



The Tribes of Albania: History, Society and Culture (Library of Balkan Studies)

By Robert Elsie

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Northern Albania and Montenegro are the only regions in Europe to have retained a true tribal society up to the mid-twentieth century. This book provides the first scholarly investigation of this tribal society, a pioneer work that offers a detailed survey of all the major Albanian-speaking tribes in Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo. Robert Elsie provides comprehensive material on the 69 different tribes, including data on their locations, religious affiliations, tribal structures and relations, population statistics, tribal folklore, legends and history. Also included are excerpts from the works of prominent nineteenth and early-twentieth century writers, such as Edith Durham and Johann Georg von Hahn, who travelled through the tribal regions, as well as short biographies on prominent figures linked to the tribes. As the first book of its kind, The Tribes of Albania will be of interest to scholars and students of the Balkans, of southeastern European anthropology, ethnography and history.

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Editorial Review

Review

The tribal system of northern Albania is one of the most fascinating aspects of a very distinctive part of Europe. Over hundreds of years, when their territory was under Ottoman rule but seldom fully under Ottoman control, these tribes provided a basis for social identity, local justice and military action. So cohesive were they that the unity of a tribe could easily survive the conversion of one part of it to Islam. Anyone who studies the history of these people will encounter tribal names and tribal identities at every step; and yet, until now, there has never been a general work gathering all the scattered information about them that survives in sources of many different kinds. The Tribes of Albania will be an indispensable and authoritative work of reference. There are few people in the world who could have written such a work; absolutely no one could have done it as well as Robert Elsie, whose knowledge of this material is unparalleled, Sir Noel Malcolm, Senior Research Fellow, All Souls College, University of Oxford; The tribalism of the north has been of primary significance to Albania right up until modern times, yet anyone attempting to study it soon encounters daunting difficulties. The topic was taboo in the Communist period, while earlier surveys and travellers' accounts are inevitably scattered and inconsistent. Now Robert Elsie has very helpfully brought together a wealth of information, in as clear and systematic a fashion as the subject permits, to create this scholarly handbook to the northern tribes, their structures, geography, and history. It is to be welcomed as a valuable contribution to the ongoing demystification of the country, Jason Tames, author of King Zog: Self-Made Monarch of Albania

About the Author

Robert Elsie is a writer, translator, interpreter and specialist in Albanian studies. He has written over fifty books on Albania including Albanian Literature: A Short Introduction and A Biographical Dictionary of Albanian History (both I.B.Tauris).

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