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## **Albania by the End of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and Relations with Neighbouring Nations according to Archbishop Pjetër Bogdani's Work *The Band of the Prophets* (1685)<sup>1</sup>**

**1. Work and Author.** Archbishop Peter Bogdani (alb. Pjetër Bogdani), the author of the theological-philosophical treaty known under the title *Cuneus prophetarum*<sup>2</sup>, appears to have been born in 1822 (Bartl, 2007, p. 273, footnote 25) in the region of Has near today's Albanian-Kosovan border, which cuts through this province.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: I would like to thank Ms. Valbona Fazliu for editing this article.

<sup>2</sup> The full title of the first edition of the work is: CVNEVS PROPHETARVM DE CHRISTO SALVATORE MVNDI, ET EIVS EVANGELICA VERITATE ITALICE, ET EPIROTICE CONTEXTA, Et in duas Partes diuisa A PETRO BOGDANO MACEDONE SACR. CONGR. DE PROP. FIDE ALVMNO. Philosophiae, & Sacrae Theologiae Doctore, olim Episcopo Scodrensi, & Administratore Antibarensi; nunc verò ARCHIEPISCOPO SCVPORVM, AC TOTIVS REGNI SERVIAE ADMINISTRATORE, PARS PRIMA. PATAVII, M. DC. LXXXV. EX TYPOGRAPHIA SEMINARII. OPERA AVGVSTINI CANDIANI. SVPERIORVM PER-

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In spite of much research, neither the author's exact date of birth nor his place of birth has been determined with certainty. However, the place and date of his death is known. He died in Prishtina on 5 December 1689 a victim of the plague which he got while taking care of General Johann Norbert Graf Picocolomini, Commander of the Austrian army. He was a speaker of the north-eastern dialect Gege, or Kosovarian (alb. kosovarisht), as we usually call it today. The biography of the author gives us the opportunity to form an image of the Albanian intellectual level of that time, which was mainly associated with the senior Catholic clergy. Bogdani himself came from an ecclesiastical family. His uncle, Andrea Bogdani, was an Archbishop of Skopje and a mentor to his nephew, indeed the main person who took care of him until he had completed his education and embarked on his clerical and scientific career, which made Bogdani one of the most distinguished intellectuals in the Balkans at the time. He was educated at well-known church institutions for Balkan clerics (Collegium Urbanum de Propaganda Fide in Rome, Collegium Illyricum in Loreto). In the frontispiece of the work, he describes his person and position as:

SACR. CONGR. DE PROP. FIDE ALUMNO. Philosophiae, & Sacrae Theologiae Doctore, olim Episcopo Scodrensi, & Administratore Antibarensi; nunc verò ARCHIEPISCOPO SCUPORUM, AC TOTIUS REGNI SERVIAE ADMINISTRATORE (STUDENT OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA. DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY AND SACRED THEOLOGY, ONCE ARCHBISHOP OF SKODRA AND ADMINISTRATOR OF TIVAR, NOW ARCHBISHOP OF SKOPJE AND ADMINISTRATOR OF THE KINGDOM OF SERBIA).

He had a strong personality. Regardless of the suffering, torment and great persecutions that were awaiting him in his homeland, he did not hesitate to go back.<sup>3</sup>

The old Albanian literature (mid-16<sup>th</sup> - mid-17<sup>th</sup> century), which includes the philosophical-theological treatise *Cuneus prophetarum*, was born and developed as a literature mainly of religious content for the needs of the Catholic religion. Regardless of the topic, this literature is created in a certain historical, cultural and

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MISSV. And for the second volume: DE VITA IESV CHRISTI SALVATORIS MVNDI, ET EIVS EVANGELICA VERITATE ITALICE, ET EPIROTICE CONTEXTA, Et in duas Partes diuisa A PETRO BOGDANO MACEDONE SACR. CONGR. DE PROP. FIDE ALVMNO. Philosophiae, & Sacrae Theologiae Doctore, olim Episcopo Scodrensi, & Administratore Antibarensi ; nunc verò ARCHIEPISCOPO SCVPPORVM, AC TOTIVS REGNI SERVIAE ADMINISTRATORE, PARS SECVNDA. PATAVII, M. DC. LXXXV. EX TYPOGRAPHIA SEMINARII. OPERA AVGVSTINI CANDIANI. SVPERIORVM PERMISSV.

<sup>3</sup> For P. Bogdani's life, see among the others Bartl (2007, pp. 273–284).

social environment, namely that of northern Albania and the Albanian population that lived there. Hence, the data provided in this book constitutes an invaluable source through which we have the possibility of learning more about the way of life and the functioning of this part of Albanian society of that time.

*Cuneus Prophetarum* or in Albanian *Çeta e profetëve*, as was the title given when it was first translated by Justin Rrota, is the most complex work of old Albanian literature. Its author has also left us a large number of letters and documents addressed to the Holy Congregation in Italian, describing in detail the events of the time and different issues of a political, social, religious and cultural character, which can be easily consulted by anyone.

The work comprises two volumes: the first volume includes a history of the creation of the world, the lives and prophecies of the prophets from Old Testament; the second volume is about the life of Jesus Christ. Every page is divided into two columns: on the right is the text in Albanian, while on the left is the one in Italian. Thus it was a bilingual publication, the censor required the manuscript to be translated the manuscript into Italian for reasons of control.

*Cuneus prophetarum* was published in 1685 in Padua, and was twice reprinted in Venice: in 1691 and 1702, respectively 6 and 11 years after its publication. At first sight, this leads us to suppose that there was great interest both from the Italian audience and many Albanian immigrants in an author who came from the Balkans under the Ottoman invasion. As Valentini wrote: “La fortuna in Italia se non ne fu grandiosa, fu però abbastanza notevole, se si pensi che le ristampe non potevano essere giustificate se non da corrispondente richiesta” (Valentini, 1977, p. 10). However, it is to some extent possible that the reprints in Venice were largely intended for Catholics from the Balkans, or Albanians, Italians and Slavs who had mastered the Italian language. The supervisor, Ioannes Clericatus, says in his Latin statement that Bogdani wrote this book “to explain it to believers in Christian doctrine in nations that have been suffering under the Turkish tyranny, as well as to unfaithful persons attracted by the errors of Judaism and Mohammedanism” (Bogdani, 2005, p. XI<sup>4</sup>). Thus, the work was intended for Christian believers in the Balkans and Mohammedans and Jews who had been converted to Catholicism. In this work he follows the initiative opened by his predecessor, Bishop Pjetër Budi, who, according to his own words, had spent much time during the last 17 years of

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<sup>4</sup> In front of the work there are 50 numberless pages that in the critical editions of 2005 have been denoted with Roman numerals.

life writing sacred books in their native languages for the believers in Serbia and Albania (Bartl, 2007, p. 270).

Various authors (Valentini, 1977, p. 11) show us that the work of Bogdani was easily available until around the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, not only in churches and other religious institutions in northern Albania, but also in households. This leads us to think that not only did Bogdani bring back with him a large number of copies when he returned from Padua, but also that from time to time new consignments must have been sent from Venice. Bogdani's bilingual work was also a great help for the Italian missionaries operating in this area. He uses this fact as an argument for the Sacred Congregation, which he says in the preface ordered him to translate the work into Italian, in order not only for Albanians to learn Italian, but also for Italians to learn Albanian by using the work as a dictionary (Bogdani, 2005, p. XVII, twice in two consecutive paragraphs). But the real reason of the translation was to control the content for the work (Bartl, 2007, p. 279).<sup>5</sup>

**2. Relations with Italian and Croatian Intellectuals.** Relations with Italian and Croatian intellectuals are shown clearly in the dithyrambic poetry and in the dedications at the beginning of the book. They are 12 in total and include:

- A dithyrambic poem in Latin dedicated to Cardinal G. Barbarigo, a laudatio, an epigram and two odes for Pjetër Bogdani by the Dalmatian Nobleman Matthaeus Thomasaeus “Nobilis Dalmata”,
- A poem dedicated to the work *Cuneus prophetarum* and its author in Latin by Archbishop Andrija Zmajević,
- A poem by Bogdani in Albanian for Archbishop Andrija Zmajević,
- A poem in old Croatian dedicated to Bogdani by Petar Riceiardi, Prince of Lika,
- A Latin anagrammatic poem by Paulus Ritter, a well known Croatian poet,
- A poem dedicated to Bogdani by Luka Suma from Shkodra,
- A poem to Bogdani by Petar Daba from Suma,
- And a third poem by Luka Bogdani, his cousin,
- An ode by Dr Silvestro Antonii, former director of the Cardinal Barbarigo printing house, in the first two years of its establishment (1684–1685).

We draw especial attention to Cardinal Barbarigo, who sheltered Bogdani during 1684–1685. After the breakout of the Great Turkish War in 1682, the

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<sup>5</sup> To keep in mind that the preface of the work contains four declarations of faithfulness.

Archdiocese of Skopje turned into a battlefield and Pasha of Skopje wanted to kill Bogdani because he was afraid that he might encourage the Catholics to start an uprising. He was therefore obliged to flee, taking his unfinished manuscripts with him (Bartl, 2007, p. 281). Barbarigo offered him a life of luxury with carriages, but the friend from Albania replied that he would rather prefer to walk and have his manuscript printed. This inspired the Cardinal to introduce typography into his seminar, and the *Cuneus* of Bogdani was the first work to be published through the seminar (Valentini, 1977, p. 10).

Very significant is the contribution of the Croatian poet, writer, historian, linguist and famous publisher (Pavao Ritter Vitezović<sup>6</sup>, 1652–1713), whom Bogdani must have met during their studies at the Illyrian College in Rome. Ritter here provides an anagrammatic poem, his speciality, in which Bogdani's work is given the epithet of "distinguished" (*de insigni opere suo*).

Another Croatian admirer was Petar Riceiardi, Prince of Lika (a province in Croatia), who provided a very meaningful poem in the old Croatian language, signed "in Vienna, 5 August 1685", where he served as an Adviser to Emperor Leopold I. In his last verse he assigns Archbishop Bogdani the same position as George Castrioti (1405–1468), an Albanian hero of the anti-Ottoman resistance:

Sriečni su (mogu rjet) Albani sasvima/ Koji dice vaš svijet Skanderbegi dvima./  
Jedan u Marcenjoj glasovit hrabrosti/ Drugi u duhovnoj naresen krijeposti./ Jurja  
Kastriota i Petra Bogdana/ Krijeposti ljepota svemu – j'svjetu znana./On stvari  
vojničkoj ostavi priliku,/ A Ti redovničkoj sada daješ sliku./Bog vaš zaisto da za dan  
puku svomu/Dika ste naroda, dika jeste domu./Njemu Bog daj vični mir, a zdravje  
Tebi/Pak objema dicni dar gori u nebi/Gdi tugi glasa ni, ni mjesta potrebi (Bogdani,  
2005, pp. XXVII–XXVIII).

There is no doubt that the relations among these men were determined not only by their literary and scientific interests, but above all by the political situation at that time and their common interest in forming an anti-Ottoman liberation army. One of the crucial places for their coming together was Vienna. Not without reason, many of our eulogy had close relations with Austrian capital, or they were temporarily accommodated there as we can see by their signatures.

**3. The Political Situation in Albania at That Time.** Bogdani spent the last six years of his life in a period of wars and major conflicts between the European powers and the Ottoman Empire, including the Second Siege

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<sup>6</sup> Vitezović is a translation in the Croatian language of family name Ritter "Knight".

of Vienna (13<sup>th</sup> July – 12<sup>th</sup> September 1683) and the beginning of the war between the Holy League of the European powers and the Ottoman Empire (1683–1699). He describes for us the dramatic situation for the period by the end of December 1683, when he was often obliged to hide in the mountains, while he put his library into sealed crates and sacks and hid it in basements, when he lost his Latin- Albanian grammar belonging to his uncle (it is not clear if it was a manuscript or published text) (not understood if it comes to a manuscript or published text) (Bogdani, 2005, p. XVI).

*Cuneus Prophetarum* was to be published only two years later while the war was still going on. Significantly, it opens with an engraving on copper, which reflects two figures: on top on the left, Christ, and below, on the right, Archbishop Bogdani on his knees, who addresses Christ with the dramatic prayer: SALVA NOS DOMINE PERIMUS. These words express in such a laconic manner the state of the Catholic population, which was threatened with complete extinction. The Catholic religion is considered as a “campo ubertofo di Verità divine, e di Virtù celesti”, the principles of which he planned to make known through his work “à quelle anime, che nate ne’ deferti del Maometifmo, hanno tanto bifogno del cibo fpirituale della Dottrina Chriftiana” (Bogdani, 2005, p. V). The author is aware that a great work is being created and that the Christian residents will be grateful to Cardinal Barbarigo for his help (Bogdani, 2005, p. VII).

**4. About the Albanian Language.** Da Lecce (1716, p. 5 unnumbered) determines the extent of the Albanian language in the beginning of XVII: “e curioso d’intendere, dentro quai limiti si contenesse un tal Linguaggio, trovai, con mio stupore, dilatarsi per tutto il Regno d’Epiro: parte della Romelia: parte del Regno di Servia: parte di Bulgaria: in Costantinopoli, in Dalmazia, quasi in tutte le Provincie del Regno di Napoli, & anche in qualche parte della Sicilia” (and being curious to understand within which borders such a language was spread, I found surprisingly that it was spread throughout the entire Kingdom of Epirus: in some parts of Rumelia: in some parts of the Kingdom of Serbia: in some parts of Bulgaria: in Constantinople, in Dalmatia, almost in all provinces of the Kingdom of Naples, and in some parts of Sicily).

In the Albanian text of *Cuneus prophetarum* the terms *Arbër-Arbëri* and *arbëneshe/arbënisht* are used to designate Albania and Albanian, whereas in the Latin text designations like *Epirus* are used for the place and *Epirotice* for the language following the tradition of the time. In harmony with this tradition

even Bogdani refers to himself as Macedone. The term *Albani* for Albanians appears in P. Riceiardi's poetry in the old Croatian language, whereas *Albanesi* is used in Bogdani's Italian translation.

Interesting data on the Albanian language situation of that time is to be found in the preface of this work. The author here urges Albanians not to let their language and science degenerate, but like other nations, to make efforts to further its evolution and development (Bogdani, 2005, p. XV). But the alarm about the destruction of the mother tongue is more about the author's and his contemporaries' great concern for the language more than with the reality (Bartl, 2007 p. 279). In fact, Bogdani's own work itself proves that Albanian at that time had expressive possibilities equal to those of the Italian language. Not only expressive and lexical richness, but the syntactic structure of sentences shows a high degree of development and elaboration of the Albanian language of that time.

Reading the foreword, we can learn that efforts made to unify or standardize the language and to develop one literary variant based on the dialect of the town of Shkodra. Bogdani also tried to adjust the language of his work according to the dialect of this town (Bogdani, 2005, p. XVII).

**5. About the Albanian Society of That Time.** *Cuneus prophetarum* marks a special point in Albanian literature, because it is the first original work of prose unlike previous writings that had been mainly translations. But what can be called original in a book of such a kind? In the first place, the links that the author makes between the well-known Bible stories and the life of our highlanders, how they lived, their tradition, and their mindset, as well as the political context in which they lived. Thus, by saying that the poor are those in need, Bogdani provides us with the example of the expedition of Vutcha Pasha and his defeat by the Kelmendi tribe in 1639. Perhaps he means use this event as optimistic way of raising support should there be any new resistance to the conqueror. In addition to punishing expeditions and continuous wars, religious persecution, reprisals and martyrdom were added to the sufferings of the Christian populations in Arbën (Albania) and Serbia. He speaks also about Ali Marinqi, "ma i keqi turk thomse, qi ka pasunë gjithë dheu i Arbënit mbrenda / il peggior Turcho, che fia ftato forfè in tutta l'Albania" (Bogdani, 2005, Part I, p. 44). But the Albanian highlanders appeared as people well able to resist, who were healthier and stronger than the rest of the population, because "me nji thembër bukë melakuqe e nji të

pīme ujë, kacenjënë posi drëjtë/ con vn tozzo di pane di forgo, e con vn beuer d'acqua faltano come li Cerui” (Bogdani, 2005, Part II, p. 40). Then the author mentions Herodian, who wrote that “Empiror Çezar August’ dëshëronte fort me pasunë ndë ushtërīntë tijnaj t’arbëneshëtë/ l’Imperatore Cefare Augusto, defideraua grandemente hauere nel fuo effercito li Albanefi”, because they are patient, they do not want to hear about hunger or thirst and are braver than others (Bogdani, 2005, Part II, p. 40).

In this work, we find also data on Albanian mythology, exemplified, for example, by the poetry of his cousin Luka Bogdani in the dedication in the preface of work. There is reference to fairies that populate the Albanian mountains with their songs and games. The Mountain of Pashtrik in Has occupies a special place in his work. It is mentioned several times and appears as a mythological and sacred mountain, a mountain of fairies and mythological species, comparable to Olympus. But there are many superstitions as well. It is interesting how he shows that in Shkodra, in 1674 one man and his followers stayed all night on a bridge over the Buna and Drini rivers with lighted candles waiting to kill the plague, which spread from time to time in areas of Albania from one shore to another “tue bām me besuem t’verbëtet, se aj lëngim āstë i gjallë, e se natënë dukej/ con dare à credere alli chiechi, che detto mal contagioso foffe viuo, e che la notte fi faceffe vedere” (Bogdani, 2005, Part II, p. 40). Bogdani is so outraged at these superstitions that he compares this particular man to a demon and urges that no one believes him. Interesting in its folkloric content is the story about how our women mourn according to ancient rituals, which Christianity could not defeat it that time or even later. Bogdani’s concern about the highlanders’ mentality was that they might be tempted more than they should be by the pleasures of this world, which indirectly suggested that the highlanders did not have much faith in the Christian dogma of life after grave. Thereby, the fact that epicurean distichon “Edamus et bibamus, quia post mortem nulla voluptas” (Bogdani 2005, Part I, p. 42) gives us with free translation in form of rhymed saying “Hamë e pijmë, se qish āstë nesërë s e dijmë” suggests that perhaps this saying was circulating among the people as a kind of proverb. There are frequent cases when the author tries to personify different religious and secular events and present them to the people by means of known characters. Thus, sibyls he presents as Albanian maidens, giving them epithets such as Hasnjana, Prisrenjana, Scodrensis<sup>7</sup> etc. When he talks

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<sup>7</sup> From Has (look at p. 1), Prisren and Shkodra (lat. Scodra), Albanian towns.



about the water as an element without colour, he explains that if it appears as yellow in Janjevo, Skopje or Novoberda, it is because the land where the water has its source, has gold, silver and other metals (Bogdani, 2005, Part I, p. 36). When great rivers such as the Danube are mentioned, he doesn't omit to also mention the rivers Drin and Vardar.

We think that it is exactly these elements make the *Cuneus prophetarum* a highly praised work, not only by theologians and scientists but also by ordinary Albanian people, who, not having a full translation of the Bible, used it as a substitute until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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## **Albania u zmierzchu XVII wieku i jej stosunki z państwami sąsiedzkimi według *Oddziału proroków* arcybiskupa Pjetra Bogdaniego (1685)**

Utwór Pietra Bogdaniego *Cuneus prophetarum* (Padwa 1685) jest jednym z najważniejszych tekstów starej literatury albańskiej (XVI–XVII wieku), która rozwijała się na potrzeby Kościoła katolickiego i zawierała głównie treści religijne. Znaczna część tego utworu to traktat filozoficzno-teologiczny. Tekst, mimo że ma zasadniczo charakter religijny, odsyła także do kontekstu historycznego, kulturowego i społecznego północnej Albanii, stanowiąc tym samym bezcenne źródło informacji o sposobie życia i funkcjonowania części społeczeństwa albańskiego w tym czasie.

Już we wstępie znajdują się ciekawe informacje na temat sytuacji języka albańskiego. Między innymi autor wzywa Albańczyków, by nie dopuścili do degeneracji języka i nauki, wzywa także inne narody, by dbały o rozwój języka. Ta troska o język ojczysty i obawa przed jego zepsuciem wiąże się z pozycją autora, który był świadom sytuacji bardziej niż ktokolwiek inny. W istocie sama praca Bogdaniego udowadnia, że w tym czasie język albański dysponował nie mniejszymi środkami ekspresji niż język włoski. Nie tylko bogactwo form i leksyki, lecz także struktury składniowe wskazują na ówczesny wysoki stopień jego rozwoju i na wysoki stopień świadomości językowej.

Jednakże, jak można dostrzec we wstępie, nie podejmowano wysiłków w celu ujednoczenia języka. Rozwijał się głównie wariant literacki, oparty na dialekcie miasta Shkodra. Bogdani próbował również dostosować swój język do tego dialektu.

Świadectwem związków autora z włoskimi i chorwackimi intelektualistami są poetyckie dytyramby zamieszczone w dedykacji. W utworze znajdujemy również informacje na temat mitologii albańskiej.

*Cuneus prophetarum* zajmuje szczególne miejsce w literaturze albańskiej, ponieważ jest pierwszym oryginalnym, albańskim utworem prozatorskim.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Peter Bogdani; *Oddział proroków*; Andrija Zmajević; Paulus Ritter; Silvestro Antonii; albański język i społeczeństwo

## **Albania by the End the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and Relations with Neighbouring Nations according to Archbishop Pjetër Bogdani's Work *The Band of the Prophets* (1685)**

The old Albanian literature (mid-16<sup>th</sup> – mid-17<sup>th</sup> century), which includes the philosophical-theological treaty *Cuneus prophetarum* by Pjetër Bogdani (Padua, 1685), was born and developed as a literature mainly of religious content for the needs of the Catholic religion. Regardless of the topic, this literature was created in a certain historical, cultural and social environment, namely that of northern Albania and the Albanian population that lived there. Hence, the data provided in this book constitutes an invaluable source through which we have the possibility of learning more about the way of life and the functioning of this part of Albanian society of that time.

Interesting data on the situation of the Albanian language of that time is to be found in the preface of this work. The author urges Albanians not to let their language and science degenerate, but just as other nations do, they should make efforts concerning its evolution and development. But the alarm for destructing the mother tongue is linked with author and his contemporaries' high conscious more than with the reality. In fact, Bogdani's work itself proves that Albanian at that time had expressive possibilities equal to those of the Italian language. Not only the expressive and lexical richness, but the syntactic structure of phrases shows a high degree of development and elaboration in the Albanian language of that time.

Examining the foreword of the book, we can learn that efforts were being made to unify the language and to develop one literary variant based on the dialect of the town of Shkodra. Bogdani also tried to adjust the language of his work according to this town's dialect.

Relations with Italian and Croatian intellectuals are clearly demonstrated in dithyrambic poetry and in the dedications at the beginning of the book. In this work, we also find data on Albanian mythology. *Cuneus prophetarum* occupies a special place in Albanian literature, because it is the first original work of prose, unlike previous writings, which were mainly translations.

**Keywords:** Peter Bogdani; *The Band of the Prophets*; Andrija Zmajević; Paulus Ritter; Silvestro Antonii; Albanian language and society

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