Albanian Culture

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**Introduction**

Albania is one of the countries in Southeast Europe on the Adriatic and Ionian Sea that is near the Mediterranean Sea. The nation is defined by an area of about 11,000 square miles, with the landscape ranging from snow-caped mountains to hot and sunny coasts near the sea. In general, the country has a population of about 2 .8 million people, with the GDP of the nation being 38.3 Billion (Dana, Mukaj, and Vishkurti, 2016). The examination of the country’s culture reveals that Albania’s history and geography has a significant impact on their way of life. According to Lloha, et al., (2019), the culture emanates from the **Indigenous Peoples**, the Illyrians, who had developed an interest in paganism in their settlement within the wooded areas of far South Europe. However, based on their languages, the Albanians can be segregated into two distinct groups. Understanding the country’s culture is thus integral in knowing their life process. Therefore, this essay will disseminate information regarding Albania, the lifestyles of the people, art practices, weddings and linguistics to develop a deeper understanding of the nation.

**History of the Country**

It is integral to note that a significant part of Albanian culture emanates from the ancient Illyrian tribe that had lived in the Albanian Region centuries ago. The name Albania was coined from the name Albanoi; a **tribe** that was part of the border Illyrian community in the ancient times of the country. As a **Symbol Systems,** it is common for Albanians to use the golden eagle as a representation of the national symbol, which dates back to the 10th Century. The Golden Eagle is a representation of heroism, courage, freedom and bravery.

**Lifestyle**

The customs followed by Albania are known as the Kanun, which refer to a set of traditions and cultural practices that have their origins in Illyrian tribe laws, and which has been passed down from one generation to another through oral interactions. According to Hart, Nilsson, Raphael, & Wilensky, (2017), the Kanun encompasses four pillars that are essential in guiding the people’s life within the country, which are Hospitality, Honor, Right Conduct and Loyalty. *Besa,* another honor code within the Kanun compels the Albanians to keep any promise they make and to ensure they meet goals set in life. For instance, agreements between honorable members is guided by the *Besa* code of honor such that the same must be completed properly at all costs. Furthermore, the Kanun calls upon people to ensure they take good care of each other while providing comfort to those who may be in need regardless of diversity factors such as religion, race, and cultural affiliations. This is the primary reason why Albanians offered the Jewish with refuge in the 1940s during the Holocaust.

**Holidays**

Albanians have many holidays to commemorate the different events they celebrate in the nation. The events are inclusive of holidays and celebration on notable individuals which are spread throughout the year. According to Minnaar, (2016), the people of Albania commemorate on 28th of November every year about their day of Independence, which is in remembrance of the day of the liberty the country obtained in 1912 from the Ottoman Empire. Military parades in all the major towns in the country mark the celebration of the Event, thereby having the **ideology** that they are remembering the days they had suffered without independence. *Bajram* is another holiday celebrated by the Muslim community and is observed by the Albanians as a day of peace, unity, fellowship, forgiveness and moral victory in the country. In commemorating this holiday, sheep are slaughtered and the meal shared among friends and family members, and with people who are less fortunate within the community. Unlike other holidays, however, the date for observing *Bajram* is variable depending on the year and the appearance of the crescent moon as a **symbol** from the heavens (Dana, Mukaj, and Vishkurti, 2016). Another festival observed as a holiday in Albania is the *Deta e Verse,* which is a pagan ceremony that is celebrated every 14th of March in each year. The purpose of the holiday is to commemorate the end of winter season and the rejuvenation of nature. In the festival, the primary activities involve the cooking of sweets, eating of turkey legs, boiled eggs, simite, walnuts and dried fits.

**Literature and Art**

The literature of the nation took its roots from the Albanian culture emanating from the Catholic Church Development and manuscripts that were written in Albanian language. Since this practice, written forms of literature borrowed from the Albanian language. The first literary work written in Albania was the Meshari by Gjon Buzuku, and since then novels and other forms of literature had been developed. Art, on the other hand, comes in various forms. In Albania, architecture, painting, sculpture and mosaic designs, among other forms, are presented as art to the people. The art dates back to the Illyrian era and has been influenced over time by other external forces within the nation aimed at conquering the religion due to various **Discrimination** practices.

**Wedding Traditions**

Weddings are an important occasion for the Albanians, and the dressing for the bride is characterized by transparency and elegance of the same. The catholic brides, on the other hand, have their dresses characterized by harmony and picturesque effects. Cultural practices depending on the religion are customary prior to commencing the wedding preparations. The period of conducting the weddings also depends on the religion to provide them with a program over how the wedding should be presided.

**Religion**

The people in Albania subscribe to a diverse selection of religions, which are inclusive of Judaism, Christianity and Islam; all of which co-exist in the nation with harmony. Freedom of worship is allowed within the country by the constitution and hence no constraints can impede the religious practices within the country. Among the three religions, however, Judaism faith is the oldest dating to before 1 BC, with Christianity following as the second most prominent faith and Islam the last. However, due to the ability of all religions to practice their faith at any place without interfering with the others, it is evident that the nation does not face religious clashes.

**Cuisine**

It is important to note that meals are evidently among the vital substances in any culture. Within Albania, it is integral to host guests in any home and provide them with substantive meals that will bring health benefits to them. This means that it is a common practice for the Albanians to invite each other for meals while they bond even if they are not commemorating any occasion. The Albanian food has its roots in the Mediterranean, which has an influence on the heavy use of olive oil in most of their dishes. However, vegetables are also a common cuisine for the Albanians whereby Spinach, eggplants, zucchini, cabbages, peppers, potatoes and cucumbers, among others, are prepared. Spices and herbs that are common to the Albanian communities are inclusive of garlic, basil, oregano, and onions. Meat products vary depending on occasions and they include lamb, goat, beef, and veal and chicken, all of which are favorites among many communities in the country.

**Language**

Albanian remains to be the dominant language spoken in the country. However, the **Linguistic Anthropology** of the nation reveals that Albanian has two different dialects; the Gheg and the Tosk. The Tosk is spoken majorly in the southern regions while Gheg is widely used in the northern regions (Endresen, 2018). Furthermore, it is evident that the Albanian language is primarily used in areas inclusive of Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. The scattering of Albanian people across the globe has led to the establishment of the dialect in other countries such as Croatia, Greece, Serbia and Italy, but with a different and unique accent.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to examine the cultural practices in Albania by conducting a research on their weddings, language, art and lifestyles of the people in the nation to have a better understanding of its practices. Albania is a country that dates over a long period and its culture roots from many years back. The nation upholds integrity, community-cooperativeness and respect, among other honors that are essential in their interactions. Moreover, the people uphold their different cultures based on their religions, which means that they have commitment in ensuring their way of life is appreciated.

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