Stella Lykogiannaki

How Aegean Sea took its name according to ancient Greek Mythology

THE DEATH OF AEGEUS, KING OF ATHENS, AND THE NAMING OF THE GREEK AEGEAN SEA AFTER HIM

Aegeus, in Greek mythology, was the son of Pandion and grandson of Cecrops. He **was a famous king of Athens**. The Aegean Sea was named after him. **He was the father of the Greek hero Theseus** who would succeed him to the throne.

One year, Theseus volunteered to go with the fourteen young people who were offered as sacrifice to the Cretan Minotaur, so that he could slay the Minotaur. Aegeus was scared for his son's life. To help ease his father's fears, Theseus agreed that he would announce his fate by displaying white sails on his ship upon his return home. Theseus had promised Aegeus that if he returned successful from Crete, he would hoist a white sail in place of the black sail with which the fatal ship bearing the sacrificial victims to the Minotaur was always put to sea.

Theseus successfully attacked and killed the Cretan Minotaur, **half man and half bull, shut up in the legendary Cretan Labyrinth of Minoan Knossos Palace in Crete.**

Aegeus waited on Cape Sounion, overlooking the sea, for his son's return. When he saw Theseus' ship approach with black sails, signifying Theseus' death, Aegeus was devastated. He threw himself off the cliff and into the sea where he perished. Unfortunately, this was all **a tragic mistake**. Theseus was of course successful in killing the Minotaur within its labyrinth. After Theseus had successfully killed the Minotaur, he left the labyrinth very much alive.

In Athens, Aegeus waited for the return of his son. **Theseus was supposed to set white sails on his ship if he had been successful in his mission, but Theseus unintentionally forgot to do so, and when Aegeus spotted the ship returning with black sails hoisted, the king believed that Theseus had perished upon Crete. Because Theseus forgot his promise, when Aegeus saw the black sail, he flung himself from Cape Sounion and died.**

Overcome with grief, Aegeus killed himself, throwing him off Cape Sounion cliff top into the sea below, and this is how the Aegean Sea got its name. This

misunderstanding ended Aegeus' life. So, Aegeus drowned himself in the sea when he mistakenly believed his son to be dead. The sea was thereafter called the Aegean.

The mythological stories of Aegeus and Cape Sounion are retold as **a tragic tale of a father who ended his own life under the mistaken belief that his son had died. As far as Greek mythology goes,** <u>the story of Aegeus and Theseus remains a classical example of a mistaken belief leading to tragic results.</u>