

# “IL DILUVIO DELLA INFEDELTÀ ORIENTALE” Islam in the view of the Old Albanian authors (16th-18th centuries)\*

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**Abstract** – This article examines the portrayal of Islam and the Muslims in the printed works and letters of the main Old Albanian authors from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These authors were exclusively Albanian Roman Catholic clergymen, educated in Italy (Loreto and Rome). As basis of this examination the following major Old Albanian texts have been evaluated: Gjon Buzuku (“Missal”, Venice 1555), Pjetër Budi (Dottrina Christiana, Rituale Romanum, Speculum Confessionis, all Rome 1618-1621), Frang Bardhi (Dictionarium, Rome 1635), Pjetër Bogdani (Cuneus Prophetarum, Padua 1685), and the anonymous Kuvendi i Arbënit (Rome 1706). In addition to these works the letters of Pjetër Budi, Frang Bardhi and Pjetër Bogdani written in Italian and/or Latin have been analyzed. This analysis is exclusively linguistically based. The interest is to find out how the Old Albanian authors describe the Muslims in their printed works and letters: what kind of argumentation strategies did they use? what terms did they use? is there a fixed formulaic wording?

**Keywords:** Old Albanian authors; Ottoman rule in Albania; Catholic faith; Islam; argumentation strategy.

## 1. Introduction

This contribution is not about the events of the Ottoman conquest of Albania and its various effects. Much research has been devoted to this subject already.<sup>1</sup> However, one of the well known effects of this geopolitical event was the arrival of Islam in the Albanian territories, which until then were either Catholic (in the north) or Orthodox (in the south).<sup>2</sup> Besides phases of forced Islamization, there are also many cases of voluntary change of religion,<sup>3</sup> especially in the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the nobility sought to preserve their position and privileges,<sup>4</sup> and others just wanted to escape the financial burdens like the poll tax (*cizye*).<sup>5</sup> Sometimes, this voluntary change to Islam was only superficial and led to the phenomenon of cryptoChristianity.<sup>6</sup> Finally, it is also a fact that the Catholic Church in the north of Albania was more oppressed by the Ottomans than the Orthodox

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. e.g. Stadtmüller 1955, Bartl 1968, pp. 15-36, Bartl 1995, pp. 40-91, Egro 2010, Schmitt 2012, pp. 54-73, Schmitt 2014, Schmitt 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g. Stadtmüller 1978, Bartl 1993, pp. 588-589, Bartl 2010a.

<sup>3</sup> This is a phenomenon which interests more the Catholic north of Albania than the Orthodox south. On the fate of the Orthodox Church during the Ottoman rule see e.g. Giakoumis 2010 (cf. also pp. 94-95 on the ‘hostile’ view of Orthodox authors on the Muslims), Schmitt 2012, pp. 101-107.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e.g. Bartl 2010a, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> See Egro 2010, p. 41. On the effects of the poll tax cf. also Bartl 2012, pp. 355-356.

<sup>6</sup> See Bartl 1967, Bartl 2012, pp. 357-359, Schmitt 2014, p. 258.

Church.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence of the Ottoman conquest one can find the following effects in practice:

- Loss of believers.
- Loss of clergymen.
- Low level of (not only theological) education among the remaining clergymen.<sup>8</sup>

All these effects are repeatedly documented in the numerous visitation reports (in Italian called *relazioni*) on the state of the Catholic Church in the Albanian territories.<sup>9</sup> From this large number of reports<sup>10</sup> the following statement by Frang Bardhi on the need of trained personnel is quite representative:

- letter, september 7, 1636<sup>11</sup>  
*...gran necessità d'operarij intelligenti in queste nostre parti d'Albania...* 'a great need for educated workers in our parts of Albania'

In fact, this structural weakness of the Catholic Church was among other reasons a factor that favored the Albanians' turn to Islam.<sup>12</sup> Overall, from the point of view of the Catholic Church, these effects were an essential threat and the Albanian territories became an area in urgent need of a mission to restore the Catholic faith.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Education of the clergymen

Therefore, what such a mission needed were well-trained clergymen,<sup>14</sup> well educated in fundamental Catholic doctrines and dogmas. In order to achieve this goal, and above all to bring the "right faith" to the Albanians, it was thus essential that the fundamentals of the Catholic faith had to be translated into Albanian. This important demand emerges several times in the letters of the various Catholic visitors and the Albanian Catholic clergymen to Rome, among others in a letter of Frang Bardhi from 1637:<sup>15</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. e.g. Bartl 2012, pp. 346-349, Schmitt 2014, p. 250.

<sup>8</sup> On the low educational level of Albanian clergymen see e.g. Bartl 2010b.

<sup>9</sup> The *relazioni* are amongst other letters edited in the various volumes published by the Albanian historian Injac Zamputi collecting documents regarding the history of Albania between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries; for a full bibliography of his monographs see the index in Zamputi 2015, p. 573. A specific edition of the visitation reports for the individual Albanian dioceses is made by Bartl since 2007 (4 volumes edited so far: Bartl 2007a, Bartl 2011, Bartl 2014, Bartl 2017).

<sup>10</sup> On how these visitation reports depict the situation in general see Bartl 2012.

<sup>11</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. e.g. Bartl 2010a, pp. 57-59, Bartl 2010b, p. 500, Schmitt 2014, pp. 253-254. This is already expressed by Pjetër Budi, letter, october 15, 1621 (see Zamputi 1989, p. 379): *...li quali popoli per esser stati di tanto tempo senza governo spirituale sono venuti in tanta semplicità, et ignoranza che giornalmente vanno mancando nella fede cattolica, applicandosi alcuni nella Scisma dei greci, et alcuni nel Mahometismo, ...* 'which people for having been for that long time without spiritual guidance have come in such simplicity, and ignorance that on a daily basis they fall from Catholic faith; some turn to the Schism of the Greeks, and some to Islam'.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also the presentation in Mirdita 1998, pp. 179-198.

<sup>14</sup> See Bartl 2010b, p. 501.

<sup>15</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 50.

- ...perche essendo d’Altra nation, per **mancamento della lingua** poco profito ne farà, ...  
‘...because, when being from an other nation, for lack of language he will gain only little profit...’

In fact, bringing the “right faith” to the Albanians in their Albanian mother tongue is the actual beginning of the Old Albanian literature, exclusively liturgical-theological literature written also exclusively by Albanian and in some instances Italian clergymen,<sup>16</sup> mostly with the professional support of the Propaganda Fide in Rome and its printing house, the Tipografia Polyglotta.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. Overview of the documents

In what follows, the focus is on how the authors of the Old Albanian literature judged and described Islam in their Albanian written works and their mostly Italian, in some cases also Latin written letters to their Roman authorities and superiors. Since these authors are Catholic clergymen, it goes without saying that this judgement has always been a negative one and that their point of view is, off course, biased.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the appearance of Islam in Albania was equated to a natural disaster, like in “il diluvio della infedeltà Orientale”, ‘the flood of the Oriental disbelief’ as Bogdani has expressed it in the introduction letter to his book *Cuneus Prophetarum*.<sup>19</sup> The following investigation will thus concentrate on the formal expression of these judgements made by the Old Albanian authors and will thus be conducted from a linguistic and stylistic point of view. How did the Old Albanian authors describe Islam and the Muslims, and what attributes and reasoning strategies did they use? Is there a common, maybe a fixed formulaic wording?

As the basis of this investigation (a) the major works of the Old Albanian literature written in Albanian and (b) the Italian and/or Latin letters of the Old Albanian authors (Pjetër Budi, Frang Bardhi and Pjetër Bogdani) have been evaluated:<sup>20</sup>

#### (a) Albanian works

Gjon Buzuku	“Missal”	1555	Venice? <sup>21</sup>
Pjetër Budi	Dottrina Christiana (DC) Rituale Romanum (RR) Speculum Confessionis (SC)	1618-21	Rome
Frang Bardhi	Dictionarium Latino-Epiroticum	1635	Rome
Pjetër Bogdani	Cuneus Prophetarum (CP)	1685	Padua

<sup>16</sup> On the Old Albanian literature see e.g. Elsie 1995, pp. 41-83, Bartl 2007b.

<sup>17</sup> On the important role of the Propaganda Fide in supporting these activities see Genesin, Matzinger 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. already Bartl 2012, p. 342 and pp. 365-366.

<sup>19</sup> The religious tract ‘Troop of Prophets’ of Pjetër Bogdani has the merit of being the first prose work written originally in Albanian. Whereas the first section of his book treats issues of the Old Testament, the second section is devoted mostly to the New Testament. In order to obtain the printing permission of the Propaganda Fide, Bogdani had to equip his Albanian text with an Italian translation. For more information see e.g. Elsie 1995, pp. 71-77. For the above mentioned quote see the edition of Omari 2005, p. IIIb.

<sup>20</sup> For reasons of space, only a selection of the particularly illustrative statements will be presented in this contribution.

<sup>21</sup> There is only one copy known and at its beginning there are missing several pages (see e.g. Elsie 1995, pp. 46-52). Anyway, various clues make it very likely that this one copy was printed in a print shop in Venice, see Nadin 2012, pp. 231-325.

“Kuvendi”<sup>22</sup> Concilium Provinciale sive Nationale Albanum 1706 Rome

(b) Italian/Latin letters

Pjetër Budi 1 letter, 1621  
Frang Bardhi letters, 1636-1641  
Pjetër Bogdani letters, 1657-1669

#### 4. *Banem turk* ‘becoming a Muslim’

This analysis will begin with the so-called “Missal” of Gjon Buzuku.<sup>23</sup> This work, the first printed Albanian book from 1555, stands apart from the other Old Albanian printed documents of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Unlike the publications of the following centuries, this book was not written for the Catholic mission in the Albanian territories but for an Albanian exile community, very probably in Venice.<sup>24</sup> But, already here the attitude of the Roman Catholic clergymen towards Islam is clearly expressed in folio 23:<sup>25</sup>

• *E kÿ anshtë i pari kuat : ai qi nukë jet fort ënbë fët të Krishtit por sã e vgjãn kun pak të keq asthë thotë vete **banem turk***<sup>26</sup>

‘And this is the first sin: the one who does not remain strong in believing in Christ, but, as soon as he finds only a little evil, says: I go and become a Muslim’<sup>27</sup>

The following lines, such as *...ti në beson ëmbë korbt se krakë*... ‘if you belief in a raven because it croaked’, reveal that Buzuku regards Islam just as a disbelief. According to this judgement, being Muslim is nothing but a sin. It is interesting though that this theological judgement

Islam = sin (because it is apostasy)

only appears here in Gjon Buzuku and is not taken up by the other Old Albanian authors.

#### 5. The meaning of *turk*

Before presenting more examples, a question of terminology has to be clarified. As the quote from Buzuku reveals, reference to the Muslims is always expressed with Albanian *turk*, or Italian *turco*. In fact, in the Old Albanian documents the Old Albanian word *turk*

<sup>22</sup> In 1703 the Catholic Church held a council in Mërqí, in the vicinity of Lezha, under the direction of the archbishop Vincentius Zmajevich to cope with the situation in Albania. The records of this council were published in Albanian and Latin by an anonymous. However, it is known that Francesco Maria da Lecce, the author of the first Albanian grammar, assisted in this publication (cf. e.g. Elsie 2010, p. 7).

<sup>23</sup> Although conventionally called “Missal” this unique book is in fact a liturgical-catechetical handbook for a Catholic priest to celebrate the Christian year (see in detail Matzinger 2016, pp. 40-41).

<sup>24</sup> Chances are that this Albanian exile community in Venice was connected with the church of San Giobbe in the district of Cannaregio; see the convincing arguments brought forward by Nadin 2012.

<sup>25</sup> See the edition by Ressuli 1958, p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> Albanian *banem turk* is the correspondence to the Italian expression *mi faccio turco* ‘I become a Muslim’.

<sup>27</sup> For an evaluation of this statement see already Matzinger 2012, pp. 273-274.

—and this holds true also for the Italian equivalent *turco*— has a twofold meaning.<sup>28</sup> In an ethno-political meaning it refers to the ethnic Turks or the Ottomans and their state and/or dominion. With respect to confession it is just the default term for ‘Muslim’ regardless of ethnic background. However, in various cases, the lexeme *turk/turco* has also a combined meaning, it stands for both the ethno-political and the confessional aspect. The Turks are the Muslims per se. Thus, when the Old Albanian authors report about the socio-political actions of the ‘Turks’ (ethnic Turks and Albanian Muslims), the confessional background (often) plays a role, and, as a matter of fact, when reports inform about the activities of the *turks/turchi* in the Albanian territories, in most cases Muslim Albanians are referred to.<sup>29</sup>

## 6. Creating an antagonism

Returning again to what has been said before, that Islam is denied being a religion but considered a disbelief, is the central argument in all of the documents of the Old Albanian authors from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The primary reasoning strategy is thus to build up the antagonism

Christianity = (right) belief : Islam = disbelief (superstitious disbelief)

However, in this view, not only Islam is a disbelief, but also the Orthodox faith as well as other religions, such as the Jewish faith are claimed to be kind of a disbelief followed by ‘infidels’, cf. e.g.:

- Pjetër Budi, SC 30.28-30<sup>30</sup>

*A mos kishnje thanë o mbesuom, se ende turqtë e të pāfētë mund jënë shelbuom nd atë të mprapët e të pā ndōnjë shpëresët zakon-të tynë* ‘Did you say or believe that the Muslims and the infidels can be saved by their backward and hopeless custom’

- Frang Bardhi, letter, september 7, 1636<sup>31</sup>

*...in queste nostre parti d’Albania per esser piene di Schismatici Greci et **Turchi infedeli**,...* ‘in our parts of Albania to be full of Schismatic Greeks and infidel Muslims’

- Pjetër Bogdani, CP 1.59.16<sup>32</sup>

*Kështu ende djālli, ka përziem, e bam nja me vetehë gjithë të pāfētë, të sijtë janë turitë, jevrejtë, heretiçitë, e të ndryshkunitë ndë mpkat* (Italian version: *così anche il Demonio hà unito à se, e quasi identificato con gl’Infedeli, che sono li Turchi, Ebrei, & Heretici, et Peccatori ostinati*) ‘this way also the Devil has joined to himself, and identified with all the infidels, who are the Muslims, Hebrews, Heretics, and obstinate sinners’

- Kuvendi 88.21<sup>33</sup>

*Pr’ata të pāfēte Turit, Heretiçit, Shqētë, Urumtë, e të skomunikuemit...* ‘for these infidels: Muslims, heretics, Slavic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, and the excommunicants...’

<sup>28</sup> See Masters 2009 and cf. already Genesin, Matzinger 2010. One has to keep in mind that *turk/turco* when used as a confessional term (‘Muslim’) has no implications regarding the ethnic background. *Turk/turco* is therefore also the usual term for Albanian Muslims which has sometimes caused confusion in the Western hemisphere (cf. e.g. Xhufi 2014).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Bartl 2012, p. 341.

<sup>30</sup> See Svane 1986, p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> See Omari 2005, p. 59.

<sup>33</sup> See Demiraj 2012, p. 225.

The fact that Islam is denied the status of a religion or even a religious community but is regarded as a disbelief finds its expression on the linguistic level by the use of the term ‘cult’, in Italian *setta*:

- Frang Bardhi, letter, september 7, 1636<sup>34</sup>

...*in queste nostre parti d’Albania per esser piene di Schismatici Greci et Turchi infedeli, quali sempre perseguitano, e cercano confonder i christiani per indurli alla falsa setta, et Schisma loro,...*

‘in our parts of Albania to be full of Schismatic Greeks and infidel Muslims, who always persecute and seek to confound the Christians to induce them to the false cult and their Schism...’

- Pjetër Bogdani, letter, july 28, 1667<sup>35</sup>

...*che intercede tra la nostra Santa fede et la setta Turchesca*;... ‘who intercedes between our holy faith and the Muslim cult’

- Kuvendi, Latin version, pars prima, caput II: De Apostatis<sup>36</sup>

...& alii quidem Moscheas, ut vocant, more patrio frequentant, caeterisque ritibus *Mahometicae sectae inhaerentes*... ‘and others who in fact according to their fathers’ custom visit the mosques, as they call them, and who adhere to the other rites of the Muslim cult’

As worshippers of a ‘cult’, the Muslims are therefore denied salvation from the theological point of view:

- Pjetër Budi, SC 30.28-30<sup>37</sup>

*A mos kishnje thanë o mbesuom, se ende turqtë e të pāfētë mund jënë shelbuom nd atë të mprapët e të pā ndōnjë shpëresët zakon-të tyne* ‘Did you say or believe that the Muslims and the infidels can be saved by their backward and hopeless custom’

- Frang Bardhi, letter, june 1637<sup>38</sup>

*credono che li Turchi e la setta Mahometana si salui*,... ‘they believe that the Muslims and the Muslim cult will get saved’

- Pjetër Bogdani, CP 2.162.30<sup>39</sup> (speaking of who goes to Limbo)

*Ma jo Turku, i silli adhëron Muhamednë, e ndonë të mos ban kurraj vepërë të keqe, të ban gjithë të mirët~e shekullit* (Italian version: *non già il Turco, quale adora il Muhametto, ancorche non facesse mai cosa cattiva al Mondo, anzi se facesse tutto il ben del Mondo*) ‘and not even the Muslim, who worships Mohammed, even if he never does a bad deed, if he does all the good in the world’

In connection with this view is also the opinion on Mohammed, who is not recognized as a prophet:

<sup>34</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> See Marquet 1997, p. 199.

<sup>36</sup> See Gashi 2003, p. 33.

<sup>37</sup> See Svane 1986, p. 30.

<sup>38</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 84.

<sup>39</sup> See Omari 2005, p. 162.

- Pjetër Bogdani, CP 1.55.4<sup>40</sup>

*Tue mos pasunë as ndonji këso gjashtë punësh Muhameti, për as ndonji mëndyrë mundetë e duhetë me i thanë profetë, si e mbanë Turitë;*... (Italian version: *Non havendo niuno di questi requisiti il Maumeto, per niun modo deve chiamarsi Profeta, come lo tengono li Turchi*) ‘Since Mohammed does not have any of these six requirements he can and must not be called a prophet in any way like the Muslims do’

Apart from this specific negative assessment of Islam, the Ottoman rule in general is seen and labelled by the Catholic clergymen as a form of tyranny. Being so, the Albanians find themselves under “the yoke of the Turks”.

- Pjetër Budi, letter, october 15, 1621<sup>41</sup>

*La Provincia dell’Albania ... dominata tutta da Turchi, et in certi luochi più bassi tiranneggiata più che mai...* ‘the Province of Albania ... entirely dominated by the Turks, and in some lower places more oppressed than ever’

- Frang Bardhi, letter, april 19, 1641<sup>42</sup>

*Descrizione, et informazione del stato del Vescouato et Chiese Parochiali della Diocese Sappatense soggette alla Tyrannia de Turchi,*... ‘description and information about the condition of the bishopric and the churches of the diocese of Sappada which is subjected to the tyranny of the Turks’

To achieve a stonger, more emotional effect, Frang Bardhi sometimes uses the stylistic figure “under the yoke of the Turks”:

- Frang Bardhi, letter, june 1638<sup>43</sup>

*...e si difendo senza uoler in eterno sottoporsi al iugo Turcico;*... ‘and they put up resistance not wishing to be forever subjected under the Turkish yoke’

- Frang Bardhi, letter, april 19, 1641<sup>44</sup>

*Vtraque sub intollerabili Turcarum iugo gemit* ‘both moan under the unbearable yoke of the Turks’

As a variant and/or attribute of the view as “tyranny”, the rule of the Turks is characterized as ‘cruel’:

- Frang Bardhi, letter, november 9, 1639<sup>45</sup>

*...ma molto più che per auanti si è fatto il Turco, o Mahometano incordo {sic} e crudele contro di noi poueri fedeli in modo che la sua Tyrannia s’è fatta insoportabile,*... ‘more than before the Muslim or Mohammedan got ravenous and cruel against us poor believers in such a way that their tyranny turned unbearable’

- Frang Bardhi, letter, april 19, 1641<sup>46</sup>

<sup>40</sup> See Omari 2005, p. 55.

<sup>41</sup> See Zamputi 1989, p. 379.

<sup>42</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 196.

<sup>43</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 154.

<sup>44</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 188.

<sup>45</sup> See Zamputi 2015, p. 217.

<sup>46</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 196.

...*nella Prouintia d'Albania sotto il crudelissimo Dominio del Turco*;... 'in the Province of Albania under the most cruel dominon of the Turks'

In most of the cases just mentioned, it is more appropriate to translate the term *turco* with 'Turk' referring to the more political aspects described in these letters. Nonetheless, the "Turkish yoke" not only had an impact on the political and social life of the Albanians, but also deeply affected the world of faith.

Also, the opinion that the Turks have brought "tyranny" to the Albanian territories makes them enemies of not only the Catholic faith, but in a more general sense, enemies of the (Catholic) Albanians.

• Frang Bardhi, letter, may 5, 1737<sup>47</sup>

...*Missionarij e tutti quanti si trouiamo in questa uita, ma lo passiamo con grandissima pouertà, in multis tribulationibus, et angustij dateci dalli Turchi inimici della fede*,... 'missionaries and everyone else, we find ourselves in this life [i.e. alive] but we spend it in great poverty, in many tribulations and sorrow given to us by the Muslims, the enemies of the faith'

• Pjetër Bogdani, CP 1.59.17<sup>48</sup>

...*e Turit, Anëmijtë tanë të pakorët, të sijtë kurraj nukë nginjënë me na bām keq, e me na pīm gjaknë tanë* 'and the Muslims, our arch-enemies, who never stop doing us harm and drinking our blood'

• Pjetër Bogdani, letter, december 6, 1670<sup>49</sup>

...*da un Turco di quelli cinque il più inimico della religione Catholica per essere stato prima scismatico, poi renegato*,... 'by one these five Muslims, the most hostile of the Catholic religion, who was a schismatic at first and then an apostate'

From the evidence so far, a clear reasoning strategy emerges regarding the description of the Muslims and the Ottoman rule in Albania. The central element is the above mentioned sharp antagonism between the "right Christian believers" and the "Muslim infidels". Their disbelief is finally the cause of many negative characteristics. In sociopolitical terms, they are considered tyrants, and from the theological point of view, they are unable to achieve salvation, cf.:

Catholic faith	:	Islam
= right belief		= disbelief
		—consequences→
		Muslims = infidels
		Turkish dominion = tyranny, cruel
		Turks~Muslims = enemies of Albanians and of the Catholic faith
= religion		= cult (paganism; heresy; superstition)
		—consequences→
		Muslims will not find salvation

<sup>47</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 62.

<sup>48</sup> See Omari 2005, p. 59.

<sup>49</sup> See Marquet 1997, p. 248.



## 7. The “negative qualities” of the Muslims

Subsequently, the Muslims (resp. the Turks) serve as a projection surface for a number of very negative qualities, which are stereotypically attributed to them by the Old Albanian authors. These qualities are considered nothing less than inherent and are seen as a natural consequence of the disbelief of the “infidel” Muslims. With regard to the description of these qualities, two reasoning strategies must be set apart. One strategy is to demonstrate the various negative characteristics of Muslims by using “concrete” examples. The other strategy is in fact way more negative and is intended to generally humiliate Muslims by comparing them to animals or natural disasters.

### 7.1. The “rich Muslims” and the “poor Albanians”

The consequences of the Ottoman conquest were clearly noticeable to the Albanians especially in the economic field. Very often, the visitation reports emphasize the financial burdens caused by the Ottoman conquest in general (first and foremost the poll tax) and underline the fact that the Albanians were also often subjected to arbitrary expropriation. One major intension attributed to the Muslims by the Old Albanian authors is therefore the enrichment at the expense of the Albanians; whilst Muslims become rich, the Albanians gradually impoverish. In contrast to the ‘greedy’ and ‘insatiable’ Muslims the Christians (i.e. Catholic Albanians) are thus described as being ‘(very) poor’, in Italian *poveri(ssimi)*:

- Frang Bardhi, letter, april 19, 1941<sup>50</sup>

*La crudelissima ingordigia di Turchi, li quali consumono li poueri e miseri christiani con tributi, decime, et alloggiamenti continui* ‘the very cruel greed of the Muslims, who exploit the poor and miserable Christians with tributes, tithes, and continuous accomodations’

- Frang Bardhi, letter, november 6, 1639<sup>51</sup>

*uengono i Turchi si nelle nostre case si dei nostri poueri christiani e mangiano, e beuono parte parte giornalmente per tutt’ il dì in sin à mezanote tutto per forza, ...* ‘the Muslims come to our houses and to the houses of the poor Christians and they eat and drink partly on a daily basis all day long till midnight, all by force’

- Pjetër Bogdani, letter, october, 1668<sup>52</sup>

*...afflioni d’ un pouero Prelato posto sotto gl’artigli della insatiabilità de Turchi,...* ‘the grief of a poor prelate who is under the claws of the greed of the Muslims’

- Kuvendi, 63.28<sup>53</sup>

*...kinëse mos të truenjë bijat Dreqit, tue i falë lakmije~së turqet,...* ‘so that they don’t hand over their daughters to the Devil, giving in to the greed of the Muslims’

In contrast to the poor Albanians, the Muslims are therefore immensely rich:

- Pjetër Budi, letter, october 15, 1621<sup>54</sup>

*...il paese, dove fra molte spoglie et prede che si troveranno in Albania di diversi ricchissimi Turchi ascenderà a parecchi milioni d’oro,...* ‘the country, where among

<sup>50</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 202.

<sup>51</sup> See Zamputi 2015, p. 221.

<sup>52</sup> See Marquet 1997, p. 209.

<sup>53</sup> See Demiraj 2012, p. 175.

<sup>54</sup> See Zamputi 1989, p. 386.

many spoils and prey that will be found in Albania of several very rich Muslims, he will rake in many millions of gold'

The desire for enrichment makes the Muslims and their authorities finally corrupt:

- Frang Bardhi, letter, april 19, 1941<sup>55</sup>

*Il Cadij cioè Giudice de **Turchi** ... et chi li fà più presenti illi facit meliorem iustitiam* 'the qadi, i.e. the judge of the Muslims ... and he whoever gives him the most gifts, to him he will do the better justice'

However, the 'greed' and 'craving' of the Muslims is not exclusively directed at material things, but also at human beings, because they rob Christian women to make them their wives:

- Frang Bardhi, letter, june, 1637<sup>56</sup>

*Li Turchi in Puucha, et in Sadrima hanno prese **le lor moglie christiane**, alcune l'hanno rapite...* 'the Muslims in Puka and in Zadrime have taken Christian women as their wives, some of them they have robbed'

Within this characterization of the qualities of the Muslims, two aspects are particularly marked. One concerns the attitude of Muslims to the political situation in Albania. Albania is their possession and they suspect anyone who aims to change this situation. Therefore, the Catholic clergymen are always observed with a critical eye, as they are suspected to plan appropriate actions.<sup>57</sup> The Muslims are thus always 'suspicious':

- Frang Bardhi, letter, may, 28, 1637<sup>58</sup>

*...uedendo 4 Vescouï assieme... essendo essi **Turchi gelosissimi** del lor stato* 'seeing gathered 4 bishops these Turks are very jealous of their state'

- Pjetër Bogdani, letter, 1653<sup>59</sup>

*...li **Turchi** sotto la finestra; ... non temiamo perché non diciamo cose che offenda il loro Dominio nel quale son **gelosissimi*** 'the Turks underneath the window ... we are not afraid, because we do not say things that offend their dominion of which they are very jealous'

Another aspect arises from the theological point of view, for the reason that the Muslims are 'infidels'. As such they are simply 'godless':

- Frang Bardhi, letter, april 27, 1640<sup>60</sup>

*...come lo uoleuano **l'impij Turchi** l'anno passato con pena capitale uietarla;...* 'as the godless Muslims wanted it last year, to forbid it under penalty of death'

<sup>55</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 212.

<sup>56</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 86.

<sup>57</sup> This suspicion is not unfounded. Catholic clergymen have repeatedly made attempts to take action against the Ottomans in organizing uprisings of the Albanians. Indeed, the author and bishop Pjetër Bogdani did not limit himself to pastoral care, but was —like Pjetër Budi at his own time— an active instigator of rebellions, making him an enemy of the Ottomans (see e.g. Elsie 1995, pp. 72-73, Bartl 2007b, p. 283, Bartl 2010, p. 64, and in general Bartl 2012, pp. 343-345).

<sup>58</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 64.

<sup>59</sup> See Marquet 1997, p. 55.

<sup>60</sup> See Zamputi 2015, p. 233.

- Frang Bardhi, letter, april 19, 1641<sup>61</sup>

...e mantener li fedeli christiani sotto **impietà Mahometana da 90. ani**... ‘and to keep the Christian believers under the Mohammedan impiety for 90 years’

This form of ‘impiety’ is assigned also to the way how the Muslims speak. Their language, i.e. the Turkish language, is also considered ‘impious’:<sup>62</sup>

- Kuvendi, Latin version, pars tertia, caput I: De Episcopis<sup>63</sup>

...ne nostro vitio **impiae Turcarum linguae** in injuriam se religionis obarment: ... ‘so that they do not revile our religion by our guilt in the godless Turkish language’

## 7.2. The “barbarian” topos and even worse

A stylistic increase of these negative qualities of the Muslims is finally achieved by denying their human dignity. In this opinion, Muslims are no longer human (‘civilized’) beings, they are simply barbarians, they are like natural disasters and as the ultimate form of humiliation, they are animals.

— ‘(uncivilized) barbarians’

- Bogdani, letter, october 19, 1666<sup>64</sup>

...delli continui travagli e temporali, che questa povera Provincia d’Albania patisce da **Barbari** ‘of these continuous troubles and tempests which the poor province of Albania suffers from the barbarians’

- Bogdani, letter, january 10, 1672<sup>65</sup>

...eccetuato **li Turchi Barbari veniali**... ‘except for the venal barbarian Muslims’

— ‘natural disaster’

- Frang Bardhi, letter, april 19, 1941<sup>66</sup>

*Il fiume Drino non men che il **Turco** imparte cagiona male alli Populi e campi di Sadrima*,... ‘the river Drin, which no less than the Muslims, harms the people and the fields of Zadrime’

- Pjetër Bogdani, letter, april 1, 1669<sup>67</sup>

...la mia povertà straordinariamente ingrandita dal terremoto di Ragusa, et altri infortunij qua tra **Turchi**... ‘my poverty got extraordinarily increased by the earthquake of Ragusa and other unfortunate events like the Turks’

— ‘animals’

- Pjetër Bogdani, letter, october 12, 1683<sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 200.

<sup>62</sup> As a matter of fact, Albanian —like the other Balkan languages— has loaned hundreds of Turkish loan words (cf. e.g. Matzinger 2016, pp. 45-48). Analyzing the Old Albanian documents it turns out that their number increases from century to century as a consequence of the inevitable Albanian-Turkish language contact.

<sup>63</sup> See Gashi 2003, p. 72.

<sup>64</sup> See Marquet 1997, p. 188.

<sup>65</sup> See Marquet 1997, p. 262.

<sup>66</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 206.

<sup>67</sup> See Marquet 1997, p. 224.

<sup>68</sup> See Marquet 1997, p. 423.

...sono indicibili le persecuzioni straordinarie di questo anno da queste **Idre**...  
‘unspeakable are the extraordinary persecutions by these snakes this year’

• Kuvendi, 83.7<sup>69</sup>

...gjith kishat ... të i mbanë mbërshelë përjashta me drÿ për punë të kusarëvet, **turqet e shtanzavet**,... ‘they shall close all churches to the outside with wood because of raiders, Muslims, and livestock’

And just like animals the Muslims have bad odor, they ‘stink’:

• Frang Bardhi, letter, april 19, 1641<sup>70</sup>

*Similiter suos filios Turcos uolunt baptizari non ut sint fideles, sed ad tollendum faetorem, quo **pueri Turcae male olent**, et ne rapiantur a Bestijs*,... ‘likewise, the Muslims want their children to be baptized not for making them believers but to take away the stench their kids smell with so that they will not get stolen by wild beasts’

## 8. The reasoning structure

The preceding examples show that the reasoning strategy is based on a culmination of negative qualities ascribed to the Muslims. Since Islam is not recognized as a religion, but only as a ‘cult’, the Muslims are thus regarded as ‘infidels’. As such, they are godless and let their negative qualities run wild: according to this stereotypical depiction Muslims are ‘greedy’, ‘suspicious’, ‘voracious’, ‘cruel’, ‘insatiable’, ‘corrupt’, and, what in the eyes of the Catholic clergymen is the worst, they are ‘godless’. With all these attributes, Muslims are virtually no longer regarded as human beings, they come close to a natural disaster and in a culmination of humiliation they are compared with animals which follow their savage nature.

## 9. How to express the antagonism

As a conclusive result, one can observe that the description of Islam and the Muslims in the Albanian documents and Italian/Latin letters of the Old Albanian authors follows a clear pattern of antagonism. Christianity, or more precisely, the Catholic faith as the only true religion in the natural view of the Catholic clergymen is opposed by Islam, which is by no ways recognized as an equivalent. In their view, Islam is regarded just as a ‘cult’, or as a ‘heresy’. By this logic, the Muslims are thus infidels. As such, they have all negative qualities and these qualities, evoked by the wrong belief are quite often specified by using the superlative degree:

*crudelissimi* ‘very cruel’

*nemicissimi* ‘very hostile’

*gelosissimi* ‘very jealous’

*ricchissimi* ‘very rich’ (opposed to the *poverissimi* ‘very poor’ Albanians).

<sup>69</sup> See Demiraj 2012, p. 215.

<sup>70</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 194.

Equipped with said negative qualities, the rule of the Turks resp. the Turkish and Albanian Muslims in Albania is only negatively assessed: it is a ‘tyranny’, a ‘yoke’ under which the Albanians were put. The Christian : Muslim antagonism is further extended in relation to the opposition between the Muslims and the Christian Catholic Albanians. The Albanians who remained faithful and refused Islam are described in the most positive way,<sup>71</sup> they are simply good powerful people:<sup>72</sup>

• Pjetër Budi, letter, october 15, 1621<sup>73</sup>

*Clementini ... **huomini valorosi, et gente rissoluta, che mai il Turco ha potuto dominarli ... cosi ancora li populi Cusi et Piperi ... pur **huomini valorosi, oltre molti altri Populi, ...***** ‘the Kelmendi ... valuable men and resolute people which the Turks never could subjugate ... like the people of Kuçi and Piperi ... simply valuable men, more than any other people’

• Frang Bardhi, letter, june, 1637<sup>74</sup>

*Son questa gente, e questi Populi Epiroti **indicibilmente fatigosi, armigeri, e belicosi, imperoche sopportano con facilità i freddi, i ghiacci, i caldi, la parçità nel uiuer, et tutti incomodi;**...* ‘it is this people, and these Epirotic tribes, indescribably hard, weaponed, and belligerent, because with ease they endure the cold, ice, the heat, a simple life, and all inconveniences’

## 10. Summary

In summary, it follows that the statements of the Old Albanian authors about Islam and the Muslims in their published works and in their letters totally correspond to the usual formulations and reasoning strategies in the Catholic visitation reports by other clergymen, be them Albanians or Italians or other nations. Many hundreds of documents of Catholic clergymen report about the situation in the Ottoman-ruled Albanian territories by giving an overall negative assessment of the Ottomans in general and the Muslims in particular. The documentation of the clergymen who are also the authors of the printed Old Albanian documents totally fits into these reports.

This holds true also on the linguistic level. A sharp antagonism of the general type ‘good’ (= Catholic faith, Christians) vs. ‘bad’ (= Islam, Muslims) is constructed. In terms of linguistic expression, this antagonism is realized in the following way: (a) by the use of negative attributes, many times in the superlative degree for a more intensive, if not even dramatic effect (see paragraph 9), and (b) the use of very specific terms and expressions or, as we may put it more precisely, the use of the usual stereotypes and common prejudices of the time.

The central attribute to characterize Muslims (and followers of other non-Christian religions) is ‘infidel(s)’ (Old Albanian (*i*) *pāfē*, Italian *infedele*),<sup>75</sup> since Islam (as well as

<sup>71</sup> However, this does not exclude that visitors also occasionally report about negative characteristics of the Albanians, see in detail Bartl 2013. But then again, their misbehavior is seen as a consequence of the lack of spiritual guidance caused by the Ottoman conquest.

<sup>72</sup> For the contemporary view of the Ottomans on the Albanians see e.g. Atsiz 1978.

<sup>73</sup> See Zamputi 1989, p. 379.

<sup>74</sup> See Zamputi 1965, p. 84.

<sup>75</sup> Besides (*i*) *pāfē* ‘infidel’ other designations for the Muslims appear like (*i*) *pëganë* ‘pagan’ (e.g. Bogdani, CP, 1.19.3) or (*i*) *neveritunë* ‘heretic’, cf. e.g. Bogdani, CP, 1.80.6 ...*e Jevrejtë e Turitë janë të vërtetë-të neveritunë të t’Shkruemit Shëjt, ...* (in the Italian version: *e li Hebrei, e Turchi sono Veri Heretici della Sacra Scrittura*) ‘and the Jews and the Muslims are true heretics according to the Holy Scriptures’.

Judaism) is not regarded as a religion but as a ‘cult’ and from a theological point of view as a ‘heresy’ or ‘apostasy’.<sup>76</sup>

The wording and argumentation strategies emerging from the documents of the Old Albanian authors is in fact pure contemporary Roman Catholic propaganda that is not in the slightest interested in a dialogue or even a serious dispute with Islam.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> It would be very interesting, off course, to examine the representation of the Muslims in the documents of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries of the other Balkan languages in order to obtain a broader synoptic representation. Cf. at least e.g. for 16<sup>th</sup> century Dubrovnik Albrecht 1966.

<sup>77</sup> From the vast literature on the Western (Christian) views on the Ottomans and Islam cf. e.g. Rostagno 1983, the collective volume of Blanks, Frassetto 1999, Soykut 2001, and Soykut 2013.

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