

THE ORIGIN OF ORIGINS: TROJANS, TURKS AND THE BIRTH OF THE MYTH OF TROJAN ORIGINS IN THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

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Résumé : La première apparition postclassique de descendance des exilés troyens se trouve dans la *Chronique* de Frédégaire (environs de 660), qui décrit les Francs avec les Turcs comme partageant une ascendance commune parmi les réfugiés de la prise de Troie. Bien que cette connexion semble absurde (et les revendications d'origines troyennes des Turcs ont été ridiculisées), elle pourrait être due à la diplomatie byzantine à la fin du 6^{ème} ou du début du VII^e siècle. Frédégaire rapporte le retour des ambassadeurs nommés de Constantinople en 629, qui pourrait être la source de beaucoup de ces histoires orientales dont certains détails correspondent à cette période précise. Alors que le séjour des ambassadeurs a coïncidé avec l'alliance de Héraclius avec les Göktürks, Frédégaire ignore l'implication turque dans les guerres Perses. Curieusement, un matériau similaire se retrouve plusieurs siècles plus tard dans la *Edda* de Snorri Sturluson, qui fournit une ascendance troyenne pour les dieux nordiques dans ce qu'il appelle « la ville turque de Troie ». Écrit bien avant que les Turcs aient conquis le site de Troie, il a parfois été avancé comme un écho des documents de Frédégaire mais semble plus susceptible d'être indépendant. Cet article suggère que le mythe des origines troyennes a fourni un moyen pour les peuples indigènes sans l'histoire de migration de se réinventer dans une histoire sacralisée.

Abstract: The first post-classical appearance of descent from Trojan exiles is found in the Merovingian Chronicle of Fredegar (around 660), who describes the Franks as sharing a common ancestry with the Turks among refugees from the Fall of Troy. While this connection seems absurd (and claims of Trojan origins of the Turks were later ridiculed), it could have originated with Byzantine diplomacy in the late VIth or early VIIth century. Fredegar reports the return of named ambassadors from Constantinople in 629, who could be the source for many of his eastern stories as some details fit that specific time. While the ambassadors' sojourn coincided with Heraclius's alliance with the Göktürks, Fredegar seems unaware of Turkish involvement in the Persian wars. Oddly, similar material is reflected several centuries later in the Icelandic Prose Edda where, in a euhemeristic introduction, Snorri Sturluson finds a Trojan ancestry for the Norse Gods in what he calls « the Turkish city of Troy ». Writing well before the Turks had conquered the site of Troy, it has sometimes been argued as a reflection of the Fredegarian

material but would appear more likely to be independent. This paper suggests that the myth of Trojan origins provided a means for peoples without native migration stories to re-imagine themselves in a sacralized history.

Mots clés : Chronique de Frédégaire, Edda de Snorri Sturluson, Troyens et Turcs.

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Connecting Troy with Turkey probably seems a natural association, as, after all, the site of Hisarlık, generally acknowledged to be that of the 'real' Troy¹, is in the modern Republic of Turkey and Turks have ruled the region since the last decade of the thirteenth century². When the Ottoman Turks began preparing for their final assault and conquest of Constantinople, Sultan Mehmet Fetih is said to have written to the Pope and the King of France claiming that, as Romans and Franks, they should support the Turks in gaining vengeance on the Greeks for the fall of Troy, twenty six centuries earlier³. In 1453, the idea that the nations of Europe could trace their origins back to exiles from Troy was commonly held⁴. Famously, Geoffrey of Monmouth had demonstrated the descent of the Britons from Brutus, grandson of Aeneas, and the story was repeated and elaborated⁵; only in the 16th century was it relegated to myth⁶.

Troy itself was near the very heartland of the Ottoman state while 'Teucrian' – a name derived from Teucer, the mythical ancestor of the Trojans – had been used by Vergil as an alternative name for the Trojans⁷. The leap from 'Teucra' to 'Turcia', the Latin form of Turkey, would seem no great leap and normative in a period when ancient Scythians might be linked to peoples as disparate as the Scots⁸ and the Ottomans⁹ by authors seeking more classical names for modern peoples. So, the idea that the Turks might put forward the same claim seems hardly unusual in the 15th century.

Yet long before the site of Troy had come under Turkish rule, Trojans and Turks had be-

¹ Korfmann, Manfred, Latacz, Joachim, and Hawkins, David, « Was there a Trojan War? », *Archaeology*, 57/3, 2004, pp. 36-41.

² Conquered by Kalem Bey, the Karesi Beylik, in 1306 (Cook, John M., *The Troad: An Archaeological and Topographical Study*, Oxford, 1973, p. 288.)

³ Spencer, Terence, « Turks and Trojans in the Renaissance », *The Modern Language Review*, 47/3, 1952, p. 331.

⁴ Brown, Elizabeth A. R., « The Trojan origins of the French and the Brothers Jean du Tillet », in Murray, Alexander C. (ed.), *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History*, Toronto, 1998, pp. 348-383.

⁵ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, I, 3-18.

⁶ Vergil, Polydore, *Anglica Historia*, Basel, 1534, was the first to doubt the historicity of the Trojan origins of the British as well as of the Matter of Britain.

⁷ Virgil, *Aeneid*, II, 49, etc.

⁸ Barrow, G. W. S., *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 2005, p. 398.

⁹ McCabe, Ina Baghdiantz, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism and the Ancien Regime*, Oxford, 2008, pp. 55-56.

come intertwined in two quite different European medieval contexts. The first of these is also the first post-classical claim of descent from Trojan exiles and is found in the Merovingian *Chronicle* of Fredegar written around 660¹⁰. In it, the author describes the Franks as sharing a common ancestry with the Turks among refugees from the Fall of Troy. In one of the first sections of the *Chronicle*, Fredegar summarizes St. Jerome's universal history. When Jerome mentions the fall of Troy, Fredegar adds:

The origin of the Franks is due to these events. They had Priam as their first king. It is written in books of history how afterwards they had Frigas as king. After this, they divided into two parts. One part went to Macedonia and they are called Macedonians after the people by whom they were received and the region of Macedonia. They had been invited to give assistance to the Macedonians, who were being overwhelmed by neighbouring peoples. Afterwards when united with that people, they gave birth to a great many offspring and from that stock the Macedonians were made into the strongest of fighters. In the future, in the days of King Phylip [Philip] and his son Alexander, report confirms what kind of courage they possessed. For the other part, which advanced from Frigia [Phrygia], had been deceived by the fraud of Olexo [Ulysses] and, though not taken captive, had nevertheless been cast out from there. Wandering through many regions with their wives and children they chose from amongst themselves a king by the name of Francio; from him they are called Franks. Francio, it is said, was very strong in war, and for a long time fought with a great many peoples, but in the end, after devastating part of Asia, he entered Europe and settled between the Rhine or the Danube and the sea¹¹.

He then writes of how, after Francio's death, the Franks were ruled by dukes until Pompey's attempted conquest of Germania. The author implies that his failure was due to the fact that

No people up to the present time have been able to conquer the Franks, but the Franks have been able to subjugate them to their authority. Cast in the same mold were the Macedonians, who were of the same descent, and although they had been ground down by brutal wars, still they have always tried to live free from external domination¹².

¹⁰ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, IV, 81 appears to date the writing to some time between 660 and 662/3 in a reference to the reign of Constans II in which events of 659 are alluded to and Constans's Italian expedition is unknown.

¹¹ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, II, 4-5: *Exinde origo Francorum fuit. Priamo primo regi habuerunt; postea per historiarum libros scriptum est, qualiter habuerunt regi Friga. Postea partiti sunt in duabus partibus. Una pars perrexit in Macedoniam, vocati sunt Macedonis secundum populum, a quem recepti sunt, et regionem Macedoniae, qui oppremebatur a gentes vicinas, invitati ab ipsis fuerunt, ut eis praeberent auxilium. Per quos postea cum subiuncti in plurima procreatione crevissent, ex ipso genere Macedonis fortissimi pugnatores effecti sunt; quod in postremum in diebus Phyliphi regis et Alexandri filii sui fama confirmat, illorum fortitudine qualis fuit. Nam et illa alia pars, quae de Frigia progressa est, ab Olexo per fraude decepti, tamen non captivati, nisi exinde eieci, per multis regionibus pervacantis cum uxores et liberos, electum a se regi Francione nomen, per quem Franci vocantur. In postremum, eo quod fortissimus ipse Francio in bellum fuisse fertur, et multo tempore cum plurimis gentibus pugnam gerens, partem Asiae vastans, in Eurupam dirigens, inter Renum vel Danuvium et mare consedit.* Translations of Fredegar are from Callander Murray, Alexander, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: a reader*, Toronto, 2008, pp. 591-594.

¹² Fredegar, *Chronicle*, II, 6: *Post haec nulla gens usque in presentem diem Francos potuit superare, qui tamen eos suae ditione potuissent subiugare. Ad ipsum instar et Macedonis, qui ex eadem generatione fuerunt, quamvis gravia bella fuissent adtrite, tamen semper liberi ab externa dominatione vivere conati sunt.*

Having established the ultimate origins and character of the Franks, he then adds a third branch (in addition to the Franks and Macedonians) of the Trojan people:

A third people of the same origin were the Torci [Turks] as their fame confirms. When the Franks had experienced many battles in their travels through Asia and entered Europe, one part of them settled on the bank of the river Danube between the Ocean and Thrace. They even chose from among themselves a king, called Torquotus, from whom the Turks get their name. The Franks in this journey made their way with their wives and children, and there were no people that could withstand them in battle. But since they fought a great many battles, when they settled on the Rhine, a small band of them arrived, for they were diminished by Torquotus¹³.

A fourth people, the Romans, were, of course, also derived from Troy and the author does not leave them out:

The first king of the Latins arose at this time, for they had fled from Troy, and he and Frigas were from that stock. But on account of the capture of Troy and the flood of Assyrians and their persecution, they had left that city and region in two parts. For that reason, they established one kingdom of Latins and another kingdom of Frigians. Aeneas ruled the Latins, who were later called Romans, in the third year after the capture of Troy, or as some believe, in the eighth year. Aeneas and Frigas, it is said, were brothers¹⁴.

A second version of this same account is given in the third book of the chronicle where it has been interpolated into the text of Gregory of Tours' *History*. There, we learn that:

Concerning the kings of the Franks, blessed Jerome has written¹⁵ who they were once upon a time, and before him the poet Virgil told the story. They had Priam as their first king. When Ulysses took Troy by deceit, they departed from there. Afterward they had Frigas as king. Divided into two, part of them proceeded to Macedonia. The others under Frigas were called Frigians; they wandered about Asia and settled on the shore of the Danube and the sea of Ocean. Again there was a division into two, and one part of them under Francio their king entered Europe. Wandering about Europe, they settled along with their wives and children on the bank of the Rhine. And they sought to build a city named after Troy not far from the Rhine. This work was begun but was left uncompleted. The remaining part of them that stayed on the bank of the Danube elected from among themselves a king, Torcoth by name and were then called Turks after him. The others are called Franci after Francio. For a long time afterwards under their dukes they always rejected the rule of strangers¹⁶.

¹³ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, II, 6: *Tercia ex eadem origine gentem Torcorum fuisse fama confirmat, ut, cum Franci Asiam pervacantis pluribus proeliis transissent, ingredientis Eurupam, super litore Danuviae fluminis inter Ocianum et Traciam una ex eis ibidem pars resedit Electum a se utique regem nomen Torquoto, per quod gens Turquorum nomen accepit. Franci huius aeteneris gressum cum uxores et liberes agebant, nec erat gens, qui eis in proelium potuisset resistere. Sed dum plurima egerunt proelia, quando ad Renum consederunt, dum Turquoto menuati sunt, parva ex eis manus aderat.*

¹⁴ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, II, 8: *Primus rex Latinorum tunc in ipso tempore surrexit, eo quod a Troia fugaciter exierant, et ex ipso genere et Frigas: fuerunt, nisi per ipsa captivitate Troiae et inundatione Assiriorum et eorum persecutione, in duas partes egressi et ipsa civitate et regione. Unum exinde regnum Latinorum ereguntur et alium Frigorum. Post tercio anno capta Troia Latini, qui postea Romani nuncupati sunt, et, ut quidam volunt, post octavo anno regnavit Aeneas. Aeneas et Frigas fertur germani fuissent.*

¹⁵ A reference to Book II.

¹⁶ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, III, 2: *De Francorum vero regibus beatus Hieronimus, qui iam olim fuerant, scripsit, quod prius Virgilii poetae narrat storia: Priamum primum habuisse regi; cum Troia fraude Olexe caperetur, exinde fuissent egressi;*

That is all that the *Chronicle of Fredegar* has to say about Turks and, if one simply reads it as it is, it would appear to be relatively straightforward. Like the link between the Franks and the Trojans in the ancient past, the link with the Macedonians is clearly extremely prestigious. The Macedonians were one of the four great monarchies depicted in the *Book of Daniel*, as explained by St Jerome¹⁷, as well as in the pagan tradition¹⁸, and Alexander the Great had long been the subject of popular myth and legend.

The Turks, though, are a strange addition and one that was only briefly current. When Fredegar wrote, the nearest Turkish state, the Western Göktürk Khaganate, was in Central Asia and had its center in modern Kyrgyzstan¹⁹. The distance between them and the Franks appears to be so large that any direct contact seems unlikely. Possibilities have been previously suggested for the identity of Fredegar's Turks other than the Göktürks, including the Avars²⁰, Bulgars²¹, and Huns²², as well as the more obscure Turcilingi²³. However, none really fit. The only one of these to have self-identified as « Turks » were the Göktürks, the first people to have called themselves « Turks » and any earlier people would make little sense. Usage of the ethnonym « Turk » assumes both wide knowledge of the name and the sort of use of it as a collective for Turkic-speaking steppe peoples that would have been impossible for someone in the seventh century; it is the sort of linguistic collective term that only makes sense in retrospect. Instead, the presence of the Turks can help explain this Urtext of medieval Trojan origins.

The Göktürks appear in contemporary Byzantine sources as *Τουρκῶν*²⁴. Their khaganate was the first Turkish empire and became one of the most powerful states on Earth, stretching from the Caucasus to northern China. When the Persians invaded and occupied Syria, Palestine, Egypt and advanced to the Bosphorus during Heraclius's reign, the Western Khaganate proved to be one of the Byzantines' most important allies. In 625, the Emperor Heraclius, at a point when the armies of both Avars and the Persians were massed outside the walls of Constantinople itself, sent an emissary named Andreus to the Western Turkish Khagan to propose a wedding match of Eudocia Epiphania, Heraclius's eldest child, with one of the Turkish rulers (whether Tung Yabghu, Ziebel, or a son is unclear). In the following years, though, the Göktürk Khaganate broke up. The Turkish name was largely in eclipse from the mid-seventh century on and was used to describe solely Central Asian peoples.

postea Frigam habuissent regem; befaria divisione partem eorum Macedonia fuisse adgressa; alii cum Friga vocati Frigiis, Asiam pervacantes, litoris Danuvii fluminis et mare Ocianum consedissee; dinuo byfaria devisione Eurupam media ex ipsis pars cum Francionem eorum rege ingressa fuisse. Eurupam pervagantis, cum uxoris et liberis Reni ripam occupant, nec procul a Reno civitatem ad instar Trogiae nominis aedificare conati sunt. Ceptum quidem, sed imperfectum opus remansit. Residua eorum pars, que super litore Danuvii remanserat, elictum a se Torcoth nomen regem, per quem ibique vocati sunt Turchi; et per Francionem hii alii vocati sunt Franci. Multis post temporibus cum ducibus externas dominationis semper negantes.

¹⁷ Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Daniele libri III*, 7, 6, etc.

¹⁸ Swain, Joseph Ward, « The Theory of the Four Monarchies Opposition History under the Roman Empire », *CPh*, 35/1, 1940, pp. 1-21.

¹⁹ Barthold, Wilhelm, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, Leiden, 1956, p. 83.

²⁰ Wilmanns, Wilhelm, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des älteren deutsche Literatur*, Bonn, 1887, pp. 111-118.

²¹ Wagner, Norbert, « Die Torci bei Fredegar », *Beiträge zur Namensforschung*, 19, 1984, pp. 402-410.

²² Wilmanns, Wilhelm, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des älteren deutsche Literatur*, Bonn, 1887, pp. 111-118.

²³ Cahen, Claude, « Frédegair et les Turcs », in *Économies et sociétés au Moyen Âge: Mélanges offerts à Édouard Perroy*, Paris, 1973, pp. 24-27.

²⁴ Menander Protector, *Histories*, fr. 4, 2, etc.

They would remain obscure for several centuries before reemerging at the end of the millennium as a Muslim people.

Other historians and chroniclers of the Franks don't give anything approaching this tale. Gregory of Tours had no Trojan story at all but the eighth century *Liber Historiae Francorum*²⁵, and later chronicles consider Troy as the origin of the Franks. But none mention the Turks. The Turks were not 'current' anymore (though they would reappear in later medieval texts regarding Frankish origins)²⁶. Fredegar's use of the name itself suggests that his sources come from a very narrow chronological period between 558 (the first Göktürk contact with the Byzantines) and 632 (Göktürk collapse) with the 620s as the most likely. In Fredegar's passage, mention of the Turks as an additional Trojan people only makes sense if they were a hugely successful (and probably warlike) people. Their (apparently doubtful) relationship with Franks and Macedonians was after all demonstrated by their *fama*. At the time Fredegar wrote around 660, they had recently become vassals of Tang China, but, a few decades earlier, they would have qualified.

But, even then, it is doubtful their *fama* could cross Europe to reach Francia directly. The only place where Franks could make contact either with Göktürks or with their *fama* was Constantinople²⁷. It seems likely then that the myth of Frankish Trojan origins might have something to do with Byzantine diplomacy²⁸. The Franks, especially the Austrasian (eastern) kingdom, were long time allies of the Byzantines, albeit not exactly reliable ones. Frankish historiographers appear to remember close diplomatic ties with Byzantium (and political interferences from Byzantium) in the sixth century²⁹. Embassies to Constantinople and contacts during the seventh century are also known, albeit not from Byzantine sources³⁰.

The best known and longest claimed descendants of the Trojans were, of course, the Romans. In Heraclius's time, the two most powerful foreign allies of the Roman Empire were the Turks and the Franks. Both had been allies of the empire in the previous century more often than not³¹ and imperial gold had found its way to both Turkish and Frankish rulers. It is conceivable that a treaty of alliance might have made mention of all three peoples, Romans, Franks and Turks, as sharing a common Trojan descent though no surviving texts have that sort of style. A few decades later, when Fredegar wrote, the legend might have been recalled but, with Göktürks and Avars both in severe decline, the circumstances surrounding the origin of the claim had already been forgotten.

²⁵ *Liber Historiae Francorum*, I, 1.

²⁶ Primas, Hugh, *Grandes Chroniques de France*, prologue; William of Tyre, *Historia rerum gestarum in partibus transmarinis*, I, 1-2.

²⁷ Ewig, Eugen, « Le Mythe Troyen et l'histoire des Francs », in Rouche, Michel (ed.), *Clovis, histoire & mémoire*, vol. I, *Le baptême de Clovis, l'événement*, Paris, 1997, pp. 845-847.

²⁸ Wood, Ian, « Ethnicity and the Ethnogenesis of the Burgundians », in Wolfram, Herwig, and Pohl, Walter (eds.), *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, I, Vienna, 1999, p. 58. Wood's extremely cautious suggestion is that it might date as far back in time as the reign of Valentinian I (c. 369).

²⁹ Procopius, *De Bello*, V, 5, 8; VII, 33, 4; VIII, 20 e 24; *Epistolae Austrasicae*, 18-20, 27, 29, 30-39, 42-45, 47; Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiae*, III, 33; VI, 2; VI 24 ff.; X, 2; Agathias, I, 4.

³⁰ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, IV, 62.

³¹ Menander Protector, *History*, fr. 4, 2; 10, 1. The alliance had broken down between 576 and 581 though Menander says that the war with Persia.

Fredegar wrote of the year 629, « the envoys that Dagobert had sent to Emperor Heraclius returned home. Their names were Servatus and Paternus. They brought news that they had concluded an everlasting peace with Heraclius »³². Servatus and Paternus are otherwise unknown but their embassy might also be the source for some of Fredegar's other information about Heraclius as the *Chronicle* includes fairly current events up to that point in a fairly accurate order. While Fredegar had heard of a battle and single combat between Heraclius and a Persian champion³³ datable to 627³⁴, he makes no mention in the *Chronicle* of what would later be the best-known event of Heraclius's reign. In the high Middle Ages, accounts of how, after the defeat of the Persians, Heraclius had recovered the True Cross and restored it to Jerusalem were well known in the west³⁵. Fredegar – and with him the rest of the seventh century west – though have no inkling of either the loss or the recovery of the cross³⁶. Such a tale would, one might expect, be a natural feature for a work like Fredegar's that revels in the entertaining anecdote. But it's missing. That lack combined with knowledge of the battle with Rhazates helps to demonstrate Fredegar's source. The battle of Nineveh occurred in 627; the return of the cross to Jerusalem only occurred in September 629. Servatus and Paternus had already returned to the West by then and only carried the news that had been current when they left. They knew nothing of the restoration of the cross; neither did Fredegar. Within only a few years, Turks as a major power would have vanished and they would not find their way into Byzantine, let alone western, sources for centuries. Other powers would rise and new versions of origins myths would appear. This odd story only makes sense in the context of a relatively narrow window of time, even if common Trojan origins might crop up again at the far end of the Middle Ages.

That might seem to be the end of the Trojan Turks. The Trojan Franks forgot their Turkish cousins even while the Franks developed their own mythical origins in ever more elaborate detail. Other peoples developed their own myths of Trojan origins but there was no more talk of Turks and Trojans in most of Europe. When they return, though, the story is odder and from further afield. In the first part of the thirteenth century in Iceland, Snorri Sturluson began compiling works on Norse history and on the myths that had preceded Christianity. While some of the stories derived from his *Prose Edda* or *Heimskringla* are extremely well known in the present, usually, the manner in which Snorri himself presented the Norse Gods is skipped over. Snorri was a Christian and lived two centuries after the triumph of Christianity in Iceland. By his time, the worship of the old gods had long since faded and their legends become little more than stories of times gone by³⁷. Snorri himself did not believe in them and thought that they had been famous humans who had lived in the past and only after death had they come to be worshipped³⁸. These humans, he ex-

³² Fredegar, *Chronicle*, IV, 62: *Eo anno legati Dagoberti, quos ad Aeraclio imperatore direxerat, nomenibus Servatus et Paternus ad eodem revertuntur, nunciantes pacem perpetuam cum Aeraclio firmasse.*

³³ Fredegar, *Chronicle*, IV, 64.

³⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 318; see also Wander, Steven, « The Cyprus Plates and the *Chronicle* of Fredegar », *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 29, 1975, pp. 345-346.

³⁵ E.g., William of Tyre, *Historia rerum gestarum in partibus transmarinis*, I, 1-2; Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, 137.

³⁶ Hrabanus Maurus, *Homiliae*, 70, 131, is the earliest western source.

³⁷ Davidson, Ellis, *Gods and Myths of the Viking Age*, New York, 1981, pp. 23-24.

³⁸ Sturluson, Snorri, *Prose Edda*, Prologus, 1.

plained, were Trojans who deliberately confused the past to fool the simple-minded natives of the north:

It is told of the Turks, how the men from Asia, who are called Æsir, falsified the tales of the things that happened in Troy, in order that the people should believe them to be gods. King Priam in Troy was a great chief over all the Turkish host, and his sons were the most distinguished men in his whole army. That excellent hall, which the Æsir called Brime's Hall, or beer-hall, was King Priam's palace. As for the long tale that they tell of Ragnarok, that is the wars of the Trojans. When it is said that Oku-Thor angled with an ox-head and drew on board the Midgard-serpent, but that the serpent kept his life and sank back into the sea, then this is another version of the story that Hector slew Volukrontes, a famous hero, in the presence of Achilles, and so drew the latter onto him with the head of the slain, which they likened unto the head of an ox, which Oku-Thor had torn off. When Achilles was drawn into this danger, on account of his daring, it was the salvation of his life that he fled from the fatal blows of Hector, although he was wounded. It is also said that Hector waged the war so mightily, and that his rage was so great when he caught sight of Achilles, that nothing was so strong that it could stand before him. When he missed Achilles, who had fled, he soothed his wrath by slaying the champion called Roddros. But the Æsir say that when Oku-Thor missed the serpent, he slew the giant Hymer. In Ragnarok the Midgard-serpent came suddenly upon Thor and blew venom onto him, and thus struck him dead. But the Æsir could not make up their minds to say that this had been the fate of Oku-Thor, that anyone stood over him dead, though this had so happened. They rushed headlong over old sagas more than was true when they said that the Midgard-serpent there got his death; and they added this to the story, that Achilles reaped the fame of Hector's death, though he lay dead on the same battlefield on that account. This was the work of Elenus and Alexander, and Elenus the Æsir called Ale. They say that he avenged his brother, and that he lived when all the gods were dead, and after the fire was quenched that burned up Asgard and all the possessions of the gods. Pyrrhus

³⁹ Sturluson, Snorri, *Prose Edda*, Skáldskaparmál, Epilogue, 5, 8: ok flá næst frá Tyrkjum, hvernig Asiamenn þeir er Æsir eru kalladir fölsuðu frásagnir þær frá þeim tíðindum er gerðusk í Troju til fless at landfólkit skyldi trúa flá guðvera. Priamus konungur í Troju var höfðingi mikill yfir öllum her Tyrkja ok hans synir váru tignastir af öllum her hans. Sá salr hinn ágæti er Æsir kölluðu Brimis sal eða bjórsal, flat var höll Priamus konungs. En þat er þeir gera langa frásögn of ragnrökr, þat er Trojumanna orrosta. fiat er frá sagt at Ökuþórr engdi oxahöfði ok dró at borði Miðgarðsorm, en ormrinn helt svá lífinu at hann sœktisk í hafit. Eptir þeim doemum er þetta sagt er Ektor drap Volukrontem ágætan kappu at ás-jánda inum mikla Akille ok teygði hann svá at sér meðhöfði hins drepna þess er þeir jöfnuðu til oxans þess er Ökuþórr hafði höfðuð af. En er Akilleus var dreginn í þetta ófoeri meðsinu kappi þá var honum sú ein lífshjálpin at þýja undan banvænligu höggvi Hektoris ok þó sárr. Svá er ok sagt at Ektor sótti svá ákaþiga orrostuna ok svá miklir váru ofrhugir hans er hann sá Akilleus at engi hlutr var svá sterkr at standask mætti fyrir honum, ok er hann misti Akilleus ok hann var þýðr þá sefaði hann svá reiði sina at hann drap þann kappu er Roddros hét. Svá sögðu Æsir at þá er Ökuþórr misti ormsins þá drap hann Ymi jötunn, en viðragnarökr kom Miðgarðsormr váveipiga at fiór ok blés á hann eitri ok hjó hann til bana, en eigi nentu Æsir at segja svá at Ökuþórr hefði þi látizk at einn stigi yfir hann dauðan þótt svá hefði verit, en meir hröpuðu þeir frásögninni en satt var en þeir sögðu at Miðgarðsormr fengi þar bana. En þat foerðu þeir til, þótt Akilleus bar banaorðaf Ektori þá lá hann dauðr á sama velli af þeim sökum. fiat gerðu þeir Elenus ok Alexander. fiann Elenus kalla Æsir Ála. fiat segja þeir at hann hefndi bróður sins ok hann lifði þá er öll goðin váru dauðok sloknaðr var eldrinn sá er brendr var Ásgarðr ok allar eignir goðanna. En Pirrus, honum jöfnuðu þeir til Fenrisúlfs, hann drap Óðin, en Pirrus mátti vargr heita at þeira trú þviat eigi þýrði hann gríðastöðunum er hann drap konunginn í hofinu fyrir stalla fiórs. Þat kalla þeir Surtaloga er Troja brann. En Móði ok Magni synir Ökuþórs kvámu at krefja landa Ála eða Viðar. Hann er Eneas, hann kom braut af Troju ok vann síðan stór verk. Svá er ok sagt at synir Ektoris kómu til Frigialands ok settusk sjálfir í þat ríki, en ráku í braut Elenum. Translations are from Brodeur, Arthur Gilchrist, *The Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson, New York, 1916.

they compared with the Fenris-wolf. He slew Odin, and Pyrrhus might be called a wolf according to their belief, for he did not spare the peace-steads, when he slew the king in the temple before the altar of Thor. The burning of Troy they called the flame of Surt. Mode and Magne, the sons of Oku-Thor, came to crave the land of Ale or Vidar. He is Aeneas. He came away from Troy, and wrought thereupon great works. It is said that the sons of Hector came to Frigialand and established themselves in that kingdom, but banished Elenus³⁹.

Not only was Norse mythology to be understood as being based on Trojan themes but it was from « that goodliest of homes and haunts that ever have been, which is called Troy, even that which we call Turkland »⁴⁰ that the Æsir had come. In Troy, Odin had a prophetic dream and

made ready to journey out of Turkland, and was accompanied by a great multitude of people, young folk and old, men and women; and they had with them much goods of great price. And wherever they went over the lands of the earth, many glorious things were spoken of them, so that they were held more like gods than men⁴¹.

Snorri Sturluson's Trojan ancestry of the Norse Gods is odd in many ways though certainly one of the strangest aspects is his repeated identification of the original Æsir not merely as mortal Trojan exiles but as beings Turks. As the texts were written before the Turks had conquered the site of Troy, it has sometimes been argued as a reflection of the Fredegarian material⁴² but would appear more likely to be independent.

Snorri's Troy, while intended as that of the classical tradition, is in a strange place; it would seem that Snorri placed it on the northern side of the Black Sea⁴³. Yet, Snorri was no fool. He was not even the only one of his contemporaries to place Troy somewhere near the Crimea. French authors a few decades prior had already made that connection⁴⁴ and it was a logical one. They knew, as did Snorri, that Troy had been located near the Bosphorus and controlled the straits from the Asian side. They also knew of the existence of two straits called Bosphorus: the strait at Constantinople connecting the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea and the other connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov (now called the Straits of Kerch). In that age, the River Don – or Tanias – marked the line between Asia and Europe⁴⁵. Tmutorakan, the chief city controlling the Cimmerian Bosphorus, was ancient, powerful and rich. It could trace its history back over two thousand years and had been a mighty place in

⁴⁰ Sturluson, Snorri, *Prose Edda*, Prologus, 3: *var gert þat hús ok herbergi, er ágætast hefir verit, er kallat Trjóa, þar sem vér köllum Tyrkland.*

⁴¹ Sturluson, Snorri, *Prose Edda*, Prologus, 4: *Fyrir þá sök fjóstist hann at byrja ferð sína af Tyrklandi ok hafði með sér mikinn fjölda liðs, unga menn ok gamla, karla ok konur, ok höfðu með sér marga gersamliga hluti. En hvar sem þeir fóru yfir lönd, þá var ágæti mikit frá þeim sagt, svá at þeir þóttu líkari goðum en mönnum.*

⁴² Dronke, Ursula and Peter, « The prologue of the prose Edda: explorations of a Latin background », in Petursson, Einar G. and Kristjánsson, Jonas (eds.), *Sjötú ritgerdir: helgadar Jakobi Benediktssyni 20 júlí 1977*, Reykjavík, 1977, pp. 153-176.

⁴³ Sturluson, Snorri, *Heimskringla*, Ynglinga saga, 2.

⁴⁴ Pritsak, Omeljan, *The origin of Rus'*, vol. I, *Old Scandinavian sources other than the Sagas*, Cambridge Mass., 1981, p. 247.

⁴⁵ Sturluson, Snorri, *Heimskringla*, Ynglinga saga, 1.

the past⁴⁶. In it, these authors ‘found’ Troy as not only was it in the right place, but, more importantly, as Snorri and other writers of his time knew the Greeks had sailed northeastward from their homeland⁴⁷. When medieval people thought of Greeks, the first place that they would have thought of would not have been Athens but would have been Constantinople; « Greek-land »⁴⁸ was centred in Thrace and Western Asia Minor. So, if the Greeks went over the sea to Troy, then Troy logically had to have been at the other Bosphorus, the one on the other side of the Black Sea. Tmutorakan fit all they knew of Troy far better than anything in Asia Minor as the ‘real’ Troy.

In that region around the year 1200 lived a Turkic people called variously Kipchaks, Cumans, or Polovtsy who had replaced other Turkic tribes in the region. Clearly, the well-informed Snorri must have concluded, Troy was a Turkish city and all else followed from that: if the original Aesir had come from Troy, not only were they Asians, something supported by the apparent similarity of the names (*Ásiamanna, er er æsir váru*)⁴⁹ but that they were also Turks and would have brought Turkish law and Turkish culture with them when they migrated to Sweden:

The fields and the choice lands in that place seemed fair to Odin, and he chose for himself the site of a city which is now called Sigtún. There he established chieftains in the fashion which had prevailed in Troy; he set up also twelve head-men to be dooms men over the people and to judge the laws of the land; and he ordained also all laws as, there had been before, in Troy, and according to the customs of the Turks⁵⁰.

The new Troy would become the seat of the first Swedish kingdom; not only were the rulers of Sweden and Norway directly descended from these exiles but their Asian (that is Turkic) language was adopted by all the people already there, Snorri tells us, as well as in Denmark, Saxland, and even England⁵¹.

⁴⁶ Strabo, *Geogr.*, XI, 2, 10, states that the city (as Hermonassa) had been founded by Ionians in the seventh century BC.

⁴⁷ E.g., Ovid, *Met.*, XII, 11-78.

⁴⁸ *Grikkland* in Snorri.

⁴⁹ Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, Prologus, 4.

⁵⁰ Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, Prologus, 5: *Par þótti Óðni fagrir vellir ok landskostir góðir ok kaus sér þar borgstað, er nú heita Sigtún. Skipaði hann þar höfðingjum ok í þá líking, sem verit hafði í Trója, setti tólf höfuðmenn í staðinum at dæma landslög, ok svá skipaði hann réttum öllum sem fyrr hafði verit í Trója ok Tyrkir váru vanir.*

⁵¹ Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, Prologus, 5: *Peir æsir tóku sér kvánföng þar innan lands, en sumir sonum sínum, ok urðu þessar ættir fjölmennar, at umb Saxland ok allt þaðan of norðrhálfur dreifðist svá, at þeira tunga, Ásiamanna, var eigin tunga um öll þessi lönd. Ok þat þykkjast menn skynja mega af því, at rituð eru langfedganöfn þeira, at þau nöfn hafa fylgt þessi tungu ok þeir æsir hafa haft tunguna norðr hingat í heim, í Nóreg ok í Svíþjóð, í Danmörk ok í Saxland, ok í Englandi eru forn landsheiti eða staðaheiti, þau er skilja má, at af annarri tungu eru gefin en þessi («The Æsir took wives of the land for themselves, and some also for their sons; and these kindreds became many in number, so that throughout Saxland, and thence all over the region of the north, they spread out until their tongue, even the speech of the men of Asia, was the native tongue over all these lands. Therefore men think that they can perceive, from their forefathers’ names which are written down, that those names belonged to this tongue, and that the Æsir brought the tongue hither into the northern region, into Norway and into Sweden, into Denmark and into Saxland. But in England there are ancient lists of land-names and place-names which may show that these names came from another tongue than this»).*

These two accounts of Turks and Trojans, odd as they are, might actually be able to reveal something about the mindset of the authors and manner in which memories of Troy were transformed in the Middle Ages. Interestingly, the peoples of that period who claimed (or were claimed) to have Trojan roots were, with the major exception of the Turks, peoples who had no history of migration. While the Goths, Anglo-Saxons, Normans, Lombards, and so on could easily claim a history of having come from somewhere else, the peoples who claimed Trojan origin could not. From at least the time of England's Bede, newly Christianized peoples recast their histories as « new Israels ». Like the original biblical Israel, Bede depicted the English as a people who had been chosen by God and had made a great migration to a new Promised Land, replacing a lesser prior population⁵². For the English, this was a relatively straightforward imagining, as the Anglo-Saxons in Bede's time knew that their ancestors had arrived from across the sea in the relatively recent past and had, in their new land, become Christians. Now, they could be seen as having a clear destiny of future greatness as the new Chosen People⁵³.

While the English version was probably the most self-consciously developed of these, other nations could make similar re-imaginings of « authentic » histories of migration and imagine themselves as being new Israels. Many looked to a migration from Scandinavia, whether recent (as for the R'us⁵⁴ and Icelanders⁵⁵) or at a more distant time (as for the Spanish Christians with their claimed Visigothic origins⁵⁶ and Lombards⁵⁷) though that was far from the only starting point. Other peoples, like the Arabs, Bretons, Bulgars, Croats, Jews, Magyars, Scots, Serbs, and, of course, the Turks themselves, all had strong traditions of migrations in the recent past in their own historical traditions.

But not all medieval peoples could do so. Some, notably the British who had been pushed aside by English invaders, the Norse in their homelands, and the Franks had no memories of great migrations in their collective pasts. In the new sacralized Christian history, autochthonous origins placed them in the unenviable role of the Biblical Canaanites rather than that of the Hebrews. Fredegar, with his faulty knowledge of what had probably originated as a diplomatic fiction, had provided a powerful alternative. Instead of originating on the south bank of the lower Rhine as Gregory of Tours had thought⁵⁸, the Franks now could also imagine themselves as a new Israel, a Chosen People with a sacred history of Exodus into their Promised Land and a future destiny of greatness. Not only did the Trojan origin myth turn them into a New Israel, but it also made the Franks more noble and at least the equals of the Romans. Repeated increasingly in Frankish historiography in the centuries in which it was evolving into French history, the tale was soon imitated by other peoples who also lacked such myths. The British, beginning first with Nennius in the ninth century⁵⁹

⁵² Hanning, Robert, *The Vision of History in Early Britain*, New York, 1966, p. 70.

⁵³ Cowdrey, Herbert E. J., « Bede and the English People », *Journal of Religious History*, 11/4, 1981, pp. 501-523.

⁵⁴ *Russian Primary Chronicle*, 859-866.

⁵⁵ Ari Þorgilsson, *Íslendingabók*, 1.

⁵⁶ Jordanes, *Getica*, 4.

⁵⁷ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, I, 1-7.

⁵⁸ Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, II, 9.

⁵⁹ Nennius, *Historia Brittonum*, I, 10-17.

but later developed much more elaborately by Gregory of Monmouth⁶⁰, too needed such a tale. They knew that their ancestors had been present in the British Isles before the coming of the Saxons and that they were the people who had been there when the Romans arrived. Now, they could claim not simply to be the people who had been there but the equals in nobility to Romans and Franks. As the British legend spread within the « Matter of Britain » alongside the French chronicles, the story became even more prestigious. Like Franks and Britons, the Swedes had been in their homeland for as long as anyone recalled; Scandinavia (as Scandza) appeared in late classical and early medieval sources as the starting point of migrations not as their end⁶¹. Snorri's fiction, even if he believed it (as seems not impossible), gave the Scandinavians mythic equality with the peoples to their south. All three peoples needed myths of origins similar to those of the Biblical Israelites and the ancient Romans, so all 'invented' them by borrowing the noblest best story of European origins they could find, that of the Trojans. Fredegar's repetition of diplomatic myth as fact, something made clear by the inclusion of the Turks, then, was a happy accident that would create a new and more powerful 'history', something that other peoples without migration myths of their own could – and would – emulate.

⁶⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, I, 3-18, ff.

⁶¹ Jordanes, *Getica*, IV, 25; Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, I, 1; etc.