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**THE POWER OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TOURISM: TROY  
LEGENDS AND MYTHS**Gökhan TURAK<sup>1</sup>**Abstract**

The ancient city of Troy is one of the important tourist destinations with its tangible and intangible cultural values. The possibility that the Trojan War, which is the subject of the epics of the famous poet Homer, may have taken place in this region is supported by archaeological remains. The legends and mythological events in the epic, together with the archaeological remains, make Troy a center of attraction for tourists. Tourists visiting Troy, which was added to the World Heritage List by UNESCO in 1998, have the opportunity to see archaeological remains related to mythological stories that have been recognized internationally for many years. This study's primary goals are to highlight the significance of intangible cultural heritage in tourism and discuss the contributions that this legacy makes to the travel and tourism sector. Because of this, the research focuses on synthesizing knowledge and perspectives available in existing literature. Within the scope of the study, studies on tourism, legend, and myth in the literature were looked at; the link between intangible cultural heritage, legend, and myth was described; examples of well-known locations with legends and myths worldwide were provided. Then, myths and legends about the Ancient City of Troy were presented, along with how they linked to Troy tourism and Çanakkale. The study's findings showed that the region's tourist appeal was boosted by the legends and myths of Troy, which also encouraged locals to participate in tourism-related activities and promoted the area's history and cultural identity internationally.

**Key words:** Intangible Cultural Heritage, Legend, Myth, Tourist attraction, Troy, Çanakkale**SOMUT OLMAYAN KÜLTÜREL MİRASIN TURİZMDEKİ GÜCÜ: TROYA  
EFSANELERİ VE MİTLERİ****Öz**

Troya Antik Kenti, somut ve somut olmayan kültürel değerleriyle önemli turistik yerlerden biridir. Ünlü şair Homeros'un destanlarına konu olan Truva Savaşı'nın bu bölgede gerçekleşmiş olma ihtimali arkeolojik kalıntılarla desteklenmektedir. Destanda geçen efsaneler ve mitolojik olaylar, arkeolojik kalıntılarla birlikte Troya'yı turistler için bir çekim merkezi haline getirmektedir. UNESCO tarafından 1998 yılında Dünya Miras Listesi'ne eklenen Troya'yı ziyaret eden turistler, uluslararası alanda uzun yıllardır tanınan mitolojik öykülerle ilgili arkeolojik kalıntıları görme fırsatı bulmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel hedefleri turizmde somut olmayan kültürel mirasın önemini vurgulamak ve bu mirasın turizm sektörüne yaptığı katkıları tartışmaktır. Bu nedenle, araştırma mevcut literatürde mevcut bilgi ve bakış açılarını sentezlemeye odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında literatürde turizm, efsane ve mit üzerine yapılan çalışmalar incelenmiş, somut olmayan kültürel miras, efsane ve mit arasındaki bağ açıklanmış ve dünya çapında efsaneleri ve mitleriyle bilinen yerlerin örnekleri verilmiştir. Ardından, Troya Antik Kenti hakkındaki mitler ve efsaneler ve bunların Troya ve Çanakkale turizmi ile nasıl bağlantılı olduğuyla birlikte sunulmuştur. Çalışmanın bulguları, bölgenin turistik çekiciliğinin Troya efsaneleri ve mitleri tarafından artırıldığını, bunun da yerel halkı turizmle ilgili faaliyetlere katılmaya teşvik ettiğini ve bölgenin tarihini ve kültürel kimliğini uluslararası alanda tanıttığını göstermiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Somut olmayan kültürel miras, Efsane, Mit, Turistik çekicilik, Troya, Çanakkale

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## Introduction

Cultural heritage is not limited to monuments, structures and archaeological remains; it also includes traditions and living expressions that we inherit from our ancestors and pass on to future generations. This includes performing arts, social rituals, festivals, oral traditions such as myths, legends and folktales, practices, knowledge and skills related to nature and the universe (Lyngdoh, 2021). Myths and legends are one of the methods of preserving the history of a society. These stories, which are built on real events or completely imaginary, are an important tool for making sense of and remembering a society's past. Myths have largely been shaped through transmission. With each transmission, new elements were added and myths maintained their vitality in this way. During the transmission process, exaggerations, additions and subtractions were made, allowing changes in myths. One of the important factors that increase the appeal of myths is exaggeration. Thanks to this exaggeration, myths have become more interesting and impressive (Çaycı, 2017). Myths and legends, as forms of folklore, are deeply embedded in the cultural identity of destinations around the world. These narratives are part of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of societies and add meaning to the places associated with them. (Yen *et al.*, 2023). Destinations with myths and legends with attractive value appear as geographical places, buildings, sculptures, caves, lakes, forests or landforms (rocks, mountains, peaks). The target audience that engages with the spiritual depth of these touristic destinations consists of people who seek knowledge and adventure, believe in intangible cultural heritage, and aim to expand their cultural horizons. Understanding myths and legends brings tourists closer to their roots and offers them the chance to relive the events that shaped these stories. For tourists, this is extremely important because it makes them part of a unique experience and increases the destination's appeal with new attractive dimensions. (Bica and Schuster, 2021).

The legends and myths of Troy, one of the oldest stories of history, known since the 8th century BC, are still alive today in every field of culture, art, literature and academia. These narratives have transcended their Anatolian origins over time, gaining a universal character by spreading across the world and inspiring diverse cultures. Today, many visitors choose the ancient city of Troy as a tourist destination in order to explore the symbolic meanings and mythological depth embedded in these legends. Due to its rich mythological heritage and global symbolic resonance. Given the enduring cultural relevance and touristic appeal of Troy, it becomes essential to examine how such mythological narratives function within broader heritage and tourism frameworks. The limited number of studies that address the legends and myths of Troy within the scope of intangible cultural heritage and evaluate them in the context of tourism makes this research significant. This study adopts a literature-based approach to explore the importance of Troy's legends and myths in the context of intangible cultural heritage and tourism. There are three primary goals for this study. First, to discuss the contributions that intangible cultural heritage makes to the tourist sector and to highlight its significance in the field of tourism. The second goal is to use myths and tales from Troy's rich cultural heritage to illustrate the city's significance. Third, to draw attention to the part myths and legends play in safeguarding and advancing intangible cultural heritage. In accordance with the purpose of the study, firstly, myths and legends are discussed as ICH values. Afterwards, the relationship between legends and myths and tourism is explained with examples. Then, the stories of Troy legends and myths are mentioned and it is explained how they are used as a tourism attraction element today.

## 2. LEGENDS AND MYTHS AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE

The importance of ICH lies in the wealth of knowledge and skills transmitted from one generation to another, rather than in the cultural expressions themselves. This heritage contributes to cultural continuity by establishing a link from the past to the present and the future. The

Convention on the Safeguarding of the ICH of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) covers five areas of ICH (ICH UNESCO, 2024);

- *Oral traditions and expressions*
- *Performing arts*
- *Social practices, rituals and festive events*
- *Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe*
- *Traditional craftsmanship.*

Oral traditions are living memories that have been passed down orally throughout history, revealing how people lived in the past and the form of society and culture. Oral traditions include not only oral history but also poems, myths, riddles, songs, stories, proverbs and legends (Abdul Kargbo, 2008). Myths, originating from the ancient Greek word ‘mythos,’ meaning story or fiction, are sacred tales that carry symbolic or metaphorical significance, often linked to religious or spiritual beliefs. These narratives frequently take the form of creation, origin, or foundation stories and are used to communicate moral or cultural values or to explain natural events (Yen et al., 2023). The term mythology is often used in reference to ancient stories, as in the form of Greek mythology, Turkish mythology, Roman mythology. All cultures have developed myths about their own history, heroes, religions and similar elements over time. The power of the symbolic meanings of these myths is one of the main reasons why they can remain alive for many years (Canova, 2020). Myths are the products of humanity's quest for meaning and the way in which individuals relate to themselves and the world around them. Gods, the formation of the universe, the relationship of gods with nature and society, natural disasters, war, famine, disease, death, etc. have all found expression in mythic thought (Çaycı, 2017). Legends, on the other hand, are often exaggerated stories about real people, events or places, linked to the collective memory of a community or society. They help to reinforce cultural identity, preserve historical knowledge and represent the values of a specific group, often providing inspiration or serving as cautionary lessons (Yen et al., 2023). It can trigger people's curiosity, their readiness to connect with a particular legend or physical environment. Legends influence people and offer the opportunity to establish a strong and emotional connection between the past and the present (Christou et al., 2023). While myths deal with supernatural events and people, legends are old stories that deal with events that may have actually happened. They may be based on a real event, place, person or a real event that occurred a long time ago and has been exaggerated over the years. However, in many narratives, myth and legend, reality and imagination are intertwined (Boz, 2023).

## 1.2. Legends and Myths as an Element of Touristic Attraction

Oral culture traditions have a significant impact on the development of tourism in destinations. Narratives specific to a destination are difficult to be copied or imitated by rival destinations. Therefore, oral culture provides an advantage to destinations in the competitive tourism sector (Yılmaz, 2015; Kim et al., 2021). The events and figures that shape a location's history serve as valuable themes, allowing tourists to craft stories and develop narratives with tourism potential (Pérez-Aranda et al., 2015). In tourism, myths, legends, and stories linked to cultural and historical sites serve multiple purposes: they attract visitors to specific locations, leave a lasting impression, provide unique experiences, help shape the identity of a destination, spark curiosity and interest in tourists, and enhance the destination's appeal and value (Stephenson, 2008), strengthen the attractive potential, trigger the desire to connect with a physical environment (Christou et al., 2023), create mystery, fear, admiration and enthusiasm, promote local history and culture, motivate and mobilise tourists (Bica and Schuster, 2021). Many studies have shown that

legends and myths play an important role in attracting tourists to certain places (Orange and Laviolette, 2010; Pérez-Aranda et al., 2015; Gül, 2017; Razak and Ibrahim 2017; Nilsson and Blom, 2018; Boz, 2020; Zargari et al., 2021; Lyngdoh, 2021; Calvi and Hover 2021), in the tourist experience (Hodsdon, 2020; Christou et al., 2023), and in the transfer of ICH by tour guides (Aktaş and Batman, 2010). Oral traditions and narratives are effective tools for creating tourist destinations, especially in some regions where myths and legends are present. For example, the theming and branding of the village of Tintagel in Cornwall utilises legends and childhood stories to attract thousands of visitors each year. In addition, the phrase “Welcome to Tintagel, the birthplace of King Arthur” is often repeated to create a pseudo spiritual atmosphere (Orange and Laviolette, 2010). Zargari et al. (2021) found that religious, epic, mythological and historical stories play an important role in shaping the beliefs, attitudes and behavioural intentions of tourists visiting Khorasan Razavi. Zhang et al., (2024) found that myths are important stimuli for tourism imagination in the destination, thus enhancing the attractiveness of the destination and becoming an important travel motivation. Gül (2017) investigated the effect of myths and legends on visiting Amasya and found that the majority of visitors think that myths and legends have a role as an attraction in Amasya tourism and that legends are effective among the purposes of coming to Amasya. Unlike Gül (2017) Lyngdoh and Gautam (2024) revealed that myths, legends, and folk tales were not the primary motivation for most tourists visiting Meghalaya; however, tourists were highly eager to learn more about these narratives and expressed a strong interest in revisiting the sites associated with the stories in order to experience both the place and the accompanying narrative together. Muchenje et al. (2025) have investigated the role of myths in destination management. According to the research findings, the myths associated with Mount Nyanga significantly enhance its appeal as a tourism destination, function as cultural tools, and support environmental conservation by reinforcing behavioral norms. Razak and Ibrahim (2017) revealed that The Langkawi Legend Park in Malaysia is an important part of the promotion and tourism development of the island. In the park, sculptures were constructed and presented to visitors to showcase mythological and legendary stories and characters. Brief descriptions of the sculptures are available on signboards or information boards. The representation of these traditional legends and myths in sculptural form demonstrates how ICH is staged in the form of tangible heritage. Chronis (2012) suggested that the success of tourist destinations with stories depends on the tourist's attitude, desire and ability to actively participate in the storytelling experience. Tourist guides, who trace lost stories, hold the key to the doors to the hidden treasures of cultural heritage. They offer tourists the opportunity to discover these traces. In a study conducted by Aktaş and Batman (2010), it was seen that legends are used by tourist guides in tour programmes, that they have effects on touristic attraction, that they can be used as a marketing tool in touristic promotion and that they can be a symbol for some regions in promotions to be made by using legends. Özen et al., (2023) interviewed 17 tour guides actively working in Cappadocia. The findings of the study revealed that legends play an important role in the field of tourist guidance and add an element of curiosity and fascination to the tours. It was also discovered that these legends contribute positively to the image and branding of the destination and ultimately provide visitors with unforgettable tourism experiences. As seen in these diverse examples, myths and legends are not merely passive cultural remnants but active components of destination identity, branding, and visitor engagement. Whether through physical representations such as sculptures, thematic village branding, or guide-led storytelling, intangible cultural narratives are effectively transformed into meaningful tourism experiences. These findings collectively demonstrate that myths function as emotional, symbolic, and motivational tools that enhance the uniqueness of a destination and strengthen the bond between place and visitor. Integrating such narratives into tourism strategies not only reinforces local identity but also provides a competitive advantage in an increasingly homogenized global tourism market. Many tourist destinations around the world have begun to offer intangible resources

such as myths and legends as cultural tourism products. Examples include Moai (Easter Island, Chile), Dracula (Transylvania, Romania), Tutankhamun (Valley of the Kings, Egypt), Robin Hood (Nottinghamshire, England), Golem (Prague, Czech Republic), Ramayana (Angkor Wat, Cambodia), Trojan Horse (Çanakkale, Turkey), Jure Grando, vampire from Kringa (Istria, Croatia) and many more (Boz, 2020). A few of these examples are given below.

**Robin Hood:** Although the legend of Robin Hood has a history of more than 600 years, it is actually a very modern character. Robin Hood, as a medieval knight, is both romantic and quick-thinking with a humorous temperament. He is also skilled in archery (Lyth, 2006). The story of Robin Hood has inspired many films, poems and books. Known as England's most famous outlaw, Robin Hood is an impressive legend that has been told for generations, known for stealing from the rich and helping the poor (Everett and John Parakoottathil, 2018). The reality of the legend still arouses interest and attracts tourists. For this reason, the Robin Hood Visitor Centre and tourist facilities have been developed in Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire. The huge 'Major Oak' tree, Robin Hood's legendary hideout, is a true heritage artefact and is well preserved and displayed as the centrepiece of the park. Today Sherwood Country Park in Nottinghamshire attracts around 500,000 visitors annually (Lyth, 2006). Festivals and various events are organised in Sherwood in the name of the legend of Robin Hood. The Robin Hood Festival is a celebration of his medieval lifestyle (Visit Sherwood, 2024).

**Dracula:** Dracula is one of the most iconic and widely recognized figures in popular culture. The name Dracula originates from the moniker of a Romanian historical figure, Vlad the Impaler. Vlad's notoriety stems largely from the medieval stories told about him, and his nickname was given to Bram Stoker's novel, published in 1897, and its main character, the Transylvanian vampire Count Dracula. Over time, these two figures have often been confused, particularly after the publication of McNally and Florescu's book. While many of the links between the two Draculas are largely artificial, they remain strong and persistent. In fact, the association has become so entrenched that the names Count Dracula and Vlad the Impaler are sometimes used interchangeably. In reality, however, this connection is almost non-existent (Candrea et al., 2016). The entire Transylvania region has become a focal point for Dracula tourism. Thanks to the success of Dracula and its impact on popular culture, Transylvania is now recognized as a land of superstition, vampires, and myths (Hovi, 2014).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a literature-based approach to explore the importance of Troy's legends and myths in the context of intangible cultural heritage and tourism. The literature-based approach presents a discussion of a particular research theme by integrating existing literature, synthesizing previous studies, and identifying knowledge gaps (Paul and Criado, 2020). Instead of collecting primary data, the research focuses on synthesizing knowledge and perspectives available in existing literature. During the research process, academic publications, books, government reports, online articles, and museum documents were reviewed to understand how the legends of Troy have been represented and used in tourism promotion and cultural preservation. The sources were gathered through general searches in widely accessible tourism-related academic databases, such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and Taylor & Francis Online, as well as platforms like Google Scholar, DergiPark, and institutional websites (e.g., UNESCO, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the Troy Museum). Rather than conducting an extensive meta-analysis or applying systematic thematic coding, the study followed a focused, literature-based approach centered on a clearly defined theme. The study does not use a formal coding scheme or software. However, a manual thematic organization process was employed based on a deductive approach. The main

analytical framework was determined in advance: the study focuses on the role of myths and legends, specifically those of Troy, as elements of intangible cultural heritage in tourism. In line with this predetermined focus, the reviewed literature was examined under subcategories that support and contextualize the central theme. These subcategories included:

- Definitions and functions of intangible cultural heritage (ICH),
- The relationship between myths, legends and tourism,
- Global examples of myth based tourism narratives,
- The specific case of Troy and its integration into tourism practices.

This structure provided a coherent framework for synthesizing the findings across a wide range of sources while maintaining a focused line of inquiry. As the research is literature-based, no ethical approval was required.

### 3. LEGENDS AND MYTHS OF THE ANCIENT CITY OF TROY

Troy is located in the Hisarlık mound overlooking the plain along the Turkish Aegean coast, 4.8 km from the southern entrance to the Dardanelles. With 4,000 years of history, Troy (Picture 1, Picture 2) is one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world. The first excavations at the site were carried out by the famous archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann in 1870. From a scientific point of view, its extensive remains are the most important indicator of the first contact between Anatolian civilisations and the Mediterranean world. Moreover, the siege of Troy by Spartan and Achaean warriors from Greece in the 13th or 12th century BC, immortalised by Homer in the Iliad, has since inspired great creative artists around the world. It was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1998, which was created by UNESCO to identify and protect sites of worldwide significance of cultural or natural heritage (UNESCO, 2024).



**Picture 1.** Ancient City of Troy

**Source:** Kültür Portalı (2024)



**Picture 2.** Representative Trojan Horse

**Source:** Kültür Portalı (2024)

The story and legends of the city of Troy are considered to play a major role in contemporary life. In Western civilisation, the legends of Troy have remained popular in almost every country and at almost every time since antiquity. These legends have meant different things to different people at different times (Rose, 1998). Troy has been visited by many important personalities: Xerxes in 480 BC, Alexander the Great in 334 BC, the Roman General Sulla in about 335 BC, Julius Caesar in 85 BC, Octavian Augustus in 47 BC, Emperor Hadrian in 124 AD and the

famous Emperor Julius the Apostate in 355 AD (Divjak, 2014). In 1453, the ruler Fatih Sultan Mehmet, who closed an era with the conquest of Istanbul, visited the Troy region in 1462. He observed the surroundings of the ancient city of Troy and listened to the stories of Achilleus, Aias and others on their tombs. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, also visited Çanakkale during the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913 and visited the ruins of Troy. According to some rumours, he is also reported to have said “Now I have avenged Hector” (Aslan, 2010). By visiting Troy, giving it rich gifts and bestowing various favours on its inhabitants, all these personalities showed their awareness of the historical traditions associated with this place, demonstrated their erudition and increased its prestige (Divjak, 2014). The fact that Troy is so valued is due to the Trojan War, which is mentioned in the famous Homeric epics that have been passed down from generation to generation over the years. There are many legends and myths about Troy. Some of the known myths and legends about Troy are given below.

**Paris' Abduction of Helen and the Beginning of the War:** The story begins with a wedding. Thetis, the goddess of the sea, marries a mortal man and all gods and goddesses are invited to the wedding except Eris, the goddess of discord. Eris, enraged by this situation, throws a golden apple with the inscription ‘to the most beautiful’ at the wedding. Three goddesses claim that this apple belongs to them. Zeus, the king of the gods, does not want to resolve this issue, so he chooses Paris, the prince of Troy, as an arbitrator. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, wins the contest by promising Paris the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen. However, the fact that Helen is married to Menelaos, the king of Sparta in Greece, complicates matters (Donnellan, 2019). Paris of Troy fell in love with Helen, the wife of King Menelaos of Sparta and kidnapped her to Troy (Canova, 2020). He also kidnaps some of Menelaos' treasure. Menelaos, with the support of his brother Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae and the most powerful of the Greek rulers, gathers all Greek kings and their supporters to wage war against Troy. Agamemnon is the overall leader. Other heroes include Achilles from Phthia and Hellas in the east and north-east of mainland Greece, Aias son of Telamon from Salamis, Aias son of Oileus from East Lokris, Diomedes from Argos, Nestor and his son Antilochos from Pylos and Odysseus from Ithaca. The Greek army sailed to the shores of Troy and camped along the Hellespont (Hertel, 2011).

**The Duel of Achilles and Hector:** In Homer's Iliad, in the 9th year of the war, Achilles had a deep anger against Agamemnon, the Commander-in-Chief of the Achaean armies, and therefore he left the war and retired to his hut (KTB, 2024). Hector, who became the leader of the Trojans, and the other Trojans, with the support of the Chief God Zeus, chased the Achaeans to their ships. Seeing this situation, Achilles' best friend Patroklos begged Achilles to either help the Achaeans or lend him his magnificent armour. Achilles refused to join the battle, but agreed to lend his armour and men to Patroclus. Patroclus put on Achilles' armour and fought almost like him. Finally he met Hector. Hector killed Patroklos with his pike, took off his armour and put it on himself. It was as if all the power of Achilles was transferred to Hector (Meydan, 2010). Achilles returned to the war due to the death of his best friend Patroclus. But he has no weapon. One night, Hephaistos, the god of blacksmiths, made a shield, armour, helmet and knee pads inlaid with gold and silver for Achilles. Achilles killed many Trojans and came to the city gate. Priamos, the king of Troy, and his wife Hekabe, who were watching the battle from the walls, tried to persuade their son Hector to take refuge in the city, but he refused. The two heroes started to fight in front of the magnificent walls of Troy. Achilles killed Hector. He not only killed him, but also pierced both of his feet and ankles between his heels, tied him to the back of his chariot and dragged Hector's corpse around the walls of Troy seven times (Aslan, 2018).

**The Trojan Horse:** The oracle Kalchas was consulted to come up with ideas that would make the strategy of the Trojan War superior. Kalchas immediately gathered everyone together and

told his dream. He dreamt that a hawk had captured a hiding bird by trickery. Now it was time to use this metaphorical example to create a correct military strategy. War tricks are Odysseus' speciality (Wöhlcke, 2004). Odysseus, one of the most intelligent kings of the Achaeans, came up with the idea of making a wooden horse. In accordance with the plan, the Achaeans pretended to withdraw from the war and left behind a very large wooden horse. While Odysseus and other distinguished commanders hid in the horse, the others sailed to the sea and hid the ships behind Bozcaada (Tenedos), far from the Trojans' sight (Akşit, 2009). When the Trojans saw that the Achaeans had evacuated their headquarters, they thought that the horse was a gift of the goddess Athena and thought to take it into the city. In order to support this misconception, the Achaeans also sent a spy. The spy Simon said that he was badly beaten by the Achaeans and left unconscious while they were leaving Troy. He also emphasised that the wooden horse was an offering to the gods and should be taken into the city. But this idea was opposed by two people. One of them was Cassandra, one of the daughters of Priamos, and the other was Laokoon, the priest of the Temple of Apollo, one of the notables of Troy. Although Cassandra and Laokoon warned them, they could not get anyone to accept their ideas (Memiş, 2005). The Trojans first sacrificed to Apollo in order not to rush the work. But in the meantime, an unexpected development took place. Two giant snakes from Tenedos Island came ashore and killed Laokoon and his two sons. The Trojans perceived this incident as the punishment of the oracles who warned them about the wooden horse and took the horse into the city (Wöhlcke, 2004). While the Trojans were sleeping after the victory celebrations, the Greek heroes came out of the horse, signalled the fleet and opened the gates. As a result, Trojan men were slaughtered and women and children were taken as slaves (Hertel, 2011).

### 3.1. The Relationship Between Troy Legends, Myths, and Tourism

What makes Troy unique is the blending of war and struggle with a culture of peace and tolerance. Troy is one of the rare epics that spread to every continent of the world and inspired different cultures. Archaeological studies that transform it into a concrete reality are seen as an important reference point for the science of archaeology today (Troya, 2018). The number of artefacts unearthed during the excavations that have been going on for more than 150 years in the Troy settlements in Hisarlık Tepe is increasing day by day and this situation greatly increases the attractiveness of the ancient city of Troy in terms of tourism. The fact that these artefacts coincide with the mythological stories known for centuries further highlights the unique value of Troy in tourism. Tourists visiting Troy have the opportunity to see archaeological findings that support mythological stories that have been internationally recognised for many years (Yalçınkaya, 2023). Table I shows the number of visitors to Troy between 2001 and 2022. In 2005, the main reason for the increase in the number of visitors was the film 'Troy' released in 2004, starring world-famous stars such as Brad Pitt, Orlando Bloom, Sean Bean and Rose Byrne. The film had a great impact in that period and created the perception of visiting Troy among tourists. When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the number of visitors decreased significantly in 2016 and 2020. In 2016, the number of visitors to Troy declined, a decrease that is commonly attributed to the political instability and security concerns following the attempted coup in Turkey. In 2020, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the entire world, led to widespread travel restrictions, resulting in a further decline in the number of visitors to Troy.

**Table I.** Number of Visitors to the Ancient City of Troy between 2001-2022

| Year | Number of Visitors | Year | Number of Visitors |
|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|
| 2001 | 241.247            | 2012 | 483.993            |
| 2002 | 330.903            | 2013 | 438.085            |
| 2003 | 270.762            | 2014 | 463.563            |
| 2004 | 417.399            | 2015 | 480.418            |
| 2005 | 583.457            | 2016 | 229.207            |
| 2006 | 276.217            | 2017 | 330.359            |
| 2007 | 380.708            | 2018 | 531.298            |
| 2008 | 397.207            | 2019 | 584.877            |
| 2009 | 351.663            | 2020 | 96.999             |
| 2010 | 386.805            | 2021 | 121.411            |
| 2011 | 534.154            | 2022 | 329.468            |

Source: Yalçınkaya (2023), Çanakkale İl Kültür Turizm Müdürlüğü (2024)

The wooden horse used in the film Troy was later gifted to Çanakkale. This horse is exhibited in Çanakkale city centre as a symbol of the city. The wooden horse attracts the attention of almost all tourists visiting Çanakkale and there is always a crowd around it to take photos (Picture 3).

**Picture 3.** Trojan Horse in Çanakkale City Centre

Source: Taken by the author.

One of the most important elements in the transfer of tangible and intangible cultural heritage is museums. The Troy Museum, which opened in 2018, welcomes visitors at the entrance of the ancient city of Troy, which has been excavated for over 151 years. The Troy Museum is like a timeless mirror reflecting the legends and myths of Troy. In the study of Korkmaz et al., (2019), it was revealed that the legends and characters, past cultures and lifestyles of Troy were more easily understood thanks to the visual contents in the Troy Museum. The Ancient City of Troy and the Troy Museum hosted 487,000 local and foreign tourists in 2022 and 538,000 in 2023. In February 2024, it reached a total of 25,000 visitors. To date, the best, peak number of visitors in Troy was approximately 550,000 people in 2019. Rıdvan Gölcük, Director of the Troy Museum, expects that by the end of 2024, “the all-time visitor record will be broken by reaching approximately 700,000 visitors in Troy”. The Troy Museum has also received many international awards. It received the

European Museum of the Year Special Recognition Award in 2020, the European Museum Academy Special Award in 2020 and 2021, the ‘Most Successful Museum Award’ of the year at the Attraction Star Awards in 2020, and the ‘Traveller Choice’ awards for two consecutive years within the framework of the ‘Traveller Choice Awards’ by Tripadvisor.com in 2020 (TonTv, 2024).

In order to keep the legends and myths of Troy alive, Tevfikiye Village, located near the Troy Museum and the Ancient City of Troy, was transformed into an Archeo-Village within the scope of the ‘Respect for History Project’, a social responsibility project of Opet Petroleum Corporation. Together with other tourism stakeholders and local administrations, efforts were made to create a three-legged destination (Troy Ruins - Troy Museum - Archaeo-Village) where tourists will spend more time in the region. Within the scope of Opet's activities, courses were organised with the Çanakkale Public Education Centre to increase the tourism awareness of local people. With increasing tourism awareness, local people have opened new businesses to earn income from tourism. The courses provided to the local population have fostered knowledge regarding the production and sale of distinctive artifacts and local items. In addition, in order to give identity to the region, Opet has made landscaping and facade cladding to reflect the history and culture of Troy (Korkmaz et al., 2020). At the entrance of the village, there is a wall giving the impression of fortification walls with the inscription ‘Opet Archeo-Village, Tevfikiye’. Continuing from here, in the village where even the street names are Troy 1, Troy 2 and so on, there are paintings (Picture 4) and statues (Picture 5) of the heroes identified with the Trojan legend (Achilles, Agammenon, Paris, Helen, Hector, Zeus). A tourist commented on the website blog that during their visit to Tevfikiye, it was quite exciting when an old man told them “Let me take your picture in front of Achilles” (Eroğlu, 2020). This shows how much the local people have absorbed the ICH of Troy and how satisfied they are with the tourists' interest in their village and cultural heritage.



**Picture 4. Sculptures of Troy Legends in Tevfikiye Village Picture 5. Wall Paintings of Troy Legends in**

**Source:** Eroğlu (2020)

**Tevfikiye Village**

**Source:** Eroğlu (2020)

Another event featuring Trojan legends and myths is the “The Day of the Poet and Homer Readings” (Picture 6). Organised every year since 2002 in Bozcaada to commemorate Homer and his epics, The Day of the Poet and Homer Readings event brings together literature lovers from around the world. In the event, verses from the Iliad and the Odyssey are read by the seaside at the first light of the morning, under the leadership of an invited poet. In this organisation, which is one of the most important cultural events of Bozcaada, Homer's works have been performed in 26 different languages so far (Turak et al., 2023). For the first six years, the participants wore scarves made of myrtle tree during the reading, and in the following years they wore wreaths made of laurel branches on their heads. These wreaths are then left to be exhibited at the Bozcaada Local History Museum. This culture and art event, which is attended by more than 100 art lovers every year, makes a qualified contribution to Bozcaada tourism by attracting qualified tourists. The creator of the event Prof. Dr. Haluk Şahin expresses the special meaning of reading the Iliad in Bozcaada as

follows; “Homer's stories are the stories of these places. Troy stands before us. Achilles plundered this island, Odysseus, after a fight with Agamemnon, went to the beach we have chosen to read and the next day he went to Troy. Homer is the voice of humanity trying to find meaning to its life in the midst of a cosmic unknown. He is above nations.” (Güzel, 2019b). This event, which is organised to commemorate the oldest known and most important works of Western literature and its author, has been going on for many years. A similar event was staged in 2021 at the Fairfield Amphitheatre in Melbourne, Australia, a site of state-level cultural significance, with the play titled "Homer's Iliad: The Siege of Troy." In a magnificent riverside amphitheatre, 10 lead actors, 3 Japanese drummers, and a reading feast commemorating the gods, heroes, and lovers at war were featured. Each actor recited a significant part of the Iliad, while the drummers helped the audience experience the atmosphere of war (Stork Theatre, 2021). In ancient times, starting from the 6th century BC, Homeric readings were held every four years in Athens by order of Tyrant Hipparchus. During these events, it became a tradition for a group of bards to recite the Iliad and the Odyssey from beginning to end (Aslan, 2018). Even in the 2000s AD, people still gather in places like Bozcaada and Melbourne to read the works of a poet believed to have lived in the 8th century BC.



**Picture 6.** The Day of the Poet and Homer Readings (Bozcaada-2023)

**Source:** Taken by the author.

Troy, where the Iliad and Odyssey epics take place, is included in the basic education curriculum of many countries around the world and has become an important brand with universal values such as culture, art and sports as well as education, literature and history. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Troy's inscription on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey officially declared 2018 as the Year of Troy (Troya, 2018). Within this framework, Troy 2018 was highlighted as the promotional face of Turkey in fairs held abroad in 140 countries, and foreign journalists were invited to Çanakkale. In addition, various conferences and seminars on Troy were organized by the representative offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the 2018 Year of Troy, many infrastructure and superstructure investments were made to contribute to the tourism of the region and the country, and events and projects with high international impact in the fields of culture, arts, sports, science, and education were implemented throughout the year. The biggest Çanakkale Cycling Festival in Turkey, organized under the theme ‘We Ride in the Footsteps of History from Troy to Anatolia’ with the participation of approximately five thousand cyclists, the First Troy Year International Children's Folk Dance Festival with the participation of 674 children from 17 countries. In addition,

Troy Horse Short Film Festival was organized under the title Troy with Art, and a documentary on the Trojan War and the legend of Troy was filmed with famous names (Güzel, 2019a).

There is also a Troy-themed culture route in Çanakkale. Cultural routes are routes that bring together historical, cultural, artistic and natural values in a specific geographical area and enable people to discover these elements. These routes emphasise cultural heritage and local identity based on a specific theme or historical story (ICOMOS, 2008). The Troy Culture Route reflects the route followed by the Trojan hero Aeneas on his way from Troy to Antandros (Altınoluk) with his companions in search of a new homeland after the destruction of Troy. This 130 km walking and cycling route, the first section of which was started in 2018, starts from the ancient city of Troy and extends from Dalyan - Alexandria Troas, Gülpınar - Apollon Smintheion to Behramkale - Assos (Boz, 2018). This route includes not only the legends and myths of Troy but also all the legends and myths of the Troad Region. For example; the legend of the Ancient Roman Road used to attend religious ceremonies in the name of Apollo, the plague epidemic caused by field mice, the Apollo Smintheus Sanctuary, the Ancient Port used by St. Paul, one of the most important figures of the Christian world, during his second missionary journey, Assos, which is thought to be named after Athena, the daughter of Zeus and one of the 12 Olympian gods, and where the philosopher Aristotle founded a philosophy school, can be seen within the Troy Culture Route.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The legends and myths of Troy, known worldwide, are among the oldest intangible cultural heritage of history. It is deeply rooted in the ancient past with its rich historical connotations. As can be seen from the examples given in the study, Troy legends and myths are used as the main theme in many areas and are still kept alive in every aspect of life today. In accordance with UNESCO's definition of ICH, these legends and myths have been maintained for centuries through oral traditions and narratives as well as social practices, rituals and festivals. These ICH values, besides being preserved and sustained, also contribute to Çanakkale and Turkey's tourism as a tourism attraction. Pérez-Aranda *et al.* (2015) state that myths, legends, and characters that play a role in the history of a place are important thematic resources that can be used to create narratives with tourism potential. Esfehiani and Albrecht (2018) argue that ICH as a tourist attraction improves development and promotion opportunities and thus creates socio-economic and socio-cultural benefits for tourism stakeholders. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Troy's inscription on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List, the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism officially declared 2018 as the Year of Troy. The Troy brand was handled at macro level and promoted in fairs in 140 countries. Throughout 2018, the legends of Troy were commemorated and kept alive in various events organised throughout the year. Beyond large-scale branding strategies, community-based cultural heritage projects have also played a significant role in anchoring Troy's narratives in local spaces. The participation of all stakeholders was supported in the process of transforming Tevfikiye Village into an Archaeo-Village. A key aspect of sustaining Troy's intangible heritage lies in the active involvement of local communities, as demonstrated in the Tevfikiye Village initiative. The level of awareness of the local community was increased through cultural heritage, tourism and entrepreneurship trainings provided to the local community. One of the most tangible examples of integrating mythological narratives into tourism infrastructure can be seen in the transformation of Tevfikiye Village. The pictures of Troy legends and heroes drawn on the walls of the village and the sculptures placed in certain parts of the village attract the attention of tourists as a tourism attraction. The oral traditions and narratives of Troy have been transformed into a concrete form through the sculptures and have given life to abstract thoughts. Razak and Ibrahim (2017) also stated that the presentation of mythological and legendary characters

through sculptures in The Langkawi Legend Park in Malaysia is an important part of the promotion and tourism development of the island.

Some destinations use some symbolic attractions in the development of tourism. Some cities have symbols that represent cultural or historical events and are identified with that place or concept. For example; Eiffel Tower, Stonehenge, Statue of Liberty, Big Ben Clock Tower, Leaning Tower of Pisa, Statue of Christ the Redeemer are city symbols known all over the world. The Trojan Horse, the most impressive symbol of the Trojan War, is also exhibited in Çanakkale city centre as a symbol of Çanakkale. Many tourists visiting Çanakkale compete with each other to take photos around the horse. Woodside *et al.*, (2007) argue that tourists often use unique features and symbols of destinations in their stories when describing their own experiences about a place. The legend of the Trojan Horse, which is universally known, is embodied through the Trojan Horse statue, affecting the tourists' experience and contributing to the destination image of Çanakkale. Holt (2004) states that symbolic attractions carry an extraordinary identity value when they are conveyed in the form of a story or myth. The Trojan Horse is a very important symbol in the transmission of cultural heritage and the promotion of Çanakkale. Moreover, by sharing their photos around the horse on social media applications, tourists both promote Çanakkale and directly affect the spread of cultural heritage. This widespread sharing creates an opportunity to deepen visitors' engagement with the cultural narratives behind the symbol. Therefore, to capitalize on the powerful symbolic value of the Trojan Horse and enhance Çanakkale's cultural tourism appeal, it is recommended that local authorities implement interactive digital kiosks or augmented reality experiences around the statue, providing visitors with immersive narratives about the Trojan War and its cultural significance.

Events and rituals have an important place in the maintenance of ICH. Organised in Bozcaada every year since 2002, The Day of the Poet and Homer Readings event brings together many people from around the world. In 2023, Chinese poets Cao Shui and Yang Lian and in 2024, Indian poet Reshma Ramesh participated in this event. With the event, poets wear wreaths made of laurel branches on their heads. As can be seen, the myths and legends of Troy have continued to be perpetuated through events and rituals and have attracted national and international tourists to Bozcaada as a tourism attraction. In this context, it is recommended that such culturally embedded events be systematically supported and promoted as part of intangible cultural heritage-based tourism strategies. Collaboration with literary associations, international poetry networks, and cultural heritage institutions could expand the scope of participation and media coverage. These efforts would not only reinforce the link between local identity and global heritage but also encourage the development of niche tourism based on literary and mythological narratives.

When reviewing the literature, no study is found that addresses the legends and myths of Troy within the scope of ICH and investigates their relationship with tourism. For this reason, this research both contributes to the ICH literature and fills an important gap by investigating how legends and myths are evaluated in the field of tourism and how this heritage is integrated into touristic experiences. This gap in the literature underscores the need for practical approaches to preserve and promote these intangible cultural assets through tourism. To achieve this, the active collaboration among public institutions is crucial to maximize the potential of these cultural narratives and enhance their visibility and value. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, along with other relevant governmental bodies, can develop mythology-based promotional strategies to strengthen Troy's national and international recognition. In this context, multilingual digital campaigns, enriched social media content, and the inclusion of Troy's mythological narratives in international cultural events should be actively supported.

In conclusion, legends and myths are ICH values that emphasise the uniqueness of a destination. Legends and myths enhance the attractiveness of tourist destinations and provide tourists with an authentic experience and a deep understanding of the identity and spirit of the region. Legends and myths enable visitors to establish a connection between history and legends while exploring the region, so that the touristic experience goes beyond a physical visit and turns into a deep cultural journey. However, the study is limited by its reliance on secondary sources; future research could benefit from fieldwork and interviews with stakeholders to deepen empirical insights.

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