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Mythifying the Albanians : A Historiographical Discussion on Vasa Efendi's "Albania and the Albanians"

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“... But what chiefly distinguishes Albania from other provinces lies in the peculiar characteristics of the race. By nature quick, energetic, intolerant of control, sceptical, and fickle, the Skipetar, unlike the Slav, has ever made freedom all in all, and religion a question of secondary importance. 'Religion goes with the sword' is an Albanian proverb; and whenever his profession of faith stands in the way of his interests your true Arnaout does not hesitate, at least outwardly, to conform to a more convenient creed.”¹

- ¹ It did not take long for the religion to go with the sword. Indeed, the Eastern Crisis/ Question, which ended with the Berlin Congress, was the sword which aggravated the nationalist fervour of Albanians that faced the severe threat of invasion by the neighbouring states². The Slavs, deemed different from Albanians by Sir Evans, a noted British archaeologist, were to occupy the lands inhabited mostly by Albanians. Yet, the Albanians, divided among various religion, lacked a coherent political unit in order to defend the verdicts of the Congress³. Albanian nationalism, still at its infancy, was to face a serious challenge in terms of recognition from the Great Powers. The absence of an ethnic unit among themselves, when coupled with nationalisms of other Balkan

people, was one of the acutest political problems that the Albanian intelligentsia had faced. Vasa Efendi or Pashko Vasa, one of the Albanian nationalists, attempted to create an Albanian identity to resolve the question of religion among his compatriots whilst facilitating Great powers recognition of Albania⁴. His mythologized saying, « Religion of Albanians is Albanianism ! » was the pillar-stone upon which Albanian identity was constructed⁵.

- 2 This paper will elucidate Vasa's piece *The Truth on Albania and Albanians* which was a historical-cum-political volume considered as a means, on the European level, against the verdicts of the Congress of Berlin. The analysis of Vasa's text will contribute to the perception of the formation of national identities, against the difficulties of "religious" unity, while giving contours of a nationalist historiography based on ethnic uniqueness as well as spatial context. Contextualizing Vasa, evidently, necessitates contextualization of his life and his work in a historical setting. Accordingly, the history that Vasa narrated will be discussed in a way to comprehend the discourse he constructed. Then, Albanian ethno-history⁶ will be elaborated with respect to the developments taking place in Albanian nationalism or *rilindja*. In addition, the dilemma confined to a romantic past within the modernist discourse will be studied with respect to the arguments in the work of Vasa Efendi straddling the fence between the nationalist historiography and constructing the political structure of a "people", if not myth. Finally the paper will deal with the part in which politics is introduced *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman Empire, demanding the eventual outcomes foreseen by the historical facts established.

Vasa as a « Political Archaeologist »

- 3 As a descendant of the Mirdites clan in Albania and loyal bureaucrat to the Ottoman administration, Vasa was born in 1824 in Shkodër, northern Albania⁷. Being a Roman Catholic, he had a profound interest in studying languages and literature⁸. His stay in Rome came to an abrupt end due to the revolutionary wave in Italy, in the end Vasa was expelled to Istanbul⁹. Equipped with republican and anti-clerical views yet suffering from poverty, Vasa eventually acquired a position in the Ottoman bureaucracy. He started as an interpreter in Translation Office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Sublime Porte in 1850¹⁰. Thanks to his language skills, he returned to Shkodër as an interpreter in 1856-1857 — always for the Sublime Porte¹¹. Vasa published *La Bosnie et l'Herzégovine pendant la mission de Djevdet Efendi* in Istanbul in 1865¹². The treatise, a record of the events, was a result of his service for Cevdet Pasha, an eminent legal reformer and an industrious historian, during the Reform Commission in Herzegovina in 1863-1864. Vasa then switched from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Interior so did his rise in the Ottoman bureaucracy until his death start¹³. He produced another published treatise, namely *Esquisse historique sur le Monténégro d'après les traditions de l'Albanie*, published in Istanbul in 1872. His interest in history was followed by a literary work called *Rose e spine* (Roses and thorns) published in Istanbul in 1873¹⁴.
- 4 While changing offices he held in the Ottoman bureaucracy he maintained his profound interest in his fellow Albanians. Accordingly, Vasa – along with Abdul and Sami Frashëri, Jan Vreto and Konstandin Kristoforidhi – became one of the founding members of the "Central Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Albanian

People” in the same year¹⁵. He also contributed to the creation of an alphabet for Albanian language by publishing the brochure *L'alphabet latin appliqué à la langue albanaise* in 1878¹⁶. He thereafter published a pamphlet — the text corpus of this paper — originally written in French, in Istanbul in 1879 with the title *Etudes sur l'Albanie et les Albanais*¹⁷. The volume was indeed one of the first publications undertaken by Society for the Publication of Albanian Writing, the distribution of which was also encouraged by the Ottoman authorities¹⁸. Following the re-publication in French in Paris, the pamphlet was also published in English in London and in German in Berlin thanks to the Ottoman consul in Paris¹⁹. The volume was later on translated into Albanian, Ottoman Turkish and Greek and finally into Arabic (1884) and Italian (1916)²⁰.

- 5 The Eastern Crisis, followed by the Treaty of San Stefano, was a particular turning point for Vasa²¹. As the League of Prizren, an organization defending the integrity of Albanian-inhabited lands, started its activities, Vasa began to publish his main political works. Sparked off by the peasant uprising in Herzegovina in 1875, the Eastern Question had evolved into a hotbed for the Balkan peoples tempted by the interest of the Great Powers. The intervention of the Great Powers on the behalf of the Christian population in the Balkans did not impede the Russian government to wage war against the Porte, the result of which was immensely vicious for the Ottoman domination in the Balkans²². Furthermore, it appeared that the irredentism of newly founded Balkan states in addition to Greece also targeted the Albanian-inhabited lands. Thus Vasa's earlier activities associated with Albanian cultural nationalism came to a halt. Language, in a sense, was relegated to a secondary place once the Albanian lands faced the imminent threat of invasion. In a similar vein, he wrote a poem in Albanian, *O moj Shqypni*, which turned into a national myth in the following years²³. On the other hand, the political reaction of the Albanianists, in line with the activities of the Albanian League, brought about against the partition of Albania two memorandums dispatched to the Great Powers in which Vasa was involved. The Memorandum of Albanian Autonomy, submitted to the British Consulate in Istanbul in March 1878, was most probably written by Vasa himself; in the same vein another memorandum sent by the prominent Albanians in Istanbul to Bismarck and Count Julian Andrassy, chief of the Habsburg delegation, in June 1878 was undersigned by Vasa as well²⁴.
- 6 Because Albania was barely known in European circles, Vasa hence published *The Truth on Albania and Albanians* in 1879. Accordingly the land claims of neighboring states did not cease, especially that of Greece, necessitating a legitimate existence of Albanians. Classifying three kinds of peoples in history, Vasa characterized the third as peoples whose origin goes back to mythological times. Having added the Albanians into this category, he explicitly declared that they were considered as a people²⁵. Therefore Vasa established the existence of his fellow compatriots, and furthered their distinction vis-à-vis the Greeks. The impact of the Crisis on Vasa was immense considering the fact that he had upheld the possibility of alliance with Greece against the Slavic threat in the memorandum submitted to the British Consulate²⁶. The hasty changes in the developments of Balkan politics compelled Vasa to produce shifting treatises laden with political ends. In 1879, the imminent threat was the irredentism of Greece as the Conference had not concluded a final decision on Greek claims on Southern Albania²⁷. A commission led by General Soutsos and Ahmet Muhtar Pasha initiated discussions in February 1879²⁸. The activities of the Albanian Leagues were vigilant, maintaining the submission of petitions to the Great Powers, and Vasa, on his part, evidently served the Albanian cause by writing his pamphlet²⁹. As the next sections dwell on this aspect

more particularly, *The Truth on Albania and Albanians* can now be summarized in few words: the Albanians were distinct from the Greeks. Considering the date of publication in such a context, it is explicable that Vasa barely mentioned anything possibly related with the Slavs³⁰.

- 7 Following the political turmoil of the Albanian opposition in which Vasa was heavily involved, he was appointed governor-general of Mount Lebanon *sancak* in January 1883³¹. It was an enigmatic exile: while expelling Vasa to a distant place, the Palace also promoted him with the title of pasha³². Life in exile was not easy for Vasa for he lost his second wife, Catherine Bonatti, in 1884 and his surviving daughter in 1887³³. Yet, these unfortunate events did not prevent Vasa from producing Albanian-oriented philological and literary works. Turning once again to literary works, he published a *Grammaire albanaise à l'usage de ceux qui désirent apprendre cette langue sans l'aide d'un maître* in London in 1887³⁴. Three years later, Vasa published, under the pseudonym of Albanus Albano, the French-language novel *Bardha de Témal, scènes de la vie albanaise* in Paris³⁵. When he died in 1892 in Lebanon, where he had maintained his position as governor of the province, the Albanian national struggle underwent a relatively tranquil period.

Delving into Historiography and Myth

- 8 To introduce the work under question, Vasa broke down his volume into three chapters consisting of a total of fifteen sections: the origin of Albanians, what they became and how they live. Accordingly, the first corresponded to the ethno-genesis of Albanians: the Pelasgi, the ancestors of Albanians according to Vasa, differed from the Greeks and preceded them on their arrival at Greece. The second, continuing the first in a historical context, elucidated the prominent figures that had Albanian origin, searching for a golden age. Finally the third, consisting of five sections, dealt with how Albanians lived at the time. Singling out the "assumed" characteristics of Albanian persons as well as social life, Vasa also presented his criticism concerning the contemporary politics of the Ottoman administration. As the next sections enhance the discourse that Vasa had constructed in detail, it was a certain agenda for him to abound in the sense of recognizing Albanians among the European and Ottoman readers. He presented the Albanians as one people, gathered around the unity of language, history and customs, therefore downplaying the differentiating aspects of Albanians, namely geography and religion. Recourse to Albanianism, to cope with the religious differences, was decently demonstrated paving the way for the recognition of rights of Albanians. As Vasa tried to contextualise the underdevelopment of Albanians, he blamed the *Tanzimat* reforms mainly which were not compatible with the Albanian lands for the officials sent by the central administration were not familiar with the Albanian customs, language and practices. Therefore, in line with the politicisation of Albanianism at the time, Vasa demanded the formation of a single Albanian province (composed of the provinces of Shkodër, Ioannina and Kosovo) explaining that « the division of Albania into three vilayets was already sufficient to completely destroy the benificent [*sic*] action of administrative unity without aggravating it by a heterogeneous medley »³⁶.
- 9 In his quest for a golden age that Anthony Smith deems functional to appropriate the antiquity, Vasa was eager to work as a political archaeologist³⁷. He excavated the findings of the identity to which he felt subject and eventually brought about a

mythical historical treatise in accordance with his nationalist ethos. Defining myth, however, is no easier than defining "nation", yet one should be warned against the risk of "mystification of myth"³⁸. As the line between historical universality and myths is blurred, truth-seeking may turn into myth-deciphering. As the famously cited phrase, « one historian's truth becomes another's myth »³⁹ reveals ; myths, in this sense, are shared truths necessary for the preservation of a group⁴⁰. In other words,

...myth is a particular set of ideas with a moral content told as a narrative by a community about itself. In this sense, myth may or may not be related to historical truth, though those who rely on the narrative generally believe that it is. *At most, myth is a way of organising history so as to make sense of it for that particular community*⁴¹.

- 10 What Vasa attempted was exactly *organizing history*. His profound sentiments for his people and the longing for its revival were, thus, amalgamated in his history writing in a period when the Albanian nation and the associated political demands commenced to mature. That is, even though Vasa did not have a certain definition of what "Albanian people stood for", he believed more in the excavations that he undertook rather than its confusing aspects. Uncertainty about the "people" and "ethnicity" therefore should not lead to linear developments ending up with nation-states⁴². In other words, while nationalist fervor in Balkans was highly efficacious, the discourse that varying Balkan nationalisms revealed was not confined to nation-state ideals *per se*. By challenging the supposed inevitability of the Balkan nation-state and the apparent inter-communal antagonisms, Isa Blumi criticises « the region's myths as *per* communal identities and the centrality of the ethnic nation in particular »⁴³. Considering Vasa's loyalty to the Ottoman administration as well as Albanian nationalist ends in particular, one's collective identity may not be that straightforward while each respective community or ethnic unit attempts to maintain definite but contradictory interests⁴⁴. As it will be shown in the next sections, Vasa's identity associated with the Albanian nationalism did not ultimately lead him to thwart all the ties that he had with the Sublime Porte. Regarding the ethno-nationalism in such a context evidently not only contributes to the ever changing interests of people but also establishes a differing agency in the modernization discourse⁴⁵.
- 11 Vasa lived as an ardent Albanian nationalist. Even though his canonization in the Albanian history was confined to his literary works, I will argue that the book *The Truth on Albania and the Albanians*, presented insights for the emerging Albanian nationalism into employing 'history' as a political weapon. Underlining the prominence of history, Coakley remarks the necessity to recourse to history and archaeology in justifying contemporary claims to disputed territory⁴⁶. In short, what Vasa attempted, as a political archaeologist, in this manner paved one of the paths for the future of the political Albanianism. In a period when many Balkan nation-states experimented with nationalism including myths, codes, symbols and histories, if not irredentism, at varying degrees, the latecomer Albanian nationalism had to find some way out. Getting beyond the mediocre disputes over land, Vasa tried to create a "people" out of almost nothing where he disseminated various myths in a history lacking brilliant past days. Of course the theory he based his narrative upon was not a new : the Pelasgian theory was already in circulation in 1860s⁴⁷. Initially, it was mostly espoused by the Arbëreshi in a Hellenic context in order to demonstrate the antiquity and the originality of the Albanian language albeit with differing conclusions⁴⁸. This myth-fed thinking, in any case, was embellished by Vasa and, furthermore, helped him to provide political armaments especially against the Greek cause⁴⁹. Inspired by his nationalist sentiments,

he narrated the Albanian history thanks to the Arbëresh Albanianists and unveiled important myths, which the Albanian nationalism severely lacked, and in turn committed them to the service of Albanian nationalism. In order to comprehend the significance of myths that Vasa borrowed from the Arbëresh in accordance with ethno-historical concerns, one should distinguish the four major variants of Albanian national myths. Once they are considered in the context of Vasa's *Truth on Albania and the Albanians*, it will be evident that Vasa had fulfilled an essential task by compiling these four variants in his volume : the myth of origins and priority; the myth of ethnic homogeneity and cultural purity; the myth of permanent national struggle; and the myth of indifference to religion⁵⁰. Vasa demonstrated, in the first sections of the text under question, the foundations of these varying myths in a historical context.

Building an Ethno-History : Autochthony, Priority and Continuity

- 12 With a great inspiration, Vasa defined the ethnic Albanians by stating that « [i]f we stop the first peasant we meet on the road and we ask him, "Who are you ?" his answer will curtly be, "I am *Shqypetâr*" This reply is invariably given both by those of Upper and Lower Albania, whether Mussulman [sic], Catholic or Orthodox »⁵¹. Disregarding the still ongoing other non-ethnic identities, Vasa hence erected a myth of territory and attributed an ethnic identity to all Albanians settled in the region starting from Shkodër surrounded by Peja, Prishtina, Vranje, Katchanik, Skopje, Perlepe, Bitola, Florina, Kebrena and Ioannina⁵². The fundamentals of an ethno-history were hence established once the territorial frontier was drawn with respect to the "ideal" ethnic unit that was supposed to inhabit the region. Considering that any nationalist historiography will define the conceptual boundaries of the nation, the "definition" is associated with myths of origin including two different expressions : myth of descent and myths of ethnogenesis⁵³.
- 13 In this nationalist historiography context, Vasa constructed an "authentic identity" that might have the meanings of "origin" and "difference"⁵⁴. Once the geography and people to be included in this identity was fixed without any controversies, the fundamentals of an ethnic history seemed to be inaugurated. With respect to the "origin" aspect, the famous theory of the period, Pelasgian theory, was employed by Vasa to supplement the autochthony of the Albanians in Epirus. The theory, Malcolm states, that « gave the Albanians a kind of racial seniority over every other people in southeastern Europe – or perhaps in Europe *tout court* – was the foundation stone on which rested all the other components of the myth-charged account of Albanian identity »⁵⁵. As it was also « necessary to distinguish the Albanians from the Greeks and the Slavs – even to stress their superiority – the origin of Albanian people was found to be in the Pelasgian people, who, according to mythology, were the inhabitants of the Balkans before the Greeks »⁵⁶. In the same vein, there was nothing that could prevent Vasa from relating the Epirot kings to the Pelasgian descent. The objective of Vasa's history writing was to find out the "lost" great Albanian men of Antiquity. His historiographical consideration was brilliantly clear when he underlined that « during the time which passed away between the fabulous centuries and that of Alexander we do not meet with any great personal attributes amongst the Kings of Epirus »⁵⁷. Without

any objections, the Epirot kings were represented as “myth”s of a lost golden age and were dealt with as the primary historical agents.

- 14 In addition to the discourse of “great men”, the distinct origin of the Albanians was now adorned with their “resistant” characteristics albeit with the poorly-related historical realities. For instance, an Epirot king called Alexander, advancing to Italy, concluded alliance with the Romans after defeating the Samnites. Entertaining the notion of “autonomy” in this particularity, Vasa went on to prove that Epirus region was not within the sphere of influence of Greece which Alexander the Great took under his command and was also in a neutral and indifferent state during the latter’s campaigns in Greece and Asia⁵⁸. No need to say that the Albanians, in the name of their forebears, were mythologized as being non-Greek as well as independent during the Hellenic period. Particularly, another king mentioned, Pyrrhus, came to the front for he had fought not only the Greeks but also the Macedonians. The myth of Pyrrhus of Epirus was not merely confined to the successful campaigns he had against the neighbouring peoples. Rather, as Vasa constructed, Pyrrhus was considered as ‘vying with the eagle’ by his fellow Epirot people due to his pace during the military operations. Bridging, thus, a vital connection between the Epirots and the Albanians, Vasa also looked down on Plutarch from whom he quoted this historical narration since he did not know the Pelasgi language and meet the people of Epirus. By correcting Plutarch’s ignorance, Vasa offered the ultimate connection :

The Albanian for “eagle” is *Shqype*. *Shqyper*, or *Shqypenii*, means “the country of the eagle”. *Shqypetar* is equivalent to “Son of the Eagle”. This historical fact, which went unappreciated by ancient historians as well as modern philologists and learned men, deserves serious examination as it constitutes an irrefutable proof for those who, like ourselves, maintain that the Epirotes were distinct from the Hellenic people; that they had always had their own language, that of the ancient Pelasgi, incomprehensible to the Greeks but spoken today in Epirus, Macedonia, Illyria and some of the islands of the Archipelago, as well as in the mountains of the Attica – the same language which is called Albanian or *Shqyptâre*.⁵⁹

- 15 The emphasis on “difference” attributed to authentic identity of Albanians included more space and elaboration in Vasa’s work. Since the main rival against autochthony was the ancient Greeks, Vasa consumed great efforts to differentiate the Pelasgian people from the ancient Greeks even if it necessitated the blurring of history and mythology. Tracing the genealogy of the ancient Macedonia, Vasa argued that Danaus, failing to invade Argos, retreated to a region called Imathia. From this fact, Vasa propounded that the real name of Macedonia was Imathia⁶⁰. Of course, the employment of Imathia was only a tool for Vasa who, regarding the region as the centre of the Pelasgian, entertained the notion of Imathia as inhabited by the Pelasgian. Therefore, the latter was existent there and evidently not Greek. As a result of an interesting combination, the Macedonians and the Epirots, Vasa indicated, did not prefer to help the Greeks⁶¹.
- 16 Apart from the political matters above, Vasa devoted an entire section to a philological debate in which, by comparing roots of many Albanian words with the Greek ones, he argued in favour of the differentiation of the Albanian language from the Greek⁶². However he was not groundless when conceding that the Greek was the *lingua franca* of the period and stating that it was not possible to deny the fame and reputation they obtained due to their progress in civilisation, their language as a literary one, and their trade and industry. Yet the ultimate question that bothered Vasa was the recognition

of the majority of non-Greeks who spoke Greek as belonging to Greek nation, a question Vasa found illicit⁶³. Etymologically speaking, Vasa made a comprehensive list of mythological figures of the Greek mythology arguing that they were derived from the Pelasgi language. By assaulting the mythical gods and goddesses of ancient Greece, it was easy for him to claim the priority of the Pelasgians. It was, however, not an original idea propounded by Vasa. The idea was advanced by Herodotus thanks to his comments that the Greeks had learned the names of many of their gods from the Pelasgians. Correspondingly in the age of romantic nationalism, these comments were formulated by Albanologists⁶⁴. Vasa was no exception. According to him, the Greek word "chaos" was derived from the Pelasgi words "hâ", "hao", "hàs" and "haos"; Erebus from "érh", "éerhem", and "érhenî"; Zeus from "zaa", "zee" and then evolving into "zaan" and "zoon" and "zoot" which mean God in Albanian at that time. And Métis was derived from the Albanian word "ment" meaning reason and comprehension and Thetis was probably derived from Pelasgi and its equivalent in modern Albanian was *deti*⁶⁵. But the significance attributed to the etymological list was beyond merely claiming the priority over the Greek mythology. Rather, Vasa disseminated the etymological narrative of Greek mythology in order to build a cultivable myth that his successors might benefit from. Sami Frashëri, naming the Pelasgians as the oldest people in the ancient period, offered a similar etymology of names of people in the ancient times in the Balkans with the given motivation⁶⁶. The "etymology game" seemed to flourish in the following years as well. Constantin Chekrezi, an Albanian publicist in America, Mehmet Konica, and Kristo Dako employed these arguments with a great enthusiasm as late as the 1910s⁶⁷.

- 17 The only prospect for similarity with Greeks to be spared by Vasa was not unconditional. What the relationship of the Pelasgi, Vasa believed, may perhaps have had with the Greeks was their ancient worships. Not hesitating to manipulate this relation, Vasa maintained that then the Greeks adopted the religion of the Pelasgians since worshipping to such gods came from the old Pelasgians⁶⁸. The trade-off was great: the only possibility that could have taken place in a very restricted manner came at the expense of *a priori* recognition of the priority of the Pelasgian *vis-à-vis* the Greek. The emphasis on non-Greekness, apparently being one of the challenging questions in Vasa's discourse, therefore helped in great extent to construct an Albanian identity that found its "other". Furthering the discussion on the language and assuming that the Pelasgian were the first race to arrive at Greece, Vasa brilliantly rationalized the retreat of the Pelasgi language without giving any resemblance to the Greek⁶⁹. The varying distinctions, no matter how poorly they constructed, with respect to the Greeks constituted the leitmotif of the work. That is, one may question why the Greeks were not regarded as descendants of the Pelasgian people. Instead of arguing such a priority, the difference from the Greeks that Vasa vigilantly maintained seemed to be a defensive approach to represent Albanians as a 'distinguished' nation not associated with the Greeks as well as an "ethnic" people that preceded the Greeks who were regarded as one of the oldest habitants of the region.⁷⁰

- 18 Nevertheless, the distinction was not merely in linguistic terms and not confined to the ancient periods⁷¹. Outraged by the slaughter between Orthodox Albanians, or *klephts*, and Muslim Albanians during the Greek War of Independence, Vasa asserted that they were the citizens of the same country (*vatan evlamları*)⁷². The distinction, hence, seemed to strengthen the Albanian ethnic unity that was divided by different religions. The Albanian ethnicity was nourished as the distance from the Greek influence increased, in both religious and political terms. While narrating the Greek

Revolution in which Albanian captains (mercenaries) participated, Vasa condemned them since they classified themselves in the lines of Greeks due to the victory they obtained because of their bravery and, in turn accepted becoming Greeks. The "identity" that Vasa attributed to Albanians were thus shaped beyond the ethnic considerations. And the conversion of the despised captains, Vasa argued, did not mean that the majority of their compatriots and citizens might be reckoned as Greeks⁷³. Apart from the non-Greekness emphasis, the formulations that Vasa undertook also enhanced the continuity of an Albanian ethnicity throughout the time when Vasa stated that « all the Albanians who are settled in Greece, and who have become Hellenic subjects, have never ceased to speak their own tongue, and, to form, so to say, a distinct family. The religion and the education which they have common with the Greeks have been unable to cause them to forget their origin, or to transform their manner of living »⁷⁴.

- 19 The "non-Greekness" of Albanians, in the form of rather an indifference, was materialised in the ancient and original scission between the two people which manifested itself thrice prior to the Ottoman reign: the Persian invasion, the Roman Conquest, and the Ottoman conquest⁷⁵. While establishing the priority of the Pelasgian in the lands currently inhabited by the Albanians, the non-Greekness also advanced the continuity of Albanians in time. In other words, as the autochthonic and distinctive claims of the Albanians were solidified thanks to the co-existence of the Greeks and the Pelasgian-cum-Albanians, the examples and arguments associated with non-Greekness Vasa offered might be read within the context of establishment of Albanians as senior inhabitants of Epirus, Illyria and Macedonia. The Albanian-Greek distinction was also a political must of the day employed by many Albanianists⁷⁶. It was somehow a necessity for legitimizing the existence of the Albanians, not historically but also contemporarily. By resorting to the Pelasgian theory with the Illyrian expansion as well as portraying the Pelasgian *vis-à-vis* the Greeks, Vasa had accomplished the autochthony of the Albanians, and the continuity was supplemented by means of the Epirot, Macedonian kings, and then Albanian kings as much as the essential attributions of the Albanian race. The continuity, supposedly, was fabricated at the level of "great men" and « the myths of the great Albanian men of antiquity were created, among whom the most distinguished were Alexander the Great and Pirro of Epirus »⁷⁷. The tools to bridge the present and the past, however, were not that prominent all the time. Vasa demonstrated an ancient custom that Islam and Christianity were not able to eradicate: taking an oath in placing a stone first upon one self's shoulder and throwing it behind⁷⁸. Bringing this ancient oath to his times, Vasa maintained that the existing oaths sworn in the name of earth, sky, fire, water as well as sun were evident remnants of the ancient ones. Thus, continuity was nurtured by the direct descent :

The language, the manners, the intimate belief, everything, in fact, have remained Pelasgic from one corner of Albania to the other, without being modified by civilisation, without being transformed by the succession of centuries, and by human vicissitudes.

It is truly an astonishing phenomena [sic] how this ancient language, the most ancient even of all the languages known in Europe, and spoken only by a population of two million of souls, has been able to maintain itself such as it has been since its origin without having an advance literature or remarkable civilisation⁷⁹.

- 20 There was a great 'mythic mentality' at work to excavate its own myths. Malcolm remarks that such a historiographical mentality was not confined to a few. In effect, the autochthony was to turn into a prelude for the future nationalistically-fed ballads⁸⁰.

Discussing the Albanian writers in America, he demonstrates the mentality that barely differed from Vasa's account as such :

two millennia of history are essentialised in a single phrase, and the "ancient" and contemporary worlds are brought into immediate conjunction in a way that implies the existence of an almost timeless Albanian "nation", its identity standing behind or beyond history itself⁸¹.

- 21 The existence of an almost timeless Albanian "nation" was preserved by their "ethnic" resistance. Vasa constructed an everlasting identity that was so firm that « although they have embraced other religions, and have been admitted into the intimate society of other people, the memory of their primitive religion has remained intact, and their language has not been lost nor even altered by contact with other languages »⁸². In order to override geographical, religious as well as social differences, Vasa attempted to fabricate an Albanian nation gathered around despite the difficulties by resorting to this "unified" community. The brigand-cum-pashas of Albania in the early modern period, Vasa acknowledged, were always surrounded by Muslims and Christian military chiefs, and relied upon their valour without any distinction⁸³. The basis of Albanianism with which Vasa found his place in the nationalist canon was retrospectively constructed⁸⁴. Disregarding the different religious affinities, Vasa gave a glimpse on his history writing when he challenged the religious belief as the principle of nationality and substitution of race with religious belief, and country with rite⁸⁵. As Gawrych maintains, « history had featured Albanians as natural fighters and characterized their DNA as, "The son of a soldier remains a soldier" »⁸⁶. Furthermore, Albanian population « are, and remain such as they were thirty centuries ago, the most ancient people of Europe, the race the least intermixed of all the known races – a race which, by a phenomenon which appears marvellous and which cannot be explained, has resisted time, which destroys and transforms »⁸⁷.

- 22 The resistance had certain features attributable to Albanians by all means, and Vasa was never hesitant about that. As he narrated the state of Albanians at his times, he disdained anything associated with time and change and ascribed features of being Albanian in the past and in the contemporary world. The need for unification of differing cultures as well as people by which they construct their identities was thus beaten to everlasting Albanian features. Inspired evidently by romantic nationalism, Vasa described Albanians without discontinuing the descent from Pelasgian in an ahistorical way :

Brave to temerity, intelligent, indefatigable, easily contented, having neither excessive ambition nor unjust covetousness, they [the Albanians] are attached to their rocks by an affection which nothing can diminish. Endowed with chivalrous sentiments, loyal, tenacious in their affections, respecting the rights and the sacred laws of hospitality and of word, they have passed so many centuries without undergoing any change whatever; they have remained Pelasgi, warlike, honest and poor.⁸⁸

- 23 No matter how helpful the presence of continuity was for building a distinct nation, its contribution to the modernisation discourse was severely restricted. The ahistorical formulation of Albanians in terms of time, space and resistance against the change did exalt the underdeveloped state of Albanians. Since the central concept of myths produced by Vasa relied on the autochthony and ever-existing continuity in order to distinguish the Albanian "people", there was a great dilemma of straddling between the

affiliation with a steady past being reflected upon the current era and the urge for progress, a default of modernisation.

The Dilemma of Romanticism against Modernisation

- 24 The “unchanging” portrayal of Pelasgian-cum-Albanians, while enhancing the legitimisation of the nation in history, poses a serious threat in the formation of a “modern nation”⁸⁹. However, it was not in Vasa’s discourse. Considering the changes taking place in national histories since the 18th century, Mishkova indicates that following the engrafting of holism on liberal individualism the outcome was a shift in the arrangement of cultures from being defined by their position “in time” to positioning them “in space”, where cultures become equal by virtue of their origin⁹⁰. Therefore, the folk tradition and folk culture in which Vasa was profoundly interested « became a condition of modernity rather than an object of modernist extinction »⁹¹. In a similar vein, in the second part of the book which Vasa devoted to the current status of Albanians, one observes the characteristics of Albanians exalted in such a way that even the feudal rules administering the Albanian lands were welcomed. The emphasis on the absence of change, forming the backbone of distinguished Albanians, was juxtaposed with an awkward criticism on underdevelopment of Albania⁹². The history suddenly became a collapsing shrine to be evacuated, yet the familiarity developed within the rooms of the building delayed the moment of departure. In this sense, Vasa demonstrated the continuity of the spirit of divination that is common and wide. Divination — by means of entrails, of certain bones of animals, of bird flight, of wolf cry, and of dreams — was criticized by Vasa who added that these beliefs came along with inheritance from their ancestors⁹³. Facing off the underdeveloped state of Albania was not an easy task in a setting where preservation of the past came at the expense of forsaking the progress.

Abandoned to their own instincts, imbued with their ancient traditions which have held the place of history and of legislation, deprived of a proper literature and surrounded by a thousand difficulties which have contributed to trammel their moral and national development, the Albanians have, unfortunately, remained behindhand, stationary as in the primitive times of their transigrations.⁹⁴

- 25 Vasa furthermore conceded that « they [the Albanians] have been unable to blend with other races or to develop their own existence on a vast scale ; thus in the point of view of progress and of civilisation they have been passed by their neighbors »⁹⁵. The discontent emanating from the underdevelopment, however, was still usable with respect to excavate the “modern” aspects in what is deemed ancient or traditional in a crude sense. That is, “selective perception” demonstrated that the feudal regulations (*Lek Dukagin*), have brought about equality before law irrespective of chieftains and subjects while ignoring its fundamental principle : « eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth »⁹⁶. Though the aspects of these laws that might be associated with “modern” concepts i.e. equality and binding all without distinction, its inherent patriarchy as well as legitimisation of violent blood feuds are disdained. In an unusual way, Vasa’s history writing allowed the blood feuds to be compatible with Albanian lands. Considering his comparisons with Switzerland which Vasa regarded apparently as a developed country, the following was built to last : « Rape of a married woman is equivalent to blood »⁹⁷. To a certain extent, one may feel that the ongoing social arrangements and justice practices were completely in line with the Albanian life. In other words, the continuity

of the intact social life in Albania was not taken into account of modernization paradigm but rather is elaborated as a moulding feature for the Albanians⁹⁸. Since the law was applicable for every individual, its comprehension was beyond the religious identities of Albanians.

- 26 The more tangible features of modernization, apparently absent in Albanian lands, were elaborated in a very modern(ist) approach while conceding the underdevelopment of Gegani.

The lands bordering on the sea shore are very fertile. The valleys of Boyans, of Mathia, Scumbi, Argenti, Voyoussa, Drin, Blistritsa, Vardar, &c., contain a great quantity of most productive land, but the agricultural system is quite primitive, and the country does not derive the advantages which a system enlightened by science could assure it. With a little more progress, the products of the soil would not suffice not only for the consumption of the population but would give a very considerable surplus which could be exported, and would serve as the basis of a very lucrative international trade.⁹⁹

- 27 Coping with underdevelopment with a very progressive mindset, Vasa evidently believed in progress as an ardent nationalist of the late nineteenth century. Relegating the famous past of Albanians to a level of minor importance, thus leaving the "romantic" fields of Albania, Vasa demonstrated his optimism, stating that « with a little more civilisation and better conditions, Albania not only would have nothing to envy Switzerland, but surpass it in beauty, in poetry, and in force »¹⁰⁰. The profound interest in progress, however, was elaborated by Vasa to be furthered by Sami Frashëri. As an amalgamation of "modernity" versus "romanticism" ;

...one can discuss the interception of the usual modernist paradigm observed especially in the last part of the book, where Sami paints a modern(ist) picture of the future Albanian society and state on the one hand, and his romanticist attitude, in the same book, on the other hand. There, he underlines the positive side of the centuries-long isolated life of Albanians remote from civilisation in the 'barbarian times'¹⁰¹.

- 28 Vasa was not so that straightforward as Frashëri would be approximately two decades later, when he argued in favour of modernization, at least not explicitly. Nevertheless the ingredients for a modern nation were almost perfect in Vasa's account. In this sense, the discussion of the state of non-Albanian Christians and their employment by Albanian pashas reveals a few considerations that could shed light on Vasa's history writing. Firstly, the neutrality of non-Albanians during the Ottoman conquest was despised. Secondly, more importantly, "living as an Albanian" was pictured by Vasa when one observed that the non-Albanians' breaking with Albanians led the former to lose the habit of handling weapons, and finally brought down on them the mistrust and the contempt of Muslims. Finally, the eulogy for past identities in comparison with the abomination to the basic economic activities is released explicitly. The non-Albanians no more recognized the duty of defending their common lands with arms and, therefore, instead revealed their proclivity for trade, industry and agriculture in like the misers of the Middle Ages¹⁰². Merging these three into one, indeed, exposes the amalgamation of modernity and romanticism. Apart from its essentialist characteristics with almost an anti-modernist romantic stance, any Albanian is portrayed as a Spartan-like soldier, expectedly, in a unifying manner.

- 29 In the context of a unity, a must for nationalism, contrary to his appraisal of the romantic aspects of the Albanian peoples, Vasa demonstrated a homogeneous discussion of the two regions of Albania, the lands of *Tosk*-region and *Gheg*-region. In

order to challenge the arguments that there existed *ab antique* a certain discord and even a traditional enmity and a lack of alliance between Ghegs and Tosks, Vasa acknowledged the enmity but restricted it to the rivalry of the two pashas of Ioannina and Shkodër that was inspired by family ambition¹⁰³. The formulation of “political Albanianism” seems thus to be established no matter how meager in form. The local people, Vasa believed, did not care about the pashas despite their occasional alliances with them. Vasa admired the folks :

Each time, that it was necessary to fight for the cause of the Empire the Guégues and the Tosques fraternised, and there was no sentiment between them tending to separate them, but one noble emulation to distinguish themselves by courage, by fidelity, and by bravery. The Guegues and the Tosques are of one family ; they are brothers who shelter themselves under the same roof, and warm themselves at the same hearth¹⁰⁴.

- 30 In fact, it is surprising to observe the unifying discourse as a still current phenomenon in historiography. Albeit with Vasa's “infant nationalism” that endeavoured to form a homogeneous community, such an elaboration is also existent in contemporary historiography¹⁰⁵. As long as the ultimate end remains as the unification of Albania, evidently there is nothing implausible about the discourse overemphasising the unity of the Ghegs and Tosks which makes a room for the politically-motivated demands, the *sine qua non* of Vasa's account¹⁰⁶. As the belief in “unification” is a product of a modernist discourse, the ultimate belief in progress would be nurtured by this unification. Vasa claimed :

With these three elements of public order and prosperity, it is certain that agriculture would not fail to assume greater proportions the breeding of cattle, which is the first source of riches of the country, would be undertaken on a more vast scale, commerce would flourish at a surer and more, active pace, industry would create new resources for the country, and public instruction would spread everywhere, bringing about progress, civilisation and, consequently, wealth and general welfare.

And as the character of the Albanian people is eminently war-like the Imperial Government could give them a similar military organisation to that of Switzerland, and at the end of six or eight years Albania would be in condition to furnish 200 battalions of troops, well-organised, instructed disciplined, devoted, and brave; 200 battalions of men, who would every one of them, die in the defence of the rights and interests of the Empire, and prove their constant and unchangeable attachment towards the august person of their sovereign¹⁰⁷.

- 31 Nonetheless, this quotation represents a peculiar aspect of nationalist historiographies in Eastern Europe since many modernizers had little reverence for the distinction between the liberal and the romantic¹⁰⁸. In this particular case, in order to demonstrate the readiness of his people for modernity, Vasa was therefore barely hesitant about praising the backwardness of his fellow people and the ultimate credence in progress.

Against the Empire as a Bureaucrat : Political Stance and Demands

- 32 Having formulated the vital bases of Albanianism, namely the distinction of Albanian as a race throughout history, the lands inspired by the “national idea”, and the essentialist attributions serving the unification of the country, the consequent political demands came out of the closet. As the previous sections have demonstrated the

historical narrative of the Albanians to a certain extent, the historicization of relations with the Ottoman Empire might unveil the subsequent political demands of Vasa that he listed repeatedly in the last five chapters of his treatise.

- 33 The continuity that Vasa built, extending from the ancient Pelasgians to the Epirot as well as the Macedon kings including Alexander the Great as well, came across a very problematical fact, the Ottoman state :

On the contrary, the Epirotes, the Macedonians, and the Illyrians, that is to say, those of the pure Pelasgic race whom foreigners in modern times have designated under the denomination of Albanians, united themselves in one patriotic idea, and in the 15th century, opposed the most obstinate resistance to the Ottoman domination¹⁰⁹.

- 34 The homogenizing myth was brought immediately to the present : to keep on the homogenization, the Albanians legitimized the military defense of the homeland in case of an alien invasion¹¹⁰. Interestingly the Ottoman occupation was conceded very easily by Vasa who was not canonized today for his indirect criticism on the Ottoman policy towards the Albanians. This concession made itself evident when Vasa argued in an undeniable way that the Albanians have always and spontaneously defended their country from the neighboring attacks and maintained the power of the Ottoman domination in Europe¹¹¹. The resemblance Lubonja claims between Skanderbeg and Vasa is very illuminative in this context: Skanderbeg was in fact a very ambiguous figure who was mythologized by the Catholic Church and then became mythologized for the second time as a national hero of the Albanians¹¹². He waged countless battles against the Ottoman forces in a period when no one was able to challenge the Ottoman arms, according to Vasa, but he was summoned to Istanbul for some reasons and had also a Turkish name. Even though Lubonja bridges the similarity between Vasa and Skanderbeg in terms of religious conversion, it is also worth reconsidering that Skanderbeg's stance had some common points with that of Vasa's albeit the centuries had passed¹¹³. Apparently Vasa was not a convert and remained Catholic, but the fact that Vasa devoted only a few pages to Gjergj Kastrioti is very telling : the first showing the stances of the second towards the Ottoman government. Even though Vasa portrayed the national hero in a prideful way with his battles waged against the Ottoman forces, there is no further elaboration in any direction. More surprisingly, one can come across the name of the Alexander the Great in the treatise more than Skanderbeg's¹¹⁴. It is thus very doubtful why Vasa did not portray a more sophisticated narrative of Skanderbeg. In addition to his relatively peaceful elaboration dealing with the Ottoman occupation, it appears that the "homogeneous" identity that Vasa attempted to draw was absent for him at the very first place. Straddled between the identities of an Ottoman bureaucrat and a political Albanianist, the negligence on one of the national myths of Albanians poses a very challenging question while inviting the possibility of the collective identities Vasa might have had.

- 35 The basic discontent that Vasa confronted was the Tanzimat reforms in particular and the centralisation in general¹¹⁵. In Vasa's account, Albania was governed by its national chiefs until 1831¹¹⁶. Therefore the "ideal" Albania enjoying autonomy to a certain extent under the rule of local feudatories was under threat. The criticism on Tanzimat should be read in such a context without disregarding the demands of the League of Prizren¹¹⁷. Given the rhetorical questions whether the ones who were in charge of the administration of Albania did not know the methods of establishment of the new order or they were not powerful enough for its establishment, the response with respect to

the disappointment with the reforms included the two¹¹⁸. The primary agency for the lack of prosperity was attributed to officials of the empire. Of course, given the political demands of the political Albanianists at the time, the accusation of Ottoman officials followed suit. The officials, according to Vasa, were not competent in executing the necessary reforms for Albania just because they exploited these posts in accordance with their corruption, greed and indeterminate and inconclusive attempts¹¹⁹. Accordingly the choices for these posts were not always picked among from honest people. Taking these complaints into account, one can easily observe the underlying motivation that Vasa tried to reach: the replacement of the officials in their posts with Albanian ones.

36 Accordingly the features of the new order shared the same burden of the underdevelopment of Albanian with the incompetent officials. Speaking in a very modernist discourse, Vasa complained about a method of administration that did not meet the tendencies and demands of the local people. Moreover, establishment of this method upon a very ancient one evidently ended up with the absence of order, ruining ultimately common prosperity and wealth¹²⁰. When one recalls the last quotation in the previous section, the awkward controversy becomes evident. In a sense all aspects of underdevelopment including that of agriculture, industry and education was attributed to the misadministration of the Tanzimat reform. As the most undesirable reform of the Tanzimat, Vasa challenged the conscription and underlined that it caused great dismay among the Muslims rather than the Christians. The relation was, again, in modern terms. The conscription of Muslims, Vasa stated, posed a serious danger to agricultural production¹²¹. However, the extent of criticism was not necessarily sharp. Aware of the legitimacy on the level of the Sultanate, Vasa formulated the Albanians who suffered from misadministration of the officials as non-complaining due to their subjection to the sultan¹²².

37 Another criticism, along with the stance of the officials, addressed the reorganisation of the province which, according to Vasa, was not conducted on the basis of ethnic considerations including the controversies of race, language, customs and manners¹²³. If one is made known that the latter four categories were employed in a significant amount in the treatise, then it follows that the "people" Vasa attempted to build relied on the four. In other words, ethnic identities were juxtaposed with some cultural characteristics in order to advance claims on Albanian lands. The major discontent was materialized as such :

Long and painful experience has shewn [*sic*] us that since Albania has been deprived of its ancient administrative form and distributed into three provinces governed by men ignorant of the country the language and manners of the inhabitants, has lost much of its lustre, of its force, of its riches and of its prosperity.¹²⁴

38 Particularly the deeds of the new order were apparently not beneficial for the two regions of Albania. Apart from the implicit assumption of "difference" concerning the divided structure of Albania, the officials were accordingly differentiated but still failing to establish the order for they failed to comprehend the "origin" at the very first place. Conservative officials attempted to revive the ancient order whereas the progressive officials were not able to disseminate reforms in a way to be understood by the local people¹²⁵. The differentiation was evidently resulted with the absence of unity and absence of equality according to Vasa.

- 39 The solution proposed, however, was nothing but the demands of the League of Prizren¹²⁶. In accordance with the great value of nationalist historiography to ethnonational politics, it becomes apparent that the treatise that Vasa narrated « can be used to justify not only past actions but also current or planned political programs »¹²⁷. Read in this context, Vasa, nevertheless, deviated from the radical stance of the political program within the Leagues. As a solution, Vasa seemed to content with the foundation of the single Albanian province. Legitimizing the five-century-long rule of the Ottomans, Vasa underlined the vital necessity of the strict union with the Imperial Sultanate for it was in the very interests of the Albanians themselves. Vasa believed that the union would not injure the national orientations and language of Albanians but rather would guarantee them an existence¹²⁸. In a period when the efforts for autonomy spread, Vasa challenged the idea of autonomy for he believed :

The Albanians likewise know that divided as they are into three religious faiths, and public instruction being yet in a state or [*sic*] embryo, they could not easily agree in their own government without having, a strong. [*sic*] hand to guide and master, them; they require a force to urge them on or to stop them according to circumstances, to temper their impulse or to sharpen their inertia.

Abandoned to themselves and to their instincts, they. [*sic*] would present the spectacle. [*sic*] of interminable dissensions which would not be long in degenerating into civil war; and [*sic*] and they know full well what civil ends in [*sic*].¹²⁹

- 40 The vital foundation Vasa built did not foresee anything beyond the unification of three provinces, namely Shkodër, Ioannina and Kosovo. Coming to terms with the actual partial features of Albania (both geographically and culturally), Vasa abruptly discouraged the idea of an autonomous Albania administered by Albanian fellows. In other words, Vasa was against the partition of his homeland against the neighbor invasion, particularly Greece, but did not favor in any case the formation of an autonomous Albania. Considering the motivation underlying his will to write the treatise under question, Vasa confined himself to the struggle for recognition of his nation and the following attempt to leap his country towards the rest of the civilized nations¹³⁰. Therefore, Vasa attempted to incorporate the future Albania into the Ottoman Empire. In terms of the current problems with which Vasa was preoccupied, the solution, on the behalf of the Ottoman government, included the options of « appointing more Albanians to senior positions in Albania, or by training officials to have working knowledge of the Albanian language, culture, and history, or by weaving a policy combining these two options »¹³¹. Though one can sense such recommendations, as this section has demonstrated the concerns with respect to acquaintance with Albanian life, it seems more likely that Vasa was after the possibility of appointment of Albanian people in posts associated with the administration of the three provinces. In any case, it was apparent that Vasa was in-between. Even though Vasa was regarded to advance indirect criticism against the Ottoman state just because he was a government official, his criticism concerning the past was slightly harsh¹³². Rather, I argue that such arguments eventually attribute single identities to such prominent nationalists¹³³. Vasa attempted to erect a nationalist discourse as an Albanian following the imminent threat of invasion, yet he was also an Ottoman bureaucrat who was thus involved in the ideological practices of the empire. Even before being appointed to Mount Lebanon and becoming an Ottoman pasha, he had approximately 30 years of service to the Empire. What the service suggests does not translate into an ordinary loyalty to the Empire, but rather it should be seen as another "identity" by which Vasa narrated his political demands at the time¹³⁴.

Concluding Remarks

- 41 Metaphorically speaking Vasa was a political archaeologist in a period when there was scarcity about archaeology. His enthusiasm for unveiling the everlasting Albanian in the future, if not beyond it, was nurtured by his love for his homeland¹³⁵. Inheriting the theories of his compatriots, he was very aware that he needed the myths to establish a people still not recognized by the European circles, so Vasa enhanced what he borrowed from the Pelasgian-Illyrian theory to channel the findings into political Albanianism of the day against the Greek menace. And in the end, he undertook to add the base bricks of the myths upon Albanian nationalism would rest. The hope that pillars would be erected by the successors was not entirely lost. Between the amalgamation between romanticism and modernisation, the bricks he placed with great enthusiasm would be followed by the pillars thus strengthening the structure, political Albanianism. The fact that the myth-bricks did not appear in a uniform outlook must be sought within the "infant nationalism" of Vasa's history writing. Yet, the successors of Albanian nationalism such as Sami Frashëri and Faik Konitza would carry out building the pillars thus augmenting political Albanianism¹³⁶.
- 42 Being at the midst of a construction, Vasa staggered between certain dualities. In a period when "identities" were constantly changed, altered and faltered, Vasa, however, engaged in a pioneering enterprise with a view to challenging the partition of his homeland. Nevertheless, his history writing was not free of the fragmentation emanating from these dynamic identities. As Vasa had extended the existence of Albanians beyond history under the guise of ancient Pelasgians and Illyrians, and thus demonstrated his ardent nationalist sentiments, he also took the Ottoman loyalty into consideration. In the end, the reason why Vasa was not canonised in the nationalist historiography of Albania should be sought not only in terms of his conformist stance associated with his Ottoman service but also because of his bifurcated identities determined by the harsh political events of his period. That being said, Vasa engaged with nationalist projects that he deemed necessary for Albania with a great prospect and paved the way for the *rilindija*. Even though his role in the revival was somewhat elusive, his narrative should be placed in the Albanian nationalism in terms of both historicisation and thematisation. Considering the similarity with the Sami's historical treatise in form and content, Vasa might have influenced the political and historical discourses of the Albanianists. Accordingly, the hybridity by which Vasa was inflicted should not eclipse the era of myth dissemination to which Vasa contributed in essence. Albeit with an incoherent and amalgamated structure, Vasa was one of the forerunners of the myth-distribution with respect to the Albanian past, to be transformed into a tradition by a new generation in the years to come.

NOTES

1. **Evans (Arthur J.)**, *Illyrian Letters*, London : Longmans, Green and Co., 1878, p. 141.
2. The Albanian nationalism, however, antedates the formation of League of Prizren, cf. **Misha (Piro)**, « Invention of a Nationalism Myth and Amnesia », in Schwander-Sievers (Stephanie), Fisher (Bernd J.), eds., *Albanian Identities Myth and History*, London : Hurst and Company, 2002, and **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais : la naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe*, Paris : Karthala, 2007, pp. 193-240. I am grateful to Nathalie Clayer who provided me with the Turkish translation of her comprehensive volume just cited.
3. The conceptualisation of the League of Prizren, a political organisation against the annexation of lands whereby the Albanians constituted the majority, followed by the Congress of Berlin is very biased in recent Turkish historiography. The League, usually regarded as the beginning of *Rilindja* (National Renaissance), has been elaborated in such a sense that its impact was almost non-existent. Even though, the nationalist sentiments of the Albanian populace are portrayed, the increasing level of nationalism among Albanians is usually associated with the activities of the Committee of Union and Progress and the aftermath of the Second Constitutional Period. For these kind of scholar works, see **İşlet Sönmez (Banu)**, *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*, Istanbul : YKY, 2007 ; **Bozboru (Nuray)**, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, Istanbul : Boyut Kitapları, 1997, and **Çelik (Bilgin)**, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar II Meşrutiyet Döneminde Arnavut Ulusçuluğu ve Arnavutluk Sorunu*, Istanbul : Büke Kitapları, 2004. For an historiographical elaboration discussing the historical period in a way to balance the nationalist tones of two countries, see **Bahadır Bayraktar (Uğur)**, « Tarihi Yeniden Yazmak : Prizren Birliği, 'Öteki' Arnavutlar ve Meşrutiyet », paper presented at *Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılâp Tarihi Bölümü I. Lisansüstü Öğrenci Konferansı*, Yıldız Technical University, 6-7 May 2010, Istanbul. This bias, as it is beyond the scope of this study, however needs a serious revision and further research.
4. In order to cast aside differences in language, I will use only his name "Vasa", at the expense of its English translation Wassa, for it is used by both sides.
5. For the English translation of the poem « Oh Albania, poor Albania » last verse of which brought about this "slogan", see **Gawrych (George)**, *The Crescent and the Eagle Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874-1913*, London / New York : I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 70.
6. The significance of ethno-history is important since « the nation is depicted as an outgrowth of earlier periods of the community's history, establishing itself as its lineal descendant through linkages of name, place, language and symbol, and in the stratification of layering of collective experiences, with lower "layers" setting limits to higher ones, despite some breaks in experience ». **Smith (Anthony)**, « The "Golden Age" and National Renewal », in Hosking (Geoffrey), Schöpflin (George), eds., *Myths and Nationhood*, New York : Routledge, 1997, p. 50. In the Albanian context, it is useful in comprehending the space-based history and its current political claims despite the strict periodization of the past. See also, **Coakley (John)**, « Mobilizing the Past : Nationalist Images of History », *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, (10), 2004.
7. **Akarlı (Engin)**, *The Long Peace*, London / New York : Centre for Lebanese Studies / I.B. Tauris, 1993, pp. 195-196. There is a controversy concerning Vasa's birth year. Though his birth in Hijri calendar indicates 1245 AH, it is usually recorded as 1825. To cite one of references among many that cited the latter, see **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 44.
8. Vasa perfected Italian, French, Turkish and Greek. He also knew some English, Serbo-Croatian, and Bulgarian as he worked as a secretary for the British Consulate in Shkodër. Robert Elsie also indicates that Vasa set off for Italy in 1847 and was influenced by the events taking place in Europe in 1848. **Elsie (Robert)**, *Albanian Literature. A Short History*, London / New York : I.B. Tauris, 2005, p. 80.

9. There are also two letters written by Vasa while he was in Bologna. In 1849, he took place in a Venetian uprising against the Austrians. Following his arrival at Istanbul, he published an account of his experience in Venice in the Italian-language *La mia prigionia, episodio storico dell'assedio di Venezia* in Istanbul, in 1850 (see **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 81).
10. I am grateful to A. Kırmızı for enabling me to access to the part devoted to Vasa in his M. A. Thesis ; see, **Kırmızı (Abdülhamit)**, *II. Abdülhamid Dönemi (1876-1908) Osmanlı Bürokrasisinde Gayrimüslimler*, M. A. Thesis, Hacettepe University, 1998, p. 67. Then, Vasa was dispatched to London where he was employed as the Ottoman Embassy to the Court of St. James's. **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 81.
11. After the year 1860-1861, Vasa was employed as a member of the Military Council during the war in Montenegro between 1861 and 1862. **Kırmızı (Abdülhamit)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-68 ; **Paşa (Cevdet)**, *Tezâkir 13-20* (vol. 2), Ankara : TTK Basımevi, 1986, p. 268.
12. **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 81.
13. The switch was materialised by the appointment at the Assistantship of the Politics Directory (*Politika Müdiriyeti Muavinliği*) of the Province of Aleppo in 1867. Vasa was then appointed as examinant at the Council of Judicial Ordinances in March 1869, to become a member few months later. **Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi** (hereafter BOA), A. MKT. MHM. 437/83, 23 Zilkade 1285 (7 March 1869). BOA. İ.DH. 598/41670, 7 Cemaziyelevvel 1286 (14 September 1869).
14. For the themes of the poems, see **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 82.
15. **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 44. However Nathalie Clayer warns about the actual existence of the committee and offers the possibility that this name was added somehow later. **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, p. 249, n 5.
16. The brochure demonstrated the application of Latin alphabet to the Albanian language, a recent consensus established among various Albanianists. Vasa was accompanied by other Albanian nationalists who were Hasan Tahsin, Jani Vreto and Sami Frashëri. **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 80-81. See also **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, p. 285.
17. In the same year he was appointed undersecretary (*Müsteşar*) of the Province of Edirne ; he worked in Varna with Ismail Kemal Vlora. **Kırmızı (Abdülhamit)**, *op.cit.*, p. 68. **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 82.
18. **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, p. 260. See note 20 below.
19. The titles of the different editions follow as such : *La vérité sur l'Albanie et les Albanais. Etude historique et critique* (Paris, 1879) ; *The Truth on Albania and Albanians. Historical and Critical Issues* (London : National Press Agency, 1879) ; *Albanien und die Albanesen. Eine historisch-kritische Studie* (Berlin : Springer, 1879). **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, p. 260. For a brief evaluation and context of the pamphlet, see **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-59 ; **Trencsényi (Balázs), Kopeček (Michal)**, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945) Texts and Commentaries*, vol. 1, Budapest : Central European University Press, 2006, pp. 119-121 ; **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, p. 260-261.
20. Elsie also notes that « the Albanian edition, *Shqypnija e Shqyptart* (Albania and the Albanians), was published in *Allfabetare e qlluhësë shqip*, Constantinople, 1879 (Alphabet of the Albanian language), along with the work by Sami Frashëri and Jani Vreto » (**Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 82). Gawrych indicates that the Ottoman edition was published in 1880 (**Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 57). See **Vasa**, *Arnavudluk ve Arnavudlar*, Istanbul : Mihran Matbaası, 1297 [1880]. The Ottoman Turkish edition started with the remark that the gross revenue and the copyright [of the volume] pertained to the Society for the Publication of Albanian Writing (*Cem'iyet-i İlmiye-yi Arnavudiye*). It should be noted that the study is based on the two editions of Vasa's pamphlet, namely the English and the Ottoman Turkish. The two editions do not reveal any significant divergences except the fact that the Turkish edition includes shorter sentences evidently for practical reasons. Unless stated otherwise, the study's quotations will be cited from the English edition. In the case of a nuance, the Ottoman Turkish edition might be referenced as well.

21. The Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878 culminating in the Berlin Conference is the milestone that shaped the future of political Albanianism in general and the ideology of Vasa in particular. For a brief discussion on the crisis, see **Skendi (Stavro)**, *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878-1912*, Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1967, pp. 31-87 ; and a more recent volume **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 38-60.
22. The Berlin Conference, a moderate peace *vis-à-vis* the Treaty of San Stefano, granted independence to Serbia, Montenegro and Rumania while dictating the establishment of Bulgarian Principality. The occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Habsburg Empire went unnoticed for the Porte was reckless to challenge following the crushing defeat near Istanbul in 1878. For the impact of the Eastern Crisis on the politicization of Albanianism, see **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 245-258.
23. The poem « Oh Albania, poor Albania » is believed to be written between 1878 and 1880. The question why Vasa was represented in the Albanian national canon with this poem instead of his other political works is an appealing question. In particular, Sami Frashëri's historical work *Shqipëria ç'kaqënë, ç'është, e ç'dotëbëhet?* (Albania what it was, what it is and what it will be?) seems to have many common points with the work of Vasa. For a brief discussion of the text and the discussion with reflections upon the Turkish historiography, see **Trencsényi (Balazs)**, **Kopeček (Michal)**, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945) Texts and Commentaries*, vol. 2, Budapest : Central European University Press, 2006, pp. 297-304.
24. **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 81 ; **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 47-48. The latter memorandum explicitly challenged any detachment of their country and opposed any submissions to another nationality, let alone the Greeks.
25. The other two peoples, Vasa stated, were the ones assimilated into others, and the ones going extinct without leaving any remnants. **Vasa**, *The Truth on Albania and the Albanians*, p. 3. The equivalent of "people" is *kavim* in the Turkish edition.
26. In the memorandum, Vasa appeared to be more concerned of the Slav claims rather than the Greek cause. The immediate effect of the following developments changed Vasa's discourse in a radical way in just a year's time. **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 252-253.
27. **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 49 ; **Bartl (Peter)**, *Milli Bağımsızlık Esnasında Arnavutluk Müslümanları (1878-1912)*, Istanbul : Bedir Yayınevi, 1998, p. 195. Once the surrender of Albanian lands to Montenegro in the north ceased to interest the Great Powers in the last months of 1878, the Porte was then preoccupied with the rectification of the southern border. **Skendi**, *The Albanian National Awakening*, p. 68-9.
28. **Bartl**, *Milli Bağımsızlık Esnasında*, p. 210; **Gawrych**, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, p. 60. For a detailed discussion of the boundary with Greece in relation with the activities of Albanian League, see **Skendi (Stavro)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 69-87.
29. **Abdul Frashëri** and **Mehmed Ali Bey Vrioni**, extending the propaganda in Europe, challenged against the Greek claims on Albanian-inhabited lands. **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
30. **Gawrych**, in the same vein, underlines the profound interest of Vasa that he devoted also to southern Albanians, Epirots, thwarting the possibilities of any alliance with the Greeks. **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 59.
31. There was a possibility of appointing Vasa at the governorship (*mutasarrıflık*) of Rhodes in March 1882. **BOA. Y.A.HUS.**, 169/41, 24 Safer 1299 (15 January 1882). The governor (*vali*) of Archipelago apparently favoured a Muslim governor but did not rule out Vasa's appointment thanks to his loyalty. Yet, Vasa refused this post. Even though it is not sure why he was appointed to that post, it should be noted that Rhodes Island was the place where earlier dissidents such as **Namık Kemal** and **A. Midhat Efendi** was expelled. For the necessity of appointing a Christian governor-general, see **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 85-86. Prior to the appointment of Vasa, the previous candidate was **Perenk Duda Pasha**, another Albanian. **BOA. Y.A. RES.**, 20/19 16 Cemaziyelahir 1300 (24 April 1883).

32. **BOA**. İMTZ.CL., 3/182, 3 Receb 1300 (10 May 1883). Vasa was appointed with the title of "viziership", thus becoming pasha. Despite the promotion the appointment might be deemed as a means for deterring Vasa from the Albanian Question, if not an exile. **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, p. 284. For his activities as the Governor-General of Mount Lebanon, see **Akarlı (Engin)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 45-57.
33. **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 83. Catherine Bonatti was Bonatti brothers' sister who were members of the society. **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, p. 316.
34. The Pelasgian theory was also present in the introduction of this work as Vasa stated that « Les Albanais, surtout ceux des montagnes du Nord, sont, encore de nos jours, ce qu'ils étaient il y a trente siècles : bergers et guerriers, pensant, sentant, vivant et mourant comme les héros d'Homère » (quoted in **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, p. 285). On the other hand, Vasa advanced the Albanian language studies because he also facilitated the learning of Albanian. **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 82.
35. Written as a love story between Bardha and her lover Aradi, Bardha represented, Elsie indicates, « the personification of Albania itself, married off against her will to the powers that be ». **Elsie (Robert)**, *op.cit.*, p. 83.
36. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, p. 42.
37. I borrow the term "political archaeology" from Anthony Smith who underlines the significance of memories of any golden age to be exploited by nationalists. The advocacy Vasa attempted to establish was nothing but « to rediscover and reconstruct the life of each period of the community's history, to establish the linkages and layerings between each period, and hence to demonstrate the continuity of "the nation", which is assumed to persist as a discrete, slowly changing identity of collective values, myths, symbols and memories ». **Smith (Anthony)**, *art.cit.*, p. 50.
38. **Schwander-Sievers (Stephanie)**, « Narratives of Power : Capacities of Myth in Albania », in Schwander-Sievers (Stephanie), Fischer (Bernd J.), eds., *op.cit.*, p. 7.
39. **McNeill (William H.)**, « Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians », *The American Historical Review*, 91 (1), February 1986, p. 1.
40. *Ibid*, p. 4.
41. **Schöpfli (George)**, « The Nature of Myth. Some Theoretical Aspects » in Schwander-Sievers (Stephanie), Fischer (Bernd J.), eds., *op.cit.*, p. 26. Emphasis added. Another definition for myth, with more emphases on politics, can be marked as follows : « the term "myth" is used to suggest the symbolic, emotional and talismanic ways in which such ideas have functioned, both as components of identity and as weapons in a war of political and historical claims ». **Malcolm (Noel)**, « Myths of Albanian National Identity : Some Key Elements, as Expressed in the Works of Albanian Writers in America in the Early Twentieth Century », in Schwander-Sievers (Stephanie), Fischer (Bernd J.), eds., *op.cit.*, p. 72.
42. Uncertainty among the different usages of the terms such as *millet*, *kavim*, nation and race etc., Vezenkov indicates, was also shared by many nationalists of the era, and he suggests focusing on the political projects of the Tanzimat leaders in their integrity instead of usage of the terms. See **Vezenkov (Alexander)**, « Reconciliation of the Spirits and Fusion of the Interests : "Ottomanism" as an Identity Politics », in Mishkova (Diana), ed., *We, The People Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, Budapest : Central European University Press, 2009, p. 61. On the other hand, the historiography, unlike the Turkish one discussed above, elaborating the Albanian nationalism predominantly deals with development leading to the Albanian independence as inevitable. Among the many examples suffice this fact : **Logoreci (Anton)**, *The Albanians Europe's Forgotten Survivors*, London : Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1977 ; **Marmullaku (Ramadan)**, *Albania and the Albanians*, London : C. Hurst & Company, 1975 ; **Chekzezi (Constantine)**, *Albania Past and Present*, New York : Macmillan Company, 1919.

43. **Blumi (Isa)**, « Understanding the Margins of Albanian History : Communities on the Edges of the Ottoman Empire », in Blumi (Isa), ed., *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire : A Comparative Social and Political History of Albania and Yemen 1878-1918*, Istanbul : Isis, 2003, p. 83.
44. **Blumi (Isa)**, « Finding Social History on the Bookshelf : The Tyranny of Sociological Categories in Studies on Albanians and the Balkans », in Blumi (Isa), *op.cit.*, p. 28.
45. To question the augmented importance attributed to ethno-nationalism, Blumi brilliantly discloses the ever-changing interests of Malësore populace, locals of Hoti and Gusinje in particular. For the dynamic interests of the two, see **Blumi (Isa)**, « Contesting the Edges of the Ottoman Empire : Rethinking Ethnic and Sectarian Boundaries in the Malësore, 1878-1912 », *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35 (2), May 2003.
46. **Coakley (John)**, *art.cit.*, p. 532.
47. The Pelasgian theory was developed in its classical form by an Albanologist, Johann Georg von Hahn. The theory quickly replaced the previous Caucasian theory in the 1860s and was widely exploited to shed light on the origins of Albanians. For Caucasian and Pelasgian theories, see **Malcolm (Noel)**, *art.cit.*, pp. 73-79. See also, **Bilmez (Bülent)**, « Shemseddin Sami Frashëri (1850-1904) : Contributing to the Construction of Albanian and Turkish Identities », in Mishkova (Diana), ed., *op.cit.*, pp. 348-350.
48. Vincenzo Dorsa (1823-1885), for instance, concluded that Greeks, Albanians, and the Latins descended from the Pelasgians whereas Girolamo De Rada (1814-1903) maintained that Albanian preceded Greek. Considering the Pelasgian language as a main branch from which Albanian and Greek emerged, Demetrio Camarda (1821-1882) constructed a relationship between the Greeks, the Albanians and the Latins without any subordination. **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 204-210. For the early Arbëreshi, including Angelo Masci (1758-1821) and Guiseppe Crispi (1781-1859), on their studies of their origin, see *ibid.*, pp. 170-180 ; **Skendi (Stavro)**, *op.cit.*, p. 116-117.
49. The Pelasgian theory was employed by Vasa in an adversary way with respect to the Arbëresh. As the latter advocated an alliance between the Arbëresh, Albanians and Greek, Vasa equipped the theory to distinguish Albanians from Greeks. Correspondingly, the way Vasa demonstrated the theory would be commonly used by other Albanianists of the time.
50. **Malcolm (Noel)**, *art.cit.*, p. 73.
51. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (*op.cit.*), p. 9. Faik Konitza's, despite its latter date, invented dialogue in which Konitza also underlined the predominance of Albanian identity in a less enthusiastic way than did Vasa. **Puto (Arten)**, « Faik Konitza. The Modernizer of the Albanian Language and Nation », in Mishkova (Diana), ed., *op.cit.*, pp. 315-316.
52. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (*op.cit.*), p. 22. It is apparent that Vasa demonstrated these lands « where its purity was safeguarded, where its virtues were best preserved before contact with aliens ». In this case, it can be argued that, the lands retained their purity and virtues even after contacting with the aliens. **Schöpfli (George)**, « The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths », in Hosking (Geoffrey), Schöpfli (George), eds., *op.cit.*, p. 28.
53. **Coakley (John)**, *art.cit.*, p. 541.
54. **Smith (Anthony)**, *art.cit.*, p. 49.
55. **Malcolm (Noel)**, *art.cit.*, p. 73. For the elaboration of the theory, along with the rival theories, in the context of Sami Frashëri's works, see **Bilmez (Bülent)**, *art.cit.*, pp. 348-350.
56. **Lubonja (Fatos)**, « Between the Glory of a Virtual World and the Misery of a Real World », in Schwander-Sievers (Stephanie), Fisher (Bernd J.), eds., *op.cit.*, p. 92.
57. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (*op.cit.*), p.7.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-13. In this section, the English edition lacks items of *Thetis*, *Latone* and *Diane* whereas the Ottoman Turkish edition lacks the items of *Erynnis* and *Aphrodite*. Cf. **Vasa**, *Arnavudluk ve Arnavudlar*, (op.cit.), pp. 28-36.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

64. For the derivations of certain mythological words by previous Albanologists — namely Malte Brun and Guiseppe Crispi — see **Malcolm (Noel)**, art.cit., pp. 77-78. What Vasa had accomplished in this sense was nothing but compiling these names in a structured manner.

65. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 12 ; **Vasa**, *Arnavudluk ve Arnavudlar* (op.cit.), pp. 30, 33, 35.

66. **Bilmez (Bülent)**, art.cit., p. 349.

67. The mythologization of the “etymologic game”, of course, owes much to previous Albanologists as much as to Vasa who contributed to its dissemination. For the adherent receivers of the game, see **Malcolm (Noel)**, art.cit., p. 78.

68. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 11. The formulation was apparently borrowed from the Arbëresh Girolamo De Rada who published *Antichità della nazione albanese e sua affinità con gli Elleni ed i Latini* in 1864. As Clayer indicates, De Rada argued that Albanian preceded Greek because the Greek polytheism was a systematic form of the Pelasgi religion and the name of Greek deities could be explained with their Albanian etymologies. **Clayer (Nathalie)**, op.cit., p. 205.

69. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians* (op.cit.), pp. 27-28. Vasa also rejected any possible interaction between the Pelasgi and the Greek « excepting in that found in the roots of the words of almost every language derived from [sic] a common source – the Arian and the Sanskrit » (*Ibid.*, p. 29).

70. Gawrych, similarly, notes that Vasa devoted a good part to repeating, demonstrating, and underscoring that Albanians were a distinct nation or *millet*, different from the “Greeks” (*Yunanlılar*). **Gawrych (George)**, op.cit., p. 58.

71. Even the Byzantine Empire could not be saved from this distinction. In order to prove that other Orthodox Christians in Epirus and Macedonia are not Greek in terms of origin and nationality, Vasa challenged the “Greek” origin of the Byzantine Empire and argues that the Empire was called “Greek” just because it practiced a different rite compared to the Western Roman Empire. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), pp. 22-24.

72. In this context, Vasa also attempted to eradicate the nationalist sentiments attributed to the Albanian captains professing Orthodox rite, rather he argued they engaged in the Greek cause because of their warlike spirit and their religious sentiments. He stated that « it happened [...] that the citizens of the same country slaughtered each other in the name of a religion which did not agree with the one professed by others ». **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 21 ; cf. **Vasa**, *Arnavudluk ve Arnavudlar*, (op.cit.), pp. 61-62.

73. Furthermore, Vasa was quite strict on the “ethnic” identities claiming that the adoption of a new nationality [*millet*] by few individuals from a nation cannot cause the destruction and change of their original nations. **Vasa**, *Albania and Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 21, cf. **Vasa**, *Arnavudluk ve Arnavudlar*, (op.cit.), pp. 63-64.

74. **Vasa**, *Albania and Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 22.

75. Vasa believed that each people « who remained separated, nay, strangers to each other » did not make any effort to second the other's cause in three invasions. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 19.

76. The elaboration of the Pelasgian theory was very common during and after the Eastern Crisis. To name a few examples, Abdul Frashëri, in an article published in *Basiret* in April 1878, based some of his arguments on it; Abdul and Mehmet Ali Vrioni resorted to ancient history while petitioning to the Great Powers against the irredentist policy of Greece in May 1879, not to mention Faik Konitza, Sami Frashëri at the end of the century. See **Clayer (Nathalie)**, op.cit., p.

250 ; **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 56 ; **Puto (Arten)**, *art.cit.*, p. 328 ; **Bilmez (Bülent)**, *art.cit.*, p. 350.

77. **Lubonja (Fatos)**, *art.cit.*, p. 92.

78. This tradition was, Vasa claimed, an ancient ritual that the Romans received from the Etruscans, who in turn received it from the Pelasgians. Vasa also noted that he had assisted in northern Albania at the swearing of an oath. Thus, contemporary Albanians were said to continue this tradition even though they, either Muslim or non-Muslim, believed in God and its Prophet. The oath, which would later evidently become the great oath, *besa*, uniting all the Albanians, was both present in both Toskeri and Gegani regions. There were slight differences in terms of the act and the words to be said but the originality was the same. However, it was not about the differences of the tradition but its unifying character in a historical context: **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (*op.cit.*), p. 14-15.

79. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (*op.cit.*), p. 15.

80. Metaphorically speaking, the ballad has been played until recently, especially in the particularity of Kosovo. Skender Rizaj, as he defines Albanians, demonstrates the Pelasgian-Illyrian theory that Vasa enhanced as given : « Albanians are direct descendants of Pellagians – Illyrians, and that they are autochthonous [sic] in the Balkans, and have lived in their territories and in their motherland (in Albania) since the ancient times ». Creation and augmentation of the myth hence becomes crystal-clear. **Rizaj (Skender)**, *Kosova, Albanians and Turks Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Pristine / Istanbul / Tirana : Marifet Yayınları, 1993, p. 90. See also, **Buda (Alex) et al.**, *Problems of the Formation of the Albanian People, Their Language and Culture*, Tirana : 8 Nëntori Publishing House, 1984.

81. **Malcolm (Noel)**, *art.cit.*, p. 70.

82. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (*op.cit.*), p. 16.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 20. For an exemplar pasha of Albania, **Skiotis (Denis N.)**, « From Bandit to Pasha : First Steps in the Rise to Power of Ali of Tepelen, 1750-1784 », *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2 (3), July 1971.

84. Religion was a serious obstacle in the Albanian nationalism, however the differences in confessional identities brought about a varying ways to construct an Albanian identity. See, **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-150.

85. Accordingly the preoccupation with Greeks and the challenge against pan-Hellenism becomes lucid for Vasa who made it certain that the consideration of Orthodox Albanian as Greeks was completely groundless : « Before the Ottoman rule they were but Orthodox Christians, who, by vocation or by interest embraced Islamism [sic], just as the Mussulmans of Upper Albania were but Catholics who had become Mahomedans [sic], as the Mussulmans of Greece were but Hellenes professing Islamism.

To style as Albanians the Mussulmans and the Catholics who do not belong to the Greek Church, and to pretend that the Orthodox of the same country are Hellenes because they profess the doctrines of the Orthodox Church is, according to our views, to seek to raise the religious belief into the principle of nationality [*esas-ı millet*], to substitute dogma for race [*cinsiyet*], rite [*mezheb*] for country, which is not admissible ». **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (*op.cit.*), p. 25 ; **Vasa**, *Arnavudluk ve Arnavudlar*, (*op.cit.*), p. 73-74. For Vasa's challenges against religion as a constituent of nation and elaboration of Albanian existence distinct from the Hellenic world, see also **Clayer (Nathalie)**, *op.cit.*, p. 260-261.

86. **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 58. The inheritance of these warlike features was a result of both their ancient natures and their lack of reasons and means for agriculture, trade and industry. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (*op.cit.*), p. 20. The romantic dilemma and the disguised discontent with respect to modernisation was evident here and the dilemma will be discussed in the next section in detail.

87. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 22. The emphasis on racial purity was evident albeit with its preliminary phase. In this incident Vasa added the preliminary view of ethnography and biology in addition to history, linguistics and folklore into his "scientific identity building" which would be at best at infancy in Vasa's narrative. **Mishkova (Diana)**, « Introduction : Towards a Framework for Studying the Politics of National Peculiarity in the 19th Century », in Mishkova (Diana), ed., op.cit., p. 32.

88. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 31.

89. By formation of a modern nation, I would like to remind once again that "modern nation" was not pre-destined ending up with a nation-state. Taking Vasa's modernisation discourse into account, it is evident that Vasa favoured some kind of progress, a symptom of Enlightenment, but the progress was ambiguous and contested, and so were the identities that Vasa built. Chatterjee, departing from a critique of Gellner, demonstrates the limits of the "conditions", i.e. that of industrialism, to challenge a cultural homogeneity and its convergence with a political unit which are deemed necessary by the commitment to industrial society. **Chatterjee (Partha)**, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World A Derivative Discourse*, London: Zed Books, 1986, p. 5.

90. **Mishkova (Diana)**, art.cit., p. 9.

91. Mishkova, underlining the romantic infiltration into modernist discourses in the 19th century, notes that such a discourse was also common for East European nations. *Ibid.*

92. In this context, Vasa laid one of the first stones to be picked in the forthcoming years by Sami Frashëri and Faik Konitza who drew a romantic picture of a savage barbarian. **Mishkova (Diana)**, art.cit., p. 19 ; **Bilmez (Bülent)**, art.cit., p. 362.

93. Accordingly funeral banquets and purification by water which Vasa claimed to be descended from the Pelasgian, along with other conservative practices, are noted with a further indication of distinction from the Greeks. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 16.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 33. For the Law of Lek Dukagin, see **Gawrych (George)**, op.cit., pp. 30-31 ; also **Skendi (Stavro)**, op.cit., p. 14-15.

97. A portion of the traditional laws were as such : the man killed for theft is dishonoured. The adulterer is punished with death. A debtor must pay his debt in the manner he had contracted it, in kind or money. Property and the guest are sacred. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 34.

98. The patriarchal laws were incorporated into "national essence" of the Albanians. It appears that such treatments were prevalent in the Bulgarian, Macedonian nationalist projects as well albeit under different conditions. **Mishkova (Diana)**, art.cit., p. 31.

99. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 32.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

101. **Bilmez (Bülent)**, art.cit., p. 362-363. Mishkova regards the bulk of the 1830s-1860s generations of South eastern European nationalists as standing at the threshold of two paradigms. In this context, Vasa might be regarded as an Albanianist « who fused a reverence for ethnic culture and tradition with a project of progress and enlightenment ». **Mishkova (Diana)**, art.cit., p. 16. Still, the continuity between Vasa and Sami is meaningful.

102. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 20.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 36. Addressing the European readers, Vasa's discourse was a part of the external usage of emerging Albanian dominant discourse in which unity was emphasised. **Clayer (Nathalie)**, op.cit., p. 321-322.

105. Clayer, in her review of Gawrych's volume *The Crescent and the Eagle*, notes that even Gawrych forgets that the actors [in Tosk and Gheg regions] belong to a highly heterogeneous society and somehow the disparities between the two regions does not convince. **Clayer**

(**Nathalie**), « Review of *The Crescent and the Eagle Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874-1913* », *Slavic Review*, 67 (3), Fall 2008.

106. The union in Vasa's discourse was also anti-clerical. With a ferocity, Vasa was frustrated at the mutual killing of Muslim and Christian Albanians when he preferred to « abstain from reflecting upon the point of mental aberration to which men can be driven by religious fanaticism, or by hatred of caste ! ». **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 21.

107. The three elements Vasa underlined was public security, respect for the constituted authorities and the confidence of all in the future. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 44.

108. The distinction, of course, includes the dichotomies of the universal and the particular as well as the modern and the antiquarian. **Mishkova (Diana)**, art.cit., p. 12.

109. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 58. Classifiable as a "myth of military valour", the myth created here is « potentially a homogenizing myth, in which taking part in the collective diminishes the role of the individual but enhances the group because of the very particular demands and qualities of group violence ». **Schöpfli (George)**, « The Functions of Myth... » (art.cit.), p. 32.

110. Vasa demonstrated the ongoing incidents taking place in his century as nothing but Albanians' defending their freedom and independence of their lands and country in arms. The historical "resistance" is conceptualised, again, as an ahistorical fact.

111. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 36.

112. **Lubonja (Fatos)**, art.cit., p. 92.

113. Having underlined the dual identities of Gjergj Kastrioti, Lubonja claims that « the fact that he changed religions (born a Christian, he became a Muslim and then a Christian again) fitted a very important historical construct created by one of the famous men of the Albanian renaissance, Vaso Pasha ». **Lubonja (Fatos)**, art.cit., p. 92.

114. Skander, in Turkish, corresponds to Alexander. For the historical narrative devoted to Skanderbeg, see **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), pp. 18-19.

115. The reaction against the Tanzimat was evident in Albanian history on the basis of preserving the previous privileges and exemptions. **Bozbor (Nuray)**, op.cit, p. 151. Of course, the majority of the reaction was not inspired by nationalist sentiments. In fact, what Vasa attempted was nothing but narration of the dissidence against the reforms with a nationalist outlook albeit with a preliminary context.

116. Among other myths Vasa constructed, this one has certain truth. Within the modernisation paradigm, the centralisation attempts of the empire have been mostly overemphasised, on the contrary I argue that the relative autonomy of the Albanian lands persisted albeit with changing reciprocal relations with the Sublime Porte in the nineteenth century. Hence, Vasa's articulation with respect to the actual "autonomy" of the Albanian lands, despite its nationalist tones, seems valid. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 36.

117. The demands stemming from the League and especially from its local branches were divergent, but Vasa did not foresee a future Albania without the Ottoman sovereignty. On the other hand, the demands for the unification of three provinces, for education in Albanian, for the Albanian skills of official appointed there etc. were the ones Vasa had agreed with the Leagues. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 39.

118. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 37.

119. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

120. The demands, supposedly of local people, were disguised within the "absences". The absence of roads and of security (for commerce), the absence of encouragement and protection (for industry), the absence of schools, in the end led Vasa to conclude that « the result has been that to ancient richness has succeeded the present poverty ». *Ibid.*, p. 38.

121. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

122. *Ibid.*, p. 37. As a particular discontent concerning the reorganisation of the province, the necessity for transit passports while travelling in Albanian lands is also mentioned. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
123. Vasa warned against the obsolescence of the old axiom, *divide et impera* and added that everything in the current of the age flowed towards union. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
125. *Ibid.*
126. For the Program of the Albanian League, see **Trencsényi (Balazs), Kopeček (Michal)**, eds., *op.cit.* (vol. 1), pp. 350-351. In particular, the last chapters of Vasa's work laid down the basis of the second item of the Program which demanded « to institute a vilayet named "The Vilayet of Albania", which will consist of the vilayets of Kosova, Shkodra and Janina. To name as governor of this vilayet a person who is educated, capable and honest, and who has a good knowledge of the situation and the needs of the country and the habits and customs of the population ». In a similar vein, Vasa's demand was almost identical : « It appears to us, therefore, in the interests of all, of the highest interest to unite Albania into one sole vilayet ; to give it a simple, compact, and strong organisation ; to give a large share of the public administration to the element of the country, and to inaugurate under the sceptre of – His Majesty the Sultan an era of unity, of concord, and of fraternity for all the faiths and all religions ». Vasa, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 43-44.
127. **Coakley (John)**, art.cit., p. 554.
128. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), pp. 39-40.
129. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
130. His expression was nationalistically sentimental : « Forgotten, we wished to bring them [the Albanian people] to the recollection of the civilised nations ; abused, we have defended them against malevolence ; calumniated, we have sought to do them justice ». **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 45.
131. **Gawrych (George)**, *op.cit.*, p. 58.
132. **Trencsényi (Balazs), Kopeček (Michal)**, eds., *op.cit.* (vol. 1), p. 120.
133. For another hybrid nationalist's dilemma, see **Bilmez (Bülent)**, art.cit., p. 362-363.
134. Vasa was probably not after only promotion and further reputation when he stated that « he did not have any medals though he had been working loyally for the Ottoman state for 35 years and had been in the important offices ». **BOA**. Y.EE. 104/194, 23 Safer 1303 (1 December 1885).
135. See for instance the last chapter in which Vasa demonstrated his national sentiments for Albania. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), pp. 44-46.
136. Admitting the incompleteness of his work, Vasa somehow flattered himself for he believed he had been amongst the first who have traced, on this matter, a rough draft with features somewhat prominent. **Vasa**, *Albania and the Albanians*, (op.cit.), p. 30, and also p. 45.

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