

SWORN VIRGINS OF ALBANIA

In the Balkans region, the rule of centuries-old law and tribal traditions still bears an effect to this day. One such code of law, the Kanun, dictates that men rule over women, and often oppressively: young girls are forced into marriages with much older men, women are the property of their husbands, and only men can vote, drive, do business, smoke, swear, own a gun or even wear pants. So if a family doesn't have a male heir, they could lose everything. Thus, some women become "*burnesha*", or sworn virgins, to elevate themselves to the status and to have the privileges of men. They cut their hair short, wear male clothing, practise masculine gestures and, most importantly, vow to be chaste for the rest of their lives. **JILL PETERS** travelled up into the Albanian Alps to meet these individuals.



Skhurtan



Hajdari





