

Neuter Nouns to the Old Authors of the Albanian Language. Evidence from the Albanian Language Lexicon of Gjon Buzuku

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Abstract:

The object of this paper is related to the description and explanation of some grammatical aspects of the simple nouns of the neuter gender in the work of Gjon Buzuku. In Albanian, the category of gender is one of the main grammatical categories of the name. By its nature, it differs from other grammatical categories of the noun, because the masculine-feminine-neuter opposite refers to the whole class of nouns taken as a whole and appears in their distribution in different genders and not in different forms of the same word. The issue of neutrality in the Albanian language is addressed by many authors, who in their studies emphasize the types of neuter nouns in the Albanian language, the extension of this category beyond the class of nouns, arguments for the presence of neutrality in the Albanian language and other issues that relate to this grammatical phenomenon.

The main argument of the work is based on the fact that the work of Gjon Buzuku, „Meshari” (1555) is the first work documented in writing in the Albanian language. In this way, the grammatical category of the neuter gender, which today is quite reduced in the Albanian language, can be investigated and described in the early forms of Albanian writing, where it is possible to identify conservative elements and its special features which are not found in today's Albanian. This is especially true when referring to the neuter nouns forms of the neuter gender.

For the realization of the work it was necessary to use the method of research and tabulation of words from the work „Dictionary of Buzuku's Albanian” by Thoma Qendro. The method of classifying neuter gender nouns according to their semantics and origin has been deemed necessary, from which we have singled out only the simple neutrals as well as the comparative method in some cases when we have referred to today's Albanian language.

At the end, the most characteristic elements of the gender of the simple neuter nouns in Albanian are underlined, used by Gjon Buzuku, to create a clearer idea about its condition in the 16th century.

Keywords: *Gjon Buzuku, Albanian Language, neuter gender, simple nouns, feature, semantics*

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• Introduction

The presence of the neuter gender in the Albanian language has been one of the most discussed, especially in the circle of foreign linguists and albanologists. The issue of the neuter in the Albanian language is found in many authors, such as: Francesco Maria da Lecce (1716), who is considered the author of the first grammar of Albanian, where, among others, talks about the types of neuters found in Albanian and extending this category beyond nouns. Also Karl Reinhold, Auguste Dozoni, Kostandin Kristoforidhi, Gjergj Pekmezi, Anton Xanoni, Norbert Jokl, Maximilian Lambertz, Ilo Sheperi, Osman Myderrizi, Aleksandër Xhuvani, Eqrem Çabej, Grigore Brîncus etc., in their studies emphasize the types of Albanian neuters, the extension of this category beyond the class of nouns, the arguments for the presence of neutrality in the Albanian language and other issues related to this grammatical phenomenon (Demiraj, Sh., 1985)

On the other hand, there are discussions on the presence of the neuter in the Albanian language expressed by authors such as: Francesco Rossi (1866), who emphasizes that the neuter does not exist in the Albanian language, referring mainly to the Gheg dialect; Martin Leake (1814), who denies the existence of neutrality in Tosk dialect of Albanian; Georg von Hahn (1854) or Gustav Meyer (1888) who do not completely deny the existence of the neuter, but come to the conclusion that neuters in Albanian are the strangest constructions, interpreting them as forms of gender (according to Hahn), or as nouns that indicate subjects, used as a collective, which in the gender and accusative case also take the node „*to*”, which belongs to the plural (according to Meyer), and are considered as forms of the singular plural (Pedersen, H., 1973), or even Franz Bopp, who according to Shaban Demiraj, accepts to some extent Hahn's opinion that Albanian has no real neuters (Demiraj, Sh., 1985, f. 187).

The use of the neuter gender has been very widespread in the Albanian language of its early periods, but during the course of the years this gender, in most cases, turned into a masculine or feminine gender (Ajeti, I., 2017, p. 383-384).

Neuter gender nouns, in the old Albanian authors are more numerous and in a more stable condition compared to today's Albanian where this category has taken on a purely relict character. Based on this fact, which shows that the linguistic feeling of the neuter at this time has been much more vivid than in today's Albanian, we have tried in our review to highlight in the lexicon of Buzuku's work that category of the neuter gender nouns that are simple words, their semantics, trying to



determine the degree of density of their use in the first documented text of the Albanian language of the 16-th century.

Works in the Albanian language during the first centuries of the Ottoman occupation are few. The oldest of them that has survived to the present day, is „Meshari” by Gjon Buzuku (1555). From its publication until 1740, for almost two centuries, „Meshari” was a lost work, an unknown work. In 1740 it was discovered in the Fides Library of Propaganda, near Rome, the „Meshar” of Gjon Buzuku (1555) was discovered by the Bishop of Skopje, Monsignor Gjon Nikollë Kazazi from Gjakova. Full the joy for this finding, he informed Gjergj Guxeta in Palermo to whom he sent a page. The book is thought to have been printed in Venice in the Latin alphabet, adding some Cyrillic characters to the sounds in Albanian. This discovery caused a great commotion, because it is the first book in the Albanian language. This discovery remained silent for more than a century, until 1909, when the Arbër - Pal Skiroi rediscovered it in the Vatican Library in Rome, where it is still found today.

Çabej emphasizes the fact that by studying Buzuku means going into the Albanian language fundamentally, because the language of this author helps in a high degree to see more clearly the general connections in the development of the language. His language gives us a tool to accurately follow the emergence of various linguistic phenomena in space and time as well as their development (Çabej, E., 1976, p. 5-77). This fact is also emphasized by Seit Mansaku when he states that the language of this text gives the opportunity to create a more or less complete idea on the morph-syntactic structure of the Albanian language of the XVI century and can be seen as the last target of Albanian development in the pre-literary period and as the starting point for a new period of it (Mansaku, S., 2001, p. 15-36).

• **Subject of the research**

The object of this paper will be the description and explanation of some aspects and characteristics of the neuter gender in the simple names evidenced in the lexicon of Buzuku's work and their classification according to semantics. For this we have analyzed the Albanian Dictionary of Gjon Buzuku by Thoma Qendro (Qendro, Th., 2014).

This dictionary is considered a valuable help in this regard, as in a sense it can be considered as the first dictionary of the Albanian language in terms of the state of the lexicon it contains, words in their original forms and in the forms as used by Buzuku, the first author of the Albanian language writing. On the other hand, in the dictionary it is given the full flexion of words accompanied by the relevant examples, which makes clearer the issue we have taken in consideration.



The researchers have concluded that in the pre-documentary period of the Albanian language, in addition to the masculine and feminine gender, the name of the neuter gender also appeared in our language, which was certainly born from the need to distinguish the respective nouns from the other two natural genders, masculine and feminine or meanwhile to fill in any gaps in the corresponding grammatical structure. In the historical analysis of the classification of the neuter nouns, genuine neuter (primitive) nouns are distinguished, within which those that indicate subjects, body parts or abstract concepts as well as the other two categories could be distinguished; neuter prepositional nouns derived from adjectives and neuter prepositional nouns derived from verbs (mainly partial verbs).

The peculiarity of the neuter gender nouns that are picked up in the dictionary within this paper lies precisely in the original phonetic-grammatical form that these nouns are used which are reflected in all grammatical categories, in all forms of inflection, as taken from Buzuku's original work without the intervention of the dictionary author.

- **Literature review**

The use of the neuter gender has been very widespread in the Albanian language of its early periods, but over the years this gender, in most cases, turned into masculine or feminine gender (Ajeti, I., 2017, p. 383-384). Today, the neuter gender can be investigated in regional dialects, as the standard is tending towards the wrinkling of this gender, and as it was pointed out earlier, in today's Albanian it has taken on a purely wasteful character.

Byron points out that the contemporary standard favors a two-gender system. In the case of Albanian, the argument is based on the fact that the practice of literary Tosk Albanian has reflected the evolution of language as a whole, and as a result, the neuter form is felt more often in the nineteenth-century writers and earlier than in later writers (Byron, J., 2012).

Demiraj points out that despite the fact that even in the Albanian language the elimination of gender neutrality is encountered as a relatively early and gradual phenomenon, it has been expanding especially during the last centuries, making it nowadays extremely stagnant and of a wasteful character. However, the neuter gender in the Albanian language of 3-4 centuries ago was more alive and stable, although it was in a reduced state as a result of a continuous weakening. As a key factor Demiraj underlines the gradual evolution of a three-gender system into a two-gender system, eliminating the neuter gender, which had begun to occur in most Indo-European languages. This evolution was



related to the general tendency of these languages to simplify their grammatical structure from certain types of adverbs that had become unnecessary, a simplification that was accomplished by avoiding those adverbs that were less semantically supported, such as the case of neuter (Demiraj, Sh., 1985, fv. 178-182).

The researcher Ethem Likaj sees the evolution of the gender category as a consequence of the gradual transformation of this category into grammatical categories. Emphasizing the great role that analogy has played in the transfer of neuter names to the other two genders, Likaj sees this process closely related to the disappearance of the worldview „ancient animist on things” (Likaj, E., 1984, p. 65).

Topalli also underlines the fact that the weakening of the neuter gender and the integration of the nouns of this gender in the other two genders has started to happen very early, so that it is difficult to determine, but, according to him, researching the language of the old Albanian authors, the fact that it has been a very lively genre stands out (Topalli, K., 2011, p. 219-224).

Mahir Domi, regarding the transition of neuters, mainly those who show subjects, into masculine but also into feminine, underlines that this process has been influenced by the fact that the oblique cases of the neuter gender had the same endings as the masculine nouns. As such he mentions the nouns: *mish* - *mishi* (meat - the meat), *gjalpë* - *gjalpi* (butter - the butter), *vaj* - *vaji* (oil - the oil), *dyllë* - *dylli* (wax - the wax), *drithë* - *drithi* (grain - the grain) etc. (Domi, M., 1961, p. 4).

According to Veselaj the continuous weakening of neutrality in the Albanian language and the disintegration of this gender, can be connected with the fact that it does not specify the special semantic subfield. In this way, according to him, for the same semantic subfields appear some types or subtypes of nouns of other active grammatical genders, mainly of the masculine gender (Veselaj, N., 2015, p. 51).

In the current situation, in the Albanian language, the neuter gender is reduced only to this category of words, mainly nouns, because the defining words such as adjectives, demonstrative and possessive pronouns, have almost completely lost the neuter gender. This causes this genus to appear only morphologically in the type of prominent singular inflection, in nominative and accusative, or in some nouns with the presence of the anterior node. The presence of neutrality in today's Albanian language can be ascertained in rigid forms, mainly in phraseological expressions or dialectal dialects even in some nouns that express subjects, but that today are integrated in the masculine gender, such as: *dhamë* - fat, *brumë* - dough, *dyllë* - wax, *gjalpë* - butter, *mish* - meat,



mjaltë - honey... etc., or even some nouns that express body parts such as: *ballët* - foreheads, *kryet* - head or any other (AShSh & IGjL, 2002, p. 93-94).

Regarding the classification of neuter nouns, different authors have relied on different criteria, but generally the classification is based on whether they are inherited neuters of Albanian or borrowings, as well as the semantic criterion of what they mean semantically. If we refer to the divisions of genuine neuters, within them are evidenced inherited or borrowed neuters that are substance nouns or neutrals that are not substance nouns.

Demiraj points out that the main nouns that are still encountered as neuters in the spoken and written language are: *ballë* - forehead, *brumë* - dough, *djathë* - cheese, *drithë* - grain, *dyllë* - wax, *dhjamë* - fat, *grurë* - wheat, *gjalpë* - butter, *krye* - head, *lesh* - wool, *miell* - flour, *mish* - meat, *mjaltë* - honey, *ujë* - water, *vaj* - oil. In addition to these, he emphasizes the fact that in the dialectological studies are presented as neuters in the Albanian dialect even nouns, mainly with a collective meaning, such as: *emërit* - name, *dhallët* - buttermilk, *rrushtë* - grapes, *groshët* - kidney bean, *hit* - ash, *orizt* - rice, *pet* - noodles, *plet* - fertilizer, *qumështit* - milk, *vrert* - gall etc., evidenced mainly in the dialects of the Arbs of Greece and Italy, in Gjirokastra, Sulova, Përmet, Dangëlli, Skrapar, Mat, Myzeqe etc. (Demiraj, Sh., 1972, p. 217-218).

Even the researcher Zymberi emphasizes that the nouns which refer to matter have almost completely disappeared, but even this type, Tosk, Arvanitas, Arbëresh of Italy, Albanians of Ukraine have preserved quite well (Zymberi, A., 2007, p. 97-105).

If we compare the current situation of the neuter gender with that presented in the works of old Albanian authors, continues Demiraj, it becomes clear that the neuter gender in the Albanian language has been relatively alive and stable. Demiraj supports the classification of neuters according to this division: neuters with a collective meaning, mainly nouns that are substance nouns and neuters that are not substance nouns. Regarding the formers, referring to the studies on this evidence, as well as relying on the works of the old Albanian authors, Demiraj points out some inherited neuters that indicate substance, nouns such as: *drithë-të*/ grain, *grunë-të*/ wheat, *klomësht-i-të*(*qumësht*)/ milk, *kos-të*/ yogurt, *miell-të*/ flour, *mjaltë-t*/ honey, *mish-të*/ meat, *ujë-të*/ water, *voj-të*/ oil, *gjalpë-të*/ butter, *brumë-të*/ dough, *dyllë-të*/ wax, *qull-të*/ porridge, *hekur-i-të*/ iron, *ar-të*/ gold, *djathë-të*/ cheese, *dhjamë-të*/ fat, *elp-të*/ barley, *li-të*/ flax, *gjak-të*/ blood, *tru-të*/ brain, *hi-të*/ ash, *plehë-të*/ fertilizer, or even newer neuter nouns which also denote substance, mainly in the Arbëresh language of Italy (the language of Albanians emigrated to Italy since the



XV century), such as: *rozmarin-t/* rosemary, *tabak-t/* sheet etc. In the second group he identifies neuter nouns that indicate substance such as: *krie-të/* head, *anë-të/* sides, *ballë-të/* foreheads, *emëni-të/* name, *gjalmë-të/* lacing, *bark-të/* tummy, *dam-të/* harm, *faj-të/* guilt, *frë-të/* bridle, *gjyq-i-të/* trial, *kopësh-të/* garden, *prehën-i-të/* lap, *rrjetë/* mesh, *sy-të/* eye, *veshë-të/* ear, *krue-të/* fountain, *shekull-të/* century, *vjetë-të/* year, *muoj-të/* month, *petëk-u-të/* garments, *shenj-të/* sign, mark, *shtrat-të/* bed, *varg-të/* string, *vor-të/* grave, *gji-të/* breasts, *mend-të/* mind, *tul-të/* pulp etc. These nouns, according to him, are evidenced in almost all the old Albanian authors such as: Buzuku, Budi, Bardhi, Bogdani, Matrënga, the Arberesh of Greece and Italy, somewhere more dense and somewhere more limited. He also highlights the fact that some of these nouns also come out both as neuter and masculine, indicating that in time these nouns had begun to integrate them towards other genders (Demiraj, Sh., 1985).

The fluctuation in the use of neuter and gender ambiguity is also evidenced by Riza, who emphasizes that the instability of nouns as neuter in use is related to the process of shifting the simple neuter to the corresponding masculine nouns, a process which had begun in the old authors,

which indicates that the linguistic sense of neutrality had begun to corrode (Riza, S., 2002, p. 116).

Çabej connects the passage of some neuter gender nouns into the masculine gender with the singularization of the prominent plural. The plural form that has passed into the singular, so the singularization of the plural is a very common grammatical phenomenon in Albanian. The process that has operated in the meantime in most cases has been twofold: first, a plural noun has been used; then from the plural form a new singular is formed, i.e. the plural is singularized. As such he mentions, neuter nouns which name pairs of limbs of the body such as: *sy* - eyes, *veshë* - ears, *gji* - breasts, *krahë* - arms, *gju* - knees, which have passed into the masculine gender, emphasizing that the disappearance of the neuter in these nouns has passed through the plural. The nouns: *sytë* - eyes, *veshëtë* - ears, *gjitë* - breasts, *krahëtë* - arms, etc., have been common forms of both singular and plural neutrinos, so e.g., *sytë* - "the eyes" meant both "eye" and "eyes". As such a grammatical form, it coincided with the plural form of all three genders, and starting semantically from the use of words in the plural, it was considered as such, as a plural. In this way arose the need to determine a clear and not ambiguous form of the singular, inventing a masculine form, which made it necessary to distinguish this form from the homonymous form of the plural (Çabej, E., 2012, p. 64-65). Anila Omari, highlighting this fact during the study of Bogdan's work,



emphasizes that a number of lexemes appear in the text with two different genders, as masculine and neuter or as feminine and neuter. As such cases she mentions the nouns: *bark-të/ bark-u*= tummy, *faj-të/ faj-i*= guilt, *mish-të/ mish-i*= meat, *qiell-të/ qiell-ja* = sky etc., or in some other cases, according to her, the text does not allow to determine the gender of the nouns that in old Albanian appear as neuters, usually nouns with a collective that that indicate substance such as: *brumë* - dough, *drithë* - grain, *dyllë* - wax, *mjaltë* - honey (Omari, A., 2016, p. 49-50).

Topalli classifies the simple neuters into 5 categories where it includes: **substance nouns**: *ujë* - water, *gjalpë* - butter, *gjak* - blood, *drithë* - grain, *elb* - barley, *grurë* - wheat, *vaj* - oil, *mish* - meat, *djathë* - cheese, *dyllë* - wax, *kos* - yogurt, *lesh* - wool, *rrush* - grapes, *qumësht* - milk, *plehë* - fertilizer, *li* - flax, *hi* - ash, *ar* - gold, *frut* - fruit, iron - *hekur*, *bar* - grass, *dru* - wood, *dhallë* - buttermilk, *qull* - porridge; **nouns which refer to body parts**: *ballë* - forehead, *sy* - eyes, *tru* - brain, *krye* - head, *gji* - breast, *bark* - tummy, *prehënë (prehër)* - lap, *tul* - pulp, *vesh* - ear; **nouns which refer to objects**: *rrjetë* - mesh, *frë* - bridle, *gjalmë* - yarn, *petëk* - garments, *shenj* - sign, mark, *shtrat* - bed; **place names**: *vorr*- grave, *krua* - fountain, *kopësht* - garden; **abstract nouns**: *emër* - name, *faj* - guilt, *dëm* - harm, *vjetë* - year, *muaj* - months, *gjyq* - trial, *kumt* - notice, *peng* - pledge, *anë* - side, *mënd*-mind, *vajtim*- lamentation, etc. by making a more detailed categorization of the second group of neuter nouns that do not indicate substance. By referring to this phenomenon, he emphasizes the fact that as genuine neuters in Albanian are included those nouns that indicate indivisible substance and as a result, they have been uncountable or nouns which refer to body parts, names of objects, place names, abstract nouns. Topalli underlines that most of the neuters of Albanian are of inherited origin and as such he mentions: *ujë* - water, *gjalpë* - butter, *drithë* - grain, *mish* - meat, *djathë* - cheese, *lesh* - wool, *dru* - wood, *ballë* - forehead, *krye* - head, *tul* - pulp, *vesh* - ear, while he considers the rest as borrowings in Albanian (Topalli, K., 2011, p. 210-217).

Kolë Ashta, in order to identify the neuters of all the old authors of the Albanian language, based his studies on the suffix „-ë”, the suffix „të”, as well as the suffix of the plural „-na”. Based on these elements he distinguishes as neuters the nouns: *ballëtë*- forehead, *barktë*- tummy, *drithëtë*-grain, *dyllëtë* - wax, *emënitë* - name, *fajtë* - guilt, *grunëtë* - grain, *kjumështëtë* - milk, *kumëtitë* - notice, *mendëtë* - mind, *mishtë* - meat, *ujtë* - water. On the other hand, he is skeptical about the neutrality of the nouns: *anëtë* - side, *gjitë* - breasts, *kruetë* - fountains, *kryetë* - heads. Even in Ashta, there is a fluctuation of the gender, where the same name belongs to the neuter gender, but also to another gender, as we can note the use of the noun *mend* (mind): *mend-ja/ mend-të* (the mind) (Ashta, K., 2002).



Idriz Ajeti classifies the genuine neutrals of Albanian into several semantic and grammatical categories, where he mentions: *substance nouns* such as: *mishtë(ë)* - meat, *drithë* - grain, *miellë* - flour, *djathët* - cheese, *dyllët* - wax, *grunët* - wheat, *gjalpët* - butter, *leshtë* - wool, *vojt/vajt* - oil; as well as other singular nouns where he emphasizes: *kyet* - head, *ballët* - forehead. According to him, the number of neuters from the autochthonous heritage fund, as evidenced by the writings of Albanian classics as well as the archaic dialects of Albanian, was once much greater than today: *ujë-t/* water, *mish-të/* meat, *drithë-t/* grain, *gjalpë-t/* butter, *mjaltë-t/* honey, *lesh-të/* wool, *elb-t/* barley, *brumë-t/* dough, *ballë-t/* forehead, *gjalm-t/* lacing, which today they have mostly turned into masculine, sporadically also feminine because of their matching in inflection with masculine or feminine: *mish-mish-i/* meat, *gjalpë-gjalp-i/* butter, *vaj-vaj-i/* oil, *dyllë-dyll-i/* wax, *ujë-uj-i/* water, *drithë-drith-i/* grain (Ajeti, I., 2017, p. 384-385).

Veselaj underlines the fact that in the pre-documentary period of the Albanian language, in addition to the noun of the masculine and the feminine, the noun of the neuter gender also appeared in our language, which arose from the need to distinguish the respective nouns from the other two natural genders. According to him, in this period are distinguished as early as considered, without a doubt, the genuine neutral (primitive) nouns not knotted, with which were named concepts of concrete and abstract field of broad spectrum, however, it can be said that in the meantime it is seen a tendency on naming the most used (food) items of the time, usually uncountable, as well as on some specific names of body parts and other nouns, usually indivisible in particles, some of which appear to be identifiable according to the form of formation even in today's language, such nouns as: *mish/* meat, *ujë-t /*water, *anët(ë)/*side, *krye-t/* head and any other (Veselaj, N., 2015).

Relying on the studies on the gender neutrality of the Albanian language (Pedersen, H., 1973) through the etymological view of neuter nouns, considers as neuter nouns the nouns which show substance: *ujë* - water, *gjalpë* - butter, *elb* - barley, *mjaltë* - honey, *brumë* - dough, *lesh* - wool, whose identity is connected with the Indo-European neutrality, and emphasizes that this category also includes the neuter nouns that indicate substance: *drithë* - grain, *djathë* - cheese, *dyllë* - wax, *hekur* - iron for which he states that they do not have a proper etymology, or even the nouns: *vit* - year, *dru* - wood, which he marks as the original neutrals. On the other hand, he emphasizes that it is not at all true that neutrals are just nouns that indicate substance and are used as a collective too. In support of this argument he underlines at least four nouns that have no collective



meaning, such as: *krie* - head, *gjalmë* - lace, *rrjetë* - mesh, *ballë*-forehead, for which he also gives references where he has identified them.

Within the group of genuine inherited neuters, it is important to identify the borrowed neuters of Albanian. Demiraj emphasizes that the genuine borrowed neuters of Albanian, in terms of volume occupy the second place among the documented neuters. As such he mentions: *ar* - gold, *dam/dëm* - harm, *faj* - guilt, *fruit/frut* - fruit, *gjyq* - trial, *li* - flax, *mend* - mind, *penk* - pledge, *rrjetë* - mesh, *shenj* - sign, mark, *shtrat* - bed, *vaj/vo* - oil. He also points out that other borrowed neuters, but in smaller numbers, are encountered from the ancient Greek: *hekur* - iron, *qull* - porridge, from modern Greek: *zahar* - sugar, from Slavic: *plehë* -fertilizer and from Italian: *rozmarinë* - rosemary etc., nouns which according to him are limited in number and geographically spread and relatively young as neuters (Demiraj, Sh., 1972, p. 105-107).

Even Ajeti, referring to Pedersen, identifies most of the borrowed neuters with a source from Latin with the argument that the lexical material of Albanian with a Latin source proves the correspondence and coincidence of Latin neutrons, borrowed in Albanian: *voj*-oil (neuter) taken from Latin: *oleum* (neutrum), *rrjetë* - *rete*. From the writings of the Albanian classics of the 16th century onwards, this coincidence in the gender of the neuter of Albanian with that of Latin is much greater: *lini*, *liri* - flax, from Latin *linum*; *ar* - gold from *aurum*. In the dialect of the Arberesh of Calabria, the noun *argjent*, *argjend* -silver as well as in the Arberesh of Greece the noun *elb* - barley. (Ajeti, I., 2017, p. 385). Topalli also supports the same argument when he points out that some of the simple neuters of Albanian are old borrowings from Latin, most of which are neuter even in that language. As such he mentions: *vaj*-oil from Latin *oleum*, *li* -flax from Latin *linum*, *ar*-gold from Latin *aurum*, *frë* - bridle from Latin *frënum*, *rrjetë* - mesh) from Latin *rētē*, *shenj* - sign, mark from Latin *signum*, *shtrat* - bed from Latin *strātum*, *dëm* - harm from Latin *damnum*, *gjyq* - trial from Latin *jūdicium*, *peng* - pledge from Latin *pignus* etc. (Topalli, K., 2011, p. 217).

Regarding the Latin borrowings, Çabej emphasizes that Latin is the language that has left deeper traces in Albanian, mainly in lexicon, emphasizing the fact that for the Latin element of Albanian it matters the circumstances that this element derives from that special form of vulgar Latin called Balkan Latin, which was adopted by the population of the Balkans by changing the pronunciation and to some extent the grammar and vocabulary according to the phonetic system of the native dialect. Within this context, among the borrowed lexicon, Çabej also mentions neuter nouns such as: *fryt(frujt)* - fruit, *li* - flax, *voj (vaj)*- oil... etc. (Çabej, E., 2008, p. 109-121).



• Methodology

The object of this paper is related to the description and explanation of the grammatical category of the simple nouns of the neuter gender in the work of Gjon Buzuku. For the realization of the work it was necessary to use the method of research and filing of words from the work „Dictionary of the Albanian language of Buzuku” by Thoma Qendro. The method of classifying neuter nouns according to their semantics and origin has been considered necessary, from which we have singled out only the simple neuter as well as the comparative method in some cases when we have referred to today's Albanian language.

At the end, the most characteristic elements of the gender of the simple neuters in Albanian used by Gjon Buzuku are underlined, to create a clearer idea about its condition in the 16th century.

• Results and discussion

Based on the object of the work, which is the description and explanation of the grammatical category of the simple nouns of the neuter gender in the work of Gjon Buzuku, we filed all the nouns of the neuter gender evidenced in the dictionary in question. The dictionary contains 3200 words, 350 proper nouns and 260 Latin words and expressions (the latter were not taken into consideration in our file).

A total of 274 neuter nouns resulted from the material collection, of which 32 were simple neuter nouns. Within this classification, there are 9 neuter simple nouns that indicate substance and 23 simple neuter nouns that do not indicate substance. The rest of the neuters, about 33 exemplars are neuter nouns derived from adjectives, such as: *të amblitë* - sweet, sweetness, sweet drink (p. 19), *të bardhtë* - whiteness (p. 36), *të ftofëtitë* - the cold (p. 116), *të mirëtë* - the good (p. 239), *të paditunitë* - ignorance (p. 301), *të thatëtë* - drying, land (p. 452) etc., and also 209 neuters derived by verbs such as: *të ardhunitë* - arrival (p. 25), *të dalëtë* - exit (p. 56), *të dukunitë* - appearance (p. 83), *të folëtë* - speaking (p. 110) etc. The author of the Dictionary in question has reflected in the dictionary all the forms of neutrality, even those forms with phonetic changes but related to the same reality or meaning. This has made the nouns of the neuter gender appear in the dictionary more in number from the inventory presented by Demiraj regarding the neuter nouns of Buzuku, which shows that there are 28 simple neuter nouns, 22 neuters derived from adjectives and 188 neuters derived from verbs².

² For more see: Shaban Demiraj (1985). *Gramatikë historike e gjuhës shqipe*. Tiranë: Fakulteti i Historisë dhe Filologjisë, Universiteti i Tiranës, pp. 198-203.



A characteristic evidenced in the Buzuku language is the density of neuter nouns used in his work. From the review and the note that Thoma Qendro has made to Buzuku's lexicon in the Dictionary, it results that a part of words, in our case neuter nouns, have limited use, which is also noted by the author of the Dictionary. Thus, there are neuter nouns which are used 1 time only in Buzuku's work and others with a density up to 5 times. For all the other nouns that have a density of over 5 times no entries have been made in the Dictionary. This feature generally applies to neuter nouns derived from adjectives and verbs, whereas for the simple nouns no such note is made. As examples of this use we can mention:

1 time: *të bartunitë* - crawling, conveyance (p. 38); *të gëzuomitë* - joy (p. 119) *të nxitit* - heat (p. 290); *të padrejtëtë* - injustice (p. 301); *të plotëtë* - fullness (p. 345); *të shprazëtite* - emptiness (p. 421); *të shpëtuomitë* - salvation (p. 419); etc.

2 times: *të falëtë* - greetings (p. 100); *të glatëtë* - length (p. 120); *të himitë* - entrance (p. 145); *të majmitë* - grease, fat, fertilizer (p. 213); etc.

3 times: *të abituomitë* - residence (p. 15); *të ftofëtite* - the cold (p. 116); *të madhtë* - greatness, power (p. 208); *të nthellëtë* - depth, size (p. 286); etc.

4 times: *të merituomitë* - merit (p. 433); *të shenjtënuomitë* - holiness (p. 402); *të vjelëtë* - harvest

(p. 482); *të lirëtë* - freedom (p. 204); etc.

5 times: *të pëgamitë* - filth, filthy (p. 319);

- **Neuters derived from adjectives**

The neuter nouns derived from adjectives, in most cases, besides the fact that are considered nouns of neuter gender, appear as adjectives in the same phonetic form as e.g.: *të errëtite* - darkness (p. 97), but even *i errëtë* - dark as adjective (p. 98); *të idhunitë* - bitterness (p. 149), but even *i idhunë* - bitter, as adjective (p. 149); *të shpjertëtë* - speed (p. 421), but even *i shpjertë* - fast, as adjective (p. 421) etc. A great part of these neuter nouns in addition to this role also appear as adjectives or as masculine or feminine nouns or both masculine and feminine, in cases such as: *të naltët* - length (p. 255), but even *i naltë* - long, as adjective (p. 255) but even *i nalti* - the long, as a noun of masculine gender (p. 255); *të mirëtë* - the good, (p. 239), but even-good as adjective (p. 239) or *i mir/ë,-i* - the good, as a masculine noun, (p. 239) and *e mir/ë* - the good, as a feminine noun (p. 238); *të paadërejtëtë* - injustice (p. 301), *i paadërejtë* - unjust, as adjective (p. 301), *i paadërejt/ë,-i* - the unjust, as a masculine noun, (p. 301) and *e paadërejt/ë,-a* - the unjust, as a feminine noun (p. 301) etj.



- **Neuters derived from verbs**

Most of the neuters, concretely 209, are nouns derived from verbs, mostly derived from substantive participles, participles used as substantivized infinitives, neuter of the participle, neuter of the participle adjective, participle nouns of the action, etc., such as: *të ardhunitë* - arrival (p. 25); *të baamitë* - completed things, affairs (p. 32); *të dalëtë* - exit (p. 56); *të djegunitë* - burning (p. 74); *të gjukuomitë* - judgement (p. 141); *të ikunitë* - getaway (p. 150); *të mbjellëtë* - sowing (p. 229); *të ndjekunitë* - pursuit (p. 267); *të nxitunitë* - incentive (p. 290); *të pritunitë* - waiting, hope (p. 350); *të qeshunitë* - mockery, ridicule (p. 362) etc. Even in the case of neuter nouns derived from verbs, there are cases when the neuter nouns also appears in the role of the adjective.

Demiraj connects the relative liveliness of the neuter gender in today's Albanian with the existence and inventory of neuter nouns derived from verbs (Demiraj, Sh., 1972, p. 132-144). The Grammar of the Academy of Sciences of Albania also states that in the Albanian language they are taken as neuters: „some nouns with nodes derived from verbs, which have emerged from the passage of participles into nouns: *të ardhur-it/* to come, *të ecur-it/* to walk, *të folur-it/* to speak, *të menduar-it/* to think, *të ngrënë-t/* to eat, *të shtypur-it/* oppress etc., as well as a few nouns with nodes that have emerged from the passing of the adjective on behalf of the neuter gender, which was characterized by the node „*të*” of this gender: „*të errët-it/* dark, *të ftohtë-t/* cold, *të kuq-të /*red, *të nxehtë-t/* hot, *të verdhë-t /*yellow, *të zi-të/black*” (AShSh & IGJL, 2002, p. 93-94).

- **Simple neuters**

The genuine neuter nouns in Buzuku's work, or the simple neuters, reflected in the Dictionary of his work, are presented in a varied and in a more stable form of use compared to today's Albanian. As Çabej points out regarding the language of Buzuku, the existence of neutrality in the Albanian language not only in Buzuku, but also in other writers after him testifies not only to an earlier period of the Albanian language in wider use of neutrality, but also confirms in many points the assumptions of the Danish scholar Pedersen regarding the final ascertainment of the existence of neutrality as the third gender in the Albanian language (Çabej, E., 1976).

As the simple neuters in the Dictionary of the Albanian language of Buzuku, the author Thoma Qendro identifies 32 items, divided respectively into nouns that indicate substance and nouns that do not indicate substance. According to Shaban Demiraj, there are 28 simple neuter nouns in Buzuku: *anë-të/* side, *barkt-të/* tummy, *djalë-të/* boy, *drithë-të/* grain, *dru-të/* wood, *emën-i-të/* name, *faj-të/* guilt, *fruj-i-të/* fruit, *grunë-të/* wheat, *gji-të/* breast, *gjyq-i-të/* trial, *klomësht-i-të/* milk,



krye-të/ head, *miell-të/* flour, *mish-të/* meat, *muoj-të/* month, *penk-të/* pledge, *petëk-u-të/* garments(clothes), *prehën-i-të/* lap, *sy-të/* eye, *shekull-të/* century, *shenj-të/*mark, sign, *shtrat-të/* bed, *ujë-të/* water, *varg-të/* string, *voj-të/* oil *veshë-të/* ear, *vjetë-të/* year, *vor-të/* grave (Demiraj, Sh., 1985, f. 198). From the dictionary entries, Qendro points out as neuters also:

- ***plehëtë*** - fertilizer; rubbish (p. 344) as a noun which denotes substance and is used only once: *Na u baam porsi plehëtë e fshitë të këtij shekulli* - We became like the collected rubbish of this world (LXXXI/2b; 1Kor. 4:13).

- ***tëlyenëtë*** - butter, fat (p.439) as a noun which denotes substance and is used four times: *Kaa me ngranë tëlyenë e mjaltë*. -He/she will eat butter and honey (XIV/2, XV, XV/2-XVI; Is. 7:15).

- ***darsmëtë*** - wedding p. 57) - *Darsmëtë për të vërtetë janë trajtuom* . - The wedding is organised. (LXXX/2a; Mt.22:8).

- ***drytë*** - lock, latch, lever (p. 82). It is used three times: *Dryenëtë n'hekuri t'i këputinj* - I will break the iron locks (XXXII; Is. 45:2).

- ***freni/fretë*** - bridle (p. 114). It is used only once in the form *fretë*, in the accusative case. *Me kapistrët e me fretë*- With harness and bridle (XVI/2; Ps. 32/31:9).

- ***kopështitë*** - garden (p. 179). *Përte torrentit së Cedrit, tuk ish një kopështë*. - Beyond the stream of Cedron, there was a garden. (LVIIIb; Gjon. 18:1); *të jesh porsi kopështittë qi kaa vadenë, qi i lëshonetë ujëtë* - you will be like a garden that has time to release its water.

- ***tamblëthitë*** - gallstone, gall, poison (p. 434). It is used only once. *I dhanë tamblëthitë përzienë me uthullë me piim*. - He/she was given to drink gall (poison) mixed with vinegar (LV/2b; Mt.27:34).

Demiraj also mentioned the following nouns of Buzuku as neuters: *grunëtë* - wheat, *penktë* - pledge, *shekulltë* - century, *shtrattë* - bed, which Qendro in the dictionary identifies as masculine and forms: *grunëtë*, *penktë*, *shtrattë* analyzes as forms of the accusative case of the respective masculine nouns, whereas identifies as masculine the noun *shekullë* - century.

All the neuter nouns given above are used as neuters in the *Dictionary of the Albanian Language by Gjon Buzuku*. To highlight the neutral character of these nouns several grammatical aspects can be examined. As one of the basic aspects we have taken their peculiarity to take the same forms in the nominative and accusative cases in the prominent and indefinite form. Thus, some of the simple nouns that indicate substance such as: *drithë* - grain, *plehë* - fertilizer, *ujë* - water, as well as simple nouns that do not indicate substance such as: *anë* - side, *darsmë* - wedding, *emënë* - name etc.,



come out with the ending „-ë”, although there are other simple nouns that do not receive this indicator, such as: *faj* - guilt, *fre* - bridle, *fryjt* - fruit, *mish* - meat, *shenj* - mark, sign etc. If we compare the same feature with the prominent shape we see that the same ending appears in all cases „-të”, an ending created by the suffix node for both of these cases: *drithëtë* - grain, *klumështitë* - milk, *plehëtë* -fertilizer, *annëtë* - side, *barkëtë* - tummy, *darsmëtë* - wedding, *emënitë* - name, *fajtë* - guilt, *frujtitë* - fruit, *shenjtë* - sign, mark, *vargtë* - string, *veshëtë* - ear etc., while other nouns such as *ujëtë* - water, *kryetë* - head etc, appear in the accusative case also with the ending (definite article) „-t”: *ujët* - water, *kryet* - head etc.

Topalli emphasizes that the paradigm of neuter gender nouns is deficient, because its paradigmatic differences with other genders appear only in nominative and accusative cases, even in these cases only in the prominent form, while in other cases, nouns of this gender have been integrated in time with the masculine gender, which has favored their complete disintegration and only the node „-të” has been a preserving factor of this gender. On the other hand, many neuter nouns in the indefinite form have the same endings as the nouns of the other two genders, for example: *mish*- meat, *lesh* - wool, *elb* - barley, *rrush* - grape, *vaj* - oil have the same form as the masculine nouns: *gjysh* - grandfather, *thelb* - gist, *këlysh* - puppy, *maj* - May (Topalli, K., 2011, p. 217).

Some from the simple neuters in the Dictionary appear even as masculine nouns, such as: *djalëtë* - boy, son), *frujtitë* - frut, *muojtë* - month, *vojtë* - oil etc.

-*Asaj iu zuu një djalë.* - She became pregnant and has a son (as masculine noun, p. 76; XXXI; Lk. 1:36).

-*Djalëtë tem.* - My boy (as neuter noun, p. 77; LV/2a).

-*Frujtitë e dheut të jetë ndë madhështii e ndë bukurii atyne qi të jetë shpëtuom n'Israelit-*

The fruit of the land will be for the greatness and joy of the survivors of Israel (as a masculine noun, p. 114; LXII/2b; Is. 4:2).

-*Të mbëlidhni frujtitë e dheut.* - Gather the fruits of the earth (as a masculine noun, p. 114; LXXIX/2a; Lev. 23:39).

-*Këta kle të gjashtëqind e një vjetë e të parëtë muoj.* - This was the six hundred and first year and the first month (as a masculine noun, p. 253; LXI; Gjen. 8:13).

-*Për trii vjetë e gjashtë muoj.* - For six years and three months (as neuter noun, p. 253; Ll/2; Lk. 4:25).

-*Voji mbett* - The oil stopped flowing (as a masculine noun, p. 484; Ll/2;4 Mbret. 4:6).



-*Me vojft leu kambëtë e mij.* - He anointed my feet with oil (as neuter noun, p. 485; LXIIa; Lk. 7:46).

It is ascertained that the indefinite form of the noun and the accusative case of these nouns as neuters and as masculine nouns turns out to be the same, a fact which has determined their instability and the subsequent transition completely to masculine nouns: *djali* - son, *fruti* - fruit, *muaji* - month, *vaji* - oil etc. This is also noticed by Selman Riza, who in the study of the language of the old authors, talking about this problem, emphasizes that the process of removing the simple neuters towards the respective masculine nouns had started to develop from this time in the old authors, and consequently, since then the linguistic sense of the neuter gender of these nouns had begun to become shaky. He argues this with the fact that the same author treats the same noun sometimes as neuter and sometimes as masculine (Riza, S., 2002, p. 116).

The fact that this phenomenon of neutrality instability has begun to be felt in the „Meshari” of Gjon Buzuku, which marks the first written work of the Albanian language, consequently leads to the conclusion that the weakening of the feeling of neutrality in the linguistic consciousness of speakers has begun earlier than the XVI-th century to which the work belongs, a feeling which has been strengthened later.

On the other hand, Demiraj, supporting Çabej's opinion, emphasizes that in Buzuku the nouns should be interpreted as neuters: *ashtë* - bone, *kruo* - fountain, *mjaltë* - honey, *rushtë* - grapes, *unguent* - perfume, *dhë* - soil, *mill* - sheath (Demiraj, Sh., 1972, p. 176).

Thoma Qendro has defined these words in the Dictionary respectively: ***ashtë/ashta*** - bone (p. 28) as feminine and masculine noun, despite the fact that inside they present the form *eshtëna; eshtënatë* (bones - nominative and accusative case plural), which match the form of the neuter with the ending „-të” in these forms to other names. *Shpirti nukë kaa as mish as ashtë* - The soul has neither flesh nor bones (LXIV/ 2b; Lk. 24:39) ; *eshtënatë e mij lëngojnë* . - my bones hurt (XVI: Ps. 6:3).

kruo/kroni - fountain (p. 183) it is used only once and appears as a masculine noun, and in the accusative case it comes out in the form *kruot*. *Mbë kruot të ftofëtë të shenjtit Bagm* (XXV).

mjaltë/mjalti - honey (p. 242) which in the accusative case appears in the form *mjaltë*. *Tëlyenë e mjaltë*. - He/she will eat milk and honey (XXXI; Is. 7:15).

rrushtë - grape (p. 378) it is evidenced in the Dictionary as a neuter, as Demiraj emphasizes. It is used only twice. *A mundë merretë n'drizashit rrush?* - Can grapes be obtained from thorns? (LXXV; Mt. 7:16).



unguent/unguenti - parfume (p. 458) it is analyzed in the Dictionary as a masculine noun (in the nominative and accusative case in the form *unguent*). *Me ata unguent po ia lyen* . - They are using that parfume (LIX/2b; Lk.7:38).

dhe/dheu - soil (p. 86) is analysed in the Dictionary only as a masculine noun (in the nominative and accusative case in the form *dhee*). *Ajo copë dhe*. - That part of soil /land (LXXXIV/2a; VA.1:19).

mill/milli - sheath (p. 238) it is used only once and as a masculine noun, and in the accusative case appears in the form *millt*. *Shtjerë thikënë tandë ndë millt tatt* . - Insert your knife into your mill (LVIIIb; Gjon. 18:11).

Another aspect that can be analyzed on the simple neuters in Buzuku is whether they are inherited nouns of the Albanian language or borrowed nouns. Based on the studies of Çabej, Demiraj and Topalli, but also on the explanatory notes made by the author of the Dictionary on this aspect, we conclude that the nouns: *fajtë* - fault, *freni* - bridle, *frujtitë* - *frut gjyqitë* - trial, *shenjtë* - sign, mark, *vojtë* - oil are latin borrowings respectively (*fallium, frenum, fructus, iudicium, signum, oleum*) which have integrated in the Albanian language as the nouns: *ujëtë* - water, *mishtë* - meat (Demiraj, Sh., 1985, f. 194).

Topalli connects the borrowings with the weakening of the neuter gender, where he emphasizes that this phenomenon must have started much earlier than the beginnings of the written Albanian, specifically with the late Latin period, since in Slavic borrowings, or in borrowings from Italian and Middle Greek and no gender nouns are found, while Albanian has been in contact with these languages. Here he underlines some exceptions such as the noun *plehë* - fertilizer from the Slavic *pleva*, which Topalli identifies as neuter in Budi (Topalli, K., 2011, p. 219-224).

Demiraj did not define this name as neuter in Buzuku, however Qendro in Buzuku's Dictionary analyzes it as such: *plehëtë* - fertilizer (p. 344), neuter noun, which in the nominative and accusative case appears in the form *plehëtë* and it is used only once.

If we compare the findings in the Dictionary of the Language of Gjon Buzuku with the situation of the neuters in today's Albanian (Dictionary of the Albanian Language, 2006) it is easy to see that these neuters are reflected in this dictionary only as special cases, in the examples of the sentences where they are found in rigid forms or phraseologies such as: **dhjamët** - fat (as neuter, p. 234) *i ngriftë dhjamët e syrit!* (curse or swearing - freeze the fat of the eye!); *i doli dhjamët* - disease caused by the protrusion of the intestine into the abdominal cavity, *nxjerr dhjamë nga pleshti* - *is very good at making profits* (figurative expression) etc.; **ujët** - water (as neuter, p. 1138) *ujët fle hasmi nuk fle* - you must always be



vigilant (proverb), *ujët e hollë* - urine (euphemism), *ta fut ujët nën rrogos* - to do something secretly (phraseology) etc.; *leshtë* - wool (as neuter, p. 537) *leshtë e ujkut, thonjtë e bufit*- force must be used against evil (proverb), *la leshtë e kokës* - also gave life to achieve something (figurative expression); *kryet* - head (as neuter, p. 497) *me kryet lart* - walks proudly (phraseology), *na çau kryet* - bored us (phraseology), *i doli në krye një pune* - completed something (phraseology) etc., or even any other case that is marked as an illustration in a sentence example.

• Conclusions

In conclusion we can say that in Buzuku the presence of the neuter in all its types is noticeable: first (indicating substance or not), neuter nouns derived from adjectives and neuter nouns derived from verbs. The greatest presence is found in the neuter nouns derived from verbs which have been able to determine the existence of the neuter gender in today's Albanian, although with a smaller inventory, as they have been replaced by appropriate nouns that indicate action or agent, which belong to the two other genders. Neuter nouns derived from verbs are relatively limited in number in the Dictionary and almost belong to the category that still exists today in the standard Albanian language, although even in this case with lower inventory, a fact that is also noticed in their instability in the neuter gender in the Dictionary.

The simple nouns are evidenced in two categories, where the nouns that indicate substance are less in number, only nine nouns, which in today's Albanian are all integrated in the masculine gender with some exceptional cases and in a certain context. Only one noun from this class appears in the Dictionary both as neutral and as masculine (the noun *vaj* - oil). As for the second class of the simple neuter nouns, those that do not indicate substance, 22 such nouns, it is noticed that most of them are integrated in the neuter gender in the present state of the language with only some exceptions in the feminine gender such as the words: *annëtë* - side, *darsmëtë* - wedding, *shenjtë* - sign, mark etc.

Analysing the examples in the sentence, gender instability is found in the simple nouns of the neuter gender, which leads us to the conclusion that the loss of vitality of the neuter began before Buzuku wrote this work, so before the XVIth century. The fact that in today's Albanian none of the simple neuters has remained such, confirms this.

As an important grammatical feature to highlight the neuter character of the simple neuter nouns is the fact that they have the same form in the nominative and accusative cases in the prominent and



indefinite form, where some of the simple nouns end with „-ë” and some other simple nouns do not take this indicator. This grammatical feature in the prominent form appears in all cases with the same ending „-të” an ending which is created by the suffix node for both of these cases. So the suffix „-t” and „-të” for the neuter gender turn into a syntactic means of identification against the node, „-i”, „-u” of the masculine gender and „a”, „-ja” of the feminine gender.

Regarding the fact whether the simple nouns of Buzuku are borrowings or inherited nouns of Albanian, it can be concluded that most of them are from the inherited fund of the Albanian language and the part of the borrowed neuters belong mainly to Latin.

In today's Albanian (Dictionary of the Albanian Language, 2006) it is easily ascertained that from the simple neuters analyzed in Buzuku's Dictionary, only special cases are reflected, in examples of sentences where they are found in rigid forms, proverbs or phraseology, as well as any other case as an illustration in any example for concretism.

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