**THE LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION OF GENDER IDENTITY:
ALBANIA'S 'SWORN VIRGINS'**

CARLY DICKERSON

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE
STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN LINGUISTICS
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

August 2015

Abstract

This paper studies the linguistic tools employed in the construction of masculine identities by

burrneshat ('sworn virgins') in northern Albania: biological females who have become 'social

men'. Unlike other documented 'third genders' (Kulick 1999), *burrneshat* are not motivated by

considerations of personal identity or sexual desire, but rather by the need to fulfill patriarchal

roles within a traditional social code that views women as property. *Burrneshat* are thus seen as

honourable and self-sacrificing, are accepted as men in their community, and are treated

accordingly, except that they do not marry or engage in sexual relationships. Given these unique

circumstances, how do the *burrneshat* construct and express their identity linguistically, and how

do others within the community engage with this identity? Analysis of the choices of

grammatical gender in the speech of *burrneshat* and others in their communities indicates both

inter- and intra-speaker variation that is linked to gendered ideologies.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One – Introduction

The study of language and gender has provided valuable insight into the ways that individuals or groups of people can identify, or be identified, through their language use. Lakoff (1973)'s ground-breaking work on women's speech set the stage for further sociolinguistic research into the gendered practices of speakers. Although early work such as Lakoff's largely focused on a male-female dynamic, research has since expanded to studies of more nuanced gender differences and similarities, including the practices of transgender communities.

Within the field of sociolinguistics, the linguistic dimensions of transgenderism have typically been studied within qualitative frameworks, and have tended to focus on marginalized groups, such as the *hijras* (Hall and O'Donovan 1996), the *travestis* (Kulick 1997), and the *'yan daudu* (Gaudio 2014). These studies reveal that transgender individuals navigate, and often create, complex systems of gendered linguistic practices and gestures to assert unique identities that transcend traditional understandings of what it means to be male or female.

However, not only are there no quantitative studies of sociolinguistic variation in transgender speech generally, there is also a lack of research on transgender individuals who occupy prominent positions in mainstream society and are treated on par with their cisgender cohort. In this paper I address this gap in the literature by focusing on the linguistic aspects of the

construction of masculine identities by *burrneshat*[1]: biological females in Albania who have become 'social men'.

Unlike other "third genders" (Kulick 1999), *burrneshat* are motivated not by personal identity or sexual desire, but by the need to fulfill patriarchal roles within a traditional social code. Although they are accepted and treated as men in their community, *burrneshat* do not marry or engage in sexual relationships, and are thus seen as honourable and self-sacrificing (Young, 2000).

For centuries, a practice of women swearing to live their lives as men has existed in traditional northern Albanian society. Known as "sworn virgins" in English and *burrneshat* in Albanian, these individuals must give up their lives as females, promising to never marry and remain virgins for life. In return, they take on masculine social roles, and are treated as men by members of their communities. This new masculine identity affords them privileges reserved only for men, such as the right to own property, carry a weapon, drink, smoke, and travel unchaperoned. Such freedom allows *burrneshat* to earn a living and provide for their families. (Tarifa, 2007; Šarčević, 2004; Young and Rice, 2012; Elsie, 2012).

---

[1] Literally "men-women" in Albanian. Often used in alternation with *vajza të betuara* ("sworn girls") (Young, 2000). The word has the following grammatical forms, depending on number and definiteness:

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
INDEFINITE	*burrneshë*	*burrnesha*
DEFINITE	*burrnesha*	*burrneshat*

To avoid ambiguity between *burrnesha* (def., sing.) and *burrnesha* (indef., pl.), this paper will use *burrneshë* as the singular form and *burrneshat* as the plural form.

Scholars and journalists alike have long commented upon the unwaveringly masculine presentation and behaviour of *burrneshat*. In 1909, English traveller and writer Edith Durham wrote of her encounters with "sworn virgins" in the northern Albanian highlands. Of one *burrneshë*, she writes: "she had always worn male garb. She had a house and a good deal of land. I asked if the men ate with her. He slapped his thigh and said: 'Of course! she has breeches on just like mine and a revolver.'" (63). The book *Women Who Become Men: Albanian Sworn Virgins* (2000), by anthropologist Antonia Young, provides an in-depth account of *burrneshat* and the role that dress plays in earning them the same rights and respect as men.

Under these circumstances, how do *burrneshat* construct and express their identity linguistically, and how do others engage with this identity? Do *burrneshat* follow the linguistic construction of masculinity of biological males, or do they set themselves apart through the use of both male and female linguistic practices? Beyond anecdotal descriptions of deep voices and straightforward conversational styles, a linguistic analysis of *burrneshat* speech is entirely missing in the literature. In particular, there is no research on the ways in which speakers navigate a binary-gendered grammatical system when referring to *burrneshat*.

Situated within a culture that embraces women becoming men, this study sheds light onto the linguistic practices used by a community in the co-construction of gender. Previous research indicates that transgender people do strategically employ both masculine and feminine grammatical forms in self-reference, and that this usage is often subversive. For example, Bershtling (2014) describes the formative role that Hebrew's system of grammatical gender can play in gender identity:

I argue that alongside the limits of a language shaped by a restrictive system of gender, the same linguistic rules can help genderqueer individuals to accomplish their identity. Namely, Hebrew's clear discernment between the sexes can be liberating—despite the fact that Hebrew does not include genderqueer identities in the realm of its morphology, it serves as an arena for various subversive practices and performances of identity. (1)

But what if there is no mainstream or oppressive culture to subvert? What, if any, social or linguistic factors will constrain grammatical gender use? Furthermore, how do others write and talk about *burrneshat*? Are *burrneshat* perceived as occupying positions within or beyond a binary gender system?

The present project examines the effects of social and linguistic factors on variation in the use of grammatical gender in the speech of *burrneshat* and others in their communities, based on Albanian-language media articles and conversations recorded in 2014 during fieldwork in Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodra, and surroundings areas. Analysis reveals that choices in the grammatical gender used to refer to *burrneshat* are linked to linguistic context as well as the speaker's relationship to them and the expression of particular traits (such as pride or strength). The study begins with a literature review, divided into two chapters: an overview of Albania and the Albanian language, and a review of the literature on language and gender, particularly as it relates to the relationship between language and transgenderism. The following chapter explains the collection of data and the selection of informants. Discussion of analysis procedures and results is divided into two chapters: a quantitative analysis of grammatical gender usage and an analysis of discursive and extra-linguistic gendered practices. A Conclusion chapter summarizes

the findings of the present research and, given its context and limitations, suggests directions for future study.

Chapter Two – Albanian People and Language

2.0 Introduction

A knowledge of the Albanian people and their language is fundamental to understanding the sociocultural context in which the present research is situated. This chapter beings with a (brief) history of Albania, followed by a description of the Albanian language. Special emphasis is placed on grammatical gender and the various forms it may take in Albanian. The chapter concludes with examples of situations in which gender-marking is or is not required in Albanian.

2.1 History of Albania

2.1.1 Geographical Location

Albania is a southeastern European country located in the Balkan Peninsula. It is bordered by Greece to the south, Macedonia to the east, Kosovo (formerly part of Serbia) to the northeast, and Montenegro to the northwest. To the west are the Ionian and Adriatic Seas, separating Albania from Italy (see Figure 2.1). Albania, with its present-day political borders, has been a country since 1912, when it declared independence form the Ottoman Empire (Hall, 1994).

However, as illustrated in Figure 2.1, the presence of ethnic Albanians and Albanian culture in the region extends beyond such geopolitical borders. Kosovo's population is overwhelmingly Albanian. Albanians make up significant ethnic minorities in the border countries of Montenegro, Macedonia, and Greece (*Arvanitika* in Greek), and Italy also has historical

Albanian communities, primarily in the south, that are known as the *Arbëresh* (Hall, 1994; Perta 2004).

Figure 2.1. Albanians in neighbouring countries

Modified version of "Albanians Outside Albania" by Scooter20 in English Wikipedia. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AlbaniansOutsideAlbania.png#mediaviewer/File:AlbaniansOutsideAlbania.png

2.1.2. Illyrian Roots

Descendants of the ancient Illyrians, Albanians have a long history of foreign occupation. Hall (1994) provides a succinct timeline, illustrating Albania's journey as a nation throughout a millennium of successive occupations. The Illyrians flourished in the 5th through 3rd centuries

BC, but by 9 AD had fallen under Roman rule. At this point in history, the Illyrians began to become known as *Arbërs*[2], hence the modern-day Albanians.

2.1.3 A History of Occupations

Albania was subsequently under control of the Byzantine Empire and various Slavic tribes, particularly Serbian rulers. During the first half of the 15th century AD, Albanians managed to resist Ottoman occupation, led by national hero Gjergj Kastrioti (also known as Skanderbeg). For over twenty years, Skanderbeg's army held out against the Turks, but after his death in 1468, the Turks were successful in gaining control over the Albanian peoples. The Ottoman Empire continued to rule Albania for the next five centuries until the Balkan Wars of 1910-1913 led to Albania's declaration of independence in 1912.

Albanian culture, like many others in the Balkans, was inevitably influenced by Turkish customs and traditions. The most obvious and lasting legacy of the Ottoman Empire in Albania is Islam. Prior to the Turkish invasion, the vast majority of Albanians were Christian – Orthodox or Roman Catholic, depending on the occupational history of their region. However, by the 20th century, roughly seventy percent of Albanians had converted to Islam (Mardell, 2008). Conversion was a strategic tool used by the Ottomans to maintain control over its subjects. Hall (1994) notes that the Turks offered many liberties and financial incentives to those willing to adopt Islam. In particular, the Ottoman Empire appointed locals to regional positions of power (given the title of *beg* [< Turkish *bey*]), essentially dismantling a united Albania into separate

---

[2] Byzantine name for a region of Illyria between Shkodra Lake and the Drin River in northern Albania (Sotirović, 2013).

administrative units. This strategy was effective, in part, because it allowed Albanians to maintain their cultural and linguistic identity while nonetheless enforcing political allegiance to the Ottoman Empire.

2.1.4 Northern Albania

Despite the Turks' extensive and thorough domination in the Balkans, certain Albanian enclaves, particularly in the northern highlands, resisted conversion to Islam and submission to Ottoman governance (Elsie, 2012). Instead, local chieftains maintained power, and the communities continued to operate according to their own laws, customs, and Catholic religion. The success of these communities in resisting the Turks was largely due to their extreme geographic isolation. Albania's northern highlands are an extension of the Alps. The region is characterized by rugged terrain, high elevations, winding rivers, and meters-high winter snowfalls (Durham, 1909). Even in the 21st century, travel to many of the remote mountain villages is feasible only in off-road vehicles, and it remains nearly impossible during the winter months.

2.1.5 Brief Period of Independence and Modern-Day Borders

After gaining independence in 1912, Albania fell back into the hands of occupiers during World War II when the Italians invaded and declared control over "Greater Albania," which included Kosovo. The Germans took over occupation in 1943 until the end of the war, when the international community established the present-day borders of Albania, and Kosovo was placed within the Serbian territory of the former Yugoslavia.

2.1.6 Communist Albania

Enver Hoxha took power in 1944 as the head of Albania's communist regime. Hoxha remained in power as dictator until his death in 1985. In the years following his death, communist control over Albania weakened, and was ultimately abandoned in 1991. During the nearly half century of communism, Hoxha's Albania was ideologically aligned with a series of communist philosophies. The People's Republic of Albania had close ties first with Tito's Yugoslavia, then with Stalin's Soviet Union, and finally with Mao's China (Hall, 1994). When relations eventually broke down with China in the 1970s, Albania became one of the most isolated countries in the world, rejecting virtually all outside aid and influence (Saxon, 1985; Jarvis, 2000).

2.1.7 Post-Communist Present-Day Albania

Albanians rejected communism in the early 1990s, and a fledgling democracy was born. However, the transition to capitalism and democratically elected leadership has been rocky, and even today the country struggles with high levels of corruption, unemployment, and poverty (World Bank, 2014).

2.2 Albanian language

Albanian (called *shqip* in its own language) occupies its own branch in the Indo-European language family. Although not uncontested, the general consensus among scholars is that Albanian has Thraco-Illyrian roots (Lloshi, 1999; U.S. Defense Language Institute, 1966). There

are two major varieties of Albanian that exist along a dialectal continuum: Gheg[3] (*gegërishte*) and

Tosk (*toskëristhe*). Sub-varieties of Gheg are primarily spoken in northern Albania, as well as in

Kosovo, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Sub-varieties of Tosk are spoken in central and southern

Albania (south of the Shkumbin River), as well as in Italy and Greece (Friedman, 2004; 2005).

Figure 2.2 illustrates the geographical distribution of Gheg and Tosk in the Balkans.

Figure 2.2. Distribution of Albanian dialects
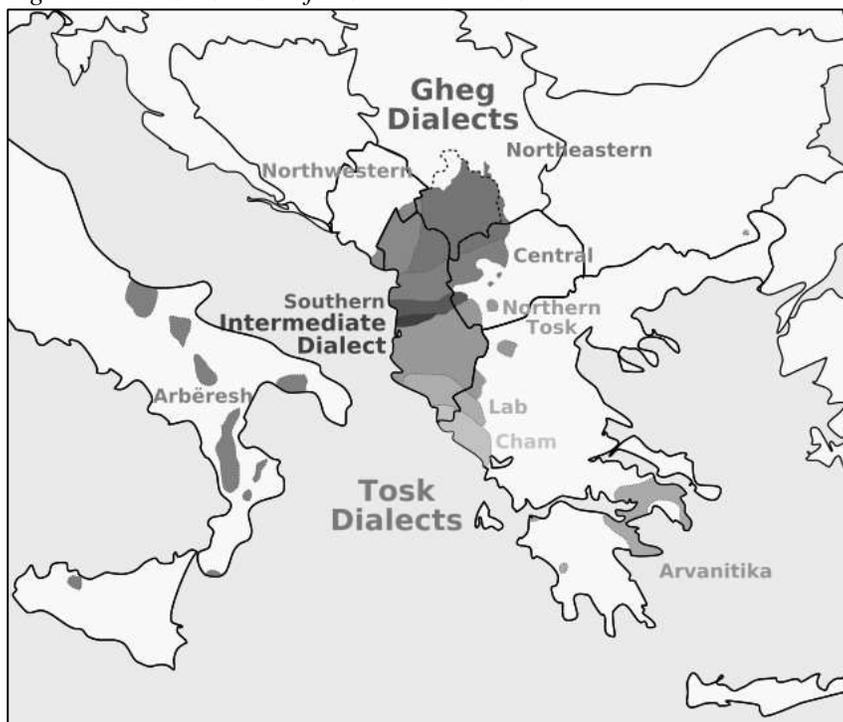
Platon (2012).

2.2.1 Balkan *Sprachbund*

Campbell (2006) offers the following definition of a *Sprachbund* (German: "language group"):

> A *Sprachbund* shows at least two common traits which extend to least three languages not belonging to the
>
> same family, excluding genetically determined origin or unilateral influence in the range of definition of
>
> the *Sprachbund*. Key elements are geographical neighbouring languages, not just a single family, several
>
> shared traits (phonological, morphological or syntactic) because of mutual influence; at least two common
>
> traits which extend to at least three languages not belonging to the same family. (5)

Although Albanian has no close language relatives, it is part of the Balkan *Sprachbund*. Geographical proximity, combined with a history of frequent cultural and economic trade throughout the region, has resulted in shared linguistic features (such as stressed schwa and no infinitive verb form) with other, unrelated, languages (including Romanian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Greek, Turkish, Macedonian, Bulgarian, and Romani) (Friedman, 2006).

2.2.2 Standard Albanian

Byron (1976) details the creation of Standard Albanian, which was only officially standardized in Albania in 1967. Prior to standardization, speakers in northern Albania used Gheg, and speakers in southern Albania used Tosk. These two dialects exist on a continuum; therefore speakers in central Albania spoke a mixture of Gheg and Tosk. Following standardization, and under the influence of Communism, younger generations were encouraged to use standardized phonology, morphosyntactic structures, and orthography. Many local dialectal features are thus no longer in use in the speech of Albanians born during and after Communism. However,

12

generations born before Communism still retain much of the traditional dialectal features (Byron, 1976: 70). Furthermore, Byron notes that despite official standardization, there are still significant regional differences in pronunciation.

Standard Albanian is mostly derived from northern Tosk, but it does have some influence from Gheg varieties, particularly with regard to some morphological structures (Byron, 1976; Klippenstein, 2010). It consists of thirty consonants and seven vowels. Figure 2.3 and Table 2.1 summarize the phonemic inventory of Standard Albanian.

Figure 2.3. Albanian vowels.[4]
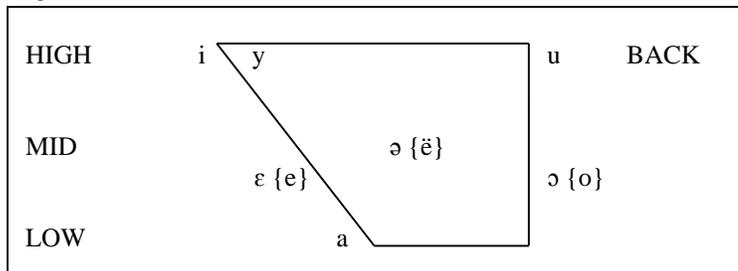
Table 2.1. Albanian consonants.[5]

	Labial		Coronal					
	Bi-labial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p, b			t, d			k, g	
Nasal	m			n		ɲ{nj}	ŋ{ng}	
Fricative		f, v	θ{th}, ð{dh}	s, z	ʃ{sh}, ʒ{zh}			h
Affricate				ts{c}, dz{x}	tʃ{ç}, dʒ{xh}	cç{q}, ɟʝ{gj}		
Trill				r{rr}				
Flap				ɾ{r}				
Approx.				l, ɫ{ll}		j		

---

[4] When the IPA symbol differs from the orthography, the orthographic symbol is provided in brackets {}.
[5] When the IPA symbol differs from the orthography, the orthographic symbol is provided in brackets {}.

2.2.3 Gheg

Gheg differs from Standard Albanian (and therefore from Tosk) in a variety of ways. Mëniku (2008) notes that the primary differences are phonological, although there are some significant morphosyntactic differences as well. The following defining features and examples are adapted from Mëniku's "Gheg Albanian Reader" (2008).

a. The Gheg vowel system maintains nasality as well as a length distinction. Tosk does exhibit contrasting vowel length, but Standard Albanian maintains neither.

b. The Standard sounds /va/ and /vaj/ are /vo/ and /voj/ in Gheg, and Standard Albanian's /ua/ is /ue/ or /u:/ in Gheg:

> *vajza* ('the girl')   /voj/za
>
> *varfër* ('poor')   /vo/rfër
>
> *grua* ('the woman')   gr/u:/ or gr/ue/
>
> *shkruaj* ('I write')   shkr/u:/ or shkr/ue/

c. Standard Albanian's /h/ changes to /f/ in Gheg (mostly in end position):

> *ftohtë* ('cold')   /ftoft/[6]
>
> *ngrohtë* ('warm')   /ngroft/

---

[6] The unstressed schwa, *ë*, is often deleted in speech, particularly in word-final position. This deletion is cross-dialectal and occurs in Standard Albanian as well. See Trommer (2013).

d. Some Standard consonant clusters are reduced in Gheg (/mb/, /nd/, /ngj/):

mbaroj ('I end') /maroj/

ndihma ('the help') /nihma/

ngjyej ('I dye') /njyej/

e. Standard Albanian and Tosk have rhotacized intervocalic nasal consonants that Gheg preserves:

vera ('the wine') /vena/

gjëra ('things') /gjëna/

f. Standard Albanian, like fellow languages in the Balkan *Sprachbund*, does not have a "true" infinitive form. Rather, the word *do* ('will') plus a form of the subjunctive is employed. Gheg, however, has an infinitive that is formed by combining *me* ('with') and the past participle of the verb:

STANDARD FUTURE CONSTRUCTION	GHEG FUTURE CONSTRUCTION
do të flas ('I will speak')	*kam me fol*[7]
WILL + speak-1S-SUBJUNCTIVE	HAVE-1S + speak-PAST PARTICIPLE
do të flasësh ('you will speak')	*ke me fol*
WILL + speak-2S-SUBJUNCTIVE	HAVE-2S + speak-PAST PARTICIPLE

---

[7] Gheg form of past participle. Standard form is *folur*. Most regular past participles in Albanian end in *–ur*. However, in Gheg this ending is often deleted.

do të flasë ('he/she will speak')	*ka me fol*
WILL + speak-3S-SUBJUNCTIVE	HAVE-3S + speak-PAST PARTICIPLE
do të flasim ('we will speak')	*kemi me fol*
WILL + speak-1PL-SUBJUNCTIVE	HAVE-1PL + speak-PAST PARTICIPLE
do të flasni ('you all will speak')	*keni me fol*
WILL + speak-2PL-SUBJUNCTIVE	HAVE-2PL + speak-PAST PARTICIPLE
do të flasin ('they will speak')	*kanë me fol*
WILL + speak-3PL-SUBJUNCTIVE	HAVE-3PL + speak-PAST PARTICIPLE

g. Northern Gheg dialects lack the distinction between the post-alveolar and palatal consonants /ç-q/ and /xh-gj/. Therefore, the word *qaj* ('I cry') is pronounced as *çaj* ('tea').

Gheg is commonly portrayed in the literature as the more conservative of the two varieties (Lloshi, 1999). This understanding may be based, in part, on the fact that "in the plains and mountain basins to the south of the Shkumbin river, Tosks have been consistently more susceptible to foreign, especially Greek and Italian, influences" (Hall, 1996: 28). However, Friedman (2005) asserts that the characterization of Tosk as the innovative variety of Albanian and Gheg as the 'original' variety is misguided. He concedes that although it is "a commonplace that Geg is the less 'Balkanized' of the two dialects […] [a] closer look at the details of Geg dialectology, however, reveals a more complex picture of areal features and contact-induced phenomena" (33). Not only are traditional linguistic features preserved to different extents in Gheg, but there are cases in which Gheg displays innovations that some Tosk dialects have not

adopted. Such nuances are due to factors beyond the simple "North/South division" and include "center/periphery and urban/rural contrasts" (40).

2.3 Grammatical Gender

As Corbett (2006) explains, grammatical gender can be understood as an agreement class:

> The noun inventory is divided into different kinds, or genders, according to the different agreements they take. […] If two nouns differ in their agreements when factors such as case and number are held constant, then they belong to two different agreement classes and normally they will belong to two different genders. (749-750)

Although in most Indo-European languages, grammatical gender coincides with male and female sex (often referred to as "natural" gender (Corbeill, 2008)), such a relationship is not necessary for linguistic gender systems. Indeed, "sex may be irrelevant, as in the Algonquian languages, where the distinction is between animate and inanimate" (Corbett, 2006: 749).

Furthermore, even in gender systems with a male-female contrast, most gender assignment of nouns seems semantically arbitrary (Kilarski and Krynicki, 2005). Consider, for example, that the sun is masculine in Spanish (*el sol*), feminine in German (*die Sonne*), and neuter in Russian (*солнца*) (Phillips and Boroditsky, 2003). According to Kilarski (2007), grammatical gender "has been described as a 'luxury', a category which is largely redundant or non-functional with respect to its role in grammar and human communication, especially in comparison with other

grammatical categories such as number or tense, and in view of its supposed non-universal character" (2).

2.3.1 Grammatical Gender in Albanian

Albanian has a grammatical gender system typical of Indo-European languages. Nouns are either masculine or feminine, with only a few nouns displaying traces of the neuter.[8] Kurani and Muho (2011) note that for nouns referring to people, "the gender is closely related to natural gender (sex). [However, when referring to] things and ideas sex has no connection with the lexical meaning of the word" (34).

The Albanian pronominal system distinguishes between first, second, and third person, as well as between singular and plural. Only the third person has a gender distinction (Çamaj, 1984). Tables 2.2 and 2.3 illustrate the forms that pronouns may take in various cases as personal pronouns or demonstratives, respectively.

Table 2.2. Albanian personal pronouns and clitics by grammatical person, number, and case. The strong form of pronoun appears on the left; the weak form (clitic) appears to the right.

	1st S.	2nd S.	3rd M., S.	3rd F., S.	1st Pl.	2nd Pl.	3rd M., Pl.	3rd F., Pl.
NOM.	unë	ti	ai	ajo	ne	ju	ata	ato
ACC.	mua~më	ty~të	atë~e	atë~e	ne~na	ju~ju	ata~i	ato~i
DAT.	mua~më	ty~të	atij~i	asaj;~i	neve~na	juve~ju	atyre~u	atyre~u
GEN.			i,e atij	i,e asaj			i,e atyre	i,e atyre
ABL.	meje	teje	atij	asaj	nesh	jush		atyre

Adapted from 'Appendix 5: Personal pronouns and clitics' in *Colloquial Albanian* (Mëniku and Campos, 2012).

---

[8] Historically, Albanian had a neuter gender, but it has since been almost entirely replaced by either the masculine or the feminine gender. Typically, formerly neuter nouns are treated as masculine when singular, and feminine when plural. Such nouns are sometimes referred to as "ambigeneric" in the literature (Joseph et al, 2014; Kurani and Muho, 2011).

Table 2.3. Albanian demonstrative pronouns and pronominal adjectives. The forms on the left indicate "near the speaker" (*this* and *these*); the forms on the right indicate "distant from the speaker" (*that* and *those*).

	3rd M., S.	3rd F., S.	3rd M., Pl.	3rd F., Pl.
NOM.	ky; ai	kjo; ajo	këta; ata	këto; ato
ACC.	këtë; atë	këtë; atë	këta; ata	këto; ato
DAT.	këtij; atij	kësaj; asaj	këtyre; atyre	këtyre; atyre
GEN.	i,e këtij; i,e atij	i,e kësaj; i,e asaj	i,e këtyre; i,e atyre	i, e këtyre; i,e atyre
ABL.	këtij; atij	kësaj; asaj	këtyre; atyre	këtyre; atyre

Adapted from 'Appendix 6: Demonstrative pronouns and adjectives' in *Colloquial Albanian* (Mëniku and Campos, 2012).

As Albanian does not have a third person, generic neuter (i.e. 'it' in English), it uses the feminine forms *ajo* or *kjo* (Lloshi, 1999). However, pronouns are frequently omitted altogether, particularly in spoken Albanian. As in many other null-subject languages, pronouns are optional due to an inflectionally rich morphological system. Therefore, it is often unnecessary to overtly specify the grammatical gender of a subject of a verb (Çamaj, 1984).

It is, however, quite regularly the case that grammatical gender must be indicated in the use of adjectives, which follow the noun. Albanian adjectives can be classed as either 'Class 1' or 'Class 2'[9]. As shown in Example 2.1 below, Class 1 adjectives behave like adjectives in Spanish and other Romance languages; they agree with the head noun in gender and number, and mark this agreement with an appropriate suffix (Çamaj, 1984; Campos, 2009).

---

[9] Joseph et al (2014) refer to these as 'unarticulated' and 'articulated', respectively.

Example 2.1. Class 1 adjectives punëtor *('hard-working') and* shqiptar *('Albanian') in the nominative, definite.*

a. djali punëtor-Ø   'the hardworking boy'

b. vajza punëtore   'the hardworking girl'

c. djemtë shqiptarë[10]   'the Albanian boys'

d. vajzat shqiptare   'the Albanian girls'

Class 2 adjectives, on the other hand, require a *nyje*[11] particle. *Nyje* particles agree with gender, number, case, and definiteness (but not with person). The adjectives generally show the same form in the singular and masculine plural, whereas the feminine plural has a different ending (see Example 2.2). However, as in Example 2.3, there are many irregular adjectives (Joseph et al, 2014).

Example 2.2. Class 2 adjective bukur *('good-looking', 'beautiful', 'handsome') in the nominative, indefinite.*

a. djalë i bukur   'good-looking boy'

b. vajzë e bukur   'good-looking girl'

c. djem të bukur   'good-looking boys'

d. vajza të bukura   'good-looking girls'

---

[10] "There is actually a bit of variation to how the masculine plural forms of unarticulated adjectives are formed. The example above represents the most common case, but some masculine plural adjectives have the same form as the masculine singular, some are formed via the suffixation of –nj (Newmark et al., 1982, states that all adjectives of Turkish origin have this ending), and most adjectives derived from nouns have the same plural ending that the corresponding noun has" ('Lesson 1: Tosk', Joseph et al, 2014)

[11] There is incredible inconsistency in the terminology across the literature. *Nyje* literally means 'knot' or 'connecting link' in English (Newmark, 1999). *Nyje* particles are alternatively referred to as 'adjectival articles' or 'linking articles', among other terms.

Example 2.3. Class 2 adjective keq *('bad') in the nominative, definite.*

a. libri i keq   'the bad book (m.)'

b. makina e keqe   'the bad car (f.)'

c. librat e këqij   'the bad books (m.)'

d. makinat e këqija   'the bad cars (f.)'

Campos (2009) organizes the *nyje* particles according to case, number, gender, and definiteness

(Table 2.4):

Table 2.4. Nyje *particles.*

	Singular				Plural	
	MASC		FEM		MASC/FEM	
	[-def]	[+def]	[-def]	[+def]	[-def]	[+def]
NOM	i	i	e	e	të	e
ACC	të	e	të	e	të	e
DAT	të	të	të	së	të	të
GEN	të	të	të	së	të	të
ABL	të	të	të	së	të	të

Adapted from 'Adjective Articles' (Campos, 2009: 1011)

Thus, Albanian provides numerous grammatical environments for gender marking. For example,

a statement of one's nationality, occupation, or current mood indexes gender:

Example 2.4.

a. jeni amerikane   '(you all) are American (f.)'

b. jam shofer-Ø   '(I) am a driver (m.)'

    c.   jam e lumtur sot   '(I) am happy (f.) today'

    d.   është i mërzitur sot   '(he) is upset (m.) today'

However, Albanian's pro-drop nature allows for gender ambiguity in environments that a language like English would require an overt marking of gender:

Example 2.5.

    a.   është nga Franca   '(he/she/it) is from France'

    b.   jeton në Tiranë   '(he/she) lives in Tirana'

    c.   punon shumë   '(he/she) works a lot'

2.4 Conclusion

Albania, despite its extensive history of foreign occupiers, has nevertheless retained a unique language and culture. Nowhere is traditional culture more preserved than in Albania's northern regions, where the people have long resisted outside influence. This geographical isolation is evident in language as well: Gheg Albanian possesses a true infinitive verb form that no longer exists elsewhere in the Balkans. Certain phonological features have also resisted change, such as intervocalic nasal consonants. This chapter has also described Albanian's system of grammatical gender, including the role of *nyje* particles in gender-marking. While in many ways Albanian requires more overt gender-marking than a language such as English, as a pro-drop language it can also avoid marking gender where English would require it. The following chapter examines the ways in which grammatical gender and linguistic practices interact with the social phenomenon of gender identity, i.e. one's identity as male, female, both male and female, or neither male nor female.

Chapter 3 – Language and Gender

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter provided some background on Albanian culture and language. In particular, the chapter explained Albanian's system of grammatical gender. In this chapter, the discussion turns to a different notion of gender, one that is neither biological nor linguistic. Rather, as the first part of this chapter will make clear, gender in this chapter refers to societal understandings of gender identity, and the ways in which cultures establish gender categories. The second part of this chapter delves into the phenomenon of *burrneshat* and the traits that set them apart from other transgender people.

3.1 Gender Identity

3.1.1 Predominant Theories

Šarčević (2004) notes that despite the general trend among sociologists to reject simple biological determinism[12] and accept "an analytical difference between sex, as a biological, and gender as a cultural category" (142), the debate between essentialists and constructionists is still ongoing. An essentialist approach to the study of gender identity holds that gender is also inherent in one's biology. On the other hand, the constructionist approach maintains that gender is learned behaviour based on cultural depictions of masculinity and femininity. Such a view is put forward by Goffman (1977). This interpretation of gender as a social construct is a fairly

---

[12] "This is the general name for theories which hold that the roots of human social behavior and personality lie in the biology of individuals and groups (racial or ethnic) and thus determine fundamental aspects of social life" (Allen, 1984).

widely accepted and understood concept in the field of gender and language studies (Lakoff, 1973; Keenan, 1974; Inoue 2007; Coupland, 2007).

The vast majority of humans are born with chromosomes and genitalia that are either male or female, and are therefore designated biological males or biological females[13]. However, social constructionists argue that one's biological sex does not dictate one's social gender. Rather, the society in which one is raised imposes its ideals of masculinity and femininity onto the individual. Societies treat people with male genitalia as boys and men, and people with female genitalia as girls and women. Different expectations and rules are placed onto the two genders, essentially teaching children from a very early age that boys act one way, and girls act another way. These ideas are so firmly instilled in a society that its members inevitably conflate gender identity with biological sex. In the event that an individual does not conform to the prescribed gender behaviours associated with the individual's sex, it can be quite problematic for other members of society, who will struggle to reconcile the discrepancy.

3.1.2 Cultures with Non-Binary Gender

Not all cultures subscribe to the strict gender binary of male and female, however. For example, multiple indigenous cultures of North America have a third gender category, referred to in English as 'two-spirit'. "In many tribes, a child with a predisposition to engage in the activities of the other gender, and to associate with its members, was progressively socialized and dressed as a member of that gender. In some tribes, males became ['two-spirit'] as a result of their vision

---

[13] In a review of medical literature dating back to 1955, Blackless et al (2000) note that the frequency of intersex births is nearly 2% of all live births, with intersexuality being defined as "deviation from the ideal male or female" (152).

quest in early adolescence." Additionally, some "parents who failed to produce a son selected a daughter to be 'like a man' and to hunt for them in later years" (Goulet, 1996: 685).

The Indian subcontinent's *hijras* are another example of a gender category besides male and female. Hall and O'Donovan (1996) write:

> Discussed variously in the anthropological literature as 'transvestites', 'eunuchs', 'hermaphrodites', and even 'a third gender', most of India's *hijras* were raised as boys before taking up residence in one of the many *hijra* communities which exist in almost every region of India. […] Indeed, the *hijras'* livelihood is contingent upon their inextricable position in the social structure; according to tradition, they are expected to sing and dance at births and weddings, where they are rewarded with gifts of clothes, jewellery and money. (228)

However, the authors also acknowledge that the daily reality of *hijras* is far from this romanticized narrative of an almost "mythical" third sex. Modern *hijras* must contend with "familial rejection, cultural isolation and societal neglect," and tell of feeling "'deficiently' masculine and 'incompletely' feminine. Instead of occupying a position outside the female-male binary, the *hijras* have created an existence within it, one that is constrained by rigidly entrenched cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity" (229).

Gaudio's (2014) study of Nigerian *'yan daudu* also explores a group of people who do not fit neatly into either male or female gender categories. *Yan daudu* are "men in the predominantly Muslim, Hausa-speaking region of northern Nigeria who are said to act 'like women.' As self-consciously feminine subjects who retain their male social identities, *'yan daudu* sometimes

participate in affective, sexual, and economic relationships with men who are conventionally masculine" (170). Not unlike *hijras*, *'yan daudu* are often "vilified" by society. However, they nonetheless "live and work openly in virtually every city and town in northern Nigeria, where they are well known for doing the 'women's work' of cooking and selling meals in marketplaces, motorparks, and other commercial areas" (173). In fact, Gaudio observes that, ironically, the income earned by performing "women's work" allows men to "fulfill their social obligations as men; most marry women and father children, while also supporting younger *'yan daudu* and other kinfolk" (173).

Kulick (1997) and Borba and Ostermann (2007) examine the identity and gender performance of Brazilian *travestis*. They "are biologically male individuals who use a myriad of *techniques du corps* (Mauss 1996) to accomplish physical features culturally associated with women" (Borba and Ostermann, 2007: 133). As sex-workers, *travestis* seek to make themselves sexually attractive to men by dressing and behaving in typically female ways. Although they do not undergo sex reassignment surgery, a number of *travestis* do make use of hormone treatments and silicone injections. Kulick (1997) emphasizes that "Gender, in this particular elaboration, is grounded not so much in sex (like it is, for example, in modern northern European and North American cultures) as it is grounded in sexuality. […] Gender in Latin America should be seen not as consisting of men and women, but rather of men and not-men, the latter being a category into which both biological females and males who enjoy anal penetration are culturally situated," thus providing "a conceptual framework that they can draw on in order to understand and organize their own and others' desires, bodies, affective and physical relations, and social roles" (575).

As the above examples illustrate, numerous cultures through the world are host to communities that defy typical understandings of gender and sexuality. In many of these cultures, the transgender communities must find ways to operate within the mainstream gender binary, leading lives that are both true to their personal experience of gender and the expectations of others. Indeed, these individuals often occupy special societal roles that cannot be performed by other men or women. This "outsider" status has led many scholars to refer to them as a "third sex" or "third gender".

3.2 Language and Gender

With the establishment of the field of sociolinguistics, the subfield of language and gender studies has flourished as well. Although linguists differ in theoretical approaches, it is well-understood that language and gender are constantly interacting to reinforce or create social identities. Not only does language reflect society's understanding of gender, social norms and beliefs can also have a substantial impact on language use.

3.2.1 Early Theories and Criticisms

Lakoff (1973) proposed that "women's speech" could be characterised by a number of linguistic devices, including hedging, apologies, extreme politeness, speaking less, tag questions, indirectness, grammatical hypercorrection, tone, "empty adjectives", and avoidance of coarse language. Coates (2004) writes that the "significance [of Lakoff's work] cannot be underestimated, as it galvanised linguistics all over the world into research into the uncharted territory of women's talk" (4). However, Lakoff's work is also criticised as adhering to a dated

"deficit" approach to gendered speech. The "deficit" approach views the speech of one gender as deficient when held up to the standards of the other gender's speech. Critics of Lakoff (1973) object to the presentation of "women's speech" as deficient in comparison to "men's speech".

3.2.2 Responses to the Deficit Approach

Other perspectives have since been offered, namely the "dominance", "difference", and "dynamic" approaches. The "dominance" approach examines language differences in light of male dominance and the subordination of women in society (Spender, 1980; West and Zimmerman, 1983). Tannen (1991) is prime example of the "difference" approach in which men and women are understood to belong to equal, yet different, subcultures. Tannen argues that this difference in cultural backgrounds is what so often leads to instances of "miscommunication" between men and women.

The "dynamic" approach, also known as the "social constructionist" approach, is the perspective that is most commonly adhered to today. The approach argues that gender is socially constructed, and as such cannot be taken as a "'given' social category" (Coates, 2004:6). West and Zimmerman (1987) famously introduce the notion of "doing gender":

> "We contend that the 'doing' of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production. Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'. […] Rather than as a property of individuals, we conceive of gender as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society." (126)

3.2.3 Performing Gender through Language

Hall and O'Donovan's work with *hijra* communities in India reveals the importance of language in "doing gender". Although *hijras* do not seek to cross from one gender norm to the other, they are nonetheless constrained by the same gender dichotomy, and must find a way to exist within it. Hall and O'Donovan state that "It may be liberating to believe in the possibility of an alternative gender which is not limited by societal expectations, but even the *hijra* must create self-identity by resisting and subverting a very real and oppressive gender dichotomy - a dichotomy that becomes very apparent in the *hijras'* own use of feminine- and masculine-marked speech" (1996: 229). As the article points out, most *hijras* are born and raised first as boys, and therefore must learn to perform a new gender identity. When they enter the *hijra* community, it is as if they are learning a second language or dialect. Fluency in the new dialect is a necessity for social and economic success.

This second dialect is comprised of more than a different set of gestures and pitch ranges, although these certainly play a large role in gender performance. "Constrained by a linguistic system which allows for only two [grammatical] genders, Hindi-speaking *hijras*, when uttering phrases that are self-referential, must gender themselves as either feminine or masculine. Their use of language reflects a lifestyle that is constantly self-defining as they study, imitate and parody binary constructions of gender in an effort to gender themselves" (Hall and O'Donovan, 1996: 230). Unlike previous researchers, Hall and O'Donovan's analysis of *hijras* found that alternation between feminine and masculine linguistic forms was not "indiscriminate" (229) or lacking any "apparent reason" (230). Instead, "Critically aware of the cultural meaning attributed to their own use of feminine as opposed to masculine markers, the *hijras* 'code-switch' between

[grammatical] genders in their daily interactions in order to express relations of solidarity and power" (231).

Phillips and Boroditsky (2003) address the constraints of grammatical gender on nearly every aspect of speech: "speakers of languages with grammatical gender must mark gender almost every time they utter a noun (hundreds or thousands of times a day)" (229). Bershtling's (2014) work on the speech of genderqueer individuals in Hebrew also acknowledges the inevitability of grammatical gender entering into one's speech. She writes that a "final linguistic practice designed to maneuver between Hebrew's gender restrictions was the use of impersonal or 'neutral' language. Most participants used this practice, which avoided personal pronouns and thereby indicated neither feminine nor masculine subjectivity" (18). However, although "gender-neutral language indeed reduced the necessity to choose between feminine and masculine and somewhat loosened the shackles of Hebrew", participants noted that "it was impossible to avoid gender marking for long periods of time" (20). Gaudio (2014) reaches a similar conclusion: "Yet while simplistic binarisms are patently inadequate for describing social facts, binaries are a pervasive and arguably inevitable feature of human discourse" (2). Furthermore, "the practice of naming and treating animate bodies as female or male is not simply a reflection of the natural world but a contestable discursive process" (6-7).

Bershtling (2014) adds, however, that "in spite of the numerous drawbacks in Hebrew's gender system, which subjects its genderqueer speakers to a sole dichotomous reality, it also allots them a certain advantage over their Finnish-, Hungarian- or English-speaking counterparts. Hebrew's gender dichotomy actually expands [their] ability to play with linguistic resources in denoting

their gender and aids them in leading change and undermining the decisive status of sex (or the categorization of bodies) in ascribing gender (or identities)" (4-5). Borba and Ostermann (2007) also find that the grammatical gender binary in Portuguese allows for the creation of "complex, multilayered identities" (135) in the speech of *travestis*. With more than one gender at their disposal, *travestis* can use grammatical devices to their advantage in various discursive contexts. For example, analysis revealed that *travestis* opt for masculine forms when describing themselves within family relationships, narrating events that occurred prior to body transformations, reporting third party speech about *travestis*, and establishing a contrast between the speaker and another *travesti* with whom the speaker does not wish to align (136-137).

3.3 *Burrneshat* ('Sworn Virgins')

3.3.1 The *Kanun*

For centuries, the people of Albania's northern highlands have lived according to *Kanun* law, in particular the law of the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini. The *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit* is a traditional code of law dictating nearly every aspect of daily life. Maintained through oral tradition for centuries, it was finally preserved in writing by a Franciscan monk, Shtjefën Gjeçovin, at the turn of the 20th century (Elsie, 2012). Historically, Albanians, particularly those in the north, lived in tribes or clans (*fis*) comprised of members of an extended family. A *fis* was in turn made up of numerous households, known as *shtëpi* (often shortened to *shpi*). Members of the same *fis* are said to be connected by blood (*gjak*). Blood relationships are patrilineal; matrilineal relationships are said to be of milk (*tamël*[14]). So strong is the focus on shared blood, that even paternal

---

[14] Gheg dialect term for "milk". In Standard Albanian, the word is *qumësht*.

cousins, many times removed, would be appalled by the idea of marriage to each other

(Sørensen, 2009).[15]

Although the region was largely Catholic, the law of *Kanun* applied to – and was obeyed by – all

Albanians, regardless of their Christian or Muslim background. Indeed, many scholars have

observed that the primary religion of northern Albanians is the Code, and religion is secondary.

In the words of Godart (1922), "*c'est la religion albanaise, c'est la religion du peuple*" (75). In

the event of a discrepancy between Catholic or Muslim laws and the *Kanun*, the latter almost

always took precedence (Young, 2000; Tarifa, 2008).

Despite the fact that scholars have been increasingly studying the *Kanun* for its important

contributions to Albanian society (see Kadare, 1990; Whitaker, 1968; Tarifa, 2008), it

nonetheless is a code of law that requires swift, and often harsh, punishment. Central to the

Kanun is the concept of *besa*. Roughly translated as "honour", *besa* is the guiding principle

behind every action and decision in the region. *Besa* encompasses the ideals of fairness, giving

one's word, respect, and unyielding hospitality. An affront to *besa* is a serious offense according

to the *Kanun*.

Although the *Kanun* has a detailed system of assigning punishments appropriate to the crime,

serious crimes (such as murder, adultery, or extreme disrespect) were generally resolved by a

policy of "blood for blood", or a blood feud (*gjakmarrja*). Any male member of the offender's *fis*

---

[15] However, matrilineal familial relationships are not viewed in the same light. Marriage between first cousins – on the mother's side – is not traditionally viewed as problematic (Sørensen, 2009).

was a possible target of revenge. Blood feuds, once started, could last for centuries, and resulted in the deaths of thousands of Albanian males (Young, 2000; Kuntz, 2014).

Because two clans could fall "into blood" at any time, every *fis* in the region had a *kulla* (fortified stone tower) in which all males would remain until the feud was resolved. For some families, a feud would last several decades, effectively imprisoning multiple generations of an entire family. Such a situation was economically crippling, as women in this patriarchal society were considered property by the *Kanun*. As such, women and girls lacked the social freedoms necessary to support their families. Travel, weapons, finances, and decision-making powers were beyond the scope of what was allowed to women (Young, 2000).

3.3.2 Assuming a Male Identity

Faced with such dire circumstances, some women opted to take on a male identity in order to care for their family, a choice that was in fact upheld by the *Kanun* (Zherka, 2011). Additionally, some families would choose to raise a daughter as a son, in the absence of an appropriate male heir. Another factor that could influence a woman's decision to live as a male was avoidance of an undesired arranged marriage. According to the *Kanun*, the only way that a woman could avoid marriage and yet maintain her family's *besa* was in the act of swearing virginity and living as a man for the rest of her life (Elsie, 2012; Young, 2000).

This phenomenon of *burrneshat*, often referred to as "sworn virgins" in the English-language literature[16], is almost exclusive to northern Albania and neighbouring areas in Kosovo and Montenegro. According to Antonia Young, an English anthropologist who has conducted extensive research on the subject, *burrneshat* are "honorary men, surviving mostly in the remote areas of northern Albanian, within the context of Albanian culture and society generally. [...] It is the economic factor which is crucial to the need for certain women in this patriarchal society to take a man's role in order to head an otherwise maleless family. Furthermore these women, as men, are prepared to take up arms if necessary in order to contribute to the control by which family honour is maintained: the bloodfeud" (Young, 2000:4-5).

3.3.3 A Matter of Gender, not Sexuality

Burrneshat, as well as the academics who study them, are quick to deny a connection between homosexuality and becoming a *burrneshë*. In the rural culture of the Albanian north, "love and marriage existed apart from each other" (Backer, 1979: 303). Young (2008) adds, "sex is such a minor part of life, that in the society of the very traditional, rural areas, it's not something that [*burrneshat*] themselves can imagine". Journalist Michael Paterniti writes of his interaction with Haki, a *burrneshë*, who vehemently denies the role of sexuality in the decision to take the oath:

---

[16] A variety of terms are employed for *burrneshat* throughout the literature. According to Tarifa (2007:88), "[t]here are a host of terms for the phenomenon in most Balkan languages: *muzana, muskobani, muskobanj,* or *ostajnica* (man-woman, manlike, she who stays) in Serbian; *tobelija* (bound by a vow) in Bosnian; *tombelija, basa,* or *harambasa* in Montenegro; *zavjetovana djevojka* in Croatian; *tybeli* in Kosovar Albanian. In the northern dialect of Albanian the 'sworn virgins' were usually called *virgjinesha* (virgins, or committed to virginity). Whereas Rene Gremaux refers to them as 'Balkan virgins,' Edith Durham used the term 'Albanian virgins.' Most generally American and British anthropologists and sociologists have used either the term 'sworn virgin' or 'avowed virgin.' Among the Muslims in northern Albania and Kosovo a 'sworn virgin' was usually called a 'sadik,' a word of Turkish origin, which means 'just,' or 'honest.'"

Other journalists had visited Haki in the past, sometimes asking questions that he viewed as impertinent. A number had wanted to know if he was really just a lesbian in disguise—and this had triggered a deep hurt. "It breaks my heart that anyone would ask such questions," he said, picking a tobacco leaf from the tip of his tongue. "I hate to be used. God has given me what I am, and I've made do. Being lesbian—this isn't even what being a *burrnesha* is about. Don't confuse who I am with being a lesbian," he said, "or I'll kick you in the shins." (Paterniti, March 2014, 'The Mountains Where Women Live as Men' in *GQ*)

3.3.4 *Burrneshat* – a Third Sex?

Burrneshat are often referred to in the foreign literature as an example of the existence of a transgender culture in Europe (see Dickemann, 1997; Cronn-Mills, 2014). However, Albanians, and scholars with in-depth knowledge of *burrneshat* are not so quick to label them as such (Young, 2000; Tarifa, 2007). Instead, not only do *burrneshat* operate firmly within the boundaries of the gender binary, but their existence indeed reinforces the notion of male-female gender polarity: *Burrneshat* "are taking on a lifelong change. Furthermore, this change is in no way seen as deviant within their society; it is not the result of some psychological or physiological difference, but as a status within an orderly pattern of statuses. […] To become a 'sworn virgin' is a dramatic illustration of the sociological concept of 'putting on a role', rather than an occasion on which some inner self is permitted to 'come out', by pushing aside certain socio-cultural conventions" (Young, 2000: 113).

The Albanian notion of gender maintains two opposing categories – male and female – that do not allow for a "middle" category. However, gender and biological sex are not as entangled as they are many other societies. Traditional gender roles in Albanian society are strictly prescribed

and upheld in a variety of social practices and norms, such as dress, occupation, song, dance, and gesture (Durham, 1909; Sugarman, 1997; Young, 2000; Shkurtaj, 2010). Therefore, although 'male' behaviour and 'female' behaviours are clearly delineated, they are nevertheless available to either biological sex[17]. Thus, a biological female is not stuck in her assigned female gender role; she can adopt the male gender without being ostracised from mainstream society. However, what she cannot do is occupy a place on some sort of gender spectrum. This simultaneously rigid and flexible view of gender, combined with the absence of a sexuality-driven motivation to change, sets *burrneshat* apart from examples of 'third sex' cultures that one often encounters in gender and sexuality studies.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter began by addressing the concepts of socially constructed gender and the role that language plays. Most sociolinguistics now adhere to the theory that people perform gender; notions of gender vary from society to society (even situation to situation), as do the linguistic norms associated with gender roles. Interaction between language and gender identity is unavoidable, and this inevitability is particularly clear in languages with systems of grammatical gender. Research into the speech of individuals such as *hijras* in India, *travestis* in Brazil, and genderqueer Hebrew-speakers has found that binary grammatical gender, for all of the

---

[17] It is important to note that male-to-female transitions are very rare in Albania and do not receive the same societal reactions as *burrneshat*. This is linked to the different statuses of men and women in Albania. While doing fieldwork, an Albanian man asked me why a man would want to take on an inferior identity; it would be a loss of privilege and social status. Similarly, in his article for *GQ*, Paterniti (2014) recalls asking a *burrneshë* why men do not become women in Albania: "It was, to him-her, an obvious and very stupid question. 'If a boy dresses and acts as a girl, it would be humiliating [...] He deserves a bad beating.'" Furthermore, a transgender woman would risk being perceived as gay – still a taboo for many Albanians. (See the UK Home Office's 2014 publication, *Country Information and Guidance: Albania: Sexual orientation and gender identity*.)

complications it may present to non-binary gendered speakers, can in fact provide ample fodder

for the linguistic construction of unique gender identities. The second part of the chapter delved

into the Albanian tradition of *burrneshat*. While *burrneshat* are transgender in practice, they

differ from other transgender cultures in that their motivation for transition is social pressure to

fulfill the role of a male family head or heir[18]. *Burrneshat* also receive the respect and acceptance

of their peers – something that is often unattainable for transgender individuals in other cultures.

The remaining chapters focus on the linguistic expression of gender identity in the speech of

burrneshat and members of their communities, particularly in light of their prominent social

positions. In the next chapter, I turn to a discussion of the data in the study and the means by

which it was collected and organized.

---

[18] Of course, it is entirely possible that some *burrneshat* were born transgender, i.e. they would personally have
identified as male regardless of social customs. However, this is not the tradition, and any suggestion that a
burrneshë transitioned for personal reasons would not be well-received.

Chapter Four – Data

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapters provided the necessary background information for a critical assessment of the data presented in the following three chapters. This chapter will discuss the selection and collection of the data. It begins with a presentation of the biographical information for interview participants, as well as the relevant information for authors and interviewees in written materials. It then details the process of data collection and organization, including interview methods, recording materials, and transcription protocol.

Interviews are an essential tool for eliciting sociolinguistic variables. As will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.1, the sociolinguistic interview (Labov 1972, 1984) is designed for this exact purpose; it allows the researcher to obtain biographical and other topical information from speakers in a variety of formality registers. This study's modified version of the sociolinguistic interview encouraged participants to speak freely and in as familiar a register as possible.

Written materials supplemented the oral data. These sources provided a balance to the informal, spontaneous language produced in interviews. Selected from Albanian-language newspapers, the articles allow for analysis of grammatical gender use when informants are more conscious of their language.

4.1 Informant Demographics

In the summer of 2014 I spent two months travelling in northern Albania seeking out *burrneshat* and their relatives for interviews. There was no single method of locating participants for interviews. However, I was often able to get the pertinent contact information for *burrneshat* or their families by frequenting social spaces dominated by men, particularly those middle-aged or retired. Taxi drivers congregating outside a busy bus stop or old men drinking Turkish coffee and *raki* in a smoky bar-café were often valuable providers of information. In addition to being very familiar with the residents of the village or city, these men had often socialized with *burrneshat* as drinking buddies or work colleagues. Women, on the other hand, were often able to offer very little information, as they operated in entirely separate social circles.

A total of twenty individuals (including interviewers) participated in five recorded interviews. Speakers include four burrneshat, two friends, one acquaintance, and ten family members. A fifth burrneshë had passed away nine years ago, but we were able to interview family members and friends. Informants ranged in age from fifteen to ninety-four years old, and hailed from villages and cities in central and northern Albanian. All participants are native speakers of Albanian. Background information for each speaker can be found in Table 4.1 below. The following section provides portraits of the main interview subjects.

Table 4.1. Biographical information for speakers.

Speaker Number	Sex/Gender Identity	Age	City or Village	Relationship to *Burrneshë*/Role in Interview
03	female	early 30s	Korça	1st Interviewer
04	male	mid-50s	Theth	Rozafa[19]'s cousin
05	female	late 30s	Elbasan	mother of Rita's great-niece
06	male	mid-50s	Theth	Rozafa's friend
07	male	late teens	Shkodra (b. in Theth)	Rozafa's second cousin
08	female	mid-90s	Theth	Rozafa's aunt
09	female	mid-40s	Shal	wife of Rozafa's cousin
10	*burrneshë*	mid-80s	Elbasan	Rita (interview subject)
11	female	mid-teens	Elbasan	Rita's great-niece
12	female	mid-80s	Elbasan	Rita's sister
13	male	early 30s	Peqin	2nd Interviewer
14	*burrneshë*	early 60s	Durrës (b. in Tropoja)[20]	Liana (interview subject)
15	female	early 20s	Korça	3rd Interviewer
16	male	early 30s	Shkodra	Fatmira's nephew
17	male	mid-50s	Shllak	Fitore's best friend
18	*burrneshë*	mid-50s	Shllak	Fitore (interview subject)
19	female	early 60s	Shllak	Fitore's sister
20	male	early 40s	Shkodra	Fitore's nephew
21	male	early 30s	Shkodra	Rozafa's acquaintance
22	*burrneshë*	mid-60s	Shkodra	Fatmira (interview subject)

Because interviews were conducted with friends and relatives of *burrneshat*, participant selection was mostly beyond the control of the researcher. It was not possible to control for a balance of speaker demographics such as age, sex/gender identity, or even place of origin, as the informant pool was limited to available family or community members. Future research would certainly benefit from a larger, more balanced pool of speakers.

---

[19] All names in this chapter and in the following chapter are pseudonyms.
[20] Mother from Gjakova, father from Vlora.

4.1.1 *Burrneshat* Profiles

Below are detailed profiles for the five burrneshat featured in the interviews, as well as a list of

the participants who were present for the interviews. Refer to Figure 4.1 for a map of Albania

and the participants' places of birth.

Figure 4.1. Map of speakers' places of origin.

Adapted from http://www.enchantedlearning.com/europe/albania/outlinemap

Liana, early 60s

Liana was born in Tropoja to a mother from Gjakova and a father from Vlora. However,

as a child the family moved to Durrës, where Liana still lives today. As a child Liana

preferred to dress and act as one of the boys. This was encouraged by Liana's parents, as an older brother had died at a young age and they sought to raise Liana in his place. Liana formally transitioned to life as a man at age 17. During Communism, Liana worked with the military, driving trucks and training female soldiers. Liana still wears a military beret wherever Liana goes. Later on in life Liana worked as a security guard; first at the port and then in the hospital's gynecology wing. Now Liana is retired and lives alone in a studio apartment. Liana spends free time drinking coffee with friends at a local café, painting, and practicing photography. As an ardent supporter of former dictator Enver Hoxha, Liana is nostalgic for the way life was during Communism. However, Liana is grateful for the progress that women have made in politics and in the workplace. Indeed, Liana feels that, as a *burrneshë*, it is one's duty to be an advocate for, and a protector of, women.[21]

(Present during the interview: Liana, Interviewer 01, Researcher)

Rita, mid-80s

Born and raised in a village near Elbasan, Rita grew up as a girl. Because Rita's parents died when Rita was still young, Rita went to live with Rita's sister's family. At age 17, a marriage was arranged for Rita to man thirty-two years Rita's senior. Rita ran away from him back to the sister's house and found work as an excavator. Rita soon found it too difficult to work and be taken seriously with long hair and in women's clothing. A few

---

[21] This sentiment was echoed in other interviews. Women see burrneshat as non-threatening because they pose no perceived risk of sexual aggression. Thus, although burrneshat prefer to move in "men's" circles, they are nonetheless privy to traditionally female spaces. *Burrneshat* also expressed a deep respect and understanding for women, given their pasts as girls and young women.

years after turning thirty, Rita had cut her hair, taken to dressing as a man, and fully

transitioned to a masculine identity. Later on Rita worked as a truck and taxi driver,

travelling all over Albania at a time when most citizens were not allowed to own cars or

travel freely. Rita received multiple commendations from the government for Rita's work

ethic. Now retired, Rita still lives with Rita's sister's family in Elbasan.

(Present during interview: Rita, Interviewer 02, Rita's sister, Daughter-in-law of Rita's

sister, Rita's great-niece, Researcher)

Fitore, late 50s

Fitore was born and raised in the isolated mountain village of Shllak, about an hour's

drive from Shkodra. Fitore grew up as a girl, but due to a serious heart condition, Fitore

knew that is would be impossible to marry and start a family. In Fitore's 30s, Fitore

transitioned to being a man in order to earn money and live independently. During

Communism Fitore worked at the local *Shtëpinë e Kulturës* ("house of culture"), but later

in life, as the heart condition grew more serious, Fitore lived with Fitore's brother's

family and eventually became bed-ridden. Fitore passed away less than a month after the

interview.

(Present during interview: Fitore, Interviewer 03, Fitore's sister, Fitore's nephew, Fitore's

male best friend, Researcher)

Rozafa (died 2006, mid-60s)

Rozafa was born and raised in Theth, a remote village in the Albanian Alps. Rozafa's

father died before Rozafa was born, and at a very young age was abandoned by Rozafa's

mother who had remarried in a different village. Instead, Rozafa was raised by an uncle and his wife. By the time Rozafa was thirty, Rozafa was living alone with an elderly uncle who had fallen ill. Rozafa took an oath to live as a man in order to care for him and make the monthly trek to Shkoder to buy his medicine. After the uncle died, Rozafa continued to live alone in a two-room house in Theth. During Communism Rozafa worked for the farm cooperative, as did most adults in the village. In 2000, Rozafa left Theth and moved in with the family of one of Rozafa's male cousins, in a small town outside of Shkodra, where Rozafa passed away in 2006. Rozafa's death was a great loss for the family, as Rozafa had assumed the role as head of the family. During the interview with the family, male members said that for a long time they felt lost without Rozafa's advice on important family matters.

(Present during interview: Interviewer 03, Rozafa's male cousin, Rozafa's male friend, Wife of Rozafa's cousin, Rozafa's male second cousin (son of Rozafa's cousin), Rozafa's aunt (adoptive mother), our taxi driver/acquaintance of Rozafa, Researcher)

Fatmira, early 60s

Fatmira has always lived in Shkodra. From a very young age Fatmira preferred to dress as and socialize with the other boys in Fatmira's family and neighbourhood. Fatmira's official transition to a masculine identity occurred before age ten, when Fatmira ran away from home after being forced to dress in girls' clothing. Fatmira agreed to return home only if free to live as a male. During Communism Fatmira worked as a truck driver. Now Fatmira lives alone and maintains a small farm. Like Liana, Fatmira is also nostalgic for life during Communism.

(Present during interview: Fatmira, Interviewer 03, Fatmira's nephew, Rozafa's male

second cousin)

4.2 Collection of Data

A modified version of the sociolinguistic interview enabled the researcher and interviewer to

interact casually with interviewees while gathering valuable information. However, written

materials were required to gain a more complete picture of the interaction between language and

gender in Albanian. The following sections detail the methods of data collection, in particular the

rational for specific interview practices such as limited researcher participation, obtaining oral

consent, and transcription practices.

4.2.1 The Sociolinguistic Interview

The traditional sociolinguistic interview was developed by Labov (1972, 1984) as a way to elicit

different registers of speech in the informant. A variety of registers, ranging from formal to the

vernacular, is important in sociolinguistic work because it allows the researcher to observe any

variation in the use of a specific linguistic form. Typically, the researcher records one to two

hours of speech with each speaker.

The most formal styles can be achieved by asking the participant to read word lists and texts.

Speakers are generally more self-conscious when reading aloud and therefore would be expected

to produce more careful, standard forms. In order to elicit a more casual register, the researcher

directs the interview so that the participant will feel more comfortable, and therefore be less

concerned about monitoring his or her speech. This is best achieved by focusing on topics that interest the speaker, stimulating interaction between the speaker and any other people present (i.e. encouraging conversations in which the interviewer is not addressed), and eliciting personal narratives "where community norms and styles of personal interaction are most plainly revealed, and where style is regularly shifted" (Labov, 1984:32). Ideally, sociolinguistic interviews will resemble a conversation, as opposed to a question-and-answer session.

As Labov notes, not only are sociolinguistic interviews effective for eliciting the desired linguistic forms, but they are also an efficient method of collecting the speaker's necessary biographical information, as well as learning about local language attitudes, stereotypes, and communication patterns. This eliminates the need for a speaker to fill out multiple surveys and forms, and therefore avoids framing the situation as a more formal interview process.

For the purposes of this project, I used a modified version of Labov's sociolinguistic interview. I decided not to use word lists or short texts, but rather to emphasize the free-flowing conversation between informants and the interviewer(s). First, literacy was a concern as some participants were clearly uncomfortable reading aloud. Second, the focus of this study is not an investigation of stylistic differences, so eliciting careful pronunciations was not necessary. Finally, there were practical constraints to gathering quality phonetic data. All interviews were conducted in cafes or family living rooms. The acoustics of such settings are notoriously challenging for audio recordings. Background noise, side conversations, and the occasional buzzing of a housefly were all frequent obstacles. Thus, due to the quality of the sound recordings, I decided to focus on grammatical and lexical items rather than phonetic or phonological variation.

A typical interview began with biographical questions: place of birth, occupation, family background, etc. The interviewer would then shift to the specific topic of being a *burrneshë*. Although each speaker addressed this topic differently, general themes included the age at which one decided to become a man; reactions of family members, friends, and the community; any advantages, privileges, or negative consequences of living as a man. Interviews often naturally continued on to an array of subjects, such as the economy, the government, or an individual's childhood. Throughout the interviews, speakers offered plenty of anecdotes used to illustrate experiences with or as *burrneshat*. An interview schedule consisting of modules and questions can be found in Appendix A.

Note that when pursuing sociolinguistic research, there is always the concern that the speech you are recording is not representative of the register used when away from the investigator and the microphone. Register typically has a stronger effect on pronunciation and dialectal features, but grammatical items are not immune. Although speakers certainly did not appear to be self-monitoring their grammatical gender usage, it remains a possibility that other social settings might elicit a change in the frequency of feminine or masculine tokens.

4.2.2 Participants' Consent

At the beginning of each interview and prior to any recordings, I obtained oral consent from all speakers present. There are a few reasons for using oral consent instead of written consent. The signing of any official document is taken very seriously by Albanians, who often require much thought and reflection before signing. I was concerned that asking participants to sign a consent form would make many of them uncomfortable. In any event, it certainly would not have

contributed to a more relaxed and informal atmosphere. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, I was concerned with literacy rates, particularly among the elderly and speakers from rural areas. Oral consent therefore made informants comfortable and ensured that all participants clearly understood what was being asked of them.

4.2.3 Role of the Interviewer and the Researcher

A native Albanian speaker accompanied me and acted as interpreter and intermediary for setting up meetings. The interpreter was also the primary interviewer. Interviewers were trained in the structure of the interview and the types of questions that were of particular interest to me. This decision to limit my direct participation in the interviews allowed for more natural conversations with informants. Interruptions for translations were kept to a minimum and informants were free to speak at a normal pace, without having to take my comprehension into consideration.

4.2.4 Recorded Material

All interviews were recorded using a Zoom H2n portable digital recorder, and were subsequently saved as .WAV audio files and stored in a secure folder on an external hard drive. This study analyzes roughly six hours of recorded material. The principal interviewer transcribed the interviews using Microsoft Word. I then entered the transcriptions and aligned them with the sound files using ELAN (Wittenburg et al, 2006), a time-aligned transcription and alignment tool produced by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, The Language Archive, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, available at http://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/.

4.2.5 Transcription Protocol

Poplack (1989) writes that transcriptions of recorded speech must "be rendered in as faithful and consistent a way as possible, without needlessly multiplying entries on the one hand, while still preserving all the pertinent variation. To facilitate the automated treatment of the data, we adopted a solution of standard orthography for our transcriptions rather than a fine phonetic and/or prosodic transcription" (431). This study adopts a similar transcription philosophy. The pertinent variation is morphological and lexical; detailed phonetic or prosodic transcriptions not only would be superfluous, but would impede token-extraction efforts.

All transcriptions were written in the Albanian alphabet using standard orthography. However, some dialectal features were included in the transcriptions, particularly morphosyntactic features.

The phonemic nature of the Albanian alphabet makes standard Albanian orthography an ideal means of transcription. Each letter of the alphabet corresponds to a unique phoneme. Several exceptions to standard Albanian were made for morphosyntactic dialect features, such as the tendency to pronounce *-uar* or *-ur* word endings as *-u*, or to drop the ending altogether. Additionally, as detailed in Section 2.2.3, Gheg Albanian uses a different infinitive form. Instances of non-standard grammatical forms, such as the use of the Gheg infinitive, were preserved in transcriptions.

However, differences in vowel quality were not preserved in transcription. Although the standard *ë* is often produced as *a*, and the standard *a* and *aj* are often realized as *o* and *oj*, in Gheg, there was a great deal of variation among speakers, and even within the speech of a single informant.

Furthermore, allowing variations of spellings would have complicated efforts to search for items within the corpus. Given that this study does not investigate dialectal variation, such phonetic distinctions were left out of transcription practices.

4.2.6 Written Materials

In addition to the recorded interviews, this study also examines the use of grammatical gender in written materials. Articles provide examples of language in a more formal setting, one in which writers make conscious decisions about language choice. Written data would provide a foil to the more spontaneous spoken data. If the data from recordings display high rates of inconsistent grammatical gender, data from articles may serve to either confirm this pattern, or it may indicate that at a higher register of language, writers display more uniformity in their usage.

I selected a variety of Albanian-language newspaper articles that discuss *burrneshat*. All but one were published in Albania; the other in Kosova. The thirteen articles include interviews with *burrneshat*, film and photography reviews, and opinion pieces. A film (based on the book *Sworn Virgin* by Elvira Dones) was recently released and has resulted in Albanians' renewed attention to the tradition.

Authors and quoted speakers were included as informants and given an individual number (Table 4.2). Table 4.3 list the names and assigned number for articles without authors' names.

Table 4.2. Background information for participants in written materials

Speaker/Writer Number	Sex/Gender Identity	Age	Relationship to *Burrneshë*
Speaker 01	female	late 30s	director of film about *burrneshat*
Speaker 02	female	mid-30s	main actor in film about *burrneshat*
Writer 01	female	late 20s	journalist
Writer 02	male	late 50s	journalist
Writer 03	male	late 30s	journalist
Writer 04	female	late 30s	journalist
Writer 05	female	late 30s	journalist

Table 4.3. List of article titles for materials without authors' names, accompanied by English translation

Article Number	Article Title
01	Burrnesha 82-vjeçare e Klosit: Më kërcënojnë, më thonë do të të zhveshim. Nëse më prekin, do mbytem (82-year old *Burrneshë* from Klosi: They threaten me, tell me they will strip me. If they touch me I will drown myself)
02	Burrneshat e veriut të Shqipërisë, janë apo jo lesbike të maskuara?! (*Burrneshat* of northern Albania, are they hidden lesbians?!)
03	Burrnesha shqiptare në sytë e fotografit spanjoll (Albanian *Burrneshat* in the eyes of a Spanish photgrapher)
04	Filmi "Burrnesha" konkurron ne festivalin prestigjioz të Berlinit (The film "*Burrnesha*" competes in presigious Berlin festival)
05	Burrneshat shqiptare, që habisin botën: "Daily Mail" reportazh për jetën e virgjëreshave të betuara (Albanian *Burrneshat* that are shocking the world: "Daily Mail" report on the life of sworn virgins)
06	Burresha Liana Sahati: Mashkullit që do më ngacmonte do t'ia prisja (*Burrnesha* Liana Sahati: If men harrass me I'll cut them)
07	Elbasan, gruaja që u kthye në burrë për t'u bëre shofere (Elbasan, the woman that became a man to work as a driver)

Newspaper articles were selected by searching the archives of major Albanian-language newspapers for recently published stories containing variations of the terms "*burrneshë*" and "*virgjereshë e betuar*" ("sworn virgin"). This strategy was largely successful. However, the search results did turn up articles about the film or book release of *Sworn Virgin* that were unusable. The release notices were short, technical pieces about dates and show times. Another common type of unusable articles was political or cultural pieces about strong women. "*Burrneshë*" is also a term of endearment and respect for a hard-working, no-nonsense woman.

These articles, therefore, were not about the same type of *burrneshat* that this study is interested in.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided an explanation of the data used in the study and the reasoning behind selecting the informants and newspaper articles. As a research topic, the phenomenon of *burrneshat* is quite specific. Therefore, interview participants could not be chosen at random from the general population. Nor was it possible to find a demographically balanced pool of speakers. Nonetheless, the data contains language use from informants unfamiliar with *burrneshat* thanks to the inclusion of written materials. The following two chapters will detail the process of data analysis and discuss the relevant results.

Chapter Five – Quantitative Analysis

5.0 Introduction

This chapter begins with an explanation of the methodology used for quantitative data, including coding procedures and multivariate analysis (Section 5.1). Section 5.2 provides a report of the analysis results, and indicates which factor groups are statistically significant in determining usage of grammatical gender. A detailed discussion of the results for each factor group can be found in Section 5.3.

5.1 Methods

5.1.1 Data Coding

The variable *(GENDER)* was defined as the occurrence of a syntactic unit (NP or AP) that

    a.   referred to *burrneshat* and

    b.   displayed grammatical gender (masculine or feminine).

If a word or phrase referred to *burrneshat* but did not display grammatical gender, it was deemed outside the variable context. Similarly, if a word or phrase displayed grammatical gender but did not refer to *burrneshat*, it was considered outside of the variable context. See Example 5.1 below.

    Example 5.1.

```
a.  ROZAFA'S FRIEND: Edhe kjo ka      ROZAFA'S FRIEND: And that was her
    qenë motivi i saj.                motivation.
```

b. ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Shumë i   ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Very <u>respektueshëm</u>,
shumë.   <u>respectful(M)</u>,very.

c. ARTICLE 04: <u>Ajo</u> ka rilindur si   ARTICLE 04: <u>She</u> is reborn as a new,
një krijesë e re, e lirë dhe e   free, and complete being.
plotë.

In 5.1a above, *i saj* was identified as a token of grammatical gender with reference to a

burrneshë. In discussing Rozafa's reason for taking the oath to become a *burrneshë*, Rozafa's

friend uses a feminine form of grammatical gender; recall that *i/e saj* is the nominative form of

'her'. (Refer back to Section 2.3.1 for an explanation of grammatical gender in Albanian.) If

Rozafa's friend had referred to Rozafa in the masculine, he would have said *"Edhe kjo ka qenë*

motivi i tij" ("And that was <u>his</u> motivation"). Note, however, that the *nyje* particle remains *i*

regardless of the grammatical gender used for Rozafa. This is because the particle agrees with

the noun *motivi* ('motivation'), not Rozafa. In 5.1b, the token of grammatical gender is

masculine; Rozafa is described as respectful, using the masculine form of the adjective, *i*

respektueshëm ('respectful'). In 5.1c, the author of the article discusses a film in which a

burrneshë character moves to Italy. The writer uses *ajo* ('she') as the pronoun for the *burrneshë*.

Thus, this is an example of a feminine token of grammatical gender. Again, note that the

adjectives *e re* ('new'), *e lirë* ('free'), and *e plotë* ('full'/'complete'), while certainly instances of

grammatical gender, do not fall within the variable context because they agree with *krijesë*

('creature'/'being'), not the *burrneshë* in question.

All admissible tokens were then entered into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and coded for a

variety of factors. A column was also included that provided the context of the token. Sections

5.1.1.1 through 5.1.1.11 detail the selection and coding process for tokens.

5.1.1.1. Exclusions

Tokens had to be excluded if they referred to a *burrneshë* in a mixed-gender group or as a member of an otherwise all-male group. The default grammatical gender for mixed-gender groups in Albanian is the masculine, so it is impossible to determine whether the speaker is including the *burrneshë* as one of the males or as a female. (See Example 5.2 below.)

> *Example 5.2.*
>
> ```
> FITORE: Ne ishim një grupë        FITORE: We were a group of
> shokësh bashkë për shembull       friends (M) together for example
> me Nojin e vëllain e Nojës        with Noj and Noj's brother.
> teme.
> ```

Grammatical gender was also ambiguous due to Albanian's declension system for case. Example 5.3 below shows the Class 2 adjective *i/e vogël* ('small') as used in the accusative case. The *nyje* particle *të* is used for both masculine and feminine forms of the adjective.

> *Example 5.3*
>
> ```
> LIANA: Prindërit vdiqën herët,    LIANA: My parents died early on,
> më kanë lënë të vogël [...]        left me [when I was] small [...]
> ```

Repetitions also had to be accounted for. If a token was repeated by an individual more than once in a single turn, I only used one instance of the token if the repeated phrases immediately followed each other and if they were identical (see Example 5.4a). I did include variations of a phrase as well as identical repetitions that were separated by some other phrase (Example 5.4b).

Example 5.4.

a. FATIMA: Jam <u>shumë e paparë</u>,   FATIMA: I am <u>very unusual (F)</u>, very
   <u>shumë e paparë</u>.   <u>unusual (F)</u>.

b. RITA: Në rafinerinë e naftës   RITA: I was <u>an excavator (F)</u> in an
   kam qënë <u>si eskavatoriste</u>.   oil refinery.
   2nd INTERVIEWER: Ua.   2nd INTERVIEWer: Wow.
   RITA: Ca vjet, nja 5-6 vjet   RITA: <u>An excavator (F)</u> there for
   aty <u>si eskavatoriste</u>.   several years, 5 or six years.

Metalinguistic discussions of grammatical gender (Example 5.5) were another situation in which

tokens had to be excluded.

Example 5.5.

WRITER 03: Pasi të bëhet burrë,   WRITER 03: After becoming a man, <u>ajo</u>
<u>shndërrohet në "ai"</u>, [...]   <u>she turns into "he"</u>, [...]

Finally, I was unable to include in my analysis formations such as "a ___ person" or "a ___

character." (See Example 5.6a.) The adjectives used in these cases would agree with the

grammatical gender of the words "person" or "character" and not the referents themselves.

Phrases containing *burrneshë* (Example 5.6b) also had to be excluded because *burrneshë* is a

grammatically feminine word.

Example 5.6.

a. FATIMA: Jam- në farefis jam   FATIMA: I am- among my relatives I
   <u>njeriu më egër</u> diftoja troç.   am <u>the fiercest (M) person (M)</u> and
                                       would show it openly.

b. ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Sikur   ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Whereas those
   mosha e këtij e kanë thirr   of [my dad's] age would call out,
   "a j- a je <u>burrneshë e fortë</u>!"   "Hey, <u>strong (F) burrneshë (F)</u>!"

Overall, 389 tokens of the variable *(GENDER)* were extracted and entered in Microsoft Excel

spreadsheets for coding. Tokens were coded for nine factor groups: the dependent variable

(GENDER) and eight other independent variables. Full coding instructions can be found in

Appendix B.

5.1.1.2 *(GENDER)*

All tokens were either the masculine or feminine variant of grammatical gender. Masculine

variants were coded as M, feminine variants as F. Refer to Section 2.3.1 for an explanation of

grammatical gender marking in Albanian, and Section 5.1.1 for examples of tokens.

5.1.1.3 Part of Speech

Tokens were coded as either Adjectives (A) or Nouns (N). Adjectives included possessive

pronominal adjectives[22]. Nouns included pronouns and nominal adjectives, i.e. adjectives

functioning as nouns in a sentence (Example 5.7).

Example 5.7.

a. ARTICLE 02: <u>71-vjeçarja</u>, Halil, ARTICLE 02: <u>The 71-year-old (F)</u>,
   i përgjigjet ashpër gazetarit   Halil a strong negative reaction
   kur ai e provokon për faktin   when the journalist suggests that
   se të qënit burrneshë ka lidhje being a burrneshë is connected to
   me prirjen për të qenë lesbike. being a lesbian.

b. ROZAFA'S AUNT: […] jo se ka   ROZAFA'S AUNT: […] not just saying
   qenë <u>e imja</u>.   this because [Ø] was <u>my own (F)</u>.

---

[22] In English, 'my', 'your', 'his', 'her', 'our', 'their', etc.

In both 5.7a and 5.7b, the tokens are nouns derived from adjectives, and therefore coded as N.

5.1.1.4 Type

Tokens were also coded as either pronominal (P) or non-pronominal (L), independent of being adjectives or nouns. See Example 5.8 and Example 5.9 below.

Example 5.8. Pronominal tokens.

a. ```
ARTICLE 07: Gëzimi më i madh
në jetën e saj ka qenë ku
ndërmarrja vendosi që t'i
japë taksi.
```
ARTICLE 07: The greatest joy in her life was when the company decided that [Ø]²³ would drive a taxi.

b. ```
FATMIRA'S NEPHEW: Ajo ka punu
në Jugosllavi.
```
FATMIRA'S NEPHEW: She has worked in Yugoslavia.

c. ```
ARTICLE 01: [...] ka apeluar e
moshuara Elane Martini, e
cila ka marrë premtimin e
policisë për nisjen e hetimit.
```
ARTICLE 01: "[...]", pleaded the old (F) Elane Martini, to whom (F) the police have promised to open an investigation.

*Example 5.9. Non-pronominal tokens.*

a. ```
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Shumë i
dashtun e tana.
```
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Very loved (M) and all.

b. ```
3rd INTERVIEWER: Si kryetar
familje le të themi.
```
3rd INTERVIEWER: Like a head (M) of a family, you could say.

c. ```
LIANA: Jam shqiptar dhe jam
krenar që jam shqiptar.
```
LIANA: I am Albanian (M) and I am proud (M) that I am Albanian (M).

d. ```
ARTICLE 02: Anile Rama
92-vjeçe, ka jetuar si një
Burrneshë që kur ishte
20-vjeç.
```
ARTICLE 02: Anile Rama, 92 years old (F), has lived as a *Burrneshë* since [Ø] was 20 years old (M).

---

²³ Indicates a null-subject.

**5.1.1.5 Preceding Grammatical Gender**

Preceding Grammatical Gender was defined as the grammatical gender of a previously occurring word or phrase that shares the same *burrneshë* as the token's referent. There are three factors in this factor group: Masculine (M) preceding grammatical gender; Feminine (F) preceding grammatical gender; or Unavailable (U) for tokens that are not preceded by another instance of grammatical gender.

Determining preceding grammatical gender posed two challenges. The first step was deciding whether or not there was indeed a preceding grammatical gender. Often multiple paragraphs or turns of speech would go by before another token of grammatical gender appeared (Example 5.10a). I decided to include instances of preceding grammatical gender only if they occurred one full sentence (Example 5.10b) or less (Examples 5.10c-d) before the token.

*Example 5.10.*

a. RITA: Ikja dhe vija dhe asnjë nuk më kuptonte se isha <u>shofere</u> femër. Nuk kishte kënaqësi më të madhe se ajo që kur shoqëroja pasagjerat në ndonjë ndodhi, ndaja me ta gëzimin e hidhërimin. Por, më së shumti kënaqesha kur shkoja në dasma. Isha <u>e detyruar</u> që t'i prisja dhe kështu donin apo nuk donin ata, edhe [...]

   RITA: I would come and go and no one understood that I was a female <u>driver (F)</u>. There was no greater satisfaction than when I would take passengers to some event, partake in their happiness or their sadness. But, I enjoyed going to weddings the most. I was <u>required (F)</u> to wait for them and therefore, whether they liked it or not, I also [...]

b. FATMIRA: Kur jam lënë prej nënit mua më ka rrit një gjyshe, ata tre edhe më ka rrit, gjyshe dhe [?] <u>6 vjeç</u>. Doshin me më rrah me më vesh fustan aty s'e kam pranu [?]. <u>6 vjeçare</u>, <u>5 vjeç</u> mund të kem kenë.

   FATMIRA: When my mother left me I a grandfather raised me, those three also raised me, grandfather and [?] <u>6 years old (M)</u>. They threatened me with a beating to get me to wear a dress, I didn't accept it [?]. <u>A 6 year-old (F)</u>, **5** <u>years old (M)</u> I might have been.

59

c. ARTICLE 02: <u>Ajo</u> ka jetuar
vetem për shumicën e jetës
<u>së saj</u>.

ARTICLE 02: <u>She</u> has lived alone for
most of <u>her</u> life.

d. ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: I kam
thënë, "hajde sonte", <u>ajo</u>
është çu prej Shkodër dhe ka
ardh këtu.
ROZAFA'S FRIEND: Ka kenë
shumë <u>burrnore</u>[24].

ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: I said, "come
over this evening', <u>she</u> left from
Shkodra and came here.
ROZAFA'S FRIEND: [Ø] was very
<u>manly (F)</u>.

A related challenge was deciding what qualified as preceding grammatical gender. I expanded

the criteria to include not only other tokens, but also other words that carry strong gender

connotations: "boy", "woman", "uncle", etc. (See Example 5.11a.) I ignored any preceding

instances of the (grammatically feminine words) *burrneshë*, *burrnesha,* or *burrneshat* because of

the inherent ambiguity of the terms (Example 5.11b).

*Example 5.11.*

a. RITA'S SISTER: [?] rrit si
<u>burrë, kjo</u> kalamajt e mi e
thanë gjithë Babë[26] Rita.

RITA'S SISTER: [?] raised[25] like a
<u>man</u>, my children all call <u>her</u> Babë
Rita.

b. ARTICLE 01: <u>Burrneshë</u> e
Klosit, Anile Rama, 82 vjeç,
ka kërkuar që të sistemohet
në një azil pleqsh pasi jeton
mes presionesh të vazhdueshme.

ARTICLE 01: <u>Burrneshë</u> from Klosi,
Anile Rama, <u>82 years old (M)</u>,
decided to move to into a
retirement home after enduring
ongoing verbal harassment.

---

[24] Dialectal variant of the standard *burrëror(e).* In addition to meaning 'manly', this word also carries the
connotations of honour, strength, and courage.
[25] Alternative translation: stayed or remained
[26] *babë*: masc., 'father', 'dad', 'papa'

## 5.1.1.6 Topic

There were four recurring topics in the interviews and written materials: Childhood (C); Work (W) and daily duties; Transition (T) to life as a man or the decision to become a *burrneshë*; and General (G) descriptions of personality, appearance, or character. (See Examples 5.12a-d, respectively.) When possible, tokens were coded for one of these contextual topics. Other (O) was assigned to all other tokens that could not be coded for one of these four topics (Example 5.12e).

*Example 5.12.*

a. RITA: Ah, fëmijëria, kam vuajt unë. Baba më ka lënë 2 vjeçe. Mama- mama më ka lënë 3 vjeçe.

   RITA: Ah, I have suffered during childhood. Father left me at 2 years old (F). Mother- mother left me at 3 years old (F).

b. FATMIRA'S NEPHEW: Shofere, po po shofere, shofere edhe me makinën në Tiranë.

   FATMIRA'S NEWPHEW: Driver (F), yes yes driver (F), driver (F) also with a car in Tirana.

c. ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Atëherë ajo s'ka dasht me lënë axhën vetem dhe ajo ka ngel pa martume vetem për-

   ROZAFA'S COUSIN: So she didn't want to leave here uncle all alone and she remained unmarried (F) only for-

d. LIANA: Jemi njëçik të zgjeruar[27] në këto gjëra se kanë ardhur shumë dhe unë i kam refuzuar.

   LIANA: We are a bit all over the place (M) for this kind of thing because lots have come and I have refused them.

e. FITORE'S SISTER: Kur ishte kjo e re për me t- operuar nuk patën mundësinë se s'kishin bukë

   FITORE'S SISTER: When she was younger (F) to- have an operation wasn't possible because they didn't have bread[28].

---

[27] *i/e zgjeruar*: expanded, spread out. (In this example, the meaning is that *burrneshat* vary greatly in their willingness to participate in interviews.)

[28] i.e., they were so poor they couldn't even afford food

### 5.1.1.7 Language Medium

Any tokens from recorded interviews were coded as Oral (O). Tokens from written materials, even if quotations from a speaker, were coded as Written (W).

### 5.1.1.8 Sex/Gender Identity

There were four possibilities for coding the gender or sexual identity of informants: Male (M); Female (F); *Burrneshë* (B); Unavailable (U). All authorless articles were coded as Unavailable. Assigning a sex/gender category to *burrneshat* is inherently problematic. After all, one of the main objectives of this study is to determine if *burrneshat* language use expresses or can shed light on their feelings of gender identity. Furthermore, it is very likely that *burrneshat* do not share similar levels of feeling inherently masculine or feminine. One *burrneshë* may identify more as a cisgender woman fulfilling a male social role, while another may have personally identified as male from a very young age. Thus, *burrneshat* were simply coded as *Burrneshë* to avoid imposing any particular gender ideologies.

### 5.1.1.9 Relationship to *Burrneshë*

Informants and articles were coded for their relationship to the *burrneshat* under discussion: Self (S); Family (F); Friend (A); Unfamiliar (U); or Impersonal (I). *Burrneshat* themselves, as the interview subjects, were coded for Self[29]. Family members were naturally coded for Family. Friends and acquaintances were coded for Friend. Anyone who had no previous relationship with

---

[29] There were no tokens in which a *burrneshë* referred to another *burrnesha* or a (non-inclusive) group of *burrneshat*. There were instances when a *burrneshë* mentioned someone else is an almost identical situation, but this person was also referred to a woman who did similar work or lived in a similar manner.

the *burrneshë* was coded as Unfamiliar. Interviewers (both in recordings and in written articles) fell into this category. Writers who had never met the *burrneshat,* as well as those articles without authors, were coded as Impersonal.

### 5.1.1.2.10 Age

Informants were coded for one of five age groups: Teens and 20s (A); 30s (B); Middle-aged/40s-60s (C); 70 or older (D); and unavailable (U). Ranges were determined by shared generational characteristics and life experiences rather than by decade. Informants in their teens and 20s were born around or after the fall of Communism and are unmarried. They have lived most if not all of their lives in democratic Albania. Informants in their 30s spent their childhoods during the Communist period, but their entire adulthood has been spent post-Communism. A number of informants in their 30s are also unmarried. Middle-aged informants were not only born and raised during Communism, they also experienced Communism in adulthood. Informants who are at least seventy years old are well beyond their child-rearing years and are elders in their families. Finally, articles without authors were coded as Unavailable.

### 5.1.1.11 Individual Code

Additionally, all individuals were assigned a number in order to preserve the anonymity of participants. This was also the case for authors and newspaper interviewees, although their names are readily available to readers. Such a practice was necessary because some of my interview informants were also interviewed by journalists. Each participant or article was then coded with a unique symbol. There were 34 total individual codes.

**5.1.2 Data Analysis**

Data was entered into Goldvarb X for Windows (Sankoff, Tagliamonte and Smith, 2005), a computer application commonly used in the study of sociolinguistic variation that can be used to carry out logistic regression. It is also useful in providing raw numbers and percentages for a variant in the various factor groups.

**5.1.2.1 Adjusting for Knockouts**

Initially, Individual Code was included as a factor group, but Goldvarb's calculations revealed that it contained a number of knockouts. A knockout is "where all the tokens are accounted for by one or the other of the [dependent variable variants]" (Robinson, Lawrence and Tagliamonte, 2001). A multivariate regression analysis is only possible when the dependent variable displays variation (at least one token of each variant) in every factor. Therefore, the analysis function will not run if any knockouts are present. Due to lack of robust data from some individuals in this study, many individual codes were knockouts. For example, Speaker 01 only provided two tokens, both of which were feminine. Individual Code was subsequently excluded as a factor group in further Goldvarb analyses. However, tokens produced by invariant individuals were still included in the analysis. This decision was based on the fact that in the speech or writing of individuals who did produce numerous tokens, variation was indeed evident. I had reason to believe that the lack of variation was only due to low Ns, i.e. if individuals had produced more tokens, it is very likely that their speech or writing would display variation as well.

## 5.1.2.2 Multivariate Analysis

Once the tokens were coded for the various factor groups, I was able to conduct a multivariate analysis in order to determine which variables were statistically significant in determining use of grammatical gender. According to Walker (2010), "In essence, variation analysis consists of quantitative comparison, most commonly among the overall frequencies of each variant as a proportion of the variable context and the relative frequencies of each variant (or one variant of interest) across different factors within the same factor group" (455). A multivariate analysis is important in quantitative sociolinguistic work because it allows the researcher to consider all factors simultaneously, and "[identify] the individual relative contribution of each factor to the observed variation" (38).

I performed two binomial step-up/step-down analyses; one for the linguistic factor groups, and one for the social factor groups. Step-up/step-down analysis is a multiple regression analysis, a statistical procedure that

> "looks for the configuration of factors that provides the best fit to the observed distribution of variants. The step-up procedure adds each factor group to the input in turn and determines whether this significantly improves the prediction of the model; the step-down procedure begins by forcing all of the factor groups and the input into one analysis and then takes away each factor group in turn to determine whether this produces a statistically significant change in fit" (Walker, 2014: 457).

The best runs for both the step-up and step-down procedures should identify the same factor groups as significant. "If they are not identical, the statistical significance of the factor group that differs from the step-up and step-down analysis is questionable. It is therefore wise to check the

results in more detail. Cross-tabulation of factor groups can sometimes reveal "interaction", or areas where a factor in one group is the same (or close to the same) as a factor in another" (Robinson, Lawrence and Tagliamonte, 2001).

The analysis of the linguistic factor groups was successful in producing identical best step-up and step-down runs. However, the initial results of the social factor groups' analysis revealed evidence of interaction; for Topic and Relationship to *Burrneshë*, the relative ordering of the factor weights and percentages within the factor group did not match. This interaction was confirmed by cross tabulating factor groups. Topic was simply excluded from analysis. Of the factor groups, it was the most subjective and therefore the most unreliable. Relationship to *Burrneshë*, on the other hand, was reconfigured. Impersonal (I) and Unfamiliar (U) were collapsed into a single factor (U) and Friend (A) and Family (F) were also collapsed into a single factor (F). After all, the friends of *burrneshat* had, like family members, known them for most of their lives and were quite close. After making the necessary adjustments, the modified analysis was successful in producing identical best runs.

**5.2 Results**

**5.2.1 Raw Numbers and Percentages**

Table 5.1 illustrates the distribution of the masculine (M) variant of grammatical gender across linguistic and social factor groups.

66

*Table 5.1. Overall distribution of masculine grammatical gender marking*

|  | Masculine | | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Factor Group | % | N | N |
| Overall Distribution | 21.1 | 82 | 389 |
| Part of Speech | | | |
|    Adjective Phrase | 26.4 | 55 | 208 |
|    Nominal Phrase | 14.9 | 27 | 181 |
| Type | | | |
|    Non-pronominal | 27.5 | 70 | 255 |
|    Pronominal | 9.0 | 12 | 134 |
| Preceding Grammatical Gender | | | |
|    Masculine | 53.1 | 26 | 49 |
|    Unavailable | 30.8 | 41 | 133 |
|    Feminine | 7.2 | 15 | 207 |
| Topic | | | |
|    Childhood | 26.5 | 9 | 34 |
|    General | 24.3 | 33 | 136 |
|    Transition | 26.6 | 17 | 64 |
|    Other | 21.7 | 10 | 46 |
|    Work | 11.9 | 13 | 109 |
| Language Medium | | | |
|    Oral | 25.0 | 56 | 224 |
|    Written | 15.8 | 26 | 165 |
| Relationship to *Burrneshë* | | | |
|    Impersonal | 42.9 | 3 | 7 |
|    Self | 37.1 | 43 | 116 |
|    Unfamiliar | 13.8 | 24 | 152 |
|    Family | 11.2 | 11 | 98 |
|    Friend | 10.0 | 1 | 10 |
| Sex/Gender Identity | | | |
|    Burrneshë | 37.1 | 43 | 116 |
|    Male | 15.0 | 12 | 80 |
|    Unavailable | 13.5 | 12 | 89 |
|    Female | 14.4 | 15 | 104 |
| Age | | | |
|    40-69 | 32.8 | 38 | 116 |
|    15-29 | 17.5 | 7 | 40 |
|    70 and older | 16.7 | 10 | 60 |
|    30-39 | 18.1 | 15 | 83 |
|    Unavailable | 13.3 | 12 | 90 |

Overall, the majority (nearly seventy-nine percent) of a total of 389 tokens were feminine.

Additionally, when sorted for specific factor groups, the feminine variant was used more often in

all groups except when the preceding grammatical gender was masculine. However, even in this

case where the majority of tokens are masculine, it is by fewer than ten percentage points.

## 5.2.2 Factors Selected as Significant

I ran two analyses in Goldvarb X: one for linguistic factors and a separate one for social factors. Of all the factor groups, four were statistically significant: Preceding Grammatical Gender, Type, Language Medium, and Relationship to *Burrneshë*. (See Table 5.2.)

*Table 5.2. Factors contributing to the use of masculine grammatical gender for* burrneshat.

| LINGUISTIC FACTOR GROUPS | | | SOCIAL FACTOR GROUPS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total N: | 389 | | Total N: | 389 |
| | Input: | .145 | | Input: | .190 |
| Preceding Grammatical Gender | | | Relationship to *Burrneshë* | | |
| Masculine | | .87 | Self | | .68 |
| Unavailable | | .69 | Unfamiliar/Impersonal | | .53 |
| Feminine | | .27 | Family/Friend | | .27 |
| | *Range:* | *60* | | *Range:* | *44* |
| Type | | | Language Medium | | |
| Non-pronominal | | .62 | Oral | | .59 |
| Pronominal | | .29 | Written | | .38 |
| | *Range:* | *33* | | *Range:* | *21* |

Factors not selected as significant: Part of Speech, Age; Sex/Gender Identity. Factors excluded from analysis: Topic.

After running a binomial step-up/step-down variable analysis in Goldvarb X, the linguistic factors of Preceding Grammatical Gender and Type were found to be statistically significant in determining the use of the masculine variant over the generally preferred female variant. The analysis did not identify Part of Speech as statistically significant.

### 5.2.2.1 Preceding Grammatical Gender

A token was much more likely to share the same gender as the previous occurrence of grammatical gender. With a factor weight of .87, preceding masculine grammatical gender was a strong determiner of the following token's grammatical gender. Very few tokens were masculine when preceded by an occurrence of feminine grammatical gender; the factor weight for preceding feminine tokens is only .27. However, the data also indicates that, absent an instance of preceding grammatical gender, the masculine is still favoured, with the factor of Unavailable grammatical gender having a weight of .69.

### 5.2.2.2 Type

Although the majority of tokens are feminine for both phrase types, pronouns and pronominal adjectives strongly prefer the feminine; non-pronominal tokens less so. The factor weight for pronominal phrases was .62, whereas non-pronominal phrases had a factor weight of .29.

Once the Topic factor group was eliminated from analysis, the binomial step-up/step-down analysis for social factors found Language Medium and Relationship to *Burrneshë* to be statistically significant factors contributing to the use of the masculine variant.

### 5.2.2.3 Language Medium

The masculine gender was more common in recorded interviews than in the written materials. The factor of Oral medium had a .59 weight, while the Written factor weight was .38. However,

the feminine grammatical gender was nonetheless greatly preferred regardless of language medium.

### 5.2.2.4 Relationship to Burrneshë

One's relationship to the *burrneshë* or *burrneshat* in question was significant in influencing whether one would be more or less likely to employ the masculine or feminine grammatical form. *Burrneshat* were more likely to use a masculine form when talking about themselves. Indeed, as a factor, they have a weight of .68. However, others were much less likely to employ the masculine. Those unfamiliar with *burrneshat* had a weight of.53, and those who had close relationships to *burrneshat* used the masculine even less – the factor weight was .27.

### 5.3 Discussion

### 5.3.1 Part of Speech

Although the marginals for Part of Speech show a higher percentage of feminine tokens in nouns (85.1%) than in adjectives (73.6%), analysis found that Part of Speech does not play a significant role in the choice between masculine and feminine grammatical gender. This may be due, in part, to the methodological decision to code nominal adjectives based on their syntactic function (nouns) even if they are derived from adjectives. Refer back to Section 5.1.1.3 for examples. Additionally, future work might consider differentiating between Class 1 and Class 2 adjectives.

**5.3.2 Type**

Very few pronominal phrase tokens (only nine percent) were masculine. This can be accounted

for if we adopt a theory that

    a.  pronominal phrases (APs or NPs) are less lexically and perceptually salient in discourse

        than their non-pronominal counterparts[30], and

    b.  informants subconsciously tend to think of *burrneshat* as females.

Non-pronominal nouns and adjectives carry a heavier semantic load (Zelinsky-Wibbelt, 2000).

That is, in addition to expressing gender, number, case, etc., they also provide lexical

information (occupation, age, value judgements, appearance, manner, etc.). This additional

information means that non-pronominal nouns and adjectives are more salient in speech, as

speakers are more cognizant of their lexical selection. If informants are therefore less aware of

their pronoun choice than they are of their other noun and adjective choices, pronominal items

might be a more accurate reflection of one's subconscious understanding of a *burrneshë's* "true"

gender.


In using lexical items, a person may have difficulty reconciling the perceived semantic discord

between a word's masculine meaning and feminine morphology. For example, Writer 03

acknowledges that *burrneshat* "sacrifice" their sexual identity (i.e. their cis-femaleness) for the

greater social good (Example 5.13a). In other words, the writer understands *burrneshat* to be

girls who have become male for social, not personal, reasons. Nonetheless, when discussing the

male duties required of *burrneshat*, the writer uses the masculine forms of "hero[31]" and

---

[30] See Ivanova-Sullivan (2014), Zufferey (2015), and Fauconnier and Sweetser (1996).

[31] The use of *hero* (M) rather than *heroinë* (F) is particularly interesting, given the title of the article: "*Heroinat e verteta shqiptare – virgjëreshat e përbetuara*": "True Albanian Heroines – Sworn Virgins".

"member/representative of the family". Writer 03 uses only one other non-pronominal token in his article; it is also in the masculine (Example 5.13b). Note, however, that all of the pronominal tokens in his article are feminine.

*Example 5.13.*

a. WRITER 03: [...] një vajzë    WRITER 03: [...] a girl decides to
vendos që ta sakrifojë          sacrifice her sexual identity for
identitetin e saj seksual për  a social one and there is no
atë social dhe nuk ka <u>hero</u> më  greater <u>hero (M)</u> than <u>she</u>, in the
të madh se <u>kjo</u>, në kontekstin  context of carrying on this
e zhvillimit të kësaj tradite   Albanian tradition. After becoming
shqiptare. Pasi të bëhet burrë, a man, she turns into "he", works
ajo shndërrohet në "ai", mban  the soil, keeps a pocket watch like
plisin, orën e xhepit sikur    a man, changes mannerisms,
burrat, ndërron mimikën,       administers the house's property,
administron pronën e shtëpisë, settles community problems as a
zgjidh problemet në komunitet  <u>representative (M) of the family</u>,
si <u>pjesëtar i familjes</u>,     takes revenge when necessary, and
hakmerret sipas nevojës, dhe   swears to have no sexual relations
betohet se nuk do të ketë     with the same sex, nor with the
marrëdhënie seksuale as me të  opposite sex.
seksit të njëjtë, e as me atë
të seksit të kundërt.

b. WRITER 03: [...] janë ndjerë   WRITER 03: [...] they felt
<u>krenarë</u> për atë që kanë bërë.  <u>proud (M)</u> for what they have done.

### 5.3.3 Preceding Grammatical Gender

In a cooperative conversation, speakers are likely to align themselves with their interlocutors. According to Garrod and Pickering (2009), dialogue "is a joint action at different levels. At the highest level, the goal of interlocutors is to align their mental representations. This emerges from joint activity at lower levels, both concerned with linguistic decisions (e.g., choice of words) and nonlinguistic processes (e.g., alignment of posture or speech rate)" (56). It is not surprising, then, that the selection of grammatical gender would be affected by the previously employed grammatical gender. Although an individual may tend to use the feminine gender when talking

about *burrneshat*, hearing someone else use the masculine form could influence his or her choice of gender in the next utterance.

This phenomenon was coined the "birds of a feather" effect by Scherre and Naro (1991) in their study of agreement marking in Brazilian Portuguese: "the principle that governs the real use of markers is something more like 'birds of a feather flock together,' that is, the more markers there are, the more likely another marker will be used; the fewer markers there are, the less likely another will be used" (24). Although Scherre and Naro's domain is syntax, the same principles are at work in other aspects of language (Pickering and Ferreira, 2008). This effect likely increases when speakers mirror their interlocutors or repeat previous phrases. In their review of structural priming[32], Pickering and Ferreira (2008) confirm that "In dialogue, interlocutors constantly switch between comprehension and production and are clearly able to use what they have just comprehended to guide what they produce. Thus it is not surprising that dialogue is extremely repetitive" (441).

In Example 5.14 below, Rozafa's second cousin, who almost always uses the feminine grammatical gender, employs the masculine following his mother's use of the masculine.

*Example 5.14.*

```
WIFE OF ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Ka        WIFE OF ROZAFA'S COUSIN: [Ø] was
qenë shumë njeri i mirë, moj,      such a good (M) person (M), oh, [Ø]
ka qenë i dashtun, o zot.          was loved (M), oh my God.
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Shumë i       ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Very loved (M)
dashtun e tana.                    and all.
```

---

[32] Citing J. K. Bock (1986), Pickering and Ferreira define structural priming as "a tendency to repeat or better process a current sentence because of its structural similarity to a previously experienced ('prime') sentence" (2008:427).

It is not always the case, however, that speakers will adjust their use of grammatical gender. Indeed, as in Example 5.15, a speaker may continue to use one grammatical gender despite the interlocutor's use of the other grammatical gender.

Example 5.15.

```
1st INTERVIEWER: Oh marshalla[33],    1st INTERVIEWER: Oh Masha'Allah,
dukesh më e vogël! si-                you look younger (F)! like-
LIANA: "Marshalla" mund thotë         LIANA: He who is Muslim can say
ai është myslyman, por                "Masha'Allah", but Orthodox people
orthodoksët nuk thonë                 don't say "Masha'Allah".
"marshalla".
1st INTERVIEWER: E di, haha.          1st INTERVIEWER: I know, haha.
LIANA: Jezu, haha. *tsk*              LIANA: Jesus, haha. *tsk* This is
Kështu janë ca gjëra që-              how some things are-
1st INTERVIEWER: Mund t'ju            1st INTERVIEWER: Can we ask you
pyesim për fenë tuaj?                 about your religion?
LIANA: Orthodoks.                     LIANA: Orthodox (M).
1st INTERVIEWER: Ju jeni              1st INTERVIEWER: You are
orthodokse.                           Orthodox (F).
```

In the above example, the interviewer employs the feminine when expressing surprise at Liana's age ("*Oh marshalla, dukesh më e vogël!*"). However, Liana's response to a question about religion employs the masculine ("*Orthodoks*"). Rather than the interviewer changing her gender usage for Liana, she replies using the feminine ("*Ju jeni orthodokse*"), despite receiving feedback indicating a preference for the masculine[34]. A possible explanation for the interviewer's maintained usage of the feminine is that she has an firm understanding of Liana as a female, regardless of Liana's numerous masculine traits.

Increased use of the masculine in the absence of a previous instance of grammatical gender is likely tied to the masculine's status as the default grammatical gender in Albanian when gender

---

[33] Although originally used by Muslims, this expression is widely used throughout Albania and by Albanians of all faiths. Note that Interviewer 01 is of an Orthodox background.

[34] In fact, earlier in the interview, Liana had also explicitly stated a preference for "Sir" over "Ma'am":

is unknown[35]. When in doubt, or when discussing *burrneshat* in the abstract, speakers or writers

will be more likely to default to using the masculine.

Of course, the results show that, at most, only fifty-three percent of tokens are masculine, even

when preceded by a masculine token. To some extent, this may reflect situations such as that of

Example 5.15 above, in which different speakers have different gender ideologies. However,

there are also many examples in the data of linguistic variation. This occurs even in the speech or

writing of a single informant. (See Example 5.16.)

Example 5.16.

ARTICLE 02: Ndërsa, Behari, një Burrneshë 86-vjeçare jetoi si djalë që nga mosha 6-vjeçare, sepse thjeshtë nuk u ndje si vajzë. <u>Ai</u> ishte rrahur nga nëna <u>e tij</u>, sepse nuk pranonte të vishej me rroba vajze. <u>Ajo</u> ishte vetëm në <u>12 vjeçe</u> kur babai pranoi që ajo pjesën tjetër të jetës ta jetonte si burrë. Behari ishte në nje intervistë të botuar më herët në GQ, kur ishte pyetur se pse një burrë nuk mund të jetonte si grua, përgjigja <u>e tij</u> ishte: "Në qoftë se një djalë vishet dhe vepron si një vajzë, kjo do të ishte poshtëruese! <u>Ai</u> meriton të rrihet keq".	ARTICLE 02: Meanwhile, Behar, a 86-year old (F) *Burrneshë* (F) lived as a boy since the age (F) of 6 years old (F), simply because [Ø] didn't feel like a girl. <u>He</u> was beaten by <u>his</u> mother, because [Ø] wouldn't agree to dress in girls' clothes. <u>She</u> was only <u>12 years old (F)</u> when [Behar's] father accepted accepted that the rest of [Behar's] life would be lived as a man. Behar was in an previous interview published by GQ, when [Ø] was asked why a man couldn't live as a woman, <u>his</u> answer was: "If a boy dresses and acts like a girl, that would be humiliating! He deserves to be beaten badly".

The author of Article 02 switches between the masculine and feminine when writing about

Behar. However, these switches do not seem to be motivated by any literary strategy to evoke

gender transition; the masculine is used to described Behar at a time when Behar was still a

---

[35] The exception being the generic neuter; in Albanian the generic neuter ("it" in English) is expresses using the feminine forms *ajo* or *kjo*, "this/that" (Lloshi 1999).

"she" ("*Ai ishte rrahur nga nëna e tij*"), and the feminine is used when describing the father's

acceptance of Behar's transition to masculinity ("*Ajo ishte vetëm në 12 vjeçe kur babai pranoi*

që ajo pjesën tjetër të jetës ta jetonte si burrë"). Whether cases such as this one indicate a sort of

unaware gender "code-switching", or simply poor editing, is unclear.

5.3.4 Language Medium

Compared to the oral data, written data contained fewer masculine tokens. This may be due, in

part, to the nature of written texts. Although not always the case (see the previous example),

articles and essays are generally edited and proof-read to avoid mistakes and inconsistencies.

Additionally, the act of writing (typing) is a deliberate, conscious one; the writer is aware of his

or her word choice. Given this more formal register, it makes sense that written materials would

display less (unintentional) variation in grammatical gender.

The written materials also differ from the oral data with regard to informant demographics.

Many tokens in the written data are produced by informants unfamiliar with *burrneshat*. The

only data from *burrneshat* themselves come from two interviews – one with Liana and one with

Rita. Thus, whether they have met a *burrneshë* once for an interview or are only writing about

burrneshat from a philosophical point of view, writers do not have an established relationship

with *burrneshat*. Tokens from friends and family of *burrneshat* are absent from the written data.

On the other hand, the informants in the recorded interviews, with the exception of the three

interviewers, are all either *burrneshat* themselves, or people familiar with them. Although

friends and family have low rates of masculine usage, *burrneshat* have above average rates of

masculine tokens (see the following section). With *burrneshat* providing nearly thirty percent of

all tokens, their high participation in recorded interviews balances out family and friends'

relatively low rates of using the masculine grammatical gender.

5.3.5 Age

Age was not selected as significant in determining grammatical gender usage. With the exception

of informants aged 40 to 69, all age groups used the feminine gender for over 80% of tokens. A

possible explanation for the higher rates of male tokens in the language of middle-aged

informants may be that three out of four *burrneshat* belong to this age group. *Burrneshat* use the

masculine gender more than other informants (see Section 5.2.1); the percentages likely reflect

the larger proportion of tokens originating from *burrneshat*.

5.3.6 Sex/Gender Identity

Sex/Gender Identity of informants was not a significant factor in predicting use of grammatical

gender. However, it is worth noting that all informants coded as Self (S) in the Relationship to

Burrneshë factor group are the same informants who are coded as *Burrneshë* (B) in the

Sex/Gender Identity factor group. Given that all tokens produced by *burrneshat* were used for

self-reference, it can be understood that being a *burrneshë* is a significant factor in whether or

not one will have a higher rate of masculine grammatical forms in one's speech.

5.3.7 Relationship to *Burrneshë*

One's relationship to a *burrneshë* was significant in influencing use of grammatical gender.

Burrneshat themselves were the most likely to use the masculine gender. Family and friends

were the least likely, with informants unfamiliar with *burrneshat* also less likely to use masculine forms of grammatical gender. These results may lend insight into how informants conceive of the gender identity of *burrneshat*.

Informants who had not met *burrneshat* and interviewers who met *burrneshat* for the first time, had a rate of sixteen percent masculine tokens. Is tempting to interpret this behaviour as evidence that *burrneshat*, despite their best masculinisation efforts, nonetheless make a somewhat feminine first impression. However, it is important to consider the context in which these informants are speaking or writing about *burrneshat*. They have sought to interview or learn about *burrneshat* precisely because *burrneshat* are "women who became men". Thus, at the forefront of informants' minds is the fact that the interview or article subject is originally a woman. Informants may be preoccupied with trying to understand or account for a *burrneshë*'s complex gender identity and presentation. Such a fixation may influence a speaker or writer to use more feminine grammatical forms than they would if they had met a *burrneshë* in a different social setting. Indeed, it is quite possible that in another context, these informants would not even realize that the *burrneshë* was not a biological male.

In comparison to journalists and interviewers, relatives and friends have solid relationships with *burrneshat* that may in fact predate the transition. These informants are not fixated on gender identity; the *burrneshat* in their lives are, for all intents and purposes, social men. Family and friends did not express any reluctance to accept them as such, nor is there any evidence of disrespect or ridicule towards *burrneshat*. In fact, informants often insisted upon the manliness, outstanding character, and integrity of the *burrneshat* in their lives. Therefore, it is unlikely that

78

the low rate (eleven percent) of masculine tokens in the speech of friends and relatives reflects a rejection of *burrneshat*'s masculine identity. A more plausible explanation is that these speakers do not perceive any conflict between the original gender of *burrneshat* and their adopted gender. For example, Rozafa's aunt raised Rozafa as her own; for her, Rozafa was and will always be, her niece. However, the aunt has no problem praising Rozafa's strength and masculinity (Example 5.17a). In Example 5.17b, Fatmira's nephew expresses a similar understanding of his "aunt". As a third example, after recording, Rozafa's second cousin mentioned that growing up, he always knew that Rozafa was not "really" a man, but that he always saw and treated Rozafa as one.

Example 5.17.

a. ROZAFA'S AUNT: Oh, ka ndenjt besa, si trim i mirë ka ndenjt, për atë punë ka mbajt armë si trim.
3rd INTERVIEWER: Ah, ka mbajt armë?
ROZAFA'S AUNT: Ka mbajt duhanin si trim, ka mbajt tana- tana gjërat si me ken trim. Jo si me ken[37] femër. Ka kaluar shumë e- shumë e mirë, jo se ka qenë e imja. Po ka kalu shumë e mirë, shumë e ndershme.

ROZAFA'S AUNT: Oh, [Ø] maintained *besa*, stayed like a good *trim*[36], for that work [Ø] carried a weapon like a *trim*.
3rd INTERVIEWER: Ah, [Ø] carried a weapon?
ROZAFA'S AUNT: [Ø] kept tobacco a *trim*, kept a lot- a lot of things like a *trim*. Not like a woman. [Ø] was very- very good, and I'm not just saying this because [Ø] was my own (F). But [Ø] was very good (F), very honourable (F).

b. FATMIRA'S NEPHEW: Si hallë, por gjithmonë e veçantë, gjithmonë e veçantë. Nuk e di- nuk e di. Shumë e veçantë, e veçantë po si hallë. Po edhe shumë e fortë edhe shumë e fortë, edhe shumë interesante [?] gjithmonë fakti, a din.

FATMIRA'S NEPHEW: As a *hallë*[38], but always special (F), always special (F). I don't kn- I don't know. Very special (F), special (F) but like a *hallë*. But also very strong (F) and very strong (F), also very interesting (F) [?] always the fact, you know.

---

[36] *trim* (masc.): a person who embodies the following characteristics: bravery, heroism, strength, manliness, gallantry.
[37] Gheg infinitive construction and pronunciation of the verb "to be".
[38] Paternal aunt.

```
Interesante po e din, si        Interesting (F) but you know, like
gjithmonë e gatshme dhe         always willing to help (F) and
gjithmonë e gatshme me ne e     always willing to help (F) us and
dashtun, e disponu si shok,     loving (F), there for you (F) like
marshalla.                      a friend (M), Masha'Allah.
```

These speakers have accepted and grown accustomed to their aunts, sisters, nieces, or cousins living as men. What outsiders might view as strange or intriguing, friends and relatives understand as a normal part of everyday life. Confident in a *burrneshë*'s masculinity, such speakers can comfortably use feminine grammatical forms without worrying about making ideological statements regarding a *burrneshë*'s "manliness".

Burrneshat were the group with the highest rate of male tokens. This indicates that they indeed see themselves as men, even if they readily acknowledge their biological differences and female childhoods. It also reflects a successful internal adoption of masculinity. Nonetheless, only thirty-seven percent of tokens produced by *burrneshat* were masculine; *burrneshat* still mostly used feminine grammatical forms. The reason is probably the same as it is for relatives and friends – they do not deny the part of them that is female, nor do they feel obligated to choose between one gender or another.

However, an additional reason for using female forms might be one of pride; *burrneshat* expressed a common sentiment of pride for what they have accomplished in their lives. In Example 5.18 below, Rita revels in the memory of commendations from women's groups. Rita may be a man, but Rita's body is still that of a five-foot-tall woman – quite the challenge for a profession which requires a fair amount of bodily strength.

Example 5.18.

RITA: E nisa punën si
ekskavatoriste, dhe më pas,
kërkoja edhe më shumë. Këtu
ruaj edhe një letër që ma ka
sjellë një grua nga Bashkimi
Sovjetik, Anastasia e quajnë,
madje-madje, kam edhe një
letër që më ka ardhur nga
Shoqata e Grave Rumune.
Anastasia më shkruan se "e
vlerëson profesionin tim si
ekskavatoriste, madje ajo më
thotë se grua aviatore ka,
edhe kamioniste, por
ekskavatoriste është shumë e
rrallë". Ndërsa letrën e marrë
nga Shoqata e Grave Rumune nuk
kam mundur dot ta përkthej,
pasi është frëngjisht.

RITA: I began work as an
excavator (F), and later I looked
for something more. Here I still
hold on to a letter that a woman
from the Soviet Union sent me, she
was called Anastasia, maybe, I also
have a letter that arrived from the
Romanian Women's Assosiation.
Anastasia wrote that she "valued my
profession as an excavator (F), she
even told me that there are women
aviators (F), truck drivers (F)
too, but an excavator (F) was very
rare". Whereas I haven't been able
to translate at all the letter from
the Romanian Women's Association,
as it is in French.

5.3.8 Topic

Topic was excluded from multivariate analysis. However, a look at the marginals reveals that the

topic of conversation may nonetheless play a role in the choice of grammatical gender. For the

factors Childhood, General, Transition, and Other, the rate of feminine tokens hovers around

75%. On the other hand, of the tokens coded for the topic Work, nearly 90% are feminine.

It may seem counter-intuitive that discussions of Work would in fact use the masculine

grammatical gender less than, say, discussions of Childhood. After all, many *burrneshat* were

still female in childhood, and by the time they were working, all of the *burrneshat* had taken on

male identities. If grammatical gender usage is not necessarily related to a *burrneshë*'s gender

presentation, it would suggest that speakers and writers may be manipulating grammatical

gender to express the nuances and complexities of *burrneshë* identities. In Example 5.19 below

(reproduced from Section 5.1.1.5), Fatmira's use of grammatical gender expresses a masculine

gender identity from an early age. When recalling a childhood episode, Fatmira does use the

feminine once ("*6 vjeçare*"), but immediately reverts to the masculine. Although at the time

others perceived Fatmira as a female, Fatmira makes it understood that Fatmira's own identity

was already male.

Example 5.19.

> FATMIRA: Kur jam lënë prej
> nënit mua më ka rrit një
> gjyshe, ata tre edhe më ka
> rrit, gjyshe dhe [?] 6 vjeç.
> Doshin me më rrah me më vesh
> fustan aty s'e kam pranu [?].
> 6 vjeçare, 5 vjeç mund të kem
> kenë.

> FATMIRA: When my mother left me I
> a grandfather raised me, those
> three also raised me, grandfather
> and [?] 6 years old (M).
> They threatened me with a beating
> to get me to wear a dress, I didn't
> accept it [?]. A 6 year-old (F), 5
> years old (M) I might have been.

Example 5.18 in the previous section is but one of many instances of feminine grammatical

gender being used for work-related discussions. Below, a journalist observes Rita's pride in the

work accomplished in Rita's lifetime (Example 5.20a). However, even *burrneshat* such as

Fatmira, who have self-identified as male since childhood, continue to use the feminine when

talking about their professional lives (Example 5.20b).

Example 5.20.

a.
> WRITER 05: Ajo është
> ekskavatoristja e parë femër
> dhe këtë ta dokumenton edhe me
> dekorata e urdhra si
> ekskavatoristja e kamionistja
> më e mirë. [...] Duket se ka
> nostalgji për ato vite, kur
> edhe pse e shanin, edhe pse e
> gjykonin, ajo është krenare që
> mundi të thyente tabutë e
> kohës dhe preferoi të bëhej
> djalë.

> WRITER 05: She is the first (F)
> female excavator (F) and can even
> prove it with awards and
> commendations as best (F)
> excavator (F) and truck driver (F).
> [...] It seems that [Ø] is
> nostalgic for those years, despite
> the insults and despite the
> judgement, she is proud (F) to have
> been able to break the taboos of
> the time and preferred to become a
> boy.

b. FATMIRA: Si <u>shofere</u>. Jam shumë   FAMIRA: As a <u>driver (F)</u>. I am very
   <u>e kenaqur</u> për atë. I thashë,   <u>pleased (F)</u> with that. I said, I am
   jam <u>shofere</u> dhe kam qenë shumë   a <u>driver (F)</u> and I have been very
   <u>e kenaqur</u> se unë <u>shofere</u>, unë   <u>pleased (F)</u> that I [am a]
   jam <u>shofere</u> me shtëpinë time.   <u>driver (F)</u>, I am a <u>driver (F)</u> with
                                                 my [own] house.

It appears that occupation, despite being one of the most stereotypically masculine aspects of the lives of *burrneshat*, is in fact a main channel of expression for their unique gender identity. *Burrneshat* have taken on incredibly physical and gender-segregated jobs, and they have earned the respect of their colleagues. Therefore, *burrneshat* need not defend themselves linguistically as "real men"; in Albanian culture, their positions and tough work ethic speak loudly enough.

5.4 Conclusion

There are a variety of factors that contribute to the selection of masculine or feminine gender for *burrneshat*. Two significant factors are language-based. Pronominal phrases are more likely to contain feminine tokens than their non-pronominal counterparts, and tokens are more likely to be masculine if immediately preceded by another masculine token. So are tokens with no immediate predecessor. As far as social factors are concerned, language medium and one's relationship to a *burrneshë* are both significant. Written texts displayed lower rates of masculine tokens than the oral data. Informants who had no previous relationship with *burrneshat* also tended to use fewer masculine tokens, and family and friends even less so. On the other hand, the language of *burrneshat* showed more frequent use of masculine grammatical gender. This usage was lowest when the topic of conversation was work or work-related.

The results of the quantitative analysis confirm variation in the use of grammatical gender when referring to *burrneshat*. Most informants produce both masculine and feminine forms in their language use; this reveals a certain degree of gender code-switching which may be employed strategically to evoke images of masculinity and strength. In fact, even the feminine grammatical gender can be used for this purpose. That male identity is not strictly tied to masculine grammatical forms indicates that language is only one facet of a much more complex social understanding of gender. In particular, it appears that one's actions and position in society are strong factors in determining gender. The following chapter investigates the complexities of gender in northern Albanian society by providing an in-depth analysis of the myriad ways gender can be constructed, grammatical gender being but one of them.

Chapter Six – Gendered Practices

6.0 Introduction

Interviews and written materials were rich in discursive and extra-linguistic data. The following sections discuss the numerous ways speakers and writers can perform, emphasize, or minimize the gender of *burrneshat*. Section 6.1 explores the numerous tools, linguistic and otherwise, that *burrneshat* have at their disposal in creating masculine personas, such as change in vocal pitch, attire, and overall attitude and stance. Sections 6.2 and 6.3 analyse the discursive practices employed by *burrneshat* and others in the expression or minimization of masculinity. However, throughout this chapter, it will also be evident that *burrneshat* do not always pass as biological men. Whether by choice or as a result of physical limitations, sometimes *burrneshat* evoke gendered identities that differ from what is typically male or female.

6.1 Gendered Performances

6.1.1 Vocal Pitch

In Example 6.1, a journalist comments upon the deep nature of Liana's voice. The journalist has written that just by looking at Liana, it is difficult to determine Liana's gender. She adds that, upon hearing Liana's voice, the listener is more confused than ever:

> *Example 6.1.*
>
> ```
> WRITER 04: [...] edhe nëse ke        WRITER 04: [...] even if you
> folur në telefon, fatmirisht         talk on the phone, fortunately or
> apo fatkeqësisht, një zë i           unfortunately, a deep voice answers
> trashë të pëgjigjet përtej           on the other end of the line.
> receptorit.
> ```

This is a common observation when people meet *burrneshat* for the first time. In fact, when listening to the interview with Liana, the transcriber had to verify with me that the speaker was truly a *burrneshë*, and not a biological male. Young (2000) describes Haki, a *burrneshë* that she met in the late 1990s:

> Haki's masculine appearance is enhanced by her particularly deep voice as well as by a cigarette which is usually seen, tucked behind her ear. (83)

Indeed, research confirms that voice gender is much more complex than whether or not the voice belongs to a biological male or a biological female. Pernet and Belin write that "Voice gender perception can be thought of as a mixture of low-level perceptual feature extraction and higher-level cognitive processes. Although it seems apparent that voice gender perception would rely on low-level pitch analysis, many lines of research suggest that this is not the case. Indeed, voice gender perception has been shown to rely on timbre perception and to be categorical, i.e., to depend on accessing a gender model or representation" (2014:3). Thus, gender categorization of voices relies on much more than a listener's perception of a speaker's pitch; social understandings of gender constructs also play a significant role. The authors find that, when listeners attempt to categorize voice gender, "pitch is used only when timbre information is ambiguous (i.e., for more androgynous voices)" (2014:3).

6.1.2 Dress and Mannerisms

Many authors and anthropologists have commented on the totally masculine appearance of *burrneshat*: "all the 'sworn virgins' whom I met dressed entirely in men's outer clothing, whether traditional or Western" (Young 2000:107). Young adds that "in every description given of the 'sworn virgins', there is the added socio-cultural confirmation of this cross-gender transformation visible in their acquisition of non-biological body discipline: their masculine stance, mannerisms and actions" (2000:98). In interviews and written descriptions, informants readily confirmed this display of masculinity. (See Examples 6.2a and 6.2b).

Example 6.2.

a.
```
ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Edhe është       ROAZAFA'S COUSIN: And [Ø] dressed
vesh komplet si burrë, me ka-     completely as a man, with a c- with
me kapele, me tana gjërat,        a cap, with lots of things, exactly
origjinal si burrë.               like a man.
ROZAFA'S FRIEND: [?] e ke parë    ROAZAFA'S FRIEND: [?] if you met on
në rrugë , ke kuptu se është      the street, you understood [Ø] was
burrë.                            a man.
3rd INTERVIEWER: Se është         3rd INTERVIEWER: That [Ø] was a man.
burrë.
ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Po, s'e ka       ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Yes, no one would
besu kurrkush se është femër      believe that [Ø] was female.
```

b.
```
LIANA: Unë me kostum, i veshur    LIANA: Me in a suit, dressed (M)
"king".                           like a king.
```

Burrneshat, in addition to dressing as men, also assume many traditionally male habits: smoking, drinking, and speaking loud and directly. Rita, despite being in recovery from partial paralysis, refuses to give up smoking unfiltered cigarettes, a treasured guilty pleasure (Example 6.3a). *Burrneshat* also inhabit male social circles (Example 6.3b) and perform the social roles that traditionally fall to men (see Example 6.3c.)

Example 6.3.

a. *discussing a brand of tobacco*
    2nd INTERVIEWER: I mirë është?   2nd INTERVIEWER: It's good? Strong
    I fortë apo jo?   or not?
    RITA: Mirë dridhe, j- jo nuk   RITA: It rolls well, it's n- it's
    është shumë i fortë.   too strong.
    2nd INTERVIEWER: Po ti e pa   2nd INTERVIEWER: And you, do you
    filtër?   smoke it without a filter?
    RITA: E pa- uh unë pa filtër   RITA: Witho- uh I smoke it without
    e pi.   a filter.
    2nd INTERVIEWER: *whistles*   2nd INTERVIEWER: *whistles* Very
    Shumë fortë!   strong!
    RITA: Unë përpara e zgjidhja   RITA: Before, I used to use a lot
    shumë të fortë duhanin [?]   of tobacco [?]
    2nd INTERVIEWER: ashtu, huh?   2nd INTERVIEWER: That much, huh?
    RITA'S SISTER: Që nuk mund   RITA'S SISTER: To the extent that
    rrinesh brenda.   you couldn't stay inside.

b. ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Edhe në   ROAZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: And for
    gjamë, kur ka shku në gjamë,   funerals, when [Ø] went to
    ka hy gjithmonë në rrjesht të   funerals, [Ø] always entered on the
    burrave.   men's side.
    [...]   [...]
    ROZAFA'S FRIEND: Nuk ka hy si   ROZAFA'S FRIEND: [Ø] didn't enter
    hynë gratë bashkë, po ai ka hy like women enter together, but he
    rrjesht të burrave.   entered on the men's side.

c. FITORE: [...] edhe prindërit   FITORE: [...] and my parents and
    edhe njerëzit e shtëpisë   people in the house always saw me
    gjithmonë më kanë shiku si një a man of the house and all.
    zot shtëpie si e tana.
    3rd INTERVIEWER: Të kuptoj.Si   3rd INTERVIEWER: I understand. As
    kryefamiljar.   head (M) of the family
    FITORE: Si kryefamiljare.   FITORE: As head (F) of the family.
    3rd INTERVIEWER: Mhmm.   3rd INTERVIEWER: Mhmm.
    FITORE: Edhe janë mundu mos   FITORE: And they never tried to
    me ma prish kurrë si me thënë. cross me, so to speak.
    3rd INTERVIEWER: Të kuptoj.   3rd INTERVIEWER: I understand.
    FITORE: Pra e kam komandu   FITORE: So I led the house as a
    shtëpinë si një mashkull.   male.

However, sometimes *burrneshat* behave (or are at least perceived to be behaving) in ways

unique to both cis-woman and cis-men alike. This is particularly salient with regard to

hospitality: because they are unmarried, *burrneshat* are accustomed to performing duties

typically assigned to the wife, such as maintaining a home and welcoming guests with food and

drink. In Example 6.4 below, a journalist comments on Rita's "feminine instincts".

Example 6.4.

WRITER 05: E veshur pastër, me këmishën e burrave dhe pantallonat, madje edhe shapkat si të burrave, Babë Rita nuk i ka humbur disa instinkte femërore. Të qeras dhe të pret me mjaft delikatesë, si një femër e vërtetë, edhe pse as që nuk ka dëshirë ta quajë vetën "femër".

WRITER 05: Dressed (F) neatly, in a man's shirt and pants, even men's shoes, Babë Rita hasn't lost some feminine instincts. [Ø] welcomes and waits on you with delicate attention, like a true woman, even [Ø] doesn't want to be called "woman".

Burrneshat are also in a unique position in that they are also able to inhabit women's spaces and

interact with women in ways that cis-men cannot. In particular, some *burrneshat* express their

responsibility as defenders of women, as does Liana in Example 6.5 below. Note, however, that

Liana nonetheless frames women as belonging to a separate group, and maintains strongly

gendered attitudes towards them.

Example 6.5.

LIANA: Ne e mbajmë kuranin, ne e mbajmë akoma atë betimin, ne e mbajmë që për zotin e shyqyr [?] nëqoftëse [?] ta kisha unë motër për shembull, këtë dhe të më bënte këtë dikush tjetër në fund te botës të shkonte unë do e gjeja. Po nuk do kalonte kollaj. Pse? Sepse karrakteri i femrës është shumë e brishte. Është shumë e njomë, është shumë elastike. Ndërsa meshkujt janë kështu, "hajt mo!"

LIANA: We keep the Kuran, we still keep that oath, we keep it so that, God forbid [?] if [?] I had a sister for example, and someone else did something and went to the end of the earth, I would find them. But it wouldn't be easy. Why? Because the character of a woman is very fragile. It's very soft, it's it's very impressionable. Whereas men are like this, "Hey, come on!"

6.1.3 Register

When interviews took place in cafés, it was common to hear *burrneshat* speak to waiters[39] loudly and with direct commands. Unfortunately, such interactions were not recorded, as they often occurred before or after the recording session. However, this same direct and at times aggressive way of talking can be observed in Example 6.6 (below). Liana has been informed that a young American woman was in a relationship with an Albanian, but that he recently ended it. Liana is convinced that this man was only using the woman to get a visa, despite the (female) interviewer insisting that this was not the case.

Example 6.6.

```
LIANA: Eh?                      LIANA: Eh?
INTERVIEWER 01: S'e di.         INTERVIEWER 01: I don't know.
LIANA: Si "s'e di"?             LIANA: What do you mean, you "don't
                                know"?
INTERVIEWER 01: Atë e di        INTERVIEWER 01: The girl knows.
vajza.
LIANA: Po vajza ka lidhje më    LIANA: Is the girl still in a
me atë? Jo.                     relationship with him? No.
INTERVIEWER 01: Jo.             INTERVIEWER 01: No.
LIANA: Atëherë? Dole te fjala   LIANA: Well then? Do you take my
ime?                            word?
INTERVIEWER 01: Keni të         INTERVIEWER 01: You are right.
drejtë.
LIANA: Ke mendimin tim eh?      LIANA: You share my opinion eh?
INTERVIEWER 01: Keni të         INTERVIEWER 01: You are right.
drejtë.
LIANA: Kam të drejtë por        LIANA: I am right, but *tsk* I go
*tsk* egërsohem për këto        crazy for these things. And if I
gjëra. Dhe sikur ta di, për     knew, for example, who this person
shembull, se kush është         was who managed to win her heart
personi që ka arritur të        and to break her heart, I would
fitojë zemrën e kësaj dhe ta    give him 124 lashes.
plagosi zemrën e kësaj, unë
e bëj 124 copash.
```

---

[39] Servers in Albania are almost always men.

During my time spent in Albania I have observed that this manner of speech, in which one

dominates the conversation and speaks forcefully, is reserved for men. Indeed, during interviews,

several female relatives spoke with such soft, timid voices that the recording equipment was

unable to pick up much of what they said. This passivity may be a reflection of the tradition for

brides and new wives to speak softly, if at all. Gjovalin Shkurtaj (2010) writes that the bride was

required to speak as quietly as possible, with her hands clasped at her heart:

> Gjatë gjithë kohës së nusërisë ajo është e detyruar të zbatojë rregullat etnografike të të folurit me zë të ulët,
> shpesh duke mos lëshuar fare zë, por vetëm duke lëvizur buzët dhe duke mbajtur qëndrimin tipik të
> nusërisë me duart të vëna në mes në lartësinë e zemrës. (244)

> TRANSLATION:
> *Throughout the entire period of being a new bride she must observe the ethnographic rules of speaking*
> *with a soft voice, often without producing any sound at all, but only moving her lips and maintaining the*
> *typical pose of the bride with hands placed at the height of the heart.*

6.2 Avoiding Grammatical Gender

Informants often navigated the Albanian system of binary grammatical gender by avoiding

statements that would require assigning *burrneshat* gender. Instead, informants used proxy

circumlocutions as well as constructions that allowed them to agree the grammatical gender with

words that stood as a proxy for the *burrneshë* in question.

6.2.1 *'Burrneshë'*

The grammatical gender of the word *burrneshë* is feminine. Therefore, as in Example 6.7,

informants are able to use this word, and all of the semantic ambiguities it entails, without having

to make decisions regarding grammatical gender.

Example 6.7.

a. ARTICLE 02: <u>Burrneshat</u>, <u>të</u>   ARTICLE 02: *Burrneshat* <u>(F)</u>, also
<u>njohura</u> edhe "virgjëresha   <u>known (F)</u> as "sworn virgins", had
të betuara", kishin prerë   cut their hair, were dressed as
flokët, ishin veshur si   men, and had taken upon their
burra, dhe kishin marrë mbi   shoulders all of the
supe të gjitha pergjigjësitë   responsibilities and work of the
dhe punët mashkullore të   men of the family.
familjes.

b. 3rd INTERVIEWER: <u>Ajo</u> që   3rd INTERVIEWER: <u>She</u> who was called
quhesha <u>burrnesha</u> e shpisë,   the *burrnesh*ë <u>(F)</u> of the house, who
që kishte punu tokën me   had worked the soil in the past,
përpara, <u>ajo</u> ishte <u>e semurë</u>, <u>she</u> was <u>ill (F)</u>, had a hole in
ishte me vrimë e zemër   the heart.

6.2.2 Describing the Personality, Not the Person

As was mentioned in Section 5.1.1.1, speakers and writers often made the character or

personality of *burrneshat* the topic of a sentence, rather than the *burrneshat* themselves

(Example 6.8). Similar to the method of using the word *burrneshë*, this manner of describing

burrneshat removes the burden of making judgements of gender identity.

Example 6.8.

a. 3rd INTERVIEWER: Ishte kështu   3rd INTERVIEWER: [Ø] had this kind
<u>natyrë</u> e dashur e afruar?   of <u>close (F)</u> loving (F) <u>nature (F)</u>?
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Po, po.   ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Yes, yes.
ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Shume.   ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Very.
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Shumë.   ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Very. Always

```
        Gjithmonë nuk ka-                    never had-
        ROZAFA'S FRIEND: Shumë njëri         ROZAFA'S FRIEND: A really good (M)
        i mirë.                              person (M).

    b.  1st INTERVIEWER: Po, mbase kjo       1st INTERVIEWER: Yes, maybe it
        ju ka sjellë edhe këtë               also has given you this strong (M)
        karakter të fortë⁴⁰ që keni.         character (M) of yours.
```

6.2.3 Addressing *Burrneshat* by Name

When meeting *burrneshat*, it can be difficult to find an appropriate greeting or title. Fatmira

(Example 6.9) explains that others simply use "Fatmira" as a way to avoid selecting among

"Mr.", "Miss" or "Mrs."

Example 6.9.

```
        3rd INTERVIEWER: Jo, ideja           3rd INTERVIEWER: No, the idea is,
        është, domëthënë, që momentin        I mean, at first do they say
        e pare të thonin "zon- zonjë"        "Ma'- Ma'am" or, you know, the idea
        apo, domëthënë, ideja-               that-
        FATMIRA: Jo, jo. Mua njerëzit        FATMIRA: No, no. People call me by
        më thirrshin në emër, në emër        name, absolutely by name.
        absolutisht.
        FATMIRA'S NEPHEW: Më thirrshin       FATMIRA'S NEPHEW: Call by name.
        me emër.
        3rd INTERVIEWER: Me emër.            3rd INTERVIEWER: By name.
        FATMIRA: Absolutisht.                FATMIRA: Absolutely.
```

Similarly, many *burrneshat* are addressed with terms of endearment by family members and

friends. In this situation as well, there are options beyond "Aunt" or "Uncle", for example.

Section 6.3.2 discusses this in more detail.

---

⁴⁰ In this example, *karakter* is an object and therefore in the accusative case. The *nyje* particle in the accusative is also *të* for feminine words.

6.2.4 Circumlocution

In the interview with Rita and Rita's relatives, the interviewer never used the word *burrneshë*. Rather, whenever it was necessary to refer to the concept of *burrneshat*, he employed a roundabout method of describing the various activities or traits associated with *burrneshat*[41]. The phrases "work hard" (Example 6.10a) and "strong" (Example 6.10b) were particular favourites. Note than in Example 6.10b, although there are instances of feminine grammatical gender, these are in reference to a hypothetical *burrneshë* colleague.

Example 6.10.

a. 2nd INTERVIEWER: Në atë periudhë që zgjodhe që të <u>punoje fort</u> edhe të bëje detyrën e një mashkulli, të-ta- ta ndieje vetën mashkull ti që të <u>punoshe fort</u>, etj., etj. [...]

2nd INTERVIEWER: At that time when you chose to <u>work hard</u> and to do the work of a man, to- to- to feel yourself like a man, you who were <u>working hard</u>, etc. etc. [...]

b. 2nd INTERVIEWER: Pate kontakt uh me ndonjë uh shoqe tjetër gjatë kohës që punove?
RITA: shofere?
2nd INTERVIEWER: Që ishte <u>e forte si ti</u>? Që kishte zgjedhur të <u>jetonte në të njëjtën mënyre</u> si t-

2nd INTERVIEWER: Did you have contact uh with any uh other friend (F) while you were working?
RITA: a driver (F)?
2nd INTERVIEWER: Who was <u>strong (F) like you</u>? Who had chosen to <u>live the same way</u> as yo-

---

[41] In fact, prior to the interview, I discovered that this interviewer was confused about what I meant when I used the term *burrneshë*. He was only familiar with the affectionate term *burrneshë* that is used for admirable, hard-working women. He had not heard of "sworn virgins" and was expecting that we were going to be interviewing village women who worked hard all day. This is perhaps the reason behind the interviewer's reluctance to use the term *burrneshë* in the interview.

6.3 Creating Masculinities through Lexical Choices

6.3.1 Connotations of Masculinity

Regardless of their grammatical gender, certain phrases can evoke strong masculine imagery. This effect is amplified within the cultural context of Albania, a country with a tradition of highly gendered social roles and practices. Some terms, like 'mischievous', 'hard-working', or 'strong', can be used for either men or women, but tend to associated with boys and men[42] (see Examples 6.11b, c, e). Other terms are much more tied to a man's role in Albania; any attempt to use these words for women would be highly marked in Albanian culture (see Examples 6.11a, d).

Example 6.11.

a. ROZAFA'S AUNT: Për atë punë ka mbajt armë si <u>trim</u>.

ROZAFA'S AUNT: To do so, [Ø] carried a weapon like a *trim[43]*.

b. ROZAFA'S AUNT: E veshu në [?], <u>punëtore, punëtore e thjesht</u> shumë.

ROZAFA'S AUNT: Dressed (F) in [?], <u>hardworking (F)</u>, a very <u>down-to-earth (F) hard-worker (F)</u>.

c. FITORE: Në periudh, koha që kam qenë <u>e fortë</u>, e kam pas jetën bukur.

FITORE: During that period, the time that I was <u>strong (F)</u>, I had a good life.

d. 3rd INTERVIEWER: Ju e-, gjithmonë e keni pasur Fitoren si <u>kryefamiljare</u>?
FITORE: Po, si tip <u>kryefamiljare</u>. Kët- këtu e kam, si më thënë- unë kam adresu vëllain.
3rd INTERVIEWER: Ti- ti ke thënë vëllait që ta bërë t-
FITORE: Unë jam bërë <u>shkak</u>.
3rd INTERVIEWER: Ti je bërë <u>shkak</u>.
FITORE: Po, po.
3rd INTERVIEWER: Domëthënë janë me shkuesi?

3rd INTERVIEWER: You- you always had Fitore as <u>head (F) of the family</u>?
FITORE: Yes, like <u>a head (F) of the family</u>. Her- here I, how to say it, I set up my brother.
3rd INTERVIEWER: You- you told your brother to-
FITORE: I was <u>the one responsible</u>.
3rd INTERVIEWER: You were <u>the one responsible</u>.
FITORE: Yes, yes.
3rd INTERVIEWER: You mean that they became engaged?

---

[42] See Gaucher, Friesen & Kay (2011) for examples and in-depth analysis of gendered wording.
[43] *trim* (masc.): a person who embodies the following characteristics: bravery, heroism, strength, manliness, gallantry.

```
FITORE: Po, po. Bie me shkuesi.⁴⁴    FITORE: Yes, yes. They got engaged.
```

    e.
```
LIANA: Kam qenë gjithmonë      LIANA: I have always been çamarroke.
Tip i lëvizshëm, e             mischievous (F). Moving around (M),
shkathët...                    cunning (F)...
```

6.3.2 Terms of Affection and Nicknames

Friends and relatives often adopt special terms of endearment or nicknames for *burrneshat*.

These terms reveal the complexities of *burrneshat* gender identity, particularly for the people

closest to them who knew them as little girls, prior to transition. In Examples 6.12a-c, relatives

and friends of Rozafa, Rita, and Fitore explain these terms.

    Example 6.12.

    a.
```
3rd INTERVIEWER: Si i thoshit     3rd INTERVIEWER: How did you call
juve, si i thërrisnit, a          [ROZAFA], how did you call [ROZAFA],
thërrisnit-                       did you call-
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Na- ne       ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: We- us
fëmijët ne e kemi thirr- ne e     children, we called [ROZAFA]- we
kemi thirr "dadë".                called [ROZAFA] "dadë⁴⁵".
3rd INTERVIEWER: "xhaxha" apo-    3rd INTERVIEWER: "xhaxha"⁴⁶ or-
WIFE OF ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Dadë.    WIFE OF ROZAFA'S COUINE: Dadë.
3rd INTERVIEWER: Dadë.            3rd INTERVIEWER: Dadë.
ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Dada.            ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Dadë.
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Po, Dada.    ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Yes, Dadë.
3rd INTERVIEWER: Dadë siç i       3rd INTERVIEWER: Dadë just like we
themi ne "hallë".                 say "hallë"⁴⁷.
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Dada. Po,    ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Dadë. Yes,
Dada.                             Dadë.
ROZAFA'S ACQUAINTANCE: Si         ROZAFA'S ACQUAINTANCE: Like "aunt".
"aunt". Është femërore por e      It's feminine but expresses a bit
tregon pak si burrë.              of masculinity.
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Ne           ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Us children-
fëmijët-
ROZAFA'S COUSIN: Jo, jo.          ROZAFA'S COUSIN: No, no.
ROZAFA'S FRIEND: "Dadë" mund      ROZAFA'S FRIEND: You can also call
```

---

⁴⁴ Traditionally, engagements are arranged by the two fathers, or other (male) family heads. Only recently has it become common practice for young people to choose their own partners without parental involvement.
⁴⁵ According to Friedman and Joseph (2016), the etymology of *dadë* is "female servant". They note, however, that there is a "range of meanings for Alb *dadë* (from Newmark 1998: s.v.) […]: 'wetnurse; pet name in baby talk for the baby's female caretaker; grandma, mommy, big sister'" (page number unavailable).
⁴⁶ Paternal uncle (Standard variant).
⁴⁷ Paternal aunt.

t'i thirrësh edhe nënës.
ROZAFA'S ACQUAINTANCE: Po.
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Në shenj dashni, dashnije i kemi thirr
ROZAFA'S FRIEND: A kupton tani?
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: Dadë.
ROZAFA'S FRIEND: Mund t'i thirrësh dhe gruas së axhës[48].
3rd INTERVIEWER: Është aty dialekte domëthënë. Kuptoj.

a mother "*Dadë*".
ROZAFA'S ACQUAINTANCE: Yes.
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: As a sign of affection, out of love we called
ROZAFA'S FRIEND: Understand now?
ROZAFA'S 2nd COUSIN: *Dadë*.
ROZAFA'S FRIEND: You can also call the wife of your *axha*[48] that.
3rd INTERVIEWER: So it's dialect, you mean. I understand.

b. RITA'S SISTER: [?] rrit si burrë, kjo kalamajt e mi e thanë gjithë Babë Rita.
RITA'S NIECE: Uh we all call her Babë Rita.
RITA: Kala- kalamajt e lagjes-
RITA'S NIECE: It's her nickname.
RITA'S SISTER: Edhe lagjia.
RITA: Daja, daja.
RESEARCHER: Atëherë është vëllai jot?
RITA'S SISTER: Ehh, vëllai!
RITA: Ehh
RESEARCHER: Daja, po.
RITA'S SISTER: Uh çuni i madh, 52 vjeç- 52 vjeç [?]. 52 vjeç ai [?] vij unë nga Italia që të fala Babë Ritës. Është 52 vjeç dhe është mësu që-
2nd INTERVIEWER: Babë Ritës, okay yeah.
RITA'S SISTER: Se unë kam shumë kohë ka [?] rrin në Itali se-
RITA: Edhe këtu Babë Rita [?].

RITA'S SISTER: [?] stayed like a man, my kids all call her *Babë*[49] Rita.
RITA'S NIECE: Uh we call call her *Babë* Rita.
RITA: Ki- Neighbourhood kids-
RITA'S NIECE: It's her nickname.
RITA'S SISTER: Neighbourhood also.
RITA: *Daja*[50], *daja*.
RESEARCHER: So [Ø] is your brother?
RITA'S SISTER: Ehh, brother!
RITA: Ehh
RESEARCHER: *Daja*, yes.
RITA'S SISTER: Uh the oldest boy, 52 years- 52 years [?]. 52 years. He [?] I come from Italy, that I greet *Babë* Rita. He's 52 years old and he's used to-
2nd INTERVIEWER: *Babë* Rita, okay yeah.
RITA'S SISTER: Because I've spent a lot of time [?] in Italy because-
RITA: And here *Babë* Rita [?].

c. 3rd INTERVIEWER: Po, si të thërrisnin, këta "dadë" të thërrisnin?
FITORE: Të gjithë "dadës" edhe heh! Tan edhe shoqnia edhe moshat e reja edhe të tan nipat e mbesat e- tashi s'më thirrin teze, hallë, për shembull tana më thirrin dadë. Edhe kur kam punu te klubi atje tan, edhe moshat e vjetra.
3rd INTERVIEWER: Kuptoj,

3rd INTERVIEWER: Yes, how do they call you, do they call you this "*dadë*"?
FITORE: Everyone "*dadë*" and heh! Everybody and friends and younger people and all nephews and nieces and- now they don't call me "*teze*[51]" or "*hallë*" for example, everybody calls me "*dadë*". Also when I worked at that club, everybody, the older people too.
3rd INTERVIEW: I understand, I

---

[48] Paternal uncle (Gheg dialectal variant).
[49] Father.
[50] Maternal uncle.
[51] Maternal aunt.

```
kuptoj.                          understand.
FITORE: Hah! "Dadë" njëri, "heh   FITORE: Hah! One person started
dadë" tjetër se ishin këta, për   saying "dadë", then another "Hey,
shembull, domëthënë nipët e me    dadë", because they were, for
mbesat e-                         example, like nephews and nieces-
```

Note that in Example 6.12a, Interviewer 03, who is from southern Albania, learns a new word,

dadë. She is then able to use this term later on when interviewing Fitore (Example 6.12c).

Outside of family settings, some *burrneshat* use names other than their birth names. Although all

of the *burrneshat* interviewed kept their female names, a few had also adopted masculine

nicknames. When out with friends, Liana prefers to be called "*Lali*[52]", a term of endearment for

men. "Liana" is a very feminine-sounding name, but *Lali* is a way for Liana to socialize without

drawing attention to the fact that Liana was born different from the other men. Rita also uses a

male pseudonym in certain social settings to avoid being identified as a *burrneshë*. As "Tomorr",

Rita can blend in and pass as a biological male (Example 6.13). This was particularly useful, Rita

explained, when working as a taxi driver for wedding parties. As the driver, "Tomorr" was often

included in the festivities, and did not have to worry about explaining or justifying "his"

masculine identity to strangers.

   Example 6.13.

```
RITA: Pastaj kur vija gjëkundi,   RITA: Later on when I would go
të gjithë [?] merrja nuse që      somewhere, everyone [?] I would
martoheshe, kur kisha taksinë,    take the bride who was getting
kështu iu thosha këtyre           married, when I had a taxi, I tell
krushqve [?] mos më thirrni në    the wedding party [?] to not call
emër po më thirrni Tomorr.        me by my name but to call me
                                  Tomorr.
```

---

[52] Friedman and Joseph (2016) provide a variety of meanings for *lalë* (*lali*): 'young father: daddy'; 'grandfather';
'brother'; 'elder brother'; '(paternal) uncle'; 'godfather'.

```
2nd INTERVIEWER: Tomorr.          2nd INTERVIEWER: Tomorr.
RITA: Dhe Tomorr ja funksion.     RITA: And Tomorr worked well.
Ata atje "Hajt gëzuar Tomorr,     They [would say] "Hey, cheers,
gëzuar t'u pi raki."              Tomorr, cheers, drink raki."
2nd INTERVIEWER: Ti- ti- ti       2nd INTERVIEWER: You- you- you
doje që të të thërrisnin          wanted them to call you Tomorr.
Tomorr.
RITA'S SISTER: Nuk tregon.        RITA'S SISTER: It doesn't reveal.
RITA: Që mos bija në sy.          RITA: To not stand out.
2nd INTERVIEWER: Që mos bija      2nd INTERVIEWER: To not stand out.
në sy.
RITA: Mm.                         RITA: Mm.
```

6.4 Conclusion

Grammatical gender is but one of many ways that speakers and writers can construct gender and express gender ideologies. The data show that the performance of masculinity involves a variety of verbal strategies and physical mannerisms. Deepened voices, men's wear, lexical decisions, and domineering attitudes all contribute to a masculine image, even when one's speech employs feminine morphology. Yet the data also indicate that informants close to *burrneshat* have an understanding of masculinity that goes beyond external display. In interviews with friends and relatives, it is clear that a *burrneshë*'s character is equally important in forming a masculine identity. Traits associated with a family patriarch – strength, generosity, courage, and an instinct to protect – are applied without hesitation to the *burrneshat* in the lives of those interviewed. Without these important characteristics, it is unlikely that the more superficial depictions of masculinity would have the same force.

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

7.1 Concluding Discussion

At its core, this study is about language's role in shaping the identities of individuals. The literature confirms that *burrneshat* have long been successful in constructing socially acceptable masculinities, even to the point that outsiders are often clueless when in the presence of *burrneshat*. The results of the present analysis indicate that language plays an important role in this construction. In fact, language's role is twofold; it is both a means of gender performance and a window into the gender ideologies of the informants.

Previous studies on language and gender have illustrated a variety of ways in which language can be used to construct transgender identities. However, these studies have been qualitative in nature; until now linguists have not quantified transgender language use. This study corrects this trend by providing a multivariate analysis of specific linguistic and social variables. In addition to highlighting gendered practices in the Albanian language, this study is the first to identify rates of grammatical gender usage and the statistically significant variables that determine the selection of masculine or feminine variants.

As a whole, speakers and writers overwhelmingly displayed a preference for female grammatical forms when referring to *burrneshat*. This was the case even for *burrneshat* themselves. However, analysis does provide insight as to which linguistic and social factors increase or decrease the usage of masculine forms. Pronominal forms were much less likely than average to occur in the masculine. As pronouns are less perceptually and lexically salient that their non-pronominal

counterparts, they are likelier to be employed more sub-consciously. This suggests that informants are not blind to the female biology of *burrneshat*; indeed this strong preference for feminine pronouns indicates that informants are quite aware of it. Use of grammatical gender is anything but static, however. Even within the speech of a single informant, forms shifted between both genders. Analysis found that an informant's use of grammatical gender is primed by previous occurrences of grammatical gender. Despite the general dominance of feminine tokens in the data, the results for the Preceding Grammatical Gender factor group showed that a majority of tokens, when preceded by an instance of masculine grammatical gender, were also masculine. Unsurprisingly, the written data displayed less variation than the oral data. Uniformity of grammar and spelling are part of the nature of newspaper articles, as is editing. More surprising is that variation does exist at all in newspaper articles. A shift between genders is an apt literary strategy, but much of the variation appears to be unconscious, or at least unintentional. Finally, one's relationship to *burrneshat* was also a significant factor. Relatives and friends were the least likely to use masculine grammatical forms; *burrneshat* were the most likely. Although both groups are very familiar (and comfortable) with the fact that *burrneshat* are women who have become men, the groups have different stakes in using language to express this adopted masculinity. Family members have already expressed acceptance of the *burrneshat* by allowing them to assume patriarchal roles. *Burrneshat*, on the other hand, use language much as they use men's clothing: it is an integral part of their daily projection of male identity.

The analysis of other gendered practices reinforces the notion that *burrneshat* have achieved incredibly masculine presentations. Even when the grammar is feminine, the connotations of many terms used to describe *burrneshat* are undoubtedly masculine. *Burrneshat* are proud of the

sacrifices they've made in order to live freely and care for others. This is evident in the high levels of feminine tokens when discussing work. Nonetheless, *burrneshat* have at their disposal several strategies for blending in with other men, including male nicknames.

It is possible that one might interpret these socially successful transitions from female to male as a sign that gender and sex equality is more progressive in Albania than in many Western nations. After all, the transgender civil rights movement in the United States is just now beginning to gain momentum. However, the findings of this study would suggest a different reality. Rather than forging new ones, *burrneshat* reinforce existing gender roles by choosing between the traditional male and female identities prescribed by a patriarchal society. As Young and Twigg (2009) write, "Living in a strict patriarchal society, [*burrneshat*] have made a break from subservient women's roles in dress, behaviour and self-assertion without breaking from their culture of patriarchy; rather they support that system. (130).

7.2 Limitations of the Present Research

This study is a foray into the language practices of a population that has received little to no previous sociolinguistic attention. It is an important contribution to Albanian sociolinguistics. Indeed, the Albanian language in general is understudied and Albanian sociolinguistics in particular is greatly underdeveloped. Quantitative analysis reveals significant variation in the speech of informants with regards to grammatical gender in Albanian. An analysis of other gendered practices illustrates the numerous other ways that gender can be constructed in discourse and social behaviour. However, the scope of analysis was limited to the examination of lexical and grammatical items; it lacks phonological and prosodic analysis. Additionally, as

mentioned in the Chapter 4, a relatively small pool of informants and the tendency for recorded

interviews to elicit more formal speech means that the results of this study may not reflect the

language or attitudes of the general population.

7.3 Directions for Future Research

Future study of language and gender identity in Albania would be well-served by a larger pool of

informants and quality acoustic recordings. This would allow for a comparison of the speech of

women, men, and *burrneshat* who, other than gender identity, share the same social

characteristics (age, geographical location, socio-economic class, etc.) in order to determine if

burrneshat pattern more with women or men in terms of standard vs. dialectal features, vocal

pitch, prosody, and so forth. The larger pool of informants would also include speakers who do

not have any sort of personal relationship with or connection to *burrneshat*. An analysis of these

speakers' attitudes and beliefs about gender in Albania would help us to understand if the views

expressed by people familiar with *burrneshat* reflect the views of Albanians in general.

Beyond the scope of *burrneshat*, further linguistic study is necessary in other transgender

communities. Northern Albania is rare in its total acceptance of women as social men; even in

cultures with socially sanctioned "third genders", a stigma is often attached. Therefore,

quantitative research is needed to understand the ways in which these transgender individuals use

grammatical gender as a tool for self-identity. Another question to consider: Do the linguistic

practices of transgender people who "pass[53]" differ from transgender people who do not? If so,

---

[53] "Successfully (convincingly) presenting one's preferred gender image. May be intentional or unintentional.
Passing is a contentious term in transgender communities, and has different meanings for different people. For
example, many trans people do not feel that they are presenting as anything but themselves, whereas "passing"

how? *Burrneshat* do not need to "pass" in order to gain mainstream acceptance; unfortunately, this is not always the case in many cultures worldwide. Finally, this area of study would benefit greatly from more work published by linguists who themselves identify as transgender (or non-cisgender). Transgender researchers and academics can bring unique perspectives to the field and perhaps help other linguists to develop best practices for research in transgender communities.

---

seems to imply that they are fooling people or hiding something. In addition some trans people do not desire to "pass" as non-trans, but rather to be respected for their identity and expression, even though people know that their gender identity or expression is different from the one typically associated with their sex." (Adams, Bell, and Griffin, 2007).

Chapter Eight – References

Allen, G. (1984). The Roots of Biological Determinism. *Journal of the History of Biology, 17(1),* 141-145.

Backer, B. (1979). *Behind the Stone Walls: Changing Household Organization among the Albanians in Yugoslavia.* Oslo: University of Oslo.

Blackless, M., Charuvastra, A., Derryck, A., Fausto-Sterling, A., Lauzanne, K., and Lee, E. (2000). How Sexually Dimorphic Are We? Review and Synthesis. *American Journal of Human Biology, 12,* 151-166.

Borba, R. and Ostermann, A. C. (2007). Do bodies matter? Travestis' embodiment of (trans)gender identity through the manipulation of the Brazilian Portuguese grammatical gender system. *Gender and Language, 1(1)*, 131-147.

Byron, J. (1976). Selection among Alternates in Language Standardization: The Case of Albanian. *Contributions to the Sociology of Language, 12,* 77-106.

Çamaj, M. (1984). *Albanian Grammar.* Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Campbell, L. (2006). Areal Linguistics: A Closer Scrutiny. In: Y. Matras, A. McMahon, and N. Vincent (Eds.), *Linguistic Areas: Convergence in Historical and Typological Perspective,* (pp.1-31). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Campos, H. (2009). Some notes on adjectival articles in Albanian. *Lingua, 119,* 1009-1034.

Coates, J. (2004). *Women, Men, and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Corbeill, A. (2008). *Genus quid est?* Roman Scholars on Grammatical Gender and Biological Sex. *Transactions of the American Philological Association, 138(1),* 75-105.

Corbett, G. G. (2006). Grammatical Gender. *In: K. Brown, (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics, Second Edition, (pp. 749-756). Oxford: Elsevier.*

Coupland, N. (2007). *Style: Language Variation and Identity*. Cambridge: University Press.

Cronn-Mills, K. (2014) *Transgender Lives: Complex Stories, Complex Voices.* Indianapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books.

Dickemann, M. (1997). The Balkan Sworn Virgin: A Traditional European Transperson. In: L. V. Bullough and C. James (Eds.), *Gender Blending*, Amherst, NY: Prometheus.

Durham, E. (1909) *High Albania*. London: Edward Arnold.

Elsie, R. (2012). Northern Albanian Culture and the Kanun. Paper given at the Symposium: *Albanese Tradities en Taal: 100 Jaar Onafhankelijk Albanië/Albanian Language and Culture: 100 Years of Independence*, University of Leiden, 10 Nov. 2012.

Enchanted Learning. (2015). Outline Map of Albania. Retrieved from http://www.enchanted learning.com/europe/albania/outlinemap

Fauconnier, G. and Sweetser, E. (1996). Spaces, Worlds, and Grammar. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Friedman, V. A. (2004). *Studies on Albanian and Other Balkan Language*. Peja: Dukagjini.

Friedman, V. A. (2005). Albanian in the Balkan Linguistic League: a reconsideration of theoretical implications. *Studia Albanica, 2005(1),* 33-43.

Friedman, V. A. (2006). Balkans as a Linguistic Area. In: K. Brown, (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics, Second Edition,* (pp. 657- 672). Oxford: Elsevier.

Friedman, V. A. and Joseph, B. D. (2016). *The Balkan Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Garrod, S. and Pickering, M. J. (2008). Joint Action, Interactive Alignment, and Dialog. *Topics in Cognitive Science, 1.* 292-304.

Gaucher, D., Friesen, J., and Kay, A. C. (2011). Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Advance online publication.

Gaudio, R. P. (2014). Acting Like Women, Acted Upon: Gender and Agency in Hausa Sexual Narratives. In L. Zimman, J. Davis & J. Raclaw (Eds.), *Queer Excursions: Retheorizing Binaries in Language, Gender, and Sexuality* (pp. 170-194). New York: Oxford University Press.

Godart, J. (1922). *L'Albanie en 1922*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Goffman, E. (1977). The Arrangement between the Sexes. *Theory and Society, 4(3),* 301-331.

Goulet, J.-G. A. (1996). The "Berdache"/"Two-Spirit": A Comparison of Anthropological and Native Constructions of Gendered Identities among the Northern Athapaskans. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 2(4)*, 683-701.

Hall, D. R. (1994). *Albania and the Albanians*. London and New York: Pinter Reference.

Hall, D. R. (1996). Albanian Identity and Balkan Roles. In *Reconstructing the Balkans: A Geography of the New Southeast Europe*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Hall, K. and O'Donovan, V. (1996). Shifting Gender Positions Among Hindi-speaking Hijras. In V. Bergvall, J. Bing, & A. Freed (Eds.), *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice* (pp. 228-266). London: Longman.

Inoue, M. (2007). Language and gender in an age of neoliberalism. *Gender and Language, 1(1)*, 79-91.

Ivanova-Sullivan, T. (2014). *Theoretical and experimental aspects of syntax-discourse interface in heritage grammars*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

Jarvis, C. (2000). The Rise and Fall of the Pyramid Schemes in Albania. *IMF Staff Papers 47(1),* 1-29.

Joseph, B., Constanzo, A., and Slocum, J. (2014). *Albanian Online.* Retrieved from http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/eieol/albol-0-X.html

Kadare, I. (1990). *Broken April*. London: Saqi Books.

Keenan, E. (1974). Norm-makers, norm-breakers: uses of speech by men and women in a Malagasy community. In: R. Bauman and J. Sherzer (Eds.), *Ethnography of Communication*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kilarski, M. (2007). On Grammatical Gender as an Arbitrary and Redundant Category. In: D. Kibbee (Ed.), *History of linguistics 2005: Selected papers from the Tenth International*

Conference on the History of the Language Sciences (ICHOLS X), 1-5 September 2005, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, (pp. 24-26). Amsterdam - Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Kilarski, M. and Krynicki, G. (2005). Not arbitrary, not regular: The magic of gender assignment. In: N. Delbecque, J. van der Auwera, and D. Geeraerts (Eds.), *Perspectives on variation: Sociolinguistic, historical, comparative,* (pp. 235-252). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Klippenstein, R. (2010). Word-initial consonant clusters in Albanian. *OSUWPL (59),* 10-32.

Kulick, D. (1997). The Gender of Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes. American Anthropologist, *New Series, 99(3),* 574-585.

Kulick, D. (1999). Transgender and Language: A Review of the Literature and Suggestions for the Future. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 5(4),* 605-622.

Kuntz, K. (2014). 'We'll Get You': An Albanian Boy's Life Ruined by Blood Feuds. *Spiegal Online.* Retrieved from http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/bloodfeudsstill prevalentinalbaniaa973498.html

Kurani, A. and Muho, A. (2014). A morphological comparative study between Albanian and English language. *European Scientific Journal, 14,* 28-47.

Labov, W. (1972). The Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores. *Sociolinguistics Patterns* (pp. 43-69). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov, W. (1984). Fields Methods of the Project on Linguistic Change and Variation. In: J. Baugh and J. Sherzer (Eds.), *Language in Use* (p. 28-53). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Lakoff, R. (1973). Language and Woman's Place. *Language in Society, 2(1),* 45-80.

Lloshi, X. (1999). *Albanian*. In U. Hinrichs (Ed.), *Handbuch der Südosteuropa-Linguistik* (pp. 277-288). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

Mardell, M. (2008). Is there a European Islam? *BBC*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/ blogs/legacy/thereporters/markmardell/2008/01/is_there_a_europe_an_islam_1.html

Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics. (2015). *ELAN (Version 4.9.0)* [Software]. The Language Archive. Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Available from http://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/.

Mëniku, L. (2008). *Gheg Albanian Reader*. Hyattsville, MD: Dunwood Press.

Mëniku, L. and Campos, H. (2012). *Colloquial Albanian: The Complete Course for* Beginners. New York/London: Routledge.

Newmark, L. (1999). Nyje. In *Oxford Albanian-English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press.

Newmark, L., Hubbard, P., and Prifti, P. (1982). *Standard Albanian: A Reference Grammar for Students*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

Paterniti, M. (2014). The Mountains Where Women Live as Men. *GQ*. Retrieved from http://www.gq.com/newspolitics/newsmakers/201403/burrneshaalbanianwomenlivingas men?/printable=true

Pernet, C. R. and Belin, P. (2014). The role of pitch and timbre in voice gender categorization. *Frontiers in Psychology (3)*, 1-11.

Perta, C. (2004). *Language decline and death in three Arbëresh communities in Italy. A sociolinguistic study*. Allessandira: Edizioni dell'Orso.

Phillips, W. and Boroditsky, L. (2003). Can Quirks of Grammar Affect the Way You Think? Grammatical Gender and Object Concepts. In R. Alterman and D. Kirsch (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 25th Annual Cognitive Science Society: Part 1 and 2,* (pp. 928-933). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Pickering, M. J. and Ferreira, P. S. (2008). Structural Priming: A Critical Review. *Psychological Bulletin, 134(3)*, 427-459.

Platon, A. (2012). Albanian dialects. Retrieved from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Albanian_dialects.svg#mediaviewer/

Poplack, S. (1989). The Care and Handling of a Mega-Corpus: The Ottawa-Hull French Project. In: R. Fasold and D. SChiffrin (Eds.), *Language Change and Variation* (pp. 411-451). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Robinson, J., Lawrence, H., and Tagliamonte, S. (2001). *GOLDVARB 2001 [computer program]: a multivariate analysis application for windows*. York University.

Sankoff, D., Tagliamonte, S. A., and Smith, E. (2005). *Goldvarb X: A variable rule application for Macintosh and Windows*. Department of Linguistics, University of Toronto.

Šarčević, P. (2004). Sex and Gender Identity of "Sworn Virgins" in the Balkans. Retrieved from http://www.udi.rs/articles/genderPS.pdf

Saxon, W. (1985). Enver Hoxha, Mastermind of Albania's Isolation. *The New York Times*.

    Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/12/world/enver-hoxha-mastermind-of-

    albania-s-isolation.html

Scherre, M. M. P. and Naro, A. J. (1991). Marking in Discourse: "Birds of a Feather". *Language*

    Variation and Change, 3(1), 23-32.

Shkurtaj, G. (2010). *Etnografi e të folurit të shqipes*. Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese Morava.

Sørensen, J. S. (2009). *State Collapse and Reconstruction in the Periphery: Political Economy,*

    Ethnicity and Development in Yugoslavia, Serbia and Kosovo. New York, NY: Berghahn

    Books.

Sotirović, V. (2013). National identity: who are the Albanians? the Illyrian anthroponymy

    and the ethnogenesis of the Albanians. *History Research, 1(2),* 5-24.

Spender, D. (1980). *Man Made Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Sugarman, J. C. (1997). *Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian*

    Weddings. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tannen, D. (1991). *You Just Don't Understand*. New York, NY: Ballantine.

Tarifa, F. (2007). Balkan Societies of "Social Men": Transcending Gender Boundaries. *Societies*

    Without Borders, 2(1), 75-92.

Tarifa, F. (2008). Of Time, Honor, and Memory: Oral Law in Albania. *Oral Tradition*, *23(1),* 3-

    14.

Trommer, J. (2013) Stress Uniformity in Albanian: Morphological Arguments for Cyclicity. *Linguistic Inquiry, 44(1),* 109-143.

U.S. Defense Language Institute. (1966). *A Survey of Albanian Language and Literature: Area Background Studies*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse.

UK Home Office. (2014). *Country Information and Guidance: Albania: Sexual orientation and gender identity*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/albania-country-information-and-guidance

Walker, J. A. (2010). *Variation in Linguistic Systems*. New York, NY: Routeledge.

Walker, J. A. (2014), Variation analysis. In: R. Podesva and D. Sharma (Eds.), *Research Methods in Linguistics* (pp. 440-459). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

West, C. and Zimmerman, D. H. (1983). Small insults: a study of interruption in cross-sex conversations between unacquainted persons. In: B. Thorne, C. Kramarae, and N. Henley (Eds.), *Language, Gender and Society* (pp. 102-117). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

West, C. and Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing Gender. *Gender and Society 1(2)*, 125-151.

Whitaker, I. (1968). Tribal Structure and National Politics in Albania, 1910-1950. In: I. M. Lewis (Ed.), *History and Social Anthropology* (pp. 253-293). London and New York: Tavistock Publications.

Wittenburg, P., Brugman, H., Russel, A., Klassmann, A., and Sloetjes, H. (2006). ELAN: a Professional Framework for Multimodality Research. In: *Proceedings of LREC 2006, Fifth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation*.

World Bank. (2014). *ALBANIA: World Bank Group Partnership Program Snapshot April 2014*. Washington, DC.

Young, A. (2000). *Women Who Become Men: Albanian Sworn Virgins*. Oxford/NewYork: Berg.

Young, A. (Interviewee). (2008). *Sworn Virgins.* Retrieved from National Geographic Web site: http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/albania_swornvirgins

Young, A. and Twigg, L. (2009). 'Sworn virgins' as Enhancers of Albanian Patriarchal Society in Contrast to Emerging Roles for Albanian Women. *Etnološka tribina 32(39),* 117-134.

Young, A., and Rice, J. (2012). De-centring Albanian Patriarchy? Sworn Virgins and the Re-negotiation of Gender Norms in the Post-Communist Era. In A. Hemming, G. Kera, and E. Pandelejmoni (Eds.), *Albania: Family, Society and Culture in the 20th Century* (pp. 163-173). Berlin: LIT Verlag.

Zelinsky-Wibbelt, C. (2000). *Discourse and the Continuity of Reference: Representing Mental Categorization*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Zherka, E. (2011). Excluded from Power: Historical Gender Inequalities in Customary Law in Kosovo and Northern Albania. *Annual REECAS Northwest Conference, April 16th, 2011*, s.6.

Zufferey, S. (2015). *Acquiring Pragmatics: Social and Cognitive Perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge.

APPENDIX A – Interview Schedule

1. Greetings and formalities

2. Introduction and explanation of project, obtaining consent

    Interviewer explains that we are studying language in Albania, and that we are particularly interested in *burrneshat*. Explanation of recording equipment and that anyone can ask to stop the interview at any time. All participants will remain anonymous in the study, and if necessary, names will be changed. Explanation of researcher's background and academic qualifications. Obtain explicit consent from all participants before proceeding.

3. Biographical information

    Interviewer begins interview by inquiring about the biographical details of *burrneshë* as well as the others present for the interview. May involve a rudimentary sketch of the family tree in order to better understand the various relationships between participants.

4. *Burrneshat*

    Interviewer then inquires about the decision to become a *burrneshë*. Questions about age of transition, reason for transition, reactions from family and friends, etc.

5. Work and occupation

   This is often a natural topic that accompanies discussion of life as a *burrneshë*. An opportunity for interviewer to ask about life as a man and the advantages or disadvantages of a male identity.

6. Social perceptions of *burrneshë*

   Interviewer directs conversation to questions concerning how *burrneshat* are seen in society. Questions about discrimination, acceptance, social roles, whether or not the *burrneshë* passes as a biological male in many settings, etc. This is also an opportunity to ask abstract or hypothetical questions in order to better understand participants' attitudes toward gender. Example questions: How would you feel if your niece decided to become a man? Do you think life is still better as a man today? Are your relationships with women different from those between women and biological men? Do you have any regrets? etc.

7. Free conversation

   Allow the conversation to continue naturally. Topics often include politics, questions about the Researched and Interviewer, health issues, money problems, or favourite memories.

APPENDIX B – Coding Instructions

(GENDER) Variable

I.   Variants

Col A   (*GENDER*) Variant
  M   masculine
  F   feminine

II.   Internal Factor Groups

Col B   Part of Speech
  A   adjective phrase
  N   noun phrase

Col C   Type
  L   not pronominal
  P   pronominal

Col D   Preceding Grammatical
                 Gender
  M   masculine
  F   feminine
  U   unavailable

III. External Factor Groups

Col E   Topic
  C   childhood
  T   transition/*burrneshat*
  W   work
  G   general/personality
  O   other

Col F   Language Medium
  O   oral
  W   text

Col H   Sex/Gender of Speaker
  M   male
  F   female
  B   *burrneshë*
  U   unavailable

Col I   Speaker's Relationship to
                 Burrneshë
  S   self
  F   family
  A   friend or acquaintance
  U   unfamiliar/no relationship
  I   impersonal

Col J   Age of Speaker
  A   late teens, 20s
  B   30s
  C   middle-aged
  D   70s +
  U   unavailable

Col G   Individual
  A   Article 01
  B   Article 02
  C   Article 03
  D   Writer 01
  E   Speaker 01
  F   Speaker 02
  G   Article 04
  H   Article 05
  I   Writer 02
  J   Speaker 03
  K   Speaker 04
  L   Speaker 05
  M   Speaker 06
  N   Speaker 07
  O   Speaker 08
  P   Speaker 09

117

Q	Speaker 10
R	Speaker 11
S	Speaker 12
T	Speaker 13
U	Writer 03
V	Writer 04
W	Speaker 14
X	Speaker 15
Y	Writer 05
Z	Article 07
?	Article 08
%	Speaker 16
$	Speaker 17
#	Speaker 18
@	Speaker 19
&	Speaker 20
!	Speaker 21
*	Speaker 22