the gods despite his piety, and all these character traits gain greater meaning when applied to the identity context of Livy's Rome. The mythical ancestor of Rome valued peace and diplomacy, so war was not required to be Roman; he was not Greek, so Romans needed to resist incorporating Greek culture into their own; he was pious but responsible for his own actions, so though the Romans needed to be pious, they still controlled the future of their state.

While the idea of reading Livy's historical characters for moral *exempla* is not at all new, there is relatively little scholarship on Aeneas in particular. Zanker (1990) mentions him in passing before proceeding to the more famous Romulus, Stem (2007) mentions Aeneas only in footnotes, and even Luce (1977) begins his discussion of the origin of Roman character with Romulus and the kings, passing over Aeneas entirely. I believe this exclusive focus on Romulus is an oversight. While Romulus is certainly central to Livy's construction of Roman identity, the history begins with Aeneas, and it is Aeneas' character traits that underlie the remainder of his history. By studying Livy's account of Aeneas in-depth, I hope to expand on the foundational moral character traits in the *ab urbe condita* and apply their significance to the context of Livy's own Rome.

Bibliography

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