



THRACE: the first step of Aeneas' journey



1. Introduction

Thrace is a region in the southeast of Europe lying within the borders of Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. Greek mythology is filled with **Thracian kings** and their stories, such as Diomedes, Tereus, Lycurgus, Phineus, Tegyrus, Eumolpus, Polymestor, Poltys, and Oeagrus (father of Orpheus). The Greek authors regarded the Thracians as **barbarous and warlike people**. Indeed, in literature the Thracians had a **special reputation for savagery**.

3. Thrace as a barbaric country which abuses hospitality

Also **Lycurgus** is mentioned by Virgil (*Aen.* 3.16: *acri quondam regnata Lycurgo*): he was the mythical king of the Edoni in Thrace. He attacked **Dionysus** and his escort, and he also refused to admit **the guest-god** in his country. The story is also told by Homer, Pseudo-Apollodorus and Sophocles.



Lycurgus,
driven mad
by Dionysus,
attacks his wife



4. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13.429-631

Thrace as *contraria tellus*:
opposite in geographical sense
but also hostile (*Met.*13.429)

Thrace as *Polydoreo
manans sanguine terra*:
the land dripping with
Polydorus' blood
(*Met.* 13.629)

5. Thrace as *scelerata terra* both in Virgil and Ovid

Aen. 3.60-61: *scelerata* excedere terra,
linqui pollutum hospitium

Met. 13. 628: *scelerataque limina Thracum*

2. Virgil, *Aeneid* 3.13-68

Thrace is the place of an old Trojan *hospitium*:

*Aen.*3.15:
hospitium antiquum Troiae sociique penates

This guest-friendship changed for a reason:

Aen. 3.55: *fas omne abrumpit*

When Troy was besieged, **Priam** sent **Polydorus** to his Thracian friend **Polymestor**. When the walls of Troy fell, Polymestor killed his guest for the sake of gold. He broke all his sacred obligations, the ties of hospitality.



Polymestor
kills
Polydorus

6. Conclusion: due to the inhospitable country Aeneas decides to leave Thrace.