

Dido's foundation legend, archetypes of foundation myths in Eurasia and Neomythology in the nineteenth century Balkans.

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Abstract

Dido's foundation legend of Carthage survives as a basic archetype for numerous foundation legends of Eurasia throughout the Middle Ages. The stratagem of the ox-hide is repeatedly referred as main theme of the foundation of towns, cities, and kingdoms, from the British Islands to the Balkans and eastern Eurasia. By the time of the genesis of the new nation – states in the Balkans the Didonian archetype has been re-proposed in the case of the foundation of the town of Naoussa, in Northern Greece, now with the Ottoman conqueror of the Balkans playing the role of Dido. His name was Gazi Evrenoz Beg, a Greek renegade who appears in a Greek manuscript found in Naoussa with attributes and characteristics taken by the Graeco-Roman vernacular and written tradition. In this article is studied and analyzed the survival of the ancient myth in the modern times focusing on the reproduction of it in the nineteenth century Balkans.

Keywords

Dido, Evrenoz, Foundation Myths, Greek and Roman Archetypes, Romanitas, Imagined Communities, Naoussa, Neo - mythology, Ox – hide, Pater Familias.

Introductory note

In the present article an ancient Mediterranean myth of long life is considered through its expansion in the British Islands, Scandinavia, and Eurasia during many centuries after the final decline of the Roman Empire. According to the myth, which explains the foundation of settlements and even kingdoms in an extraordinarily vast geographic area, the protagonists conquer land with no war. The expansion of this motif is not only geographical but diachronic and multi-versioned since it is found to be expressed as a repetitive model in recent historical instances, as that of the Balkan Naoussa. The ways the myth has been revived follow on the one hand the

Roman vernacular tradition of Dido in former Roman lands and on the other the instrumentalization of a classical tradition in modern settings and during the revival of the interest for the classical world as a political projection over the formation of nation-states. Based on the ancient Carthaginian foundation myth of Dido the article enumerates versions of it in different medieval Eurasian areas and analyzes their mechanism of diffusion as well as their impact over the origin of the neo-myths that shaped the creation of the nation-states at the dawn of the modern era.

The case of Naoussa is reported here as typical of this artificial revival of the ancient foundation myth in the Balkans of the mid nineteenth century, at the period of the struggle for constitutional freedom, when the efforts of the Sultans for political renovations and the nationalist movements manifested in the European part of the Ottoman Empire. It will be shown how the original legends related to the foundation of the town were kept back and how a new foundation myth has been promoted by the Christian community according to its need for political and economic reconciliation with the Ottoman authorities after the failed revolt of 1822 and its second foundation in the late 1830's.

The promoted figure of the founder of Naoussa, Gazi Evrenoz, is repropounded as a Roman Pater Familias and at the same time as a male version of Dido of Carthage. For this methodically invented pseudo-history of Naoussa particularly role play the political party of the *Çorbacı*, represented by the most powerful Christian families of the town, of clear philo-Ottoman attitude. A dispersed, today, manuscript with the pseudohistory of the foundation of Naoussa becomes later the only published source of its origins as a memory trace of official confirmation and political acceptance of the Ottoman character of its history during the Ottoman period.

Particular focus is given to diverse versions of the same tradition, both vernacular and written. A further analysis provides more information about the concepts of the imagined communities, neo-mythology and the classical archetypes, as major elements of influence over the Balkan nation-states in their creation.

Dido's legend of the foundation of Carthage

Dido was from Phoenicia. According to the pre-Virgilian version of the myth her original name was Elissar, or Elissa (Justinus, *Epitome Historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi*, XVIII, 4–8). She lived in Tyros, as the wife of king Sichaios¹ to whom the throne was granted by her father Massa. Pygmalion, younger brother of Dido, was against their father's will and after killing Sichaios he took possession of the throne. The adventures of Dido started after the *coup d'état* organized by Pygmalion. Forced to abandon Phoenicia, in order to save her life from certain death, she escaped to Cyprus first and to Numidia later, in what is today Libya. In Numidia, Elissar becomes the notorious Dido, hosted by the local king Jarvas and advancing her royal ancestry as a pretext for being treated as a guest with special privileges. Dido asked Jarvas to let her have a territory where to settle the people who followed her from Phoenicia. After getting a negative response to her demand Dido put on action a second plan according to which she would offer to Jarvas a good part of

¹ Or Acerbas, or Zacherbas/Sicharbas.

her richness, asking to have a piece of land big as an ox-hide. If the first plan didn't work, the second brought Dido the expected results. Jarvas accepted the proposal and Dido made out of the animal skin a thin string, able to contain enough land for building a powerful town, Byrsa,² which was later destined to be glorious Carthage, and establishing the worship of Goddess Urania (Ἡρώδιανός, 5, 4). Jarvas realizing that the exotic and tricky woman was to become a dangerous rival worked back his own plan, asking her to be his consort in order to fuse the two royal towns in one, and leading Dido to the suicide.

Virgil (Virgil, Aeneid, Book I, 1–2), as a national poet and Livy, as a national historiographer of Rome, re-telling an older account of Dido's story narrated by Timaeus (Timaeus, FHG, 1. 197), were responsible for making famous to the world a local myth. With the expansion of the Roman legions to all directions of Europe, Dido and her notorious stratagem became part of a tradition common among the most disparate nations of the continent and of the British Islands.

Foundation myths of Eurasia

In England, the Phoenician myth was transplanted into local English traditions such as those of Hengist in Lincolnshire (Gamden 1695), and of Thong in Kent. According to Geoffrey Monmouth's *Historiae Regum Britanniae* the Saxon leader Hengist after supporting King Vertigern's territories manages to get lands as recognition for his loyalty to the King. Having methodically discovered a way to get more power he asks Vertigern a land big as a hide. Hengist and Horsa (Tatlock 1950, Morris 1885), the two Saxon leaders whose armies were used as mercenaries against other invaders of Britain turn into conquerors themselves and they establish their new communities permanently on British soil. More precisely Monmouth reports the imaginative dialogue between the two, with Hengist starting as this: *"Sir, your enemies give you disturbance from all quarters, and few of your subjects love you. They all threaten you, and say they are going to bring over Aurelius Ambrosius from Armorica, to depose you, and make him king. If you please, let us send to our country to invite over some more soldiers, that with our forces increased we may be better able to oppose them"*.

Until that moment the brothers Hengist and Horsa were working in the service of Vertigern as mercenaries. As the earliest sagas have it this would be the way Saxons started to expand their military power over the British islands. In this semi-historical report of Monmouth, the crucial moment of the further expansion of the Saxons in England depends on the ability Hengist shows to Vertigern the way for salvation against the foreign invasions, which is to invite more Saxons from the continent. But this first request of Hengist is followed by a second one which is decisive for his first real establishment in the new country: *"But there is one thing which I would desire of your clemency if I did not fear a refusal. The possessions which you have given me in land and houses are very large, but you have not yet done me that honor which becomes my station and birth, because, among other things, I should have had some hometown or city guarded me, that I might be*

² Βύρσα in Greek means: piece of animal skin, βύρσος, βυρσοδέφης, βυρσοδεψείον, κατεβύρσωμαι, βυρσοδέφης ἡ σκυτοτόμος, Πολυδεύκης, 7, 83 – 84.

entitled to greater esteem among the nobility of your kingdom. I ought to have been made a count or prince since my ancestors enjoyed both those dignities”.

Vertigern responded: *“it is not in my power to do you so much honor, because you are strangers and pagans, neither am I yet so far acquainted with your manners and customs, as to set you on a level with my natural born subjects. And indeed, if I did esteem you as my subjects, I should not be forward to do so because the nobility of my kingdom would strongly dissuade me from it”.*

Hengist insisting in his demand he immediately responded: *“Give your servant only so much as I can encompass with a leathern thong, for me to build a fortress upon, as a place of retreat if occasion should require. For I will always be faithful to you, as I have been hitherto, and pursue no other design in the request which I have made”.*

The king orders, then, Hengist to send for more mercenaries to Germany and: *“Hengist immediately executed his orders, and taking a bull’s hide made one thong out of the whole, with which he encompassed a rocky place that had been carefully made to build a castle, which, when finished took its name from the thong were with it had been measured; for it was afterwards called in the British tongue Kaerborrei, in Saxon Thancastre, that is Thong Castle”* (The British History of Geoffrey Monmouth, Book 6, Ch. XI).

The story of Hengist and Horsa is similar to the story of Ivar the Boneless (McTurk 1991), son of Ragnar Lothbrog who exchanges his threatening presence on British soil with an ox-hide territorial demand from king of Northumbria, Aella.

The hide, an old Anglo-Saxon unit of measurement, seems that was fruit of Dido’s myth, and it has been invented out of this legendary stratagem. J. U. Powell observes: *“as well might we connect ham which is often found in place – names, with “ham” meaning the hinder part of a pig, because waiters in Vauxhall Gardens here according to the wits of the time, supposed to be able to carve a ham into slices thin enough to cover an acre”* (Powell 1933: 312). According to a local legend reported to Liebrecht Hyde Park in London took its name from the ox-hide myth (Liebrecht 1851: 514).

As an old legend of Bulverhythe, near Hastings, the advancing William the Conqueror from Pevensey Bay to Bulverhythe cut a bull’s hide into strings tiding them in one piece in order to fight as far as the strings would reach (Ekwall 1960). According to the medieval Dunstable legends the Iron Age fortress of Maiden Bower (Hasted 1798: 132–134, Behrend 1996) in Bedfordshire, was founded by a queen who cut a bull’s hide into thongs, joined them and shaped a circle with it (Smith 1904: 56–57). The queen impressed the king telling him that she was able to encamp the entire army of the kingdom within an ox-hide, and she successfully did it. The king, delighted, ordered a sophisticated defensive system to be erected along the line of the joint thongs (Bailey 1981).

The existence of the stone circle, situated on the hills above Llanbryn-mair (History of the Parish of Llanbryn-mair, Mont. Coll. 1888, XXII, 308), known as Lled Croen yr Ycht and which in Gaelic means width of the ox-hide, was explained by the local tradition as the grave of a gigantic oxen that died of grief at being parted by his mate. Once the oxen died, he was skinned by the local people and the thongs produced surrounded the circle of stones (Williams 1911).

In Britain the material remains of the legendary circles of thongs survived as stone circles that didn’t have any practical character of protection, but they were seen as

products of religious protective rituals performed by the time of the foundation. Furthermore, the memories of thong-based foundations could have the character of property limits and sacred enclosures which were accepted as foundation acts not only of states, feuds, and towns but of private or municipal territories, such as those of church yards, farms and lands belonging to local owners (De la Pryme 1870: 61–62).

In Scandinavia an entire circle of Sagas is connected to the ox-hide, not simply as a foundation act but as a supernatural medium of the concept of conquest and victory over a rival such as the Scandinavian *Holmgang*, a duel between two berserkers on the limited space of an ox-hide. The *Holmgang*, or *Bokmal* practice (Guerber 1895: 73–75)³ reflects the concept of fighting on matters of ownership, property, or the fair conquest of a territory (Behrend 1996).⁴ Clear is its direct relation to the further establishment of the winner over the claimed land and his resulting rights of ownership (Radford 1989).

We have a version of the stratagem in the Scandinavian foundation myth of Gefjon who procured land from Gylfi to form her kingdom of Seeland. Gefjon was a tutor of the women who died virgin. Odin (Guerber 1895: 73–75.)⁵ sent Gefjon to the king of Sweden Gylfi in order to ask for some land for herself. The king, amused, promised her as much land as she could plough around in one day and night. Gefjon turned her sons into an ox harnessing them to plough and started to cut a huge border line. At the end of her project, she cut the piece of land contained into this large area and she dropped it into the sea. The result was to create the kingdom of Seeland.

However, Scandinavia's Sagas are related to the old English legends regarding the ox-hide and its use as a way to obtain land. This is the case of Ragnar Lothbrok's son (Lewis 1831: 613) Ivar the Boneless who after fighting with no good results against the King of Northumbria Aella he proposes to him to quit threatening his kingdom with just demanding a piece of land as big as an ox-hide (Schlauch 1949: 246–247). The land is given, and the permanent establishment of the Norsemen in Britain is a reality (Waggoner 2009).

In France Raymond of Poitiers after losing his way while hunting he was found by Melusina the Nymph and her two companions. Melusina fell in love with Raymond, and she suggested him to ask from King Bertram a plot of land, at the point of their first meeting. King Bertram gives Raymond a minuscule piece of land, enough to contain a deer – hide, without ever imagining that soon there will be a strong tower built on the spot, threatening his own dominion over the entire kingdom. In the European continent the foundation myth of Poitier is a striking example of a legend

³ *Holmgang*, *Bokmal*, and *Nynorsk* in ancient Norwegian mean “to walk on a tiny islet, or over a small ox-hide”. The duel was considered to be a prove of courage and bravery of both offender – offended, and it had to be fought according to an early etiquette of chivalry.

⁴ This reminds Roman hero Horatius Coclès who was granted as much land as he could plough round in a day. Ox-hide tricks, sacred ploughing and duels over bull skins are connected always with claimed pieces of land with resulting rights of ownership.

⁵ According to the old Norse Mythology Odin's sons, Weldegg, Beldegg, Sigi, Skiold, Saeming and Yngui were the ancestors of the royal houses of East Saxony, West Saxony, Franconia, Denmark Norway and Sweden. The Saxons Hengist and Horsa, protagonists of one of the ox-hide foundation myths of Britain, are considered to be descendants of Odin's sons too.

based on similar semiotic parameters. Melusina and Raimond are the protagonists, presented as the equivalents of Dido and Aeneas in Medieval France.

Following the traces of Dido's tradition in Eastern Europe we find them in the foundation of Hermannstadt⁶ in the area of the Roman town of Cedonia, along the border with Dacia. In the case of Hermannstadt protagonist is a man, Hermann (Mullet 1972), a German colonizer of the Extra Germania territories (Florea 2010). Hermann was a hard-working peasant of humble origins who asked from the lord of the place to have some land of his own big as an ox-hide. We can guess the rest of the story, which is following the repetitive motif of Dido's, though the legendary event is taking place at the territory of an anciently established Roman town of the frontier which was one of the numerous Roman Limes of Transylvania.

On the Hellespont, the strip of sea dividing Europe from Asia, a circular fortress has been built over the myth of Mehmed Fatih who planned to establish an advanced military post, in front of Constantinople, in order to extend his plans for conquering Byzantium. Evliya Çelebi in his first book reports an old legend according to which a Greek priest who secretly adopted the Islamic faith suggested to Mehmed Fatih to build a fortress cutting off the Byzantine supplies. The priest prophesized to Mehmet that he would become the Conqueror of Constantinople. Mehmed by the time of his siege of Byzantium, many years after the priest's prophecy, asked Constantin the Palaeologue, last Emperor of the dying Byzantine Empire, his permission for building a hunting lodge on the European coast of Bosphorus. The trick is the same as Dido's. The Greek emperor, after a long reflection, gave his permission to Mehmed, but under the strict term that the land shouldn't exceed the size of an ox-hide. It is, as the legend has it, the way that Mehmed, future emperor of Istanbul, would build Rumeli Hisari Castle, terrain of decisive activities during the long siege of Constantinople (Evliya Çelebi Seyahatname Kitab I, chapters 20, 52, 252).

Further to deeper Asia, in Bukhara in 1858, Piotr Ivanovich Lerkh, officer of the Russian embassy in China, made the outstanding discovery of the miniature map of Bukhara, when he was sent to Bukhara to collect rare manuscripts and ancient coins on behalf of the Asiatic Archaeological Society. The rare map was deposited in the archives of Lerkh until 1964, when Soviet archaeologist R. L. Gafurova re-found it (Gafurova 1992: 37, 70) and the historian A. R. Muhamedjanov studied it (Muhamedjanov 1965: 36). The rarity of the miniature map of Bukhara consists in its shape, which has the form of an ox-hide, and it is three-partied, with a white panorama of the city, a reddish outlook of its center, and a greenish part showing the suburbs. The fact that the shape of the map imitates an ox-hide is a good evidence of Bukhara's double tradition of foundation, which is as it follows:

Halok (Burns 1834: 329–330), eccentric King who loved asking travellers to solve difficult riddles, put to death those who wouldn't demonstrate enough ability. One day a gifted young boy of seven, Imam Kazy Khan, takes the decision to face the difficult riddles of the King. Halok didn't agree to receive the courageous boy, due to the young of his age, still, Imam Kazy Khan insisted saying to the King that if *“you need to see somebody taller than me, then I have got my camel, and if you need to meet an*

⁶ Today's Romanian Sibiu.

older, then I have my bearded goat by my side'. These challenging words of the boy opened him the doors of the royal palace, and together the possibility of resolving the riddles. Halok should then accept to respond positively to Imam Kazy Khan's request "*for a piece of land as big as an ox-hide*".

According to the second foundation myth of Bukhara it is a Mongolian Khan and not Halok who makes the questions to the travellers. The myth is that strong that survives throughout time, until the early nineteenth century, when the ox-hide map was fabricated, though the earliest foundation of Boukhara according to the oldest local traditions was due to Sikunder Zoolkurnuen (Burns 1834: 329–330), the famous to all Alexander the Macedon. In reality, it is not Bukkhara that has been established according to the Didonian stratagem, but the old tower known as the Ark of Bukhara.

Gazi Evrenoz the Conqueror and the early Ottoman conquest in the Balkans

Gazi Evrenoz Beg, with the assistance of his children's instructor Sheh Liani,⁷ is considered the founder of Naoussa, a town about 90 kilometers to the SW of Thessaloniki, which is to become in the nineteenth century the first industrial center in the Ottoman Balkans. According to the prevailing myth Evrenoz discovers an ideal area to found a town, developing the same stratagem of Dido's.

Founder of a proper dynasty with outstanding longevity in the Ottoman history, Evrenoz's origins are obscure since different traditions preserve a variety of approaches to the prehistory of his family tree, though even his name is reported in more than one version. When historical events were still mixed with the veil of obscure legends, a distinct personality makes his appearance having essential military achievements throughout the Balkan Peninsula (Οικονομιδης et alii 2011–2013). Unknown are the exact dates of birth and death, counting a long lifespan which cover or even surpass a century.

It is still unclear whether Evrenoz was originally a Muslim (Köprülü 2001: 208),⁸ if he was a Christian renegade like many others (Ζαχαριάδου 1999, Lowry 2012), and if he was a native of Thrace, Byzantium, or Bithynia (Ζαχαριάδου 1999).⁹ Due to the similarity of his family name with that of one illustrious Byzantine family, the Vranas (Liakopoulos 2002),¹⁰ there has been supposed a connection with the Christian officers who were responsible for the military organization and protection of Evros River, a place-name similar to the General's (Moravcsik Byzantinoturcica). In the Byzantine bibliography Evrenoz is referred as Evrenez, Vrenez, Vrenesis, Vrenes, Vranas, Avranesis, Vraneus.¹¹ For the Greeks Evrenoz' father was Ornos, a well – known Byzantine governor of Prusa who chose to become a renegade changing his name in Isa and turning into Bey of Prangi, on Evros River, at Didimotycho.

⁷ Also known as Sheah Leaei' and Abdulllah Illahi'.

⁸ Köprülü considers with certainty Evrenoz a Turk and of noble Turkish extraction though without advancing any stable proves for it.

⁹ According to Zahariadou his name is not Turkish.

¹⁰ Liakopoulos mentions as possible family name the Vryonis.

¹¹ Branezis according to Manuel II the Palaeologue, Avranesis according to Phrantzis, Evrenez according to Doukas.

Evrenoz founded one of the longest noble dynasties in the Ottoman Empire, enlisted among the five oldest families, such as the Mihaloğlu, the Omeroğlu, the Malkoçoğlu, and the Turahanoğlu (Mutavchieva 1988), generating seven sons who were responsible for continuing his war achievements in the Balkans. Some genealogical discrepancies, though, produced confusion between the political and military deeds of Evrenoz and one, or two, of his immediate descendants, reason for erroneously believing that Evrenoz leaved for 120 years, or even more.

Despite all the above uncertain details about Evrenoz' origins, his military successes have been sufficiently reported, such as the fulminous conquest of the Balkans, Central Greece and the Moreas, starting from Thrace (Ζαχαριάδου 1999) and Macedonia (Ζαχαριάδου 1999) and providing to the Ottoman Empire all its European provinces, expanding its direct control from Evros River to the Adriatic Sea, and from the Balkans to the Aegean.

Evrenoz, started his career as a “Beg” in the district of Carasi and he was promoted to a “Gazi” after the Ottoman campaigns in the Balkans (Melikoff 1991: 720). In 1362 he conquered Edirne¹² when he was appointed Uç Bey of Thessaly. In 1389 he fought in Kossovo, in 1392 – 93 he conquered Thebes and Levadeia (Σαββίδης 1993: 25) and in 1396 he fought at the battle of Nikopolis of Epirus. Corinth was conquered in 1397 (Σαββίδης 2004: 42). In 1402 Evrenoz participated in the battle of Ankara, when Beyesid I was captured by the Mongols of Timurlan. It is in that instance that Evrenoz manages to bring to safety the entire Order of the Yeniçeri, moving the army from the central Anatolian plateau to the western coastline of Asia Minor, with no losses.

Evrenoz' preference for Macedonia was expressed through his choice of Yennice I Vardar (Demetriades 1976)¹³ as the town destined to become the place of his last home, where he ordered his proper tomb to be build, turning the town that he founded into a pilgrim's destination until the modern times, and his Gazi Baba Turbe' into a holly place of the Muslims throughout the centuries.

Naoussa

Naoussa (Γαβριηλίδης 1999)¹⁴ is located in the district of Emathia, northern Greece (Fig. 1), near the ancient Macedonian territory of Mieza, about 90 kilometers to the west of Thessaloniki, and at the foot of Mt Vermion (Φιλίππιδης 1881). In the antiquity the fertile plain facing Naoussa was considered to be the mythological Mida's Gardens. The most famous ancient traces in the vicinity are the monumental graves of Macedonian type, and the town of Mieza with its theatre and other remains of ancient buildings. At the Nymphaeon, between ancient Mieza and modern Naoussa is located Aristotle's School, where the young royal – Prince Alexander took his classes in the company of his few fellows *etairoi*. The ancient town of Kition was in the area too, probably somewhere between the plain and the foot of Vermion but not really identified yet. The closer to the Ottoman period settlement of Naoussa, called Palioniaousta, should be located at the SE steep slopes of Vermion,

¹² Former Hadrianopolis.

¹³ Modern Yiannitsa'.

¹⁴ In the past known as Niagousta, Negush, Agostos, Avugost or even Nea Avgusta.

above the Babos Katsikia rocks (Σπάρτσος 2016). Naoussa between 1860 and 1930 was known as the Manchester of the Balkans due to the numerous woollen mills and to its industrial textile production and exports.

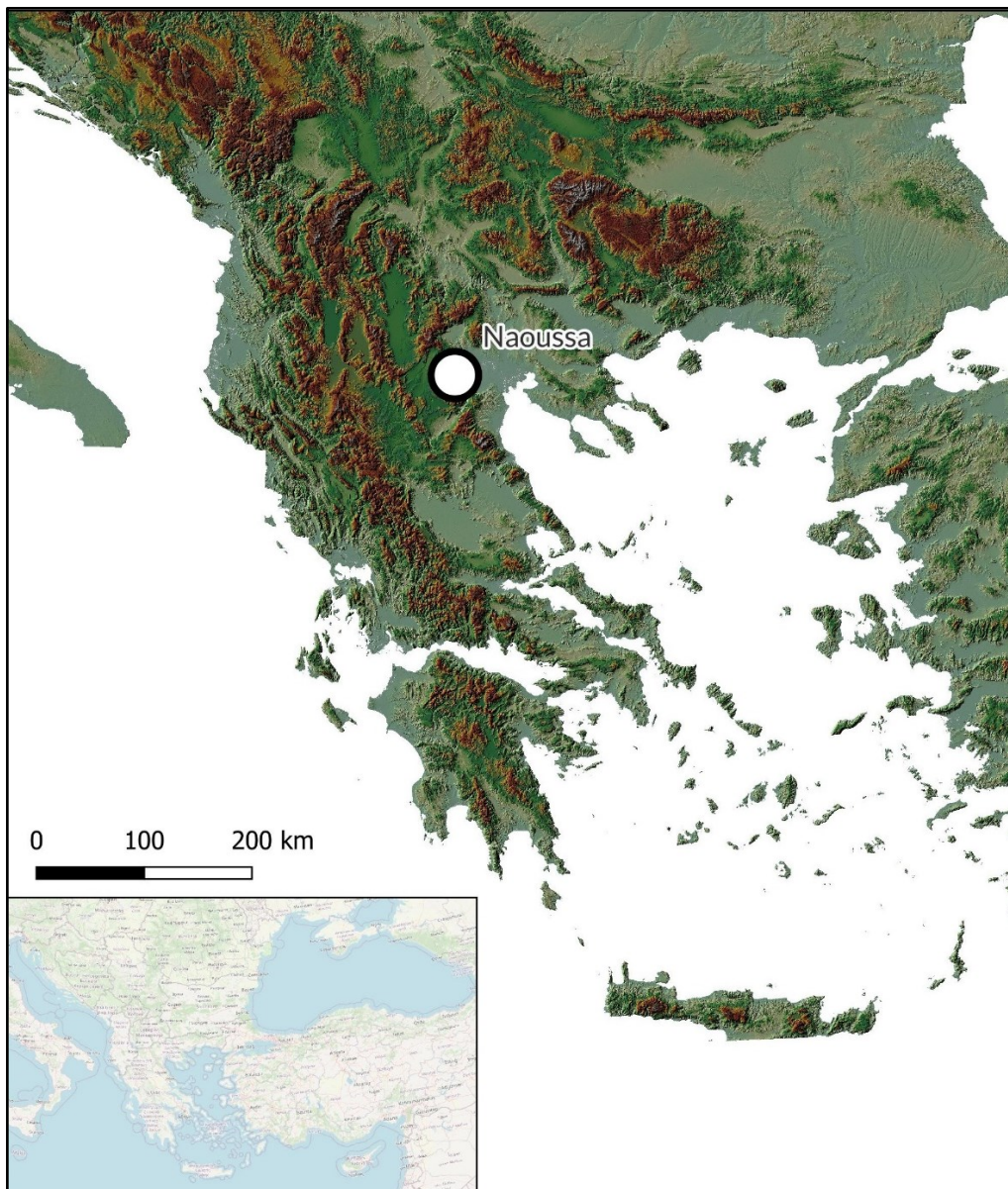


Figure 1. Naoussa.

Since Naoussa was in the past personal property of the Imperial Mothers and after the mid – nineteenth century the first industrial center of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, a powerful middle and upper class was developed (Νικολαΐδης 1859), which established a particularly prolific commercial network, including the Habsburg's Empire, Egypt, and great number of countries of Eastern Europe (Μπάϊτσος 1997). At the turn of the twentieth century proud Naoussa's merchants and industrialists were travelling as far as to Great Britain, Belgium and the United States in order to update their technological know – how, to let their successors be educated in Europe and America and to arrange deals with new partners from abroad (Ρούπα & Χειμολογλου 2004: 292–301). Wool was provided to Naoussa's

industries by the Valachian communities of Emathia and Pieria (Ρούπα & Χελίμογλου 2004: 486–499), and cotton was imported from the filial to Naoussa's companies established in Egypt (Γιούτας 1999).

Though Naoussa during the Ottoman occupation of the Balkans was a town with special privileges granted by the Sultans, and having only a Muslim governor, a judge and their families living permanently in it, the town is believed that it was first founded by the Ottoman Turks (Φιλίππιδης 1881, Βασδραβέλλης 1952). According to the oldest oral memories, this took place around the late fourteenth century by a supposed Byzantine renegade, or descendant of renegades, who managed to hike successfully the military hierarchy of the Ottoman army, Gazi Evrenoz Beg, the man who was responsible for the fast conquest of Thrace, Macedonia, Central Greece and the Peloponnesus referred as the founder of the Evrenozoglu Dynasty which gave military and political leaders to the Empire, until the early twentieth century (Γαβριηλίδης 1999).

In the second half of the nineteenth century the history of the foundation of Naoussa appeared for the first time in written form, by D. Platarides, who however never printed it. In that *Istoria tis Poleos Naoussis*, “*History of the Town of Naoussa*”, later re-written and published by the local teacher Stougiannakis (fig. 2), Platarides made use of local oral traditions some of which were to be found in Baujour's account of Evrenoz' biography, given to him by Abdulrahman Bey direct descendant of Evrenoz, and in the local vernacular tradition. The promotion of a text with obscure provenance, at a time of major national movements emerging in the Balkans which was more similar to a tale than to a proper historical account, and which was written in Greek and not in Turkish, sounds as a paradox today, but not as such then, still at an epoch of a productive multicultural engagement in the area, which was promoted and kept alive by the cosmopolitan character of the Ottoman Imperial Court.

The main legend of the foundation of Naoussa according to the unpublished text of Platarides

According to the unpublished text of Platarides, the foundation of Naoussa goes as it follows: Gazi Evrenoz, a wise and skillful General of Murad the First, during his successful military campaigns in Thrace and Macedonia, remained delighted by the natural beauty of an area called: Carataş, an extended terrace similar to a garden, next to the spectacular falls of the river Arapitsa, some 150 meters above a particularly fertile plain (Στουγιαννάκης 1924). He learned that the local population was hiding from him in the Vermion Mountain, not very far from the springs of the river, where they had their primitive settlement, known as: Paloniaousta, or Old Niaousta. Evrenoz had the idea of inviting them to abandon their shelter and to show up, bringing as gifts wooden shoes, painted with bright colors. The barefoot mountaineers, who were reduced in the condition of savages, without ever having seen similar objects and without being able to realize their proper use, approached shyly Evrenoz and his officers, surprised by the unexpected offer. Without being sure how to wear the colored shoes, since they didn't have any previous knowledge of this extravagant for them accessories, the savages of Paloniaousta managed to

put them on their feet, and then trying to walk with difficulty. It was too late to understand that this was the right moment for Evrenoz to capture them.

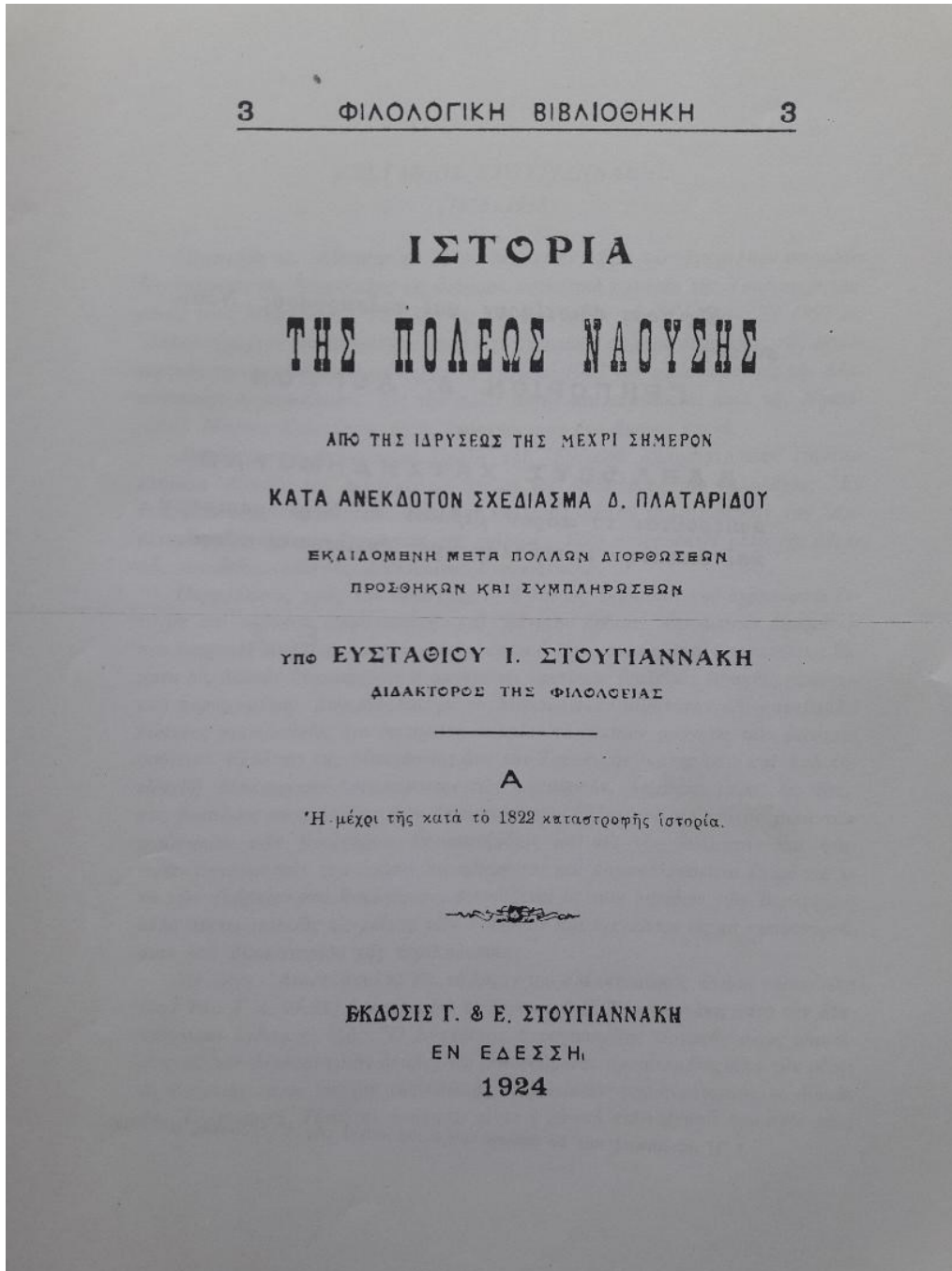


Figure 2. Title page of “History of the town of Naoussa”, by E. Stougiannakis.

Once he put everything in order and organized his conquered territories, Evrenoz visited the Sultan in Edirne giving him full report of his achievements in Thrace and Macedonia. The Great Turk, happy with the good news, offered Evrenoz hospitality in the royal palace and he promised to grant him anything he would like to have, as a gift for his services to the Throne. To this generous proposal Evrenoz responded with the demand of having a town of his own, whose entire territory wouldn't be

bigger than an ox-hide. The Sultan accepted, as expected to do, and the deal was established between the two men.

After turning to Caratash and ordering the savages to gather in front of him, Evrenoz talked to them, explaining that he was coming as a friend and his desire was to make of them civilized people and to give them a new home, in the town that he was intending to found. The savages followed him to the place where he weaved out of the ox-hide a very thin strip indicating the external border of the chosen territory for new Niaousta. He enclosed the area within a comfortable space bordered by the strip which he fixed on four newly planted plain trees (fig. 3), along the periphery of the circle (Λαγόπουλος 2002: 234). Naoussa, Niausta, Niagusta, Negus, Agostos, Avdustos became a reality.

As the story has it, Evrenoz brings civilization to “local savage populations”, through the foundation of a new town and their transformation into citizens. Furthermore, he makes use of a trick known already in antiquity, since the legendary times of beautiful Dido/Elissa, and later as a popular poetic work written by Virgil, “Dido and Aeneas”, in order to convince his master the Sultan to allow him the establishment of his own town. Evrenoz for a second time uses a trick, that of the wooden and colored shoes, for capturing the natives, without harming them. Then, he makes a speech to the population giving proof of his personal political charisma. Lastly, he locates the borders of his town within a huge circle fabricated out of an ox-hide strip. The legendary story of the foundation of Naoussa is developed with the use of traditional means, tested in ancient times, emblematic symbols of the talented founder. Expert of the military art, gifted orator, skilful manipulator of the masses, Evrenoz’s actions incarnate here the archetype of the genius leader who merits to be crowned by final success in all his achievements. The story of the foundation describes, in mythological terms, the entire career of a historical personality, reflecting, as a sort of simplified epitome, all the sides of a charismatic conqueror.



Figure 3. “Stravoplatanos” - Naoussa. One of the remaining plain trees supposedly planted by Gazi Evrenoz during the foundation of Naoussa.

Gerasimos Kapsalis, Doctor of Philology, Counsellor of Public Education who taught classical philology at the Gymnasium of Veroia in the years 1912–1913 and 1915–1916, wrote and published a long article on the Bulletin of the Greek Folklore Society¹⁵ with the title: Folklore of Naoussa. The article is about the way Naoussa was founded and he reported various elements of local folklore related to old popular songs and costumes and other rare information. In his own reported foundation of Naoussa Kapsalis mentions in three paragraphs the foundation of the

¹⁵ Δελτίον της Ελληνικής Λαογραφικής Εταιρείας.

town by Gazi' Evrenoz alone, in the fashion described by Platarides/Stougiannakis, though Kapsalis' report was published in 1917 (*Καψάλης* 1917), 7 years before Stougiannakis' publication of his *Istoria tis Poleos Naoussis*. It is probable that Stougiannakis took in consideration Kapsalis' study and perhaps made use of his article. Kapsalis doesn't refer his sources. We ignore if Kapsalis knew about the existence of Platarides manuscript, nor if he ever saw it and used it. Remarkable is the persistence of the basic elements composing the story, such as the methods used by Evrenoz to earn the trust of the local inhabitants, or such as the ox-hide trick and the foundation of the town tracing its design over a cruciform pattern with the help of four plain trees who planted on the four points of the horizon. However, Kapsalis gives us valid information about two more elements of the local tradition; one related to the uniform used by the men of Naoussa during the annual celebration of the Carnival, and the second related to a name with which the male population of Naoussa used to call themselves.

Naoussa is famous in Greece for an almost ritualistic celebration which takes place once a year, during the Carnival. The name of it is "Boules and Yianitsari", (Brides and Janissaries). The dancers called Yianitsari wear a short foustanella, typical male costume in Greece and in some other areas of the Balkans. Kapsalis reports that 150 years earlier the "Yiannitsari" dancers didn't wear the foustanella but the old costume of the Ottoman Janissaries, in the memory of the Ottoman founders of the town. In the article he makes a detailed description of this costume, and he further explains that the Turkish costume of the Yiannitsari was turned into the Greek foustanella by the time of the Greek Governor of the town Logothetis Zafeirakis before the Holocaust of 1822. Secondly, Kapsalis mentions that the older male inhabitants were calling themselves Gazides,¹⁶ Gazi', Gazileri', like the founder of Naoussa Gazi' Evrenoz Beg. The word Gazi is an old Ottoman military title granted to the most able among the generals of the Ottoman army. Kapsalis concludes his study saving a rare popular song of post-Holocaust Naoussa in which mourners over the destroyed by the Turks town blame Rumeliot and Peloponnesian revolutionaries who also pushed the population of Naoussa to participate in the Revolution.¹⁷

A second manuscript related to the foundation of Naoussa

In 1956 Ioannis Vasdravellis publishes on *Μακεδονικά* (Βασδραβέλλης 1956) an article with the title: "Ιστορικά περί Ναούσης εξ ανεκδότου εγγράφου".¹⁸ On this article Vasdravellis reports the discovery of a 19 pages manuscript among the archive of monk Callinikos, related to the history of Naoussa. The author's name is unknown and Vasdravellis, due to orthographic and linguistic details, considers the document as the copy of an older text. The document is written in Greek. According to this Callinikos' document founder of Naoussa was Evrenoz' grandson Haji Ahmet Evrenozoglu who is reported as ancestor of illustrious later descendants of the same family, such as Selim Pascia, Ahmet Beg, Isuf Beg and Hasan Beg

¹⁶ Γαζήδες

¹⁷ «Του κρίμα ναχ' η Ρούμελη, του κρίμ' οι Μωραίτες/που σήκωσαν πανάσταση, που σήκωσαν κεφάλι,/χαλάστηκαν ινιά χουριά κι διακέντι κάστρα»

¹⁸ Historical notes on Naoussa from an inedited manuscript.

Yiannitsiotis. In 1420, when capital of the Ottoman Empire was still Edirne, the Sultan found a way to approach the Christian populations of Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace, in order to prepare the three areas for a later military expansion of the Empire to the west. The method would be to send eighteen faithful to the emperor renegades to the three provinces to indoctrinate the people in Islam. Among the eighteen was Haji Ahmet Evrenozoglu who would play the role of the chief in command of the project. Haji Ahmet used the town of Serres as general headquarters of the ambitious project, where that first day the eighteen members of the mission nailed their wooden sticks next to them and fell asleep. The day after eighteen sticks were turned into 18 plain trees, an omen showing that the mission ordered by the Sultan would be successful. The place was called: *On sekish çinar*". Thirteen of the missionaries left to the towns of Drama, Nevrokopi etc, and Haji Ahmet and four others travelled to Thessaloniki to preach the people the Islamic Law. The place they chose to preach was called *Beş Çinar*, due to the same phenomenon with five more wooden sticks turning into plain trees.

Next place of preaching was Yennice where Haji Ahmet transferred his new headquarters, at a site called *Ta Bania*, not far from the ancient capital of Macedonia, Pella, accompanied by his older son and the boy's teacher Shiah Liani (Ζεγλίνης 2006). The Sultan after learning that the religious mission undertaken by Evrenozoglu was crowned by success travelled to Yenice with his royal court where he met him. It was an unfortunate moment for Haji Ahmet when his son, playing with his horse moved it in front of the Sultan who offended enough observed to Haji Ahmet that this was prove of lack of correct education of the son, something that caused the son's execution of his own father. Later, when the Sultan approved both the missionary and his fair response to the offence Haji Ahmet begged for having a piece of land all his own as a feud. The Sultan agreed and where Naoussa was going to be founded Haji Ahmet ordered Shiah Liani to go and erect his new town. Shiah Liani, a holly man and particularly sweet in his words managed to convince Christians who lived at a remote area of Mountain Vermion to follow him and to give them a new place to inhabit. Under the direction of the wise teacher the 11 first houses were built and at the area called the "Kiosk" the Christians built his grave, since soon after the foundation Shiah Liani passed away. At his return from Mecca Haji Ahmet Evrenozoglu preferred to transport the teacher's grave from Naoussa to Yenice, offering to the people of Naoussa many privileges, such as a low *haraç* and the possibility of the inhabitants to not share their town with Ottoman Muslims, with the exception of the Judge and the *Voyvod*, who were allowed to live permanently inside the walls.¹⁹ Then he offered Naoussa as a *vakuf* to the *Valide*' Sultana. No mention on the ox-hide stratagem is referred.

The older vernacular traditions about Evrenoz and the foundation of Naoussa.

¹⁹ Always according to Callinikos' manuscript, a low sum of money should be given on an annually basis to the *Cami* of Yenice, dedicating 2 gross for the candles lit in the *turbe*' of Shiah Liani at Kiosk, in Naoussa.

The French traveller Baujour (Baujour 1797) reports the existence of a very old Turkish tradition about Evrenoz, communicated to him by one of his descendants, Abbdulrahman Evrenozoglou in the early nineteenth century. According to this family tradition Evrenoz was not only an outstanding warrior, general and politician but an unusually tall and strong man, able to carry an entire bull under his arm for several meters. He was faithful to his Master the Sultan Murad the First in every situation, even when, during a horse parade with the Sultan, one of the sons of Evrenoz surpassed the Sultan's horse, he was punished to death by his proper father for having demonstrated to be arrogant in front of both father and emperor. The Sultan thanked Evrenoz for his great achievements letting him to have as much land as he would be able to cover from dawn to dawn galloping on his horse. Evrenoz started galloping from Yenice and he went twenty kilometres to the south, at Kollakia, where he nailed his wooden club. From there he went to the rest of the four directions of the horizon covering not less than twenty kilometres and tracing a circle which would contain the NE part of today's Emathia, part of the region of Pella and a small portion of the western region of Thessaloniki. In this newly gained feud Evrenoz would become the owner of hundred villages instead of the ninety-nine that in the end he possessed, if a cock wouldn't crow earlier than the natural, letting him believe that the dawn had already arrive.

However, among the oldest oral traditions preserved in family memories of Naoussa nothing is ever mentioned about Evrenoz' ox-hide invention. In the oldest oral traditions, edited by Valsamidis, it was a Christian woman and not Evrenoz the founder of the town. An interesting article by Valsamidis (Βαλσαμίδης 2009) relates this woman with Mara, daughter of Serbia's King George Branković and spouse, in second marriage of Sultan Murad, Mehmed Fatih's father. The historical person Mara was Mehmet Fatih's stepmother and particularly privileged by him. Mara was permitted to keep her Christian faith and name until the end of her life.

According to another, totally different version of the foundation of Naoussa, *"there was a king who owned the area of Naoussa. His daughter, a smart and beautiful princess, asked as a favor from her father to have as a dowry enough land to build a town all her own and enough big to be contained into an ox-hide. Her father after his daughter unexpected request gave her his permission and she prepared a long and thin thong with which she included enough land to build a real town. In every corner she planted a plain tree, six in total, imitating the shape of a bull's skin"*. The oldest known vernacular traditions on the foundation of Naoussa are those preserved by the native families of Papanastasiou and Dymbala, reported, the first, by Eleni D. Papakonstantinou and the second by Michalis Dymbalas. (Βαλσαμίδης 2009).

The second tale is related again with a royalty, a princess that the Sultan wanted to have as his wife. As term for accepting his proposal the princess asked the Sultan's permission to build a town inside the territory covered by a cow's skin. The Sultan laughed with the term, and he granted her the permission. She used the skin of a cow as thongs, and she realized her methodical stratagem. Naoussa gained special privileges and has been private possession of all Valide' Sultanas since then.

In the end of this brief list of the oldest oral traditions related to the foundation of Naoussa, it is important to report one more which presents as responsible for the

foundation two and not one man, and these men were Abbdullah Illahi²⁰ and Theophanis, a Turk Dede (Φιλίππιδης 1881) and a Christian Saint.

A man who characterizes an entire historical period of theological fermentation in the fifteenth century Ottoman Turkey, related directly to Evrenoz' life and deeds was Shiah Liani, or Abbdullah Illahi (Δούδος 2001). Abbdullah remained in history as a man who built and expanded Sufism in Ottoman Turkey, he was a genuine representative of this School of Thought and he was the teacher of the famous Beddredin.²¹

It is generally believed that by the time of the foundation of Naoussa, Saint Theophanis of Naoussa was in the area, trying to find a good place to establish a monastery. As the oral tradition (Δούδος 2001) has it the two men, Abbdullah Illahi and Saint Theophanis met somewhere near Naoussa and they became friends, despite the difference of their faith, and the distant theological visions that they were supporting each one of them. As a matter of fact, the Christian and the Muslim worked together for the well doing of the inhabitants of the new city (Στουγιαννάκης 1924). Interesting to tell, Naoussa was first founded in order to be inhabited exclusively by Christians. This synoikismos should follow a new model all over the conquered territories of the Ottomans, according to which the Christian subjects of the Sultan should be gathered in old or new settlements for the good of the demography and the economy of the new Empire. This has been one of the ways for demonstrating the Sultan's firm decision to repopulate the lands that they were been destroyed by the wars of the conquest.

Naoussa is not the only case but is certainly one among the first examples of the good will of the Ottoman authorities to establish well balanced relations and trust with their Christian populations, in areas of dense Orthodox communities since the early post-byzantine times. The problem which arises here is that Saint. Theophanis' is still uncertain if he lived in the same period with Abbdullah Illahi (Γαβριηλίδης 2000).

Obvious prove of the engagement of the Evrenozoglu family to the foundation of Naoussa is the respect with which the people of the town treated one of his descendants in 1822, Isouf Aga, who was sent to the under siege by the Ottoman army Naoussa to deal with the revolutionaries. The Greek authorities who received Isouf Aga behind the walls considered him as the respectful descendant of "holy" Evrenoz Gazi', founder of their town (Στουγιαννάκης 1924). After the Second Balkan War between Greece and the Ottoman Empire and the liberation of Naoussa, another direct descendant of Evrenoz came to Greece claiming the compensation for his confiscated by the Greek Kingdom possessions in Naoussa and Yianitsa'. Evrenoz' relation with Naoussa has been taken as genuin historical fact, as some mayors of Thessaloniki were chosen out of the Evrenoz family, until the Greek liberation of the city in 1912.

²⁰ Known also as: Sheh Liani, Sheh Leai, Mullah Leai, and Mullah Liani.

²¹ Baddredin, student of Shiah Liani, or Abbdullah Illahi, is a famous soufi teacher and revolutionary.

Classical archetypes of foundation myths in Medieval Europe and possible mechanisms of their diffusion.

Talking about archetypes we should try first to analyze their origins. In the case of the archetype of the ox – hide as a basis for the foundation of cities, city-states, kingdoms and empires this is originated from a myth of the Mediterranean, which becomes vastly known through its Livian-Virgilian version and the Roman military and cultural expansion in Europe and the world. It seems that the myth has been spread over even beyond the borders of the Roman Limes from the legionaries and the Roman colonists who changed the map of the then world, Romanizing great part of Britain, Brittany, Celtic France, Central and Eastern Europe. After the gradual collapse of the systematic order of the Roman hegemony in Europe and the progressive contraction of its geographic expansion, several chiefdoms began to centralize their political power and to expand their territorial control over neighboring clans (Geary 2003) throughout Europe between the fifth and the eighth centuries and started to work on their state identities over the steps of the Holy Roman Empire, due to their political elites that have been highly Romanized during the late Imperial period. *“The first Europe included France, England, western Germany, Ireland, central and northern Italy, and the mountain regions of northern Spain. The vital centers of civilization were not on the Mediterranean coast, but in the river valleys of northern France and the Rhineland. The culture of the first Europe was unified by the universal language of churchmen, kings, and the aristocracy – Latin. Latin was the language of both ecclesiastical and secular governments and the tongue in which all intellectual matters were discussed or written down”* (Cantor 1993).

It is a matter of political prestige for the Frankish and Germanic chiefs to “feel” Romans, or to behave as such, when the vision of the dying, or the alright dead Roman Empire was still feeding the personal ambitions of the new macro-leaders of Europe. Since the new political formations didn’t share any real demographic, linguistic and cultural similarities with the old Roman Empire, with the exception of artificially made new-Latin versions of the old Latin, though with strong the desire to assimilate the surviving Roman political and administrative traditions in order to speculate politically with them, the emerging authorities worked hard in order to be considered the perpetrators of the Roman tradition. Norman F. Cantor gives in the best possible way the idea that: *“European medieval civilization was not produced by any one event or a series of events, but by the absorption by western Europe of certain ways of life, ideas, and religious attitudes that had prevailed for many centuries in the Mediterranean world. These ideas and values were pulled northward into western Europe – into Northern France, Southern England, Northern Italy, and the Rhine valley – and in the process, certain aspects of the Mediterranean culture were adopted and changed (it is perhaps even more significant that many aspects were not changed). Before the Middle Ages, then, there was a Mediterranean culture and society that was adopted and absorbed. An understanding of that civilization is essential to an understanding of the medieval world”* (Cantor 1993).

In fact, Germans and Frankish first and almost all the European nations later claimed for centuries up to the dawn of the modern era to be the heirs to the throne of the “Holy Roman Empire” at an attempt of having a revival of Empire. *“The Frankish kings deliberately undertook to steer the barbarian peoples of Western Europe back into*

the Roman tradition” according to A. G. Dickens (1977). Roman prestige and local versions of what “should” be “Roman” transformed the continent politically and culturally to the point of promoting a reviewed and in great part imaginary idea of Ancient Rome. Roman titles, insignia and even official nomenclature were to be used until the early twentieth century by the presumed “heir” of Ancient Rome (Settis 2004: 28). In Rome the Pontifex Maximus, now head of Western Christianity, conserved the most archaic of the Roman titles, maintaining symbolically the bridge connecting the analogy between two opposite aspects of the Idea of Rome. As possessor of an ancient Roman title of the pagan times, the Pontifex Maximus is a law giver and the one who perpetuates the values and the use of the ancient Roman legislation into the medieval era. The Lex Romana is one of the most durable elements of the old Imperium (Cahill 1995).

The Christian identity given to the new kingdoms with the “Roman” ambitious claims instead of neutralizing this imaginary vision of what was Ancient Rome and what it should be from now on Europe, preserved the revised Roman ideals under the new perspectives of a mass ethnic and cultural amalgamation which brought to new administrative units inclined to include vast regions of homogenized populi, until the eighth century. The “stimulus of Rome” enabled the emerging European kingdoms to recreate their present status reaffirming their past Romanization and after having denied it (Todd 2001).

The successful survival of the Latin language in Medieval Europe is a symptom of this claimed *Romanitas* by the administrative and ecclesiastic elites. The creation of the new – Latin languages in continental Europe and the British Islands, based on the fusion with the plethora of previous linguistic substrata, is a decisive parameter of the perpetuation of the Roman analogy between the pagan past and the Christian present in the procedure of the new systematic accommodation of cultural values. Foundation myths have been proposed pumping out models from the pagan Roman traditions. The most persisting was that of Virgilian Dido’s.

The emerging cultural chauvinism of the eighth century materializes in the figure of the Eponymous Founder, a symbolic figure with unimaginable influence over huge numbers of followers and peoples. In 799 Pope Leo III offers to Charlemagne the keys of Saint Peter and the military insignia of Rome, the Vexillum, turning a former “barbarian” into son of the Lupa Romana and member of the Populus Electus. It is a promotion based over archetypical forms to perpetuate a long line connecting Remus/Romulus to the Ottonian dynasty through Charles the Great and investing it under the crown of *Urbs Aeterna*.

Oral traditions become the histories of ethnicities that are joined under charismatic leaders needed to be set in mythological environments. The most ancient royal courts of Europe are formed inside a mythical storytelling that demands resemblances with the best of the most glorious common past (Kolstø 2005).

Dido and Alexander, two ancient archetypes of the Graeco-Roman tradition, are the manifestations of the perfectly established Kingdom. Trick and ability must be the main guidelines for the formation of a “civilized” state. There is the need of the rival King who must be won and the “barbarian” gentes who must be freed from their ignorance, barbarity, and slavery. The prototype of Alexander though, as it is

preserved in the different versions of Medieval Alexander's popular stories and inherited through the Roman ideal of the perfect leader, lead to restoration and transformation of new multiethnic states that need to prove presumed old roots after uncovering heavy layers of forgotten family memories and dynastic values (Zolla 1994: 86–87).²²

Taking the case of the royal house of Lusignan which ruled in both great part of Europe and the ancient lands of the Levant, Cyprus, and Armenia (Richardson 2011) between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries, its influence has been decisive not only as political model but as an original perpetuator of Dido's Myth throughout the realm of the collective memory of the emerging medieval European identities. Here, the real founder of the royal house is not a man, Raymond, but his consort Melusina, a woman with non-human nature, whose achievements stand at the background of the entire foundation myth. According to the legend Melusina saves the life of Raymond and she suggests him to use Dido's trick, although the hide is not made of an ox but of a wild deer. After planning the plot and suggesting it to Raymond, Melusina advances her ambitious program step by step founding important buildings, as castles and cathedrals, marking with them their skilfully earned territory. Melusina is the European counterpart of the Phoenician Dido. Both are engaged with men who are less important than they are and who receive their graceful assistance in crucial moments of their lives. The matriarchal genre of the Phoenician tradition has been transplanted into the heart of Europe through Melusina's foundation myth.

The oldest written form of the myth dates back to the fourteenth century, during the heyday of the Lusignan hegemony over almost all Europe and the British islands, when the final written version as a poem dates at one century later. Members of the Lusignan family were decorated with titles as: Prince of Antioch, Prince of Tyre, Count of Jaffa, Ascalon and Tripoli, Lord of Beirut and of Sidon, from their possessions in the Levant and North Africa. During their long presence in the Levant and North Africa it was not only the Lusignan who influenced their *gentes* but they must have been influenced strongly from them on their turn. The fact of being lords, princes and counts of ancient kingdoms should entitle them to behave as heir to old traditions both local and Roman, since these kingdoms ended as part of the great Roman mosaic of conquest.

The historical link of the Lusignan with the Levant, homeland of Dido, and its political expansion over old Roman conquests could make of them responsible for the later revival of the Phoenician myth. The Romanized myth of Dido becomes a Roman heritage to preserve and to repeat constantly in other foundation cases, insisting always on the idea of a repeated archetypical model which will turn easily into a recognizable European trademark of authenticated pedigree. Under this

²² “Il progetto di Pompeo era invece di ripristinare il mito di Alessandro Magno, che aveva ottenuto la consacrazione imperiale egizia, quella iranica e forse ambito a quella vedica. Si era trasmutato in cornuto figlio di Ammone in Egitto, con riti che parvero inesplicabili ai suoi laici Greci. Fece suo il sacro fuoco di Dario, e di lui sposo' la figlia e uccise l'assassino, assumendo così' il charisma iranico. In figura di Dioniso ebbro, ora soave ora omicida, invase l'India, ma il rajasuya, la consacrazione vedica che trasforma un re in embrione e primizia del cosmo e quindi in Imperatore, non seppe caprire”.

perspective the Lusignan foundation myth may be at the origin of all the Didonian foundation myths of medieval Europe.

And what about the ox-hide myths of western and mid Asia? Is there any reliable trace of a passage of Dido's myth from Europe to Asia? Could it be possible to theorize a potential role of the Lusignan kingdom of Great Armenia in spreading of Dido's myth beyond the geographical borders of Europe? In the fourteenth century the Lusignan take possession of the kingdom of Great Armenia, in Cilicia, through marriage. After the Mamluk conquest of this kingdom the descendants fled to France and Southeastern Russia. Even with no documented proves that they were responsible for letting the myth to become "Asiatic" the Lusignan strongly pressed their royal seal also in Asia, leaving behind them their influential handprint several thousands of miles away from Portugal, Spain, England, France, and Italy. As a matter of fact, few other royal houses have influenced so vast territories during the Middle Ages (Cantor 1993).

Further expansion of the Didonian Myth beyond space and time

European imperialism made use of the Didonian Myth, in the early modern history, as Andrew Newman (Newman 2017) shows on his paper relative to the expansion of the ancient tradition overseas. Newton collected native vernacular traditions of New York, Cambodia, Manila, Taiwan, the Cape of Good Hope, Jakarta, Gujarat, on European foundation of colonies at the respected places. In the article Newton advances the theory that Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch colonists performed the Didonian trick in emulation of the classical homonymous tradition. The tradition which was made part of the native cultural heritage and then has been preserved into an oral form for centuries is indicative of the persistence of the theme in distant areas of the globe, supporting an obvious diffusion and transfusion of the classical motif of Dido's in the early modern history, in American, African, and Asiatic lands. Dido's Myth has been transformed, in this way, into an imperialist tool in the hands of colonists, international commercial societies, and representatives of various Christian churches of Europe. Interesting is to show how important as an element of this transfusion was considered the mythological foundation act over the steps of the Mediterranean legend of Carthage; a Mediterranean tradition, which means a diachronic European heritage, recorded, preserved, and expanded to all directions of the horizon as an early modern European activity of conquest and ownership.

In old poems (Newton 2017),²³ oral local traditions (Newton 2017)²⁴ and legends recorded by a Father of the United States (Newton 2017),²⁵ an Arab commentator (Newton 2017),²⁶ a European traveller (De Carne 1872, Newton 2017), a British

²³ The Sinhalese war poem from the seventeenth century Maha Katana describes the transaction between the Sinhalese king and the Portuguese.

²⁴ The Hikayat Hang Tuah, a Malaysian set of oral traditions, recounts the adventures of Hang Tuah, a hero of the fourteenth – fifteenth centuries of Melaka, reporting the moment of the Didonian Portuguese stratagem.

²⁵ Alexander Hamilton's notes on the Portuguese deception of the king of Gujarat of Guzara in India.

²⁶ Haji al – Dabir reports the engagement of the Portuguese with the story of the ox hide in respect of the ruler of Hormuz.

East Indian Company's agent (Stamford Raffles 1817), a Jesuit missionary (De Moyria de Mailla 1715), a Moravian missionary (Newton 2017), American writers (Fenimore Cooper 1826), and a French missionary (Arbousset 1846) repeat the description of foundation acts in the most disparate places of the world. Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch settlers after dealing with local kings, princes and military leaders gain the necessary Τόπος to establish businessmen, settlers, and church missions. It results difficult to not remember what Archimedes said: *δός μοι πᾶ στῶ καί τὰ γὰν κινάσω*,²⁷ give me enough land and I will seek the Earth. That first step to take is reflected through a type of conquest old as the world. This: "give me enough land..." reminds the Scandinavian Holmgang's necessity for conquering more territory, and the importance the Τόπος πᾶ στῶ has for the first step to a conquest. A piece of land, a starting point to start from, the first land to make of her a new motherland and a kingdom may be small, tiny, remarkably limited. Symbol of this first starting point is the archetypical ox-hide of Dido's, of Melusina and of Evrenoz. The arising of the "new man/woman" on the social hierarchy of late Antiquity's Europe finds in this way its total symbolic meaning.

Neo-mythology in the mid nineteenth and the early twentieth century Balkans.

"Beginnings are important. The beginning sets the agenda, the tone, and the standard. Throughout Antiquity there was considerable interest in stories about beginnings, especially in those about the origins of cities, states, and peoples. Foundation myths were told across the ancient world in many different forms and through many different media. They can be found in poetry and prose, represented visually in monumental and decorative art, and played out in civic and religious rituals. Stories of origin were sometimes recounted in their entirety, forming the central narrative in a text. But even more frequently, foundation myths were alluded to obliquely or used as reference points for narratives on other subjects. Stories of beginnings and myths of foundation were ubiquitous in classical antiquity" (Mac Sweeney 2015). This is the way Mac Sweeney in her 2015 monograph describes the process of the creation of the foundation myths in the classical world.²⁸ In later centuries, during the dawn of the Modern Era, when again the Graeco - roman overidealized political concepts of the ancient Res Publica start to be promoted by the European intelligentsia as the perfect model of political society, and at the moment of the genesis of the nation-states, it's again back to the classical archetypes that these are founded. The Eponymous Founder must resemble the characteristics of an idea surviving for centuries in the subconscious of the imaginary gentes of the Balkans. He must be a hero, certainly not a common man, specially gifted with semi-divine skills. He must be a warrior and an able father to show the way to his gentes, a *Pater Familias - Pater Nationis*, a leader who can guarantee the well

²⁷ «τοῦτο γὰρ Ἀρχιμήδους μὲ εὖρημα μηχανικόν, ἐφῶ λέγεται εἰρηκέναι; δός μοι πᾶ στῶ καὶ κινῶ τὴν γῆν», Pappos of Alexandria, Synagoge, Book 8, «Πᾶ βῶ καὶ χαριστίωνι τᾶν γᾶν κινάσω», Diodorus Siculus, 26, 18, 1, 35. «πᾶ βῶ καὶ κινῶ τᾶν γᾶν», Simplicious, Ypomnema on Aristotles' Physika, 1110.

²⁸ Interesting to read W. Churchill in his: "The Birth of Britain: A History of the English Speaking Peoples", where he says that "the story of Arthurs is a theme as significant as the Odyssey or the Old Testament", and that "it is all true, or it ought to be". Views about the approach of the genesis of nations have changed rapidly in the last 50 years.

– being of the nation. In the Balkans the axiom of the national hero has strong roots in this model of the warrior-king.

The national leader must be able in the art of the war and veteran of long and heroic fights. The model of the warrior-king is completed by the image of the statesman and law giver who must reconstruct his society of gentes after the conclusion of the wartime. Evrenoz, as representative of a new empire which engulfs a plethora of different nations during a rapid and original conquest is setting a systematic order into his campaigns and corresponds to the model of the ideal chivalrous leader, of the national father and of the charismatic man of the army on the one hand, and to the idea of the mythological figure who deserves to be considered equal to legendary figures of the past in the region of the Balkans, on the other. Evrenoz with the many talents resembles Alexander in the imagined vision of the ancient leader and he acts as the male version of Elissa/Dido and Melusina, profoundly marked in the Eurasian political subconscious.

In the “imagined communities” of the new nation-states of the Balkans the necessity for promoting diachronically stereotype images is of major importance for their *raison d’être*. Claims of territories which are historically considered ancient units which must be reset and reordered on the map of needed chauvinism are the main political goal of neighbouring and contrasting with each other neo-nations (Brunnbauer 2005). “By the beginning of the twentieth century, an image of the Balkans had already been shaped in European literature; moreover, it was almost exclusively under the name Balkan that it was further elaborated. The geographic discovery was going hand in hand with a simultaneous invention of the region; the two processes are in fact, inseparable”, Todorova (1997) says. Ancient Macedonia is the imaginary territory to be claimed and to be re – located as vital legendary component of the new national identities of its people (Gori et alii 2017).²⁹

After the first Ottoman Constitutional Act in 1876 (Βακαλόπουλος 2018) the political amalgamation which has been promoted by the Ottoman Empire for almost 6 centuries in the Balkans was replaced by a radiant ethnogenesis, accompanied by vast nationalistic movements which were proposed as restoration of a lost, ancient order (Stavrianos 1963: 6–7). New traditions, shown as ancient were suggested by “*intellectuals and politicians who transformed romantic, nationalistic traditions into political programs*” (Geary 2003).

In the artificially designed new borders of the Balkans, traced by the arising new national leaders in the Balkans (Winniffrith 1995), there was no space for any more multiethnic traditions (Todorova 1997). Local traditions, instead, national memories and dialects, languages and forms should take shape over the old Ottoman map (Gori et alii 2017). The spectre of the Ottoman Union under the Sultan had to be removed once forever, and it was something planned and put in use successfully. The old values of the polyethnic empires have been mystified into skeletons in the closet of the new nation-states. Transplanting forgotten and newly remembered relics was a practice of a quasi-talismanic character.

²⁹ Still happening in large or small scale in the Balkans.

Alexander becomes again the most venerated political persona of the Balkans. Macedonia emerges again as a territory to be claimed again by the former “slaves”, inventing the new borders over the vanished traces of the ancient ones.

“The ethnically based nation – states of today have been described as ‘imagined communities’, called into being by the creative efforts of nineteenth – century intellectuals, archaeologists and politicians, who transformed earlier, romanticized traditions into ideological programs”, Geary notices correctly (Geary 2003), and Hahn mentions the term: *“primordialist notion of ethnicity”* (Hahn 2017: 42).

In the effort of *“perceiving the historical myths as foundational narratives, as stories that purport to explain the present in terms of some momentous event that occurred in the past”*, the nineteenth century historiographers mobilize in all possible senses every available myth, turning it into mythistory. The case of the Balkan town of Naoussa, with its proper part in Evrenoz’ mythographic life told by Platarides and Stougiannakis could be an indicative case study. In the case of the new-mythology of the foundation of Naoussa it’s the Ottoman version of this mid nineteenth century chauvinism which is taking place with the support of the Christian party of the *çorbacı* as the most privileged by the Ottomans part of the local subjects.

The mechanism built and functioned by the emerging new nation-states of the Balkans now is tried by the representatives of the old status quo too, which after the Tanzimat, must be re-promoted and re-distributed, according to the new political philosophy followed by the claimers of the Sultan’s lands. If the Macedonians recall the memory of Alexander (Oikonomidis et alii 2014), Philip and Amyntas, if the Serbs start unveiling their revolutionary flags with the name of Stephen Dushan on them, Bosnians reconsider their national hero Hussein-bey Gradiscević, Croats remember their Nikola Šubić Zrinski (Žanić 2005), Albanians and Greeks feel again over their heads the shadow of heroic Skenderbeu (Oikonomidis et alii 2011–2013, Hodgkinson 1999), the old Ottomans can promote, in the same way, the idol to whom their Empire owed the conquest of the Balkans: Gazi’ Evrenoz Beg.

The re-promotion of Gazi’ Evrenoz achievements, real or imaginative, was not necessary to be the job of Ottoman officers, the Sultan, or of other authorities of the Ottoman government. In the case of Naoussa the Greek subjects themselves could remind the connection of the foundation of their town to the legendary warrior in pseudohistorical or mythological terms, since this could provide them protection, attention and less troubles with the Turks. In 1854 a new revolt burst out in Chalcidice which didn’t have the expected results and new repression measures would be methodically taken against the Christian subjects throughout Macedonia. The memories of the terrible holocaust of 1822’s Naoussa were still fresh, at the moment of the restart of the economy of Naoussa and with several new industries conquering the Balkan markets rapidly. To demonstrate their non connection with any further revolts and complots, reminding that Naoussa was considered protégé of the Valide’ Sultana after its foundation by a real and glorious Turk would be primal priority.

When traveller and chronicler Evlya’ Çelebi’ writes his report on Naoussa in 1668 mentions that the town was vakuf of Gazi’ Evrenoz Beg but he doesn’t refer anything about the myth of the ox-hide. Difficult is to believe that Çelebi’, who was

a great collector of local legends didn't have the opportunity of learning about an odd story such as that of the ox-hide affair of the famous Gazi'. Gavrielides says (Γαβριελίδης 1999) that it is very probable that the legend of the ox – hide should be dated after the year 1668, two hundred years after the supposed deeds of Evrenoz in Naoussa. The lack of data related to the ox-hide stratagem in both Çelebi's report and Abbdulrahman Evrenozoglu's tradition communicated by Baujour are indicative for the posterior dating of the myth and they must be taken in serious consideration.

Further similarities and similia between the narratives of Evrenoz' life and the classical Greek and Roman Archetypes

Through the prism of Platarides'/Stugiannakis' narrative Evrenoz is presented as a savior to the locals of the Vermion Mountain since he civilizes their rough ways giving them Civitas. His figure turns to them from a suspected renegade conqueror into a Pater. He is the creator of a rich Urbs after establishing a brand-new Oppidum following the prototype of Carthage's foundation. He is followed by his own Pontifex Maximus, Shah Liani, who becomes the mediator with the new gentes, playing the role of the Pons Facere. He doesn't hesitate to be a tough judge even over members of his own family, promoting a traditional Jus which has to be respected by everyone. His dynasty is not a legend but a historical fact. Evrenoz is acting more as a local Caesar than as a Patrician of his Emperor. His military achievements are genuine and historically proved. In other historical contexts he might be another Alexander the Macedon, having once again as headquarters Pella. However, Alexander's archetype, as that of Dido's, has been stably used throughout both the historical and the legendary narrative of Evrenoz. The story of Evrenoz, in terms of an Illud Tempus (Eliade 1963: 19) or as a "*primordial mythical time that precedes historical time, is therefore beyond historical verification or refutation*", paraphrasing Eliade.

What follows the Didonian stratagem of Evrenoz in the foundation myth of Naoussa is the way that he establishes the boundaries of the town, which is in conjunction of the Roman tradition. According to Platarides/Stougianakis text Gazi' Evrenoz nailed four sticks made of plain tree at the four points of the horizon, tracing a big cross on the ground. Then he closed this area using the strip of the ox-hide, which means he practiced περισχοινισμό (Λαγόπουλος 2002: 242–243) and separating the outer space from the inner space. Miraculously the sticks turned into real plain trees after a while, which some of them still exist nowadays and indicate the old borders of the town (Λαγόπουλος 2002: 242–243).³⁰ Here we have the ancient Roman pattern of the typical Urbs, based on the crossed roads of the Cardo Maximus and the Decumanus. One could easily compare it with the original Greek urban model of the Isodomic System, as well. Roman Solcus, or Isodomic system of the crossed main roads is indifferent since the description reflects a particularly old practice for tracing the foundations of a settlement in the Graeco-Roman tradition. In the Evrenoz' foundation myth is obvious the necessity for a better

³⁰ Barlaouta to the North, Stravos to the West, Koufios to the East, and Poliana to the Southwest.

living, in urban terms and conditions, as it is obvious the concern for order through a carefully designed urban space (Burns & Eadie 2001).

Urban amenities and comforts are expected to provide water supplies, stable residences, possibilities for trade activities, all of this into a grid – plan of streets which is necessary element for progress and wealth. In contrast to the previous precarious living at Palioniaousta, far from roads of communication, the foundation of a “Roman like” town suggested, organized, and set in motion by Gazi’ Evrenoz saved the former “savages” from certain extinction.

Skepticism and “how old Platarides’ manuscript could be?”

According to what we know, the manuscript of Platarides, dates back to the time of the Tanzimat. We soon realize that the existence of this presumed manuscript is suspiciously engaged to a supposed family tradition, which survived through the last generations of the Evrenozoglu dynasty. In any case, it’s more than interesting that what we have in our hands of all this obscure tradition has been preserved and promoted in Greek, then, published always in Greek, by a Greek teacher of Naoussa. Until recently the people of Naoussa consider the total of this tradition as genuine. Since the “History” written by Platarides appears in the mid nineteenth century we must investigate the historical circumstances of that period in Naoussa and in the Vilayet of Veroia. After the failed efforts of the revolutionaries for incorporating the revolution of Macedonia to the general Greek War of Independence which was already counting more than a year’s successful campaigns in southern Greece and the Peloponnesus, Naoussa was raised to the ground by order of Abdül Abbut, Grand Vizier of Thessaloniki. The surviving revolutionaries escaped to Thessaly, Sporades Islands and the Peloponnesus where they continued to fight. Thousand-five hundred among the captured, Christian population were executed publicly at Kioski, and the rest were sold in the slave market of Thessaloniki, at Bayram Pazari, and elsewhere. The total of the buildings in town were destroyed by fire, except for few families that kept a neutral position during the revolution. Naoussa remained uninhabited by its Christian elements for more than ten years.

Despite the general amnesty given by the Sultan, which was not in any sense valid for those considered responsible for the revolution, the inhabitants who gained back their freedom demanded to have returned their land possessions in order to return to town, something impossible in that moment since the imperial authorities made in time to redistribute the former Christian lands to Muslims invited for the first time in Naoussa’s history to settle inside its walls. The Petridis and Kyrtis families, due to the special privileges given by the Sultan and preserved for almost one hundred years, convinced the authorities to come to a review of their decision and only then the surviving original population started to re-enter the town, something which didn’t take place until the late 1830’s. The following period was marked by good efforts to live in peace of those who reestablished in Naoussa, with no compromises with both authorities and the newly settled Koniari Turks.

A new chapter in Naoussa's history was opened in the 1840's with new and old Christian subjects populating it,³¹ whilst the Muslim newcomers settled along the NW side of the previous to the Holocaust borders of the town.³² Until the mid 1860's, when the first wool factories appear, Naoussa was totally reorganized on a new architectural model and with new economic and social perspectives. In this critical point a new revolt takes place in southern Macedonia and Naoussa this time doesn't participate (Βακαλόπουλος 2018) and doesn't respond to wide open provocations. It's time of reconstruction after experiencing the wildest possible punishment, few decades earlier. We will never know whether it's the Ottoman authorities responsible for the creation and divulgation of Platarides' story, or Platarides himself who divulgates a semi fake, semi legendary tale in order to remind to the Turks and to everyone that Naoussa has been for centuries a loyal to the Sultans town, privileged and independent, founded by the major Ottoman general, and vakuf of the Valide' Sultanas.

An attempt to write "history" in the late nineteenth century's Ottoman Empire

In 1881 Nikolaos Philippides publishes in Athens his *Revolution and Catastrophe of Naoussa* (Μήτσιαλα – Ζεγγίνη 1998), a short history of the facts that lead the town in total destruction in 1822. Philippides' family was a local family of warriors who fought in both the battles against Ali Pascia's raids to Naoussa, in 1795 and in 1805. He was grown with the stories his parents were telling at home. He was educated in Thessaloniki and in Athens. In 1886 he was sent to Macedonia as director of the Greek Schools of Florina. With Thomas Paschides, Philippides joined the New Filiki' Etaireia, a Greek organization for the liberation from the Ottomans and soon they acted as main agents, travelling all over northern Greece, Epirus and Macedonia, having as headquarters Monastir, in Northern Macedonia.

It's Philippides' *Revolution and Catastrophe of Naoussa* that makes the holocaust of 1822 widely known to the public for the first time beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire when the Ottoman authorities recognize him as a dangerous for the Empire element. On May 23, 1888, he is captured together with other members of the New Filiki' Etaireia and in 1889 he is transferred to Fezan, in Tripolitania of Libya in permanent exile. His odyssey finishes two years later only instead, when with the support of European political persons, he manages to gain back his

³¹ Several Christian subjects of Naoussa who were sold in the Bayram Pazar in Thessaloniki, and the main slave markets of Edessa and Veroia managed to be freed from the status of slavery some years later and returned to their homeland. Relatives and descendants of warriors who were considered responsible for the revolt against the Sultan and survived from slaughtering and/or slavery returned to Naoussa, known as the generation of the rebirth of the town. Until the end of the Ottoman occupation descendants of personalities who fought in 1822 kept their family background veiled, or they changed more than once their family name. Typical is the case of the Dimou family, which traced back its origins to the notorious Dimos Dimou, or Delidimos, *kleftarmatolos* and descendant himself of the owners of the *Armatolikion* of Ano Megas Ayiannis. Having participated in the Revolution of 1822 was not a subject openly discussed in Naoussa, until 1912, the year of the incorporation of Northern Greece to the Greek Kingdom.

³² It is worth mentioning that in that instance the Christian family of Mamantis offers to the newly settled Muslims the lot of land for the construction of the mosque.

freedom. Philippides is a typical case of a nineteenth century reporter who instead of using myths focuses on historical facts, collecting information from the victims of the Holocaust in Naoussa and using the bibliography, both Greek and foreign, related to the 1822 events. He is a historian with the fervor of a reporter and not a storyteller. He writes and he doesn't invent, even under the mantle of fermenting nationalism which is characteristic of his epoch. In the Turkish dominions of northern Greece to write real history, or at least to reproduce reports of real facts contrasting the Empire was practically impossible by that time. Life and times of Philippides prove this repression. History at the dawn of the twentieth century in the Ottoman Empire is and must remain Mythistory.

Conclusions

The myth of the ox-hide as basic element of a largely extended foundation myth in Eurasia during the Middle Ages has been diachronically used for political purposes and as a demonstration of possession of a long lost "Romanitas", an invented Roman lineage for the ideological support of new kingdoms, empires, and local baronies. The apparently "solo" case of Naoussa's foundation proves the durable character of this ox-hide narrative in nineteenth century Macedonia, birthplace of Greek and Roman traditions and symbolic locus of the ancient, classical past, par excellence. The nineteenth century survival of Dido's foundation myth, composed according to the same motives found throughout the continent and mixed with other classical elements reminding Alexander's political behavior over his subjects appears when the Ottoman sovereignty in the Balkans loses ground on the one hand, and on the other at a moment of obvious economic re-flourishing of the town of Naoussa, after a particularly tough punishment by the Ottoman authorities due to the failed revolution of 1822.

Evrenoz re-appears in the mid 1800s as a paternal protector of the Christian subjects of the town, as an able founder who offered to the ancestors of these subjects' possibilities for a better life, political freedom and even independence. The creation of a newly written narrative, in Greek and by the hands of Christian subjects, based on different versions of semi-legendary, semi-historical and verbally kept traditions is an effort for a compromise between subjects and authorities during the period of regaining economic, political, and social wealth.

The Christians of Naoussa have to prove their recognition of the Ottoman sovereignty over them in order to get back their lost privileges over their territory, their possessions and themselves. Despite the existence of numerous different versions of the foundation of Naoussa that survive until the early twentieth century, preserved from mouth to mouth for at least six centuries, in Platarides' unpublished text but safely re-written and advertised as the official history of the foundation of Naoussa by Stougiannakis, only what is connected to Gazi' Evrenoz Beg memory is taken as genuine and authentic, excluding any other parallel traditions about the foundation of the town. The case of Naoussa's foundation myth is characteristic of how resisting ancient traditions, legends, neo-mythologies, political archetypes, political and economic speculation can be, decisive for the common acceptance of

mythistory as genuine, historical fact at a time when myths were re-proposed as a mechanism creating new nation consciousness.

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