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THE SIBYLLS OF ALBANIAN ARCHBISHOP PETER BOGDANI IN “THE BAND OF PROPHETS”

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the Sibylls, religious poems found in the work "Çeta e Profetëve" by Pjetër Bogdani, one of the most significant figures in Albanian literature. Bogdani, known as the first author of original prose in the Albanian language during the period of Old Albanian literature, brought a noticeable change to the literary landscape of his time. He created a new dimension for Albanian literature and a stylistic approach that marked an important turning point in its development. Until that period, Albanian literature was primarily a reflection of translations and adaptations from other languages. However, with this work, Bogdani offered an entirely original form of writing, deeply connected to the traditions and culture of the time. This achievement marked an important step in the further development of Albanian literature, giving it a unique identity and artistic depth that continues to enrich and inspire to this day. The Sibylls in "Çeta e Profetëve" serve as a powerful expressive tool to convey the thoughts and values that Bogdani seeks to communicate. They are not merely mythological figures, but rather serve as a deep connection between religion, philosophy, the Albanian language, and its culture, reflecting a profound passion for the traditions of the time. Through an artistic and emotional language, the Sibylls communicate messages that intertwine with nature, culture, and religion, creating a strong link to national identity. In this sense, Bogdani's Sibylls are not just part of the text, but serve as a medium to deliver a powerful message about the spirit and values of the Albanian people, giving them a new, rich, and timeless form.

KEYWORDS: Bogdani, literature, poetry, sibylls, art, mythology, religion

1. Introduction

In the history of Albanian culture and literature, a special place is held by the authors known as the “old authors” or the “authors of the North,” figures who played a crucial role in the foundation and early development of the Albanian language and literary tradition. Early Albanian literature of the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century, which includes the philosophical theological treatise

Cuneus Prophetarum, emerged and developed primarily as a literature of religious content, serving the needs of the Catholic faith, while at the same time being shaped within a specific historical, cultural, and social context namely that of northern Albania and the Albanian population inhabiting this region. For this reason, such works constitute an invaluable source for understanding the way of life and social organization of this part of Albanian society during the period in question (Arapi, 2015, p. 242). Within this distinguished circle, Archbishop Pjetër Bogdani occupies an extraordinary position not only as an intellectual of his time but also as the author of a fundamental work in our literary tradition: *Cuneus Prophetarum* (The Band of Prophets). Published in 1685, this work represents the first written prose in the Albanian language, making it a pivotal moment in the history of Albanian writing and thought. Its content is multifaceted – encompassing theological, philosophical, scientific, and literary treatises and attests to the author's broad cultural formation. Moreover, the work stands as evidence of his conscious effort to refine and enrich the Albanian language so that it could stand on equal footing with a cultivated language of the time, such as Italian. This linguistic dimension and its cultural significance have been highlighted by numerous scholars. Among them, A. Stratiko, as early as 1896, emphasized that through Bogdani, the Albanian language underwent a major turning point: “This turning point in the Albanian language, across all its uses, as a rich example shaped by the voice of ancient speech, is truly worthy of in-depth study (...)” (Rugova, 1990, p. 7). Furthermore, Vatican archival records document the activities of the Albanian clergy in the 17th century and include specific references to Bogdani, highlighting his role in promoting Catholic missions and Albanian cultural identity (Jačov, 1983, p. 135).

Meanwhile, the renowned poet Lasgush Poradeci, focusing on the artistic value of the poetry included in this work, expresses: “In addition to other linguistic notes that I consider important, I have copied a cosmogonic poem which, in terms of its original concept, powerful idea, and unique form, I believe should be regarded not only as a literary monument of the Albanian language but of literature in general. The Cosmogony of the Great Albanian, with its qualities, stands on equal ground with the Assyrian (Babylonian, Indian) cosmogony, as it is presented in the Vedas” (Poradeci, 1979, p. 40).

Bogdani's figure becomes even clearer through later scholarly studies, such as that of Ibrahim Rugova, who portrays the author not only as a writer but also as a thinker deeply aware of the needs of his time. According to him: “He was fully aware of the demands of the new era following the Renaissance, understanding that much more needed to be done in the fields of culture and knowledge, and he took this mission as part of a broader resistance – initially against Ottoman rule, but also as a means of spiritual strengthening for the people. Thus, it was also a matter of intellectual independence and intellectual resistance, as can be seen from certain parts of his book” (Rugova, 1990, p. 40).

This deep and enduring interest in Bogdani's work is also emphasized by scholar Sabri Hamiti, who observes: “The immediate fascination of these creators

with the work of Pjetër Bogdani is somewhat paradoxical and surprising. It represents a retrospective discovery of the literary values of the Albanian tradition values that function extraordinarily well within that tradition and in a dynamic intercommunication of ideas dispersed across time and centuries, projecting later thought into earlier works” (Hamiti, 1989, p. 113). In addition to these perspectives, “Recherches sur les anciens textes albanais” notes archival evidence regarding an early version of Bogdani’s treatise under a different Latin title in 1675 and its later bilingual edition known as “Cuneus Prophetarum,” citing even the “Propaganda Fide’s” response requesting its translation and correction, which offers valuable insight into the textual history and publication process of this foundational work (Roques, 1932, pp. 34–35).

Thus, *Cuneus Prophetarum* remains a cornerstone in the history of Albanian literature not only as the first written prose document in the Albanian language but also because its significance is grounded in the background and nature of the work as the most important early text written and printed in Albanian namely the theological treatise by Archbishop Pjetër Bogdani, which served both as a synthesis of philosophical-theological thought and as an effort to lay a literary and intellectual foundation for Albanian letters (Malcolm, 2020, p. 10).

2. Why Sibylls in School Literature?

The Sibylls, as mythological and prophetic figures, play an important role in school literature for several reasons. They are not only elements of cultural and historical heritage but also provide deep opportunities for understanding and analyzing various themes, such as faith, prophecy, and the impact of literature on the development of societies. In ancient culture, the Sibylls were known for their ability to predict the future and offer advice. Prophecy, closely intertwined with mythology and religious traditions, has had a powerful influence on the way religious ideas and beliefs have been constructed, leaving deep marks on the development of literature and the structuring of social life. The study of these figures can help in understanding how mythology influenced the creation of various themes in literature and how it facilitated the spread of ideas and beliefs in ancient societies.

The poems and texts that include the Sibylls are filled with deep meanings and symbols that help in understanding the spiritual world and the future. Through these works, the influence of prophecy on the development of literature can be revealed, highlighting moral, philosophical, and religious messages that have had a significant impact on society. These symbols and motifs can serve as tools for discussing how literature can convey important cultural and social messages. Furthermore, the analysis of the figures and motifs used in literature, as well as the connections between mythology and literature, contributes to the development of analytical and critical skills. This process requires a deep understanding of the symbolism and ideas being described, offering opportunities to understand the interaction between literature and society. Studying these elements is important

for understanding how literature has shaped and enriched social norms and values over different periods.

Another important aspect is the intercultural influence of the mythology of the Sibylls. This myth has passed through different historical periods and has been interpreted and adopted in various cultures, reflecting the influence of ancient cultures on the literature and societies that followed. In this way, the study of such figures offers the opportunity to analyze and understand the influence of ancient mythology on the development of later literature and culture.

In conclusion, the Sibylls represent an important element in our school literature and are included in practically all educational cycles up to university, where Albanology is studied, as they offer rich opportunities to explore and analyze deep cultural, artistic, philosophical, and historical themes. Studying these figures helps develop a deeper understanding of literature and provides the opportunity to reflect on the influence of mythology and prophecy on society and culture. This perspective is also connected with the broader literary tradition continued by major works such as “Cuneus Prophetarum” by Pjetër Bogdani, where the influence of a wide classical education and a moral and aesthetic approach which some modern scholars have described as “humanist” is clearly evident; this quality underscores not only the liturgical and pastoral function of the Albanian language in his work but also its role as a consolidated language of writing and ecclesiastical culture in the region (Malcolm, 2002, p. 126).

3. Methodology

Literature, as a broad discipline, requires a dual approach to be fully understood: first, it must be known and understood from within that is, by examining its structure, themes, and techniques and then it should be viewed from the outside, by considering how it interacts with its audience and how it influences the reader. This process requires deep and careful attention to the elements that make up the literary text and to how the text can be interpreted in various contexts. A number of authors who have employed such methods in their creation are often questioned and critiqued by scholars and literary critics, as this approach can create difficulties in determining the clear and straightforward message of a work. Such methods often lead to deep debates in cultural circles, where discussions try to determine how the messages of a work should be defined and how the “dark” or unknown elements of the text, often hidden or concealed behind symbolism, metaphors, and literary figures, should be interpreted. These “shadows” of the text often serve as a field for interpretations and speculations, requiring a more in-depth, multidimensional approach to uncover their potential meanings.

In this paper, we have followed the method of deciphering these hidden messages, which implies the use of a thorough analytical and interpretive approach to bring out the deep and complex meanings that a literary work may contain. This process of analysis has been supported by historical and cultural methods, which are essential for understanding the context in which a literary work was created and developed. Historical methods allow us to place the literary

works within a specific temporal and spatial context, examining the influences that the historical period and society have had on their formation. On the other hand, cultural methods help us understand how a literary work is connected to the traditions and cultural norms of its time and how it might reflect or challenge these structures.

Through these methods, this study aims to contribute to the deepening and expansion of the understanding of the literary work, providing a detailed analysis of its various aspects, from symbolism and themes to the historical and cultural connections that define it. This methodological approach is crucial for understanding the entirety of the work and for creating a fuller readability of the messages it conveys, as well as contributing to ongoing discussions and debates about the importance and role of literature in society.

4. The Sibylls and the Song of the Sibylls

The word “Sibyll” originates from Latin and was used in ancient times to describe a “virtuous and wise maiden.” This term had a broad meaning in the ancient world, referring to a group of ten prophetesses known among the Greeks and Romans. According to Vujaklija (1980, p. 837), this term was a distinctive feature of Greek and Roman cultures. The origin of the word comes from the Greek Sibylla, which is formed from two words: Siòbs, which refers to a form of ancient Hellenic art, and boulé, meaning “divine counsel” or “prophetic thought.” According to the Grand Larousse Encyclopédique (1960, vol. 8, p. 809), the Sibylls are mythological and mystical beings. According to Ovid, a Roman poet who lived during the reign of Augustus (March 20, 43 BC – 17/18 AD), the Sibylls lived for a thousand years and were responsible for guiding heroes to the underworld. After this period, they led them to the blessing of the Elysian Fields. In different cultures, the role of the Sibylls could vary. According to Klaić (1961, p. 1329), the Sibyll could also be understood as a “fortune-teller” a woman who predicted the future. This figurative meaning of the word was used to reflect the prophets who proclaimed the fate and future of people.

In Part One, Scale IV Lecture “The Life of the Ten Sibylls and Their Songs”, Bogdani presents the Sibylls as key figures embodying wisdom and prophecy. According to Bogdani (1990, p. 479), the Sibylls are counselors who serve to reveal divine secrets and mysteries, offering guidance to those who have experienced mercy. One of their most prominent functions is the foretelling of the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ – an idea deeply rooted in Christian tradition. Bogdani reinforces this when he writes: “The leaders of the apostles guide the comforted souls in heaven, singing and dancing among the virgins,” indicating that the songs they sing are poetic expressions of prophecy and announcements of Christ’s coming.

Bogdani’s poetic work has attracted broad scholarly attention and is generally divided into two main categories: Sibylline poetry and devotional poetry. The Sibylline section includes eleven songs, all thematically connected to religious and prophetic motifs. Although the first song is written in the Sibylline

style, it is in fact a translation from Greek. Bogdani himself acknowledges this, stating: “Some of their verses are those which the Greeks have produced” (Rugova, 1990), implying that some of these prophetic texts have foreign origins.

However, many scholars dispute the idea that these texts are merely translations. The poetic structure, the use of symbolic imagery, and the contemporary themes of Bogdani’s time addressed in them suggest that they are largely original compositions. Moreover, as Sedaj (1988, p. 18) observes, in the bilingual format of the work, the Italian column is often identical to the Albanian one when it comes to the Sibylline songs reinforcing the notion of an original creation in the Albanian language. Meanwhile, the accompanying columns in Italian or Latin do not contain word-for-word translations, but rather free translations that convey the same theological ideas, further emphasizing the originality and poetic autonomy of the Albanian version.

It is worth noting that, although the influence of foreign languages on Albanian has been extensively addressed in various studies, the influence of Albanian on other languages especially classical ones remains underappreciated and insufficiently researched in linguistic literature. In this light, Bogdani’s Sibylline poems stand not only as works of religious and literary value but also as important contributions to the development and affirmation of Albanian cultural expression within a broader European context.

However, there are many arguments that oppose this claim and support the idea that the aforementioned songs were created by Bogdani himself. This suggests that he made a unique contribution to enriching Albanian literature and cultural tradition by creating a distinct form of Sibylline poetry that is now part of the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Albanian people. Deeply influenced by the native language and tradition, the author approaches the Sibylline songs with a distinct creative sensitivity, adapting them in a way that interweaves the universal values of Christianity with the cultural reality of his own environment. Through careful stylization, the prophetic figures are presented naturally, in close connection with the image of the virtuous local woman, merging into a text that reflects the harmony between religious content and popular aesthetics.

This thematic and stylistic syncretism transforms the songs into more than just devotional poetry: they become expressions of a conscious effort to preserve and transmit identity values during a challenging historical period. Through a poetic language rich in symbols and melodies inspired by folklore, the artistic creation reaches the dimension of a work that speaks simultaneously to the soul and to collective memory. For this reason, these poems hold a special place in the spiritual and cultural heritage of the country. They represent a deliberate attempt to articulate an authentic voice through a literary form enriched with mythological, philosophical, and theological elements.

Therefore, these poetic texts should be regarded as a valuable treasure of cultural heritage, as they embody the effort to shape a distinct literary and spiritual identity through a rich symbolic language one that speaks not only to their own era but also to generations that followed. In them is reflected not only the spirit of

their time but also the will to give new voice to our culture beyond its geographical and ideological boundaries.

5. The Subject of the Songs of the Sibylls

In this cycle of songs and poems, Pjetër Bogdani presents the prophecies and narratives of the ten Sibylls, dedicating a separate composition to each one. Each song offers a unique narrative that explores a specific aspect of Christ's life and mission, conveyed through the interpretation of prophetic visions and mythological figures associated with the Sibylls. According to Bogdani (1990, p.475, I. IV.17.), each Sibyll carries a distinct message, reflecting a particular stage in the life of Christ and the salvation He brought to the world. In the poem of Cuma (Sibilla Kuma), Bogdani foretells the coming of Christ a transformative event marked by miracles and peace, heralding a new era for humanity. The poem of Libya (Sibilla Libia) describes the birth of Christ, a sacred moment that marks the beginning of His divine mission on Earth. The Delphic Sibyll (Sibilla Delfika) expresses lament over the crucifixion of Christ, portraying it as a painful act of sacrifice and boundless love for humankind.

The Persian Sibyll refers to Christ's preaching and miracles, emphasizing His role in proclaiming the Kingdom of God and redeeming the world from sin. Eritrea, for her part, utters a curse upon the sins of humanity, sins that led to Christ's suffering and sacrifice. Samia proclaims Christ's descent from the holy mountain, a symbol of divine mystery and sacred revelation, linked to the hope and salvation He would bring to mankind. A second reference to Cuma highlights the beauty of Christ a symbolic beauty that represents divine light and holiness. The Sibyll of Hellespont (Sibilla Hellespontica) speaks of Christ's mission through words and deeds, offering comfort and help to the faithful. In the song of Phrygia (Sibilla Frigjia), the focus is on Christ's suffering and passion, emphasizing the weight of His sacrifice on the cross. Finally, the poem of Tiburtina foretells Christ's second coming, His resurrection and glorious return to judge the righteous, establish justice, and bring peace. This message carries a profound sense of hope and certainty, reinforcing the promise of a renewed and redeemed world.

Taken together, these poems present a comprehensive portrayal of Christ's life from His birth and ministry to His crucifixion and resurrection. Through prefiguration, prophetic voices, and a blend of mythological and biblical imagery, Bogdani offers a profound meditation on Christian faith and the enduring significance of Christ's presence in human life.

6. The Originality of the Songs of the Sibylls

As emphasized earlier, if we were to rely solely on Bogdani's statement that "some of their poems are these, which have been translated from Greek," we might conclude that Bogdani's *Songs of the Sibylls* are mere translations and not original creations. However, as Rugova (1990, pp. 177/178) points out, Bogdani himself writes a pretext at the beginning of each poem of the Sibylls, and this

pretext can probably be considered a “hypotext.” This suggests that Bogdani sought to provide stronger support for the claims he would make in the Sibylls' reports in verse and primarily relied on Saint Augustine as a model for his writing. Despite the fact that Bogdani's poems might have been based on earlier creations or accounts, which constitute the “hypotext,” these (even when considering the poems written in Italian or Latin) are still original creations “hypertexts,” as Hamiti (1989) argues, because they form a new text. Rugova (1990) also emphasizes that Bogdani was inspired by the material available in Greek and the example of Virgil with the Sibyll of Cuma, but comparing this with the Italian and Latin translations, these poems emerge as new, powerful writings imbued with classical inspiration. Additionally, the fact that all the poems in Albanian are rhymed, while the translations only convey their meaning, is strong evidence that Bogdani wrote these poems first in Albanian. Therefore, as Elsie (1995) accurately points out, a well-known Canadian scholar, in Bogdani's work we encounter for the first time what can be considered as literary language (p. 47). For this reason, the critic concludes: “As a poetic whole, these poems are original works of Bogdani, inspired by Greek material” (ibid).

Hamiti (1989), after examining some of Father Harapi's statements and analyzing the relationship between hypotext and hypertext, concludes: “Harapi's correct characterization only marks the literary procedure of Bogdani's poetic hypertext for his poetic superstructures of the *Songs of the Sibylls* found in the work *Cuneus Prophetarum*. This shows that Bogdani's poetic texts are not mere translations from Greek, but rather superstructures he built upon them, initially from Greek and even earlier from Latin.” Here, a question may arise: If the source material of these poems is biblical, if the Sibylls predict or preach advice and teachings that are also biblical, and if other authors have also written about them, then where does Bogdani's authorship or originality lie in this context? According to Hamiti (1989) this originality can be explained through the concept of “dual authorship.” He distinguishes, on the one hand, the Sibyll's authorship, and on the other hand, Bogdani's authorship, which is directly linked to the role and position of Bogdani as a poet.

In terms of time span, construction style, and the function of meaning, the texts of the Sibylls are pre-Christian, while those of Bogdani are post-Christian, or more precisely, pro-Christian. However, when we consider the way Bogdani constructs the poetry, the poetic figures he uses, the topography he builds in some of the *Songs of the Sibylls*, and the issues of his time that he raises, we find convincing arguments that the *Songs of the Sibylls* are indeed original creations of Bogdani. According to the researcher Sedaj (1988, p. 18), even in the discussion text of the work, the Italian column is identical to the Albanian one, where the songs of the Sibylls appear in Albanian. Meanwhile, the other column in Italian or Latin does not reflect the identical text to the poem in Albanian, but often comes close to it, based on the ideas it conveys.

7. Strophic Forms and Rhyme of the Songs of the Sibylls

The Songs of the Sibylls, written by Bogdani, are composed in the form of eight-line stanzas with their traditional ABABABCC rhyme scheme. This rhyme scheme also appears in some songs that contain more than eight lines, although the stanzas are not always clearly separated.

While Budi's poetry was heavily influenced by popular poetry, using quatrain strophic forms and simple rhyme schemes, as well as common poetic figures, this cannot be said for Bogdani. He had a high intellectual formation and, in his poetic creation, followed modern models for the time, such as the regular eleven-syllable strophic forms and the rhyme schemes mentioned above. In this way, Bogdani created a poetic style that stood apart from that of popular poets, bringing a new and more refined dimension to Albanian literature of his time.

Clothed with the Sun and shod with the moon

With stars around her head crowned,
 The girl Mary, more beautiful than the fairy,
 The little boy Jesus she holds in her hands,
 Why do the Jews envy him, calling him a pagan,
 We remember, always speaking ill of him at the assembly,
 They began to firmly cast out that boy Jesus,
 Not allowing him any place to rest (Sibyll of Libia, second stanza).

Here we will not address poetics in its broader sense as the “science of literature” but we will focus on the poetics of Bogdani's Sibylls in the narrower sense of the term. According to the Fjalori i Gjuhës shqipe (2002, p. 1035), poetics refers to the use of artistic means and the stylistic features of a writer or literary movement. This means that we focus on the style and literary forms employed by a poet or writer, as well as the specific techniques that characterize and make their creativity unique. The very fact that Bogdani, in his major work *“The Band of Prophets”* writes several poems, proves that, apart from theological and biblical facts, and aside from the philosophical view of various aspects of life, he also wanted to express truths through poetry through, literary figures, as Saint Augustine said. In this sense, poetry becomes a powerful means of expressing ideas and teachings, using styles and structures known in the biblical tradition, but also displaying a particular literary mastery.

In addition to the figures and devices characteristic of biblical literature, Bogdani also uses figures and tropes with great skill, giving a deep and multifaceted dimension to his poetry. He uses stylistic figures and tropes to enrich and deepen the message, striving not only to provide a simple description of events but also a profound interpretation of life and spirituality. This careful and measured use of figures makes Bogdani's poetry a distinctive realization of biblical poetics and an example of stylized writing that is suited to the message he wishes to convey. Thus, the poetics of Bogdani's Sibylls is an excellent blend of biblical style and high literary elements he used to create poetry that is more than

just description. It serves as a medium for expressing deep thoughts and feelings, creating a literary richness that remains valuable even for modern readers. At the core of these figures and tropes that enrich Bogdani's poetry stands, above all, the "queen of tropes," as some have called it metaphor.

Let us begin by mentioning one of the poems that has amazed many researchers, some of whom would even consider it one of the most beautiful and anthological poems in our poetry and in medieval poetry in general. This assessment has been made based on the evaluation and interpretation of the Albanian text. This applies primarily to the verses that are filled with a semantic and rhythmic depth, which give the poem a unique beauty, while also including the most important aspects of Bogdani's poetic writing.

Clothed with the Sun and shod with the moon
With stars around her head, a crown tightly bound,
That girl Mary, more beautiful than a Fairy,
Holds the child Jesus firmly in her hands.

In the Song of the Sibyll of Libya, Bogdani provides us with a depiction of Saint Mary with Christ, where the child is "held firmly in her hands," a description of her beauty so profound that it surpasses the usual biblical descriptions "of the light and sparks that appeared at the birth of Christ," which we find everywhere in biblical texts. There can be no greater light, even figuratively, than having it all at once, as Bogdani presents it: both the Sun (clothed), the Moon (adorned), and the stars (as a crown). Additionally, it is important to note the pause in the epithet, which syntactically appears as either detached or possibly added, creating a comparison with the comparative degree of the adjective (more beautiful than a fairy), which almost leads to the shift in the final line of the verse: "*Holds the child Jesus firmly in her hands.*"

We say this because "The girl Mary holds the child firmly in her hands" could have been written as a single line, but it wouldn't carry the same artistic value as it does in the way it is presented here. Along with the rhythm and an admirable rhyme, we also encounter internal rhyme. Bogdani's poetry resembles ambrosia, which according to the Mythological Dictionary (1988, p. 30) refers to the food of the gods of Olympus, which, according to legend, was nine times sweeter than honey itself:

Clothed with the Sun...
With stars... adorned...

This is an irregular rhyme, yet it adds rhythmic value to the poem. The figure of the metaphor, as well as that of comparison, is used frequently and with great finesse, as seen in the following examples:

Isaiah says without opening the door,
The flower comes out, a boy from Jesus' roots,

Like the white lily in the spring,
Like the hyacinth that blooms in the earth itself... (*Sibyll of Cumae*).

In this poem of Bogdani's, we also encounter the phenomenon of transference, or the shifting of words or phrases, meaning situations where a word or phrase that should belong to one line is placed in the following line. This can sometimes be done for practical reasons (because the line must contain a certain number of syllables), but in Bogdani's case, this is done intentionally. In this way, the word or phrase, moved to the following line, gains special semantic and stylistic weight, and, on the other hand, the verses are more tightly connected with each other.

For example:

A miracle when the Wolf, the Sheep, and the Lamb
Tied together the Newborn Boy and the Dragon
Alone; without fear, without tears, no prayer, no lament (*Sibyll of Cumae*).

Or:

Sion, more then Pashtrik mountain by Prisrend
higher
e pray to you: for from you will come the law (...) (*Sibyll of Samia*).

Although rarely, in these songs of Bogdani, we also find some typical folk expressions or figures, such as:

The Sibyll of Jonia sings and writes,
The wind from the heavens burns wood and stones (...) (*Sibyll of Eritrea*).

Or:

When the blessed Christ was left dead in the grave,
The stone and wood broke, and the Church was divided (...) (*Sibyll of Frigia*).

According to Hamiti (2003, p. 59), in this context, the creative power is the movement and the intercommunications created by the clashes, separations and reunions of the four basic elements in a process. This applies to Bogdani's poetic text as a conclusion of an idea or as its representation. In the literary aspect, such an effect is sought by every poetic text...

8. Some remarks on the language of the Sibylls

In general, the prevailing opinion is that Pjetër Bogdani paid particular attention to the issue of the Albanian language, especially to its writing and cultivation. He expresses this concern clearly in the preface to his work *Çeta e Profetëve* (1990, p. 10), titled "*Te primite përpara letrarit*" (Introductory Notes for the Reader). In this introduction, Bogdani emphasizes that the Albanian people, although "in dark slavery, blinded with two layers of black mist on their

cheeks tyranny and ignorance have suffered due to the lack of knowledge and wisdom.” He argues that this reality necessitates the dissemination of knowledge and the development of the native language. Furthermore, he asserts that it is “a great and fruitful benefit to attain this level of wisdom: to write beautifully, to examine and to understand how one should conduct oneself throughout life... and not to allow the knowledge and the language of the land to *be forgotten...*”

*Without delving into the more complex aspects of historical phonetics and grammar, it is important to emphasize that in the work of Pjetër Bogdani, several notable linguistic developments can be observed in comparison to earlier authors of Albanian literature. The old consonant clusters *kl* and *gl*, which also appear in the writings of Gjon Buzuku, are presented in Bogdani’s work as *ki* and *gi* (corresponding to the sounds *kj* and *gj*). Similarly, the vowel cluster *uo*, present in the works of Buzuku and Budi, appears in a modified form in Bogdani’s texts (as well as in those of Frang Bardhi before him), reflecting a process of phonetic evolution that leads to the simplification of word structure and gradual stabilization. This transformation demonstrates an increasing awareness of the need to bring the written language closer to its spoken form, making it more suitable for broader and more inclusive communication.*

A distinctive feature of Bogdani's writings is undoubtedly the use of apostrophe, which appears as a unique virtue in all the writings of the period in which he lived and worked. This use of the apostrophe is not only a stylistic trait of his works but also an element that reflects the sensibility and cultural influences of the time. The use of this linguistic tool is present in a natural and intentional way, giving Bogdani's texts an emotional emphasis and a direct connection with the reader, typical of the period in which he created. As Omari (2015, p. 31) points out, the apostrophe in literary texts can bring different interpretations, being used to highlight the emotions, thoughts, and passions of the subjects being directly addressed. The use of the apostrophe can be entirely appropriate and functional, easily understood by the reader without requiring deep analysis to grasp its meaning. This stylistic feature of our author has been an important tool for revealing the emotional depth of his works and for creating a close connection with the audience of his time.

Therefore, the scholar Berisha (2005, p. 81) rightly emphasizes that: In the art of speech and in literature, the issue becomes increasingly complex because the literary text [...] communicates and has an aesthetic impact through language, that is, through messages that emerge from its unique linguistic structure. This means that language in literature is not just a tool for expressing ideas, but also a means of influencing and evoking emotions in the reader. The unique linguistic structure of a literary text creates a deep connection with the reader, allowing them to perceive not only the content but also the aesthetic, emotional, and philosophical dimensions that are often hidden behind the words. This makes language a powerful tool for affecting the reader’s perception and emotions, offering a more complex and richer experience.

9. Bogdani and the Literary Albanian Language

There is no doubt that Bogdani is the first Albanian writer to have consciously worked on the development of the Albanian literary language. As a distinguished intellectual, he understood that in order for the people to advance and overcome backwardness, a cultivated and refined language was essential. He was deeply passionate and fully committed to the advancement of the mother tongue, believing that knowledge should be acquired through the people's natural language. As the author himself stated, "To acquire knowledge, one must use their own language" (1990a). There is no doubt that Bogdani is the first Albanian writer to have consciously worked on the development of the Albanian literary language. As a distinguished intellectual, he understood that in order for the people to advance and overcome backwardness, a cultivated and refined language was essential. He was deeply passionate and fully committed to the advancement of the mother tongue, believing that knowledge should be acquired through the people's natural language. As the author himself stated, "To acquire knowledge, one must use their own language" (1990b). The importance of Pjetër Bogdani for the Albanian language lies in the enrichment of the vocabulary and in the ability to express abstract notions in Albanian (Biographisches Lexikon, p. 221)

In his efforts to improve the language, Pjetër Bogdani, whom Elsie (2010) describes as "the last and by far the most original writer of early Albanian literature" (p. 54), emphasized the systematic enrichment and refinement of Albanian. As he himself noted, Bogdani gathered a wide range of words and refined them with great care and dedication. He corrected terms that may have been misused and gave particular attention to ancient and forgotten words, which he referred to as "plaka e të harrueme" (old and forgotten words). Furthermore, he coined and employed a number of neologisms to meet the needs of the time, especially in the composition of his seminal work *Çeta e Profetëve* (The Band of Prophets). For example, among the action nouns he introduced are: *të kjanëtë* (to cry), *të bluemitë* (to grind), *të folëtë* (to speak), and *të njomëtë* (to wet). He also used numerous deverbal nouns formed with the suffix "-im," such as *bekim* (blessing), *lëngim* (suffering), *mallkim* (curse), and *shtërngim* (tightening).

Lambertz (1955, p. 4) highlights that Pjetër Bogdani, in his *Cuneus Prophetarum*, exemplifies an early form of standard literary Albanian. He skillfully combines common, archaic, and borrowed vocabulary, while also creating neologisms to articulate new ideas and convey significant religious and cultural concepts.

Beyond his meticulous linguistic work, Bogdani made a significant contribution to the evolution of literary Albanian by initiating the first attempt to distinguish and apply various functional styles of the language. As Kostallari (1995, p. 133) notes, in Bogdani's work we encounter, for the first time, an effort to categorize the functional styles of Albanian literary language. He employed a diversity of styles: narrative passages, explanatory sections, scientific writing, and artistic expression, among others. This marks a crucial step in the functional

expansion of Albanian, enabling the language to adapt to different contexts and enriching its expressive potential in literary and intellectual domains.

10. Conclusion

The conclusion of this text emphasizes the linguistic and cultural importance of the masterpiece *Çeta e Profetëve* by Bishop Pjetër Bogdani, which stands out for its originality and the use of two languages, Albanian and Italian. According to scholars Hamiti and Shala (2019, p.189), this work is one of the most important publications in Albanian literature, as it represents a major step forward in the development of the Albanian language, alongside other earlier works such as *Meshari* by Father Gjon Buzuku, the works of Lekë Matranga, Bishop Frang Bardhi, and Bishop Pjetër Budi. While these authors provided translations from Latin and Italian with some original additions, Bogdani's work is an authentic creation that encompasses theological, philosophical, historical, and scientific aspects.

However, this work goes beyond the theological domain, reaching universal fields of philosophy and poetic creativity. In this context, Bogdani holds an important place in Albanian literature, becoming a necessary pillar in the development of this literature. Albanian literature, without his influence, would be much poorer. Bogdani established new foundations for writing in Albanian, not only in the religious field but also in the artistic one, giving it a new and deeper dimension.

The language of Bogdani's work is unique, both artistic and rich with characteristics that improve and enrich the Albanian language. It is a prime example of the use of language as an artistic tool, leaving a profound impact on the history of Albanian writing. The originality and greatness of this work lie in the fact that it is not only a theological creation but also a treasure of the Albanian language and culture, having jealously preserved the tradition of writing and imparted a deep meaning to every word and sentence. Despite historical difficulties, this work has transcended time and kept the tradition of Albanian writing alive, crowning Bogdani not only as an author but also as an important leader in shaping Albanian literary identity. Bogdani was aware that his people needed a common language, and this was one of his most important contributions.

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