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[Announcements](#)

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[Home](#) / [Archives](#) / [Vol 3 \(2014\): BALKAN SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW](#) / [Articles-LAW](#)

A Tradition of Honor, Hospitality and Blood Feuds: Exploring the Kanun Customary Law in Contemporary Albania

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Abstract

The following paper explores the contemporary Albanian society, as a reality which is at a crossroads between modernity and tradition, where old values and new ambitions live side by side. To elaborate on this, the research refers to the code of customary law presented in the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini, an ancient statute at the basis of Albanian culture. The Kanun is analyzed both as a code of customary law and as a frame of reference for social behavior that constitutes Albanian identity. The code represents the

body of traditional law and has been orally transmitted from generation to generation, existing in an unwritten version throughout centuries and governing the most important aspects of the social structures. The Kanun represents the oldest Albanian jurisdictional system. This research is relevant from both a sociological and juridical point of view. The study examines the role played by the ancient customs in the current reality, such as the private justice practice based on the blood feuds' tradition. Although many prescripts contained in the Kanun might appear today as obsolete and archaic, blood feuds are still present and represent a social wound in the current dynamic of Albanian society. The analysis follows a deductive approach, specifically focusing on the pillars of Lekë Dukagjini's Kanun: the word of honor, hospitality and blood revenge.

Key words: Albania; Customary Law; Tradition; Honor; Hospitality; Blood feuds.



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[Vol 3 \(2014\): BALKAN SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW](#)

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