

The Paphlagonian Enetoi / Veneti.
The history of a foundation myth in Polish, Croatian, and Russian
Historiography and Literature.

Classical Philology has shown, that the myth of the Paphlagonian people of the Hene-toi—mentioned among others by Homer, Pseudo-Scymnos, Strabo and Livy—is the earliest known ethnogenetical myth which connects the origin of a European people to the history of the Trojan war. This myth, which might have inspired the Roman myth of the Trojan descent of Aeneas, has been rediscovered in the first half of the sixteenth century and since then played for more than three centuries a prominent role in Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern European historiography and literature.

It was around 1538 in the Wittenberg circle of Philipp Melanchthon, Kaspar Peucer and Georg Sabinus, who were working on the edition of the *Chronica Carionis*, that for the first time a connection was made between the people of the Ouenedai, which according to Ptolemy's *Geography* lived along the coast of the Baltic Sea, and the people of the Paphlagonian Enetoi/Veneti which had by then become a commonplace in the historiography of Padua and Venice. The myth became widely known through Melanchthon's *Epistola de origine gentis Henetae, Polonicae seu Sarmaticae* which was printed together with Wenceslaus Grodecki's *Tabula Poloniae* in 1558 and reprinted in Mączyński's first Latin-Polish Dictionary of 1564. Since then it had left its trace in the great historiographical works of Polish humanists such as Marcin Kromer, Maciej Strykowski, Alexander Guagnin and Stanisław Sarnicki. The humanists' fascination with the myth was due to the possibility to provide the national culture with a past which could compete with the Greek and Roman past and was not inferior to other European humanist cultures.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century the myth migrated into Czech and Croatian historiography and appears prominently in works like Mauro Orbino's *Il regno de gli slavi* (1606) Faustus Vrančić's *De Slowinis seu Sarmatis* (1606), providing evidence for otherwise not documented humanist contacts in Easter Europe. The history of the Enetoi/Veneti further illustrates the reception of humanist historiography in Enlightenment Russia, e.g. by M. V. Lomonosov and N. M. Karamzin; it has further become a pledge for the panslavist ideas of Pavel Jozef Šafařík and Lubor Niederle, before the historical truth of the myth has been seriously questioned in the twentieth century. The myth has throughout the centuries remained an inspiration for Polish national poetry such as Jan Skorski's *Lechus, carmen heroicum* (1745), Jan Paweł Woronicz's *Lechiada* (1807), Juliusz Słowacki's *Lilla Weneda* (1840) and Antoni Lange's *Wenedzi* (1909).

The paper presents how the ethnogenetic myth of the Paphlagonian Enetoi/Veneti has reflected its original humanistic conception: It was first of all—in analogy to the Trojan origin in humanist French and English literature—a important argument for the development of a culture in the vernacular, providing at the same time the heroic motives necessary for national epic poetry. Though the paper will focus on the reconstruction of a humanist concept in Slavonic cultures, the tracing of the myth's history will also reveal, how the myth has been—due rather to changing national concepts than to the historian's vanity—“rediscovered” several times omitting the reference to its previous history.