



Research Article

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The Power of Ethnocultural and Ethnolinguistic Codes for Social Change

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Abstract

Ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic codes have historically shaped and sustained social relationships, guiding collective behavior and actions. One notable example is the blood feud, traditionally governed by canonical acts. In modern societies, there is an ongoing challenge to shift the entrenched concept of "manhood" — from the belief rooted in the canon that "a man avenges blood" to a contemporary ethos asserting that "a man forgives blood feuds." This study investigates the transformative role of Anton Çetta, a distinguished intellectual from Kosovo, who leveraged ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic codes to drive social change. It examines how Çetta's cultural and intellectual foundations as an author and scholar intersected with his mission-driven work, ultimately establishing him as a symbol of human rights. The central research question guiding this study is: How did Anton Çetta attain the status of the "wise old man," whose authority facilitated the resolution of blood feuds and fostered reconciliation? The paper explores Çetta's role in the blood feud reconciliation movement in Kosovo, focusing on three core factors that underpinned his success: (i) his leadership qualities, (ii) his strategic deployment of cultural archetypes, and (iii) his effective use of ethnographic speech codes through storytelling. The findings reveal that Çetta's intellectual impact propelled an emancipatory and civilizing mission by activating deeply embedded archetypes and ethnolinguistic codes within the collective consciousness. His approach redefined traditional behaviors, fostering new social patterns centered on collective dignity. Ultimately, this study aims to draw generalizable insights from Çetta's work, highlighting how his intellectual and ethnographic strategies transcended the individual and contributed to broader societal transformation.

Keywords: Individualistic culture, collectivist culture, archetype, ethnocultural code, ethnolinguistic code, blood feud reconciliation, leadership, social change

1. Introduction

1.1 The Scope of the Canon and Its Universal Nature

The Canon is not merely an Albanian cultural element but a customary legal framework with a universal nature, extending beyond Albania's borders. It has been recognized as customary law not only in northern Albania but also in Kosovo and parts of Montenegro. Scholars such as Franz Nopcsa have observed parallels between the Canon of Northern Albanians and the customary laws of

Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and even the legal codes of 12th-century Italian cities. Moikom Zeqo (2014) emphasizes that the Canon extended from the highlands of Northern Albania to the Venetian territories from Shkodra to Kotor. Furthermore, the Canon's similarities to the customary laws of Homeric Greece, particularly in Northern Albania, suggest a broader Balkan tradition of unwritten legal codes. Some theories link the Canon's origins to Illyria, although definitive proof remains elusive (Tarifa, 2014). Striking parallels can also be found between the Canon and the laws of the Caucasus, as highlighted by German anthropologist Adolf Dirr and Leonard Fox, the English translator of Gjeçov's work (Fox, 1989). The motivations behind blood feuds within the Canon resonate with those of other traditional societies. In medieval Iceland (Byock, 2003), blood feuds were triggered by insults, theft, jealousy, and dishonorable conduct. Similarly, in New Guinea (Kuschel, 1988), offenses like livestock theft, adultery, and violating communal rules could spark conflict. The Solomon Islands regarded obscene behavior and breaches of water-use norms as grave offenses warranting blood feuds.

These cross-cultural parallels underscore that the Canon is not an isolated phenomenon but part of a global tradition of customary laws that address conflict resolution and social cohesion. As such, the Canon transcends its Albanian roots, representing a valuable piece of global cultural heritage and reflecting how traditional societies have historically structured justice and coexistence.

1.2 The Code of Lekë Dukagjini and Blood Feud

The Code of Lekë Dukagjini embodies a sophisticated and intricate set of rules that have historically governed the social and legal life of Albanians. Deeply rooted in Albanian culture, the term "canon" originates from the Greek word "kanon," meaning norm or measure, underscoring its role as a codification of justice and communal behavior. Transmitted orally across generations, the Canon represents not only a local tradition but a universal cultural value, paralleling ancient customary codes from other societies.

While the exact origins of the Canon remain unclear, scholars widely support the hypothesis that it did not emerge at a specific moment or from a single individual (Pupovci, 1972). Rather, it evolved over time, solidified in the 15th century by Lekë Dukagjini, who provided structure and codification to these longstanding social norms. His efforts formalized a legal system that reinforced justice, solidarity, and social order within Albanian communities. A significant milestone in the Canon's history was its publication in Albanian by Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi in 1930. This written compilation allowed for a comprehensive study of the Canon, establishing it as a complex and nuanced legal system.

One of the most debated aspects of the Canon is the practice of blood feuds. Contrary to the common perception of blood feuds as mere acts of vengeance, they historically functioned as mechanisms to uphold balance and justice within the community, especially in the absence of formal judicial institutions. Crucially, the Canon also integrated principles aimed at conflict resolution — emphasizing mediation, forgiveness, and the restoration of social harmony. These elements highlight the Canon's dual nature: while it acknowledged retributive justice, it equally underscored the importance of reconciliation and collective well-being.

1.3 The Canon and Blood Feud: Collective Memory Preserved through Speech Codes

The Code of Lekë Dukagjini, as a complex system of customary norms, has been preserved through legends and oral traditions, serving as a form of collective memory that has profoundly influenced the social and legal fabric of Albanian society. Deeply rooted in Balkan history, the Canon transcends its role as a local legal framework, embodying universal principles of social coexistence.

For centuries, these norms have been upheld and transmitted by tribal elders and village leaders, who safeguarded the Canon's teachings through oral storytelling. Scholars such as Edith Durham (1909) highlighted the remarkable capacity of northern highlanders to memorize and

faithfully reproduce these codes— a phenomenon also observed among other traditional cultures, including the Montenegrins. Blood feuds, a salient aspect of the Canon, have ancient roots linked to tribal organization. According to Morgan, the tribal order's foundation lay in kinship ties, where members bore a collective obligation to protect one another and avenge any loss of life within the group (Durham, 1909). This practice was not simply an expression of vengeance but a deeply ingrained system of collective responsibility and loyalty to one's tribe and bloodline. Legends have preserved the Canon's principles of daily coexistence and its concept of blood feud as a means of justice. Often misunderstood, blood feuds were, in essence, mechanisms of maintaining balance, equality, and reciprocity within the community particularly in the absence of formal judicial institutions. The Canon further embedded these practices in a distinct linguistic and ritualistic framework, where the act of blood feud was accompanied by a codified language of discourse and solemn rituals. As Castelletti (1933) asserts, blood feud represented a natural manifestation of the psychology of Albanian highlanders, reflecting their profound commitment to freedom and their duty to defend both personal and collective integrity. This intricate interplay between tradition, speech codes, and collective memory reveals how the Canon shaped both justice and social harmony within Albanian.

1.4 Comparative Analysis of Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Mechanisms

Conflict resolution and reconciliation mechanisms (<https://gazetadielli.com/>) have evolved across cultures and historical periods, reflecting both universal patterns and culturally specific practices. From the mediation and arbitration systems of Ancient Greece — exemplified by Solon's Oath of Athens — to the legal code of Yassa under Genghis Khan's Pax Mongolica, and the complex negotiation processes of the Iroquois Confederacy in North America, diverse societies have institutionalized conflict resolution in unique ways. The Scottish Highlands' Code of Honor during the 17th and 18th centuries and the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini in the Balkans similarly emphasized the restoration of honor, community involvement, and the pivotal role of respected leaders as mediators. While these systems share core principles — such as promoting peace and restoring communal harmony — they differ in their implementation. Athenian courts formalized mediation, while Balkan societies relied on traditional councils of elders. The Iroquois employed tribal councils, and in Scotland, neutral third parties often arbitrated conflicts. Despite these differences, all these methods sought to maintain social equilibrium by balancing justice with reconciliation.

1.5 Cultural, Social and Political Resistance to Reconciliation

The evolution of blood feud resolution methods reveals the cultural, social, and political resistance that often accompanies reconciliation efforts (Oral History Kosovo). Traditional mechanisms like *Islihatet*, led by esteemed elders with executive authority, and the use of Guarantors, frequently encountered betrayal and violence. Symbolic payments were often required even when forgiveness was granted, reflecting deep-seated customs. Contemporary reconciliation efforts, such as youth-driven initiatives and reconciliation councils, have shifted the focus to the intrinsic value of forgiveness, often removing financial compensation and encouraging community-wide participation as guarantors. This shift faced political resistance, notably through the Serbian Ministry's 1990 decree opposing the movement led by youth and Anton Çetta. Despite these challenges, the spirit of reconciliation transcended divisions.

Furthermore, deeply rooted cultural norms posed additional barriers, especially for engaged women in reconciliation, who faced skepticism in male-dominated spaces. Their experiences highlight the intersection of historical trauma, gender dynamics, and community engagement in this complex process.

1.6 *The Canon as Collective Memory Preserved through Speech Codes*

Until the 20th century, the Canon was transmitted orally, embedded in the collective memory of Albanian society. It was meticulously safeguarded by tribal elders and village chiefs, who played a crucial role in preserving its integrity. Edith Durham (1910) noted the exceptional memory of the northern highlanders, who, much like the Montenegrins, developed a rich oral tradition and an extraordinary capacity to recall and recite complex codes and customs. The maxims and decrees of the Canon were not merely rules but cultural markers recorded in the collective consciousness of tribal elites and passed down through generations, often in the form of proverbs and ceremonial rites dating back to the Middle Ages. Coon (1950) observed that northern highlanders, relying on traditional verse forms and a stereotypical vocabulary, could compose new epic songs while seamlessly reciting ancient ones from memory.

Martin Camaj (1989) draws a striking parallel between the Canon and Albanian epic songs, describing their "natural form" as oral rather than written—perpetuated by word of mouth from one generation to the next. Beyond the practice of blood feuds, the Canon's symbolic language reinforced values of family loyalty and collective identity, reflected in proverbs like "blood is thicker than water" and the rituals surrounding acts of vengeance and forgiveness. The symbolism of blood, deeply ingrained in the Canon, resonates with similar practices in other cultures such as feudal Scotland and Corsica, underscoring the universality of these cultural codes. Through oral traditions, stable proverbs, and ritualized speech, the Code of Lekë Dukagjini has preserved its ethical framework, solidifying itself as an enduring pillar of Albanian collective memory and social identity.

1.7 *Blood Forgiveness: Differences Between Albanian Culture and Other Traditions*

Blood forgiveness is a complex practice that has served as a mechanism for resolving conflicts in many cultures, particularly in Albanian society. In the context of blood feuds, societies that have practiced this system have done so to establish order rather than chaos, enforcing strong rules that uphold honor and dignity.

According to Šufflay, blood feuds were almost completely eradicated in Europe during the Middle Ages due to the influence of the Church and the authority of the state. However, they later resumed with new force, as witnessed in Tivar in 1511 (Šufflay, 1968). Wallace-Hadrill notes that, except in cases where personal or family honor was seriously violated, blood feuds gradually faded and disappeared in Europe, giving way to the authority of the monarch and his laws (Šufflay, 1968). The disappearance of tribal structures made it difficult, if not impossible, for blood feuds to continue in Western societies.

Over time, especially during the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church sought to limit and prohibit blood feuds, replacing them with public punishments and fines, which it administered itself. This intervention by a third party served as a means to resolve conflicts and establish order. According to Weber and Durkheim, the blood feud was closely related to social order in pre-modern societies. Weber argues that in modern societies, where the public sphere has been rationalized through the justice system and the state, blood feuds have lost their place as a practice of the past (Šufflay, 1968).

In Albania, although the phenomenon of blood feuds has been present, the strength of the state's authority, especially during the socialist system, has significantly limited this practice. The evolution of collective perceptions of honor and loyalty has also contributed to the fading of blood feuds over time, making them more difficult to sustain in modern society.

Blood forgiveness in Albanian culture often involved the intervention of men in authority, such as tribe elders, chiefs, or clergy, who could facilitate reconciliation. This differs from other traditions, where the intervention of third parties, such as authorities or popular figures, has also been present but sometimes in more formal and less culturally charged ways.

This study explores one of the latest models of mass blood forgiveness under the leadership of Anton Çetta in the 1990s. It aims to analyze the relationship between Anton Çetta's cultural and

intellectual education and background as an author, scholar, and researcher, and his life and activity as a missionary, who himself was transformed into a human rights institution.

The phenomenon under consideration is the reconciliation of blood feuds in Kosovo, focusing on the role of Anton Çetta. The central question is: How did Anton Çetta manage to be accepted as the "wise old man," to whom every door was opened and every blood feud was forgiven, when Kosovo was at a historic crossroads?

By examining the case of Kosovo in depth, we intend to explain one of the later sociological mechanisms of blood forgiveness, through the use of customary and folklore codes that have accelerated this process, particularly by combining these codes with Çetta's leadership role.

This analysis is based on a combination of primary and secondary sources. The primary data derives from Kosovo's rich oral storytelling tradition, a long-standing cultural practice that has preserved personal, familial, and national histories through narrative transmission. To systematically examine this tradition, we conducted an in-depth study of the Digital Archive of Oral History Kosovo, analyzing approximately 30 interviews using coded text analysis to address our research questions. The findings from these primary sources are further contextualized through a review of secondary literature from both national and international sources. To enhance the reliability and validity of our conclusions, we triangulated the core archived interviews with additional testimonies from media sources, ensuring a rigorous verification process.

The study does not endeavor to set the context of the events that undoubtedly influenced it, but rather focuses narrowly on the relationship between collective and individual cultural codes to explain blood forgiveness, without claiming that they are independent of context and other factors.

2. Reconciliation of Blood Feuds in Kosovo: Context and Explanatory Framework

The reconciliation of blood feuds in Kosovo is a complex phenomenon shaped and evolved within a specific historical and cultural context. This process, closely tied to blood feud traditions, has functioned as a mechanism for conflict resolution and the maintenance of social order during periods of crisis and heightened tension.

The blood feud reconciliation movement, led by Anton Çetta in 1990 as the chair of the Central Council of the National Movement for Blood Feud Reconciliation, brought peace and relief to thousands of Albanian families. "There is no single case in the history of our people where, in one year, 1,169 blood feuds have been forgiven," stated Lulëzim Etemaj (albinfo.ch., website, 6 February 2020), one of the five initiators of the movement.

Blood feuds in Kosovo were most prevalent in regions where folklore and oral traditions had remained vibrant, preserving customs and rituals directly or indirectly linked to the practice. In these areas, customary heritage, intertwined with oral literature, was governed by codes that dictated individual behavior, distinguishing between good and evil, moral and immoral actions. The daily lives of the residents were deeply influenced by these codes.

The year 1990 marked a turning point, as demonstrations erupted across Kosovo, and the youth mobilized their movement. It was a time for significant change, demanding swift and decisive action. Against the backdrop of this crucial period, Anton Çetta emerged as a key figure — a "deus ex machina" — offering a solution to a deeply rooted societal issue.

Çetta unified the blood feud reconciliation movement, aiming to eradicate this phenomenon by drawing on his extensive work in collecting, studying, and publishing Kosovo's oral literature, primarily from the Dukagjini region, but also including material from Albanians in Northern Macedonia and Montenegro. His success lay in his strategic use of the very "tools" that had sustained blood feuds for centuries — the canon (code), oratory, and customary laws — repurposing them as instruments for peace.

Anton Çetta's interest in popular culture began in the fall of 1946 when he enrolled in the Faculty of Philology, French Language Branch, at the University of Belgrade in Serbia. In 1950, he was appointed assistant lecturer at the Albanian Language and Literature Seminar within the same

faculty. This academic foundation paved the way for his in-depth study of Albanian ethnocultural heritage.

This article seeks to identify and analyze Çetta's role in the blood feud reconciliation movement in Kosovo, focusing on the key factors that contributed to its success. The study is structured around several thematic axes, each interwoven to build a comprehensive understanding of this transformative process.

The analysis concludes that Çetta was an intellectual who contributed to an emancipatory and civilizing movement, implemented by mobilizing archetypes and ethnographic codes embedded in the collective psyche, transforming them into new behaviors that fostered a renewed sense of collective dignity. Although not exhaustive, this article aims to draw generalizing conclusions inspired by the intellectual and ethnographer Çetta, extending beyond the individual himself.

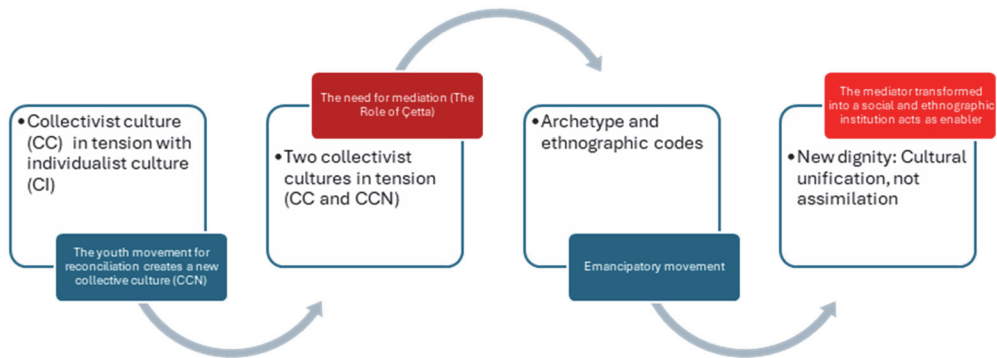


Figure 1: explains the transformative cultural chain from an emancipatory individualist culture (CI) in tension with a collectivist culture (CC) based on ethnocultural roots, to a new collective culture (CCN) driven by youth and mediated through Çetta, who manages to transform it into a new collective culture (CCN) that builds on the same ethnocultural principles but promotes a new dignity cult, that of forgiveness instead of punishment.

To substantiate this hypothesis, the study employs fundamental communication theories (Griffin, Ledbetter, Sparks, Budini, Gjergji, 2012), including Dignity Negotiation Theory (Stella Ting-Toomey) and Speech Codes Theory (Gerry Philipsen). Additionally, theories on leadership psychology (M., Edwards, Leadership Explained, website, 2 December 2015) have been consulted, along with a thorough analysis of the series of publications from the Albanological Institute of Pristina and oral and bibliographic testimonies meticulously gathered and published by The Oral History Initiative (2015). (<https://oralhistorykosovo.org/about-us/>)

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Axis 1: The Coexistence of Individualistic (IC) and Collectivist (CC) Cultures as a Premise for Change: The Youth Movement as a Catalyst for a New Cultural Balance

The dynamic interaction between individualistic culture (IC) and collectivist culture (CC) represents a fundamental aspect of societal evolution. This confrontation, deeply influenced by context, fosters a new equilibrium: as individualistic culture strengthens, it communicates and shapes a renewed form of collectivist culture. This article focuses on the blood feud code in 1990s Kosovo, where the traditional collectivist culture upheld the principle that "blood must be avenged," while the

emerging individualistic culture embraced the notion that "forgiving bloodshed is honorable." These cultures reflect two distinct worldviews:

- **Collectivist perception:** Bloodshed must be avenged (obligation) by a man (self) who lives honorably (goal).
- **Individualistic perception:** I do not seek revenge (self) because I believe in God and the state (goal), and I do not perceive vengeance as a moral duty (obligation).

The testimony of Prof. Marjan Dema, alongside numerous accounts from participants in the blood feud forgiveness process, supports the hypothesis that "revenge," rather than formal blood feuds, was prevalent in uneducated families. Dema, having lost three brothers, chose not to retaliate and even left a final wish instructing his family not to avenge his death if he were murdered (Oral History Initiative (website), 31 January 2017).

In a collectivist culture, individual behavior is dictated by group norms, with personal sacrifice often serving the collective interest. Revenge was a socially enforced norm, leaving little room for personal deliberation. Conversely, in an individualistic culture, behavior is guided by personal values, and sacrifice is rewarded on an individual level, often challenging the collective's expectations.

The carriers of individualistic values—typically the educated youth exposed to modern ideas—emerged from patriarchal societies but advocated for forgiveness as a marker of honor. In Kosovo, this shift in perception was embodied by the young participants in the Reconciliation Movement.

The confrontation between these two cultural paradigms gradually transitioned into a form of "silent tension," allowing for the coexistence of both perspectives. This balance was facilitated by the introduction of a youth group from the Dukagjin Plain (edmondkumnova (website) 24 January 2007) into the socio-cultural fabric of the Blood Feud Reconciliation Movement. As the individualistic culture (forgiveness of blood feuds) expanded, it laid the groundwork for a new collectivist culture—"blood feuds can be forgiven"—to emerge.

Prior to the Reconciliation Movement, blood feuds were deeply entrenched in Kosovo's collective consciousness, often passed down for generations. Upon a murder, a customary expression of condolence was "Good evening," implying that the pain could only be alleviated if the perpetrator was killed by nightfall. The victim's blood-stained clothes were preserved until vengeance was exacted, and the killer was honored by being seated at the head of the table—a ritual symbolizing public dignity. The prevailing belief was that "blood does not age."

However, as the Blood Feud Reconciliation Movement gained momentum, this mindset shifted. Forgiveness became the new collective ideal, symbolized by phrases such as "May you live with honor" (literally translated from Albanian as "May your cheeks be white"), reinforcing that true honor now belonged to those who forgave. Forgiveness ceremonies were held publicly, often in village squares, to emphasize the social recognition of those who chose reconciliation over revenge.

The pivotal event at Verrat e Llukës in May 1990 marked the peak of this cultural shift. Approximately half a million people gathered to affirm that "to forgive blood feuds is manly." From the first celebrated blood feud forgiveness in Raushiq on February 3, 1990, until the grand gathering at Verrat e Llukës in May, over 1,000 blood feuds were resolved, and 2,500 families were liberated from the isolation of house imprisonment.

Ultimately, the concept of "white cheeks"—symbolizing honor and integrity—was redefined. No longer associated with avenging bloodshed, it became a reflection of moral courage and forgiveness, signaling a transformative reorientation of collective values within Albanian society.

Axis 2: The Confrontation of Two Collectivist Cultures and the Role of Mediation

The clash between two collectivist cultures in Kosovo created an urgent need for mediation — a role skillfully assumed by Anton Çetta. Çetta's unique ability to navigate this cultural conflict stemmed from his mastery of speech codes and his "sui generis" leadership style. These qualities formed the foundation of a successful reconciliation strategy.

According to Dignity Negotiation Theory (Oral History Initiative (website) 31 January 2017) the resolution of this conflict required a shift in trajectory between two contrasting cultural orientations:

the individualistic culture, centered on self-care (SELF at the core), and the collectivist culture, focused on preserving the dignity of others (US at the core). The youth movement played a crucial role in bridging this gap by promoting a transformative code: the sacrifice of the SELF for a renewed sense of collective dignity. This innovative approach encouraged care for others while maintaining a sense of personal honor.

However, this shift was met with resistance. Traditional collectivist norms emphasized collective dignity through the practice of "taking blood" — avenging bloodshed. Yet, the youth movement laid the groundwork for dismantling this old framework, which had long stifled social development. For this transformation to succeed, it was essential to establish a new, cohesive context.

In this critical moment, the intellectual elite emerged as key agents of change, tasked with reinforcing the push toward a redefined collectivist culture and dignity. They assumed the role of "third-party" mediators, essential for easing the tension between the two cultures — the individualistic culture (IC) and the new collectivist culture (NCC). Without proper mediation, these cultures risked becoming competitors or, worse, assimilators of one another. Çetta, as a prominent figure within the intellectual elite, played a decisive role in ensuring the dignity of both cultural identities was respected. His leadership prevented the assimilation of one culture by the other, instead fostering a peaceful coexistence that culminated in reconciliation.

The significance of Çetta's mediation is further highlighted through the testimonies of his contemporaries. According to Berisha (1997), Çetta's presence during the blood feud forgiveness process was often crucial. In many cases, individuals declared: "If I forgive the blood feud, I do so only because of Anton Çetta." This raises an essential question: Why was Çetta so widely accepted by all parties involved?

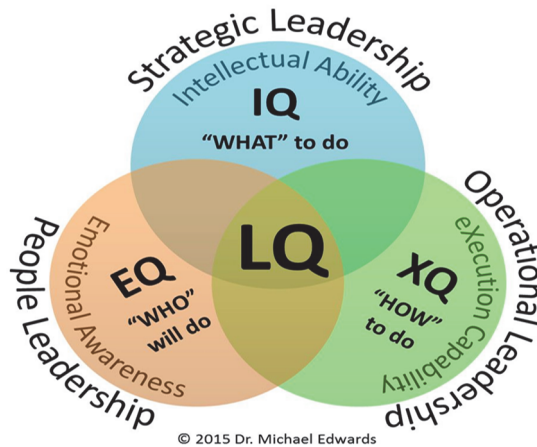
Our analysis identifies three primary factors that explain Çetta's influence and acceptance:

1. *Leader-like Nature*

Psychological studies outline four key quotients that contribute to leadership success (LQ) (M. Edwards, "The Leadership Quotient: How IQ, EQ, and XQ Come Together for Great Leadership", Leadership Explained (website), 2 December 2015)

- *Intelligence Quotient (IQ)*: The ability to understand, analyze, and remember information — crucial for strategic leadership.
- *Emotional Quotient (EQ)*: The capacity to gain the trust and respect of others, demonstrating authenticity and responsibility — a reflection of strong character.
- *Social Quotient (SQ)*: The skill to build and sustain relationships, with emotional intelligence playing a vital role in making a leader relatable and approachable.
- *Execution Quotient (XQ)*: The ability to overcome adversity, ensuring effective and efficient task completion — a hallmark of operational leadership.

The Leadership Quotient



Çetta's biographical background reflects the presence of four key quotients essential for leadership: the intelligence quotient (IQ), which underpins strategic leadership, and the social-emotional quotient (EQ), which fosters emotional intelligence and acceptance as a leader. Notably, his ethnographic education further enriched these qualities. Equipped with these skills, Çetta naturally assumed the role of leader within the movement — a role he embodied through the archetype of the "wise old man" and reinforced by employing ethnographic speech codes, particularly through the art of storytelling.

2. Use and Redefinition of Cultural Archetypes

Human beings are not inherently able to read one another's minds; we are not programmed to do so. However, there is a way to bridge this gap — through imagery. Individuals create patterns of psychic images, allowing them to influence the thoughts and emotions of others. Over millennia, humanity has developed archetypes, one of the most enduring being the "Wise Old Man."

In oral literature, the Wise Old Man appears in his mystical form, often seated in the men's chamber — a symbolic space representing assembly, tradition, and the authority of the elders. For the highlanders of Kosovo, this familiar figure, drawn from tales and ballads, materialized through Anton Çetta: a knowledgeable, elderly man, tall and upright, with flowing white hair and a calm, steady voice that carried the weight of his words. His presence was both persuasive and reassuring.

According to Stella Ting-Toomey and John Oetzel's Dignity Negotiation Theory (Griffin, Ledbetter, Sparks, Budini, Gjergji, 2012), negotiation unfolds in three stages: (i) emotional expression, (ii) passive aggression, and (iii) third-party assistance. The archetype of the Wise Old Man mirrored the role of the "third party" mediator in Albanian tradition, occupying the symbolic space of the assembly or men's chamber, where elders convened to resolve disputes.

As Çetta himself noted (Çetta, 1995), the Elders' Council was an institution of customary law composed of one or more respected elderly men who, in the presence of guarantors and witnesses, addressed civil, criminal, and other conflicts. These councils, held in men's assemblies, assessed the severity of offenses, determined guilt or damage, and imposed sanctions based on customary law, primarily drawn from the Lekë Dukagjini Canon (Code). Under Ottoman rule, Sharia law was applied in urban areas, but in rural, mountainous regions far from administrative centers, people sought justice through the wisdom of the elders.

The Elders' Councils were supported by witnesses who assisted in verifying claims. These councils practiced a form of "legal storytelling" (Çetta, 1995), marked by concise narration, dynamic dialogue, and a traditional narrative structure. Extraordinary cases or those that illustrated the

application of customary norms were memorized, passed down orally through generations, and served as models for resolving future conflicts.

3. *Ethnographic Codes of Speech through Storytelling*

Speech codes are layered systems of meanings, premises, and rules tied to socially constructed practices and terms. Each distinct culture fosters its own speech code, reflecting its psychology, sociology, and rhetoric. For example, the speech code of HONOR emphasizes the individual's value as defined by community standards, while the code of DIGNITY highlights an individual's inherent worth as a human being. These speech codes often gain added significance when used in rituals — structured sequences of symbolic actions (Griffin, Ledbetter, Sparks, Budini, Gjergji, 2012).

The Wise Old Man archetype, embodied by Çetta, tapped into these ethnographic speech codes, leveraging the oral tradition of storytelling deeply rooted in the collectivist culture. This oral tradition transmitted moral values and conflict resolution strategies across generations.

The stories recounted in men's chambers often centered on key themes: respect for the tribe, honor, blood feuds, guarantees, besa (a pledge of honor or a given word), manhood, and the weight of harsh words. Elders shared these narratives not merely as entertainment but as a way to "advise the younger ones."

The power of storytelling was vividly illustrated during blood feud forgiveness meetings. In one case, recorded in the memories of participants, a young man was prepared to forgive a blood feud, but his sister resisted. Her refusal stemmed from a promise — a besa — she had made to their dying father, vowing to avenge his death. To resolve this internal conflict, the solution was drawn from legend: a symbolic conversation with the deceased. The daughter visited her father's grave, explained why forgiveness was being sought, and imagined receiving his consent. Much like Doruntina and other figures from Albanian oral literature, she was freed from the besa that could not be fulfilled (Oral History Initiative (website) 2015).

Language, as Heimann Steinthal (2010) asserts, is not just a communication tool but a form of spiritual culture — a manifestation of social consciousness alongside morality, law, and ideology. It transfers collective experience and shapes thought processes. Wilhelm von Humboldt (Achelis, 2021) further emphasized language as the "formative organ of thought," linking speech directly to cognitive functions.

Thus, Çetta's speech carried transformative power. He emphasized the strength required to forgive, framing it within ethnographic speech codes: "It is so difficult to forgive that only men forgive," or "It takes a braver man to forgive a blood feud than to cause one." These expressions, drawn from oral literature, resonated deeply with his audience.

When Çetta spoke, silence reigned (Oral History Initiative (website) 2015). His words, steeped in cultural wisdom and storytelling, entered the imaginations of his listeners. Often, his speeches moved people to tears — first from pain, then from the release of forgiveness. As one observer noted, "Once the group asked him to kill to be a man; now the group asks him to forgive to be a man." By invoking old codes, Çetta laid the foundation for a new culture of dignity and reconciliation.

Axis 3: Exercising Archetypes and Ethnographic Speech Codes: Çetta as an Institution of Human Rights

Çetta transcended his role as a mere mediator; he became both an institution of human rights within the new collectivist culture (NCC) and a living legend rooted in the past collectivist culture (CC).

He redefined dignity by transforming the selfless strategy of the past collectivist culture (CC) into a winning strategy for the new collectivist culture (NCC). While preserving the essence of dignity, he reversed the algorithm of oral literature, uniting the two cultures into a single national cause.

During moments of silence in the men's chambers, when reconciliation seemed unreachable, Çetta found golden opportunities to break the deadlock: storytelling. His narratives, such as "Who Turned Out to Be the Noblest" (Çetta, 1989), conveyed direct messages and sparked discussions among the gathered men. This strategy often shattered the prevailing silence, reopening the path to forgiveness.

Sabahajdin Cena recalls: "... When the host family served coffee to the professor, he would take the coffee pot himself, pour only half a cup, and say: 'I would like to feel happy that there is still coffee in the pot.'" This simple gesture extended the conversation — because, as he implied, the coffee had not run out (Cena, 2011).

Çetta's oratory went beyond words. Cena (2011) observed how Çetta's facial expressions, from raised eyebrows to furrowed lines and the subtle movement of his right index finger, created a multisensory experience. His voice resonated optically, acoustically, and kinetically — captivating the audience and reinforcing his powerful presence.

3. Conclusions

Blood feud reconciliation in Kosovo represents a profound practice that reflects the country's history, culture, and social structures. In a complex context where violence and insecurity prevail, this process offers an opportunity to restore order and build a more harmonious society, especially in the face of challenges that demand strong solidarity. However, it is essential to recognize that blood feud reconciliation is not an isolated practice; it is shaped by a range of historical, cultural, and social factors that continue to influence its dynamics.

In modern societies, the self-construct (self-image) is both independent (individualistic perception) and interdependent (collectivist perception) with culture and collective behavior. The new collectivist culture honored Çetta as a "legend," while both contemporary and future elites recognized him as an institution of human rights. Çetta's legacy lies in his ability to bridge cultural codes of speech and drive lasting social change, embodying a figure who seamlessly united tradition and progress.

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