

ALBANIA

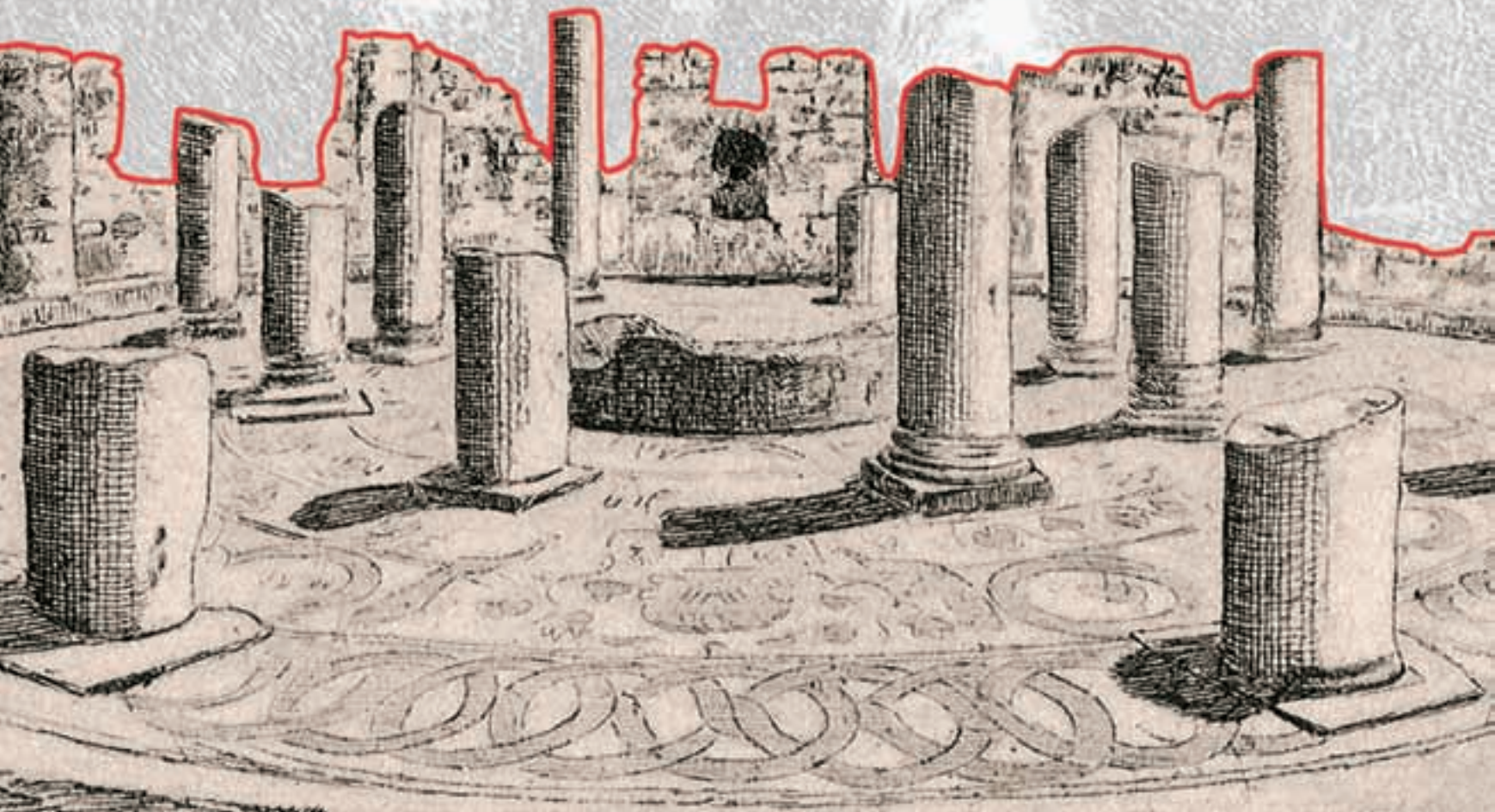
...from the history



MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CULTURE,
YOUTH AND SPORTS

NATIONAL TOURISM
ORGANISATION

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- The Illyrians, Helen Settlements and Roman Civilization*
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- The period from 1912 to 1944*
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PREHISTORY

The land of present Albania has populated since the Paleolithic Period. Researches in the habitations of Paleolithic (6000-3000 BC) from Albanian and foreign archeologists has started since the beginnings of 20th century, of Bronze Age (about 2500-1200 BC).

The most ancient habitations belong to Middle Paleolithic Age and Late Age. These had been discovered in Xare (Sarande), Kryegjate (near Apolonia), Gajtan (Shkodra).

In Vluse of Skrapar and Konispol, were discovered Mesolithic strata that indicate for continuity of life even in this Age.

In Maliq, Barc (Korça) Cakran (Fier), in Burimas near Mali I Thatw and in Podgorie in Korça area, are discovered other habitations of Neolithic Age.

Interesting elements of the Neolithic Age in Albania



are such as Palafitet (over water habitations), from which could be mentioned that of Dunavec, Maliq, and Sovjan, the all in the Korça area. The last one is still in excavating phase. The most important points of Bronze Age (2500-1200 BC) are those of Maliq, Shpella e Trenit and Podgorie (near Korça), and in the Southeast of today Shkodra, Shpella e Gajtanit.

Near the Shpeshë e Trenit, in the Lake of Prespa e Vogel, is situated the fortification of Trajan, dating from Iron Age. This fortification was one of prehistorically buildings enormous in the area. The walls of the castle were about of 3 km long and they surrounded a land area about 22 hectares.

Similar habitations of the Bronze and Iron Age are evidenced in many other districts i.e. Bardhe, Kalivo (Saranda) etc. All those testify for an indigene important component in the beginnings of the civilian life.

One of the most important prehistorically objects, exposed for the visitors, are an anthropomorphic vase of Neolithic Age, discovered in Kamnik of Kolonje. Today, this object there is in National Historical Museum at Tirana.



THE ILLYRIANS, HELLENIC SETTLEMENTS AND ROMAN CIVILIZATION

The majority of the researchers consider Illyrians, as ancestors of the Albanians.

The term "Illyrian" was acquired from Greeks and

later generalized as an "authentic tribe", which inhabited in the district between Scodra (today Shkodra) and Dyrrachium (today Durres). This term used to determine linguistically and ethnically the populations who inhabited in western area of Balkan Peninsula. Furthermore, the Balkan Peninsula itself, referring to the most important European encyclopedias, up

Ardenica Monastery
Foto: F. Voko



to 19th century AD, was identified as Illyrian Peninsula.

Illyric tribes expanded up to Southern Italy in the Salentin Peninsula. Their same language was Illyric. Different researchers, based on Illyric names of districts and people, consider this as an Indo-European language and ascendant of modern Albanian.

The main Illyric tribes that inhabited the present Albania were Labeati, Atintani, Parthini, Pirusti, Albani, Taulanti, Penesti, Kandavi, Amanti, Bylini, Desareti, Enkelei, Kaoni etc.

The most important cities were Scodra, Lissus, Albanopolis, Dimalium, Amantia, Pelioni, Bylis, Aulona, Foinike, Onhezmus, Butroth (Butrinti) Nikaja, Antigonea, etc.

In the 7th - 6th century BC in the illyric territories were established settlements from the colonialists of Corcyra and Corinth as Epidamus (Dyrrachium)

and Apolonia.

The establishing of the Hellenic settlement, at the seaside, from the middle of VII century and later influenced considerably both in the social development and economic to Illyrians and got it up in a new stage the contacts with the Hellenic culture. This happened as a result continuous relations between the indigene population and the Greek merchants, which often visited these districts. An important role in the development of the successive events has played

Corcyra (Corfu), a Greek settlement originated from Corinth, about the year 703 BC.

At about 622 BC the Ilyric tribe of Taulanti, because of the danger of the Liburnian pirates invited the inhabitants of Corcyra to establish a settlement at Epidamnus. The isthmus where the settlement was set up, was called Dyrrachium (ilyric name), which to this day survives with the name Durrës. Epidamnus was a very fine country, with a castle on the top of the hill, and by passing of time, it reinforced enough



due to the trade and agriculture.

Another settlement of importance was Apollonia, established near 588 BC from a Corinthian and Corcyra community. Apollonia had a well known bituminous mine, located in Nymphaeum (near Selenice) that produced bitumen of high quality to be used for the cementation of the ships. There was also a very powerful background from which, as an agricultural-mercantile city, was notably developed.

There have been some known personages. Therefore, Bardhuli (4th century) has dominated for a certain time even in Macedonia and had good relationships with Dionis of Syracuse. His son, Kliti, was the only one who conquered the Great Alexander in a battle near the city of Pelion. Other kings and princes are Glaukia, Teuta, Agroni, Genti, etc. This last one, after his defeat by the Romans, became captive together with his family and sent to Italy where he became an





Rodoni Church
Foto: E. Kasimati

outstanding practitioner conferring his own name to a medicinal plant, that he himself practiced it. The tomb of the King Gent is in Italy, in Guvio. After three wars against the most enormous Empire of that time, Rome, in 168 BC, Illyria fell under its occupation. With the coming of the Romans, these tribes within Illyrian districts lost their independence. The Illyric

kingdom in this period divided in three parts, one of which corresponded to Albania in the north of River Mat including Lissus and Skodra. After 146 BC, on the path of an old road, the Romans built up one of the famous road of that time "Via Egnatia". Two branches of roads, begun from Apolonia, Dyrrachium, and came together in the westernmost of Elbasan. After it passed through the Shkumbin River, came by Lake of Ohrid from the north, and continued with Thes-



*Dhërmiu Church
Foto: E. Panidha*

salonica, and in the end with Byzantium. This road became very important to connect the east with the west. The circulation in it also enabled the buildings of various habitations along it, leading to a notable increase of trade development and inciting simultaneously the Romanization of the whole Balkan Peninsula including here the Albanian districts as well. In this period is mentioned Lissus, a city that achieved a conventus civium Romanorum (corporation of roman citizens) that in the time of Julio Caesar was

given the status "municipal city".

Apolonia in that time was involved in a wave of immigrations of the Italian families, which would play an important role in the regional life. A rhetorical

school, comparable with those of Rhodes and Athens, where Octavian Augustus had studied, opened here. Dyrrachium, also in this period flourished. In the time of Julio Caesar, it enjoyed the status of "free city". Since Augustus time and after, it enjoyed the status of a roman settlement "colonia Julia Augusta Dyrrachiorum". The huge amphitheatre of 1st century BC, employed for gladiators' games, is a preferable object for the tourists, and even to this day is attractive and of significant values. Another culture monument belonging to this period is also "Rotonda" or City Central Square.





Today in the territory of Albania there are arranged archaeological points frequented by tourists and belong exactly to this historical period.

The main frequented objects are the archaeological centers of Butrint, Bylis, and Apollonia, such as the ruins of the Ancient Dyrrachium.

The ancient city of Butrint located 18 km south of Sarande is one of the historical - cultural points of most importance in the country and simultaneously represents a very significant part of world culture inheritance. The natural system with its surroundings together with National Park is recently involved under the protection of Ramsar International Convention.

vention.

The ancient city of Butrint is under the international protection of the UNESCO.

Significant objects that are attractive for the tourists are:



- *Ancient Theatre of Butrint, maintained in a very good condition and with a capacity of about 5.000*



Old Ruins
Foto: J. Benzenberg



Church in Shkodra
Foto: arkiv

seats.

- *Paleochristian baptistery, which is the biggest one of Balkan.*
- *Asclepius temple (dedicated to the god of medicine), as well as numerous mosaics, ancient walls, the gates of the city, etc.*

At the city of Butrint, every year is carried out, the International Festival of Theatre. In addition, different artistic activities and folkloric are organized.

Apolonia is located 12 km in the south of Fier, near the village of Pojan. Tourists visit its numerous objects very frequently. Among them are:

- *Marvelous façade of Buleterion (Municipality) Theatre*

- *Odeon*
- *Nymphium (monumental fountain)*
- *Stoa, canals structure, gymnasium, etc.*

In the ancient city of Apolonia, there is an ancient mosaic with particular values for the visitor, which shows the Achilles image. In the complex of Apolonia, there is also the monastery of Saint Mary, near the museum of Apolonia.

The objects to visit in the ancient Dyrrachium are as follows:

- *Amphitheater, which is among the biggest of the whole Balkan Peninsula with a capacity of 15 - 20 thousands of spectators. The construction is of the period of roman occupation and specifically at first*



*Church in Nise
Foto: E. Kasimati*

centuries BC.

- Among most apparent archeological values is the mosaic, symbolically named "The beautiful of Durres", that there is in the National Historical Museum of Tirana and belong to the 3rd - 4th century BC.
- In Durres, there is also the Archeological Museum of the city with a very rich collection of values.

Objects of interest to be visited, also there are in Bylis (Mallakaster), Selca e Poshtme (Pogradec), Finiq (Delvine), Orikum, Plloçe (Vlore) near Petrela (Tirana), Gajtan (Shkodra), Antigone (Gjirokastra) etc.

Tourists in Albanopolis, Shkodra, Berat, Foinike, etc visit remain of ancient walls. Antigonea, for discoveries that exhibit the design of the habitations is very recognized.



Detail, Old house
Foto: E. Kasimati

Interesting enough is Bylis including:

- A theatre, which is larger than that of Butrint
- Stoa, (for promenade) a two-floor building
- Monumental fountains of 3rd century
- Several stadium elements
- Numerous habitations, and
- Mediaeval cultural objects such as basilicas that manifest a significant continuity in cultural field.

BYZANTINE PERIOD (LATE ANTIQUITY AND MIDDLE AGE)

With the decline of Roman Empire in the territory



Old photo of Korca
Foto: arkiv

of present Albania settled different tribes. The first settlements were those of Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Huns.

Avari, Normans, Bulgarians, etc., follow other settlements.

In this territory passed even the Crusades making this land a passing bridge for them. Byzantine period established in this country a range of cultural and religious values, which are also present to this day and contain objects for tourism and the visitors.

The main complexes of Byzantine objects in Albania are:

Paleochristian Basilicas in Bylis, Ballsh, and Butrint. There is also the Basilica of Arapaj near Durrës, with a marvelous mosaic with pastoral picture.

A complex of churches in the 2400-year city of Berat, where is of interest to visit the churches such as Saint Michael, Saint Triad, Saint Todhri, and Saint Mary of Vllaherna as well the Cathedral of Saint Mary.

In addition, in the religious objects of Voskopoja there is the monastery of Saint Prodhon (1632 - 1634), the Basilicas of Saint Mary (1712) and Saint Nicholas (1722).

Other objects of this kind are not so frequent in other districts of the Albania. Here, we can mention the

*Original Fresko Nice Church
Foto: E. Kasimati*







mediaeval churches in the district of Shpat in Elbasan, such as the church of Saint Premte in Valesh, and the church of Saint Kolli in Selcan. There are mural pictures painted by Onufri. There are also of interest the remains of the church of Saint John Vladimir in the village of Shinjon in the area of Elbasan.

In the Korca area are of interest the monasteries of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Vithkuq, the church of Ristozi in the village of Mborje, and the church of Saint Mary in Prespa.

The church of Marmiroi (12th century) in Orikom, the church of Saint Mary in Zvernec, and the churches of

Saint Stephan and Saint Mitri (12th - 14th century) in Dhermi, and the church of Saint Nicholas in Mesopotam, that consist of attractive objects, there are in the area of Vlora.

In the area of Fier is the monastery of Pojani, situated in the complex of Apolonia, and the monastery of Ardenica.

In addition to National Historical Museum of Tirana, with a notable museum value, there are two other museums, in which are exposed objects of value of Byzantine and mediaeval art in Albania. One of them is the Museum of Mediaeval Art in Korca. More than 7000 objects and works of the Albanian outstan-



Berati Castle
Foto: J. Benzenberg

ding painters of iconography of 17th - 18th century, as Onufri, David Selenica, Kostandin Shpataraku, Zografi brothers etc, and Onufri of Berat, where are exposed both his works and those of his son Nikolla, are visited especially by the foreign tourists.

THE PERIOD OF OTTOMAN OCCUPATION

The period of Ottoman Occupation in Albania lasted about five centuries. This period starts with the bat-

tle of Savra, near Lushnje in 1385 and ends with the National Independence in November 28, 1912 in Vlore. During all this long period of time an important place have the fights and the diplomatic efforts of the National Hero, Gjergj Kastrioti (Scanderbeg) to defend his country from the ottoman invasion.

In this period we meet a range of mediaeval castles, such those of Danja, Kruja, Petrela, Preza, Kanina, are objects of interest for the visitors. In the historical events of this time, also are involved the castles of Berat, Rozafa, Gjirokastra, etc.

Among the most important museum, objects of this period are as follows:

*Skenderbeu Monument in Kruja
Foto: J. Benzenberg*





Castle in Durrës
Foto: arkiv

The National Museum "Gjergj Kastrioti", in Kruja, inaugurated in 1982. This museum there is on the main portal of the castle fitting its style. A prevalent place dominates the historical objects and facts, which represent an apparent evidence of the fights led by our National Hero Gjergj Kastrioti to protect Albania from the danger of the ottoman invasion. The museum has a wide complex of sculptures referring to Scanderbeg. In it, books with old documents, relics of that time, editions and work referring to the portrait of Gjergj Kastrioti, and the history of the Al-

banian Princedom under the guide of feudal family of Topiaj, are exposed.

In the museum of Kruja architectonic and historical elements such as heavy supports, stone arcades, and pictures in glass, etc.

In Lezhe, in the remains of the Cathedral of Shen Kolli (Saint Nicholas), there is the sepulchre of our National Hero Gjergj Kastrioti (Scanderbeg). Today, local and foreign tourists visit this memorial. Objects of this period are the ruins of Sarda, a mediaeval city only 15-km far from Shkodra. The ruins of the city are





on the hill of an island of the Lake Vau of Dejes. The residence of the biggest feudal family of Dukagjini was here. Today, objects to visit is the gate of princely palace, mural fragments, and the church of "Holy Virgin", which is a typical roman style.

The way to go there is so kind, since one have to travel for 10 miles alongside the Artificial Lake of Vau of Dejes. In this area operates the society "Sarda" which organizes tours to the hill of the "city".

The period of ottoman occupation finalized with a great range of efforts for independence, crowned

with the Proclamation of Independence in November 28, 1912, in the Congress that carried out in Vlora, which proclaimed the Independent State of Albania. The Museum of the Independence there is in Vlora.

THE PERIOD FROM 1912 to 1944

This period, after the National Independence, Albania experienced the First World War, the Revolution of 1924, and 11-year Monarchy of King Zog 1st. In this

Tirana center 1938
Foto: LUCE



LUCE



Langarica Bridge
Foto: G. Mati



Albanopolis Ruins
Foto: E. Kasimati

period characterized by the influence of Italy in all sectors of life in Albania, because of economical, commercial, and military relationship established with Italy. Italian architects changed the face of Tirana conceiving diversely from before: a square at the centre "Scanderbeg Square", as well as Architectonic Complex of Boulevard, which represent particular architectonic values.

All this dependence of Albania toward Italy finalized with the occupation in 1939 and with the escape of King Zog from Albania. After the capitulation of

Italian fascism in September 1943, another invader came, Germany. This occupation lasted until 1944. To this period belong various historical objects. We can cite as follow:

■ *Museum House where is carried out "Kongresi i Lushnjes (Congress of Lushnja)", in 1920. From here, Tirana proclaimed initially provisional capital of the country (it gained the final status in 1925). The Congress had the task to protect the Albanian territory from any potential danger of fragmentation.*



*Pojan Monastery
Foto: J. Benzenberg*



*Butrinti Castle
Foto: E. Panidha*

- *The government residence of Fan Noli in Tirana.*
- *The King's Zog Palace in Tirana, which today is the Culture Monuments Institute.*
- *Cinema Millenium 2, which during the communist regime in Albania was the Palace of Pioneers.*
- *The Palace of Brigades located in the southeast of Tirana, since some years are the Government Residence, where different appointments are organized.*
- *The building of the first ex-Parliament in Albania. After the country liberation in 1944, this building, designed by an Austrian architect, has been and it continues to be the Puppet Show.*

There are also in Tirana buildings of historical values, such as the building of the National Flag, in November 26, 1912, as well as Old Library in the street "Punetoret e Rilindjes".

There are also other objects such as mansions of Ex-King Zog over the hill of Durres, in a very dominant point, the mansion in Sukth of Durres, etc.

Some other buildings of Italian architectural style, such as Polytechnic University, Hotel "Dajti", the Bank of Durres, Municipality of Vlora, Library of Fier, the house of birth and childhood of Aleksander Moisi in the city of Kavaja, museum-house of the painter Van-

*Shkodra Castle
Foto: J. Benzenberg*





Monument in Durrës
Foto: J. Benzenberg

gjush Mio in Korça and various buildings and mansions in Tirana, Shkodra, etc., are of this time.

The period from 1944 to nowadays

A total confinement and isolation characterize the period from the end of Second War and on. This was an obscure period for Albania, which the end of Second War found it ruined, in a miserable economical situation. There was a tendency of the Government of that time to acquire powerful partners from Com-

munist Block, such as Soviet Union and its allies. The political system that established in this time was a totalitarian state headed Enver Hoxha, who kept it under the total domination of so-called Party of Labor, until his death in 1985.

Various historical buildings and especially those of religious character damaged and crushed, and all this as a result of the policies pursued in that time. An example of cult objects destruction is the Cathedral of Shkodra, hundreds of small churches, masjids and mosques.

The period from 1990 and on is a period of political



*Teuta statue
Foto: J. Benzenberg*



Rodoni Cape Castle
Foto: E. Kasimati

*Old ruins in Shkodra
Foto: J. Benzenberg*



changes and pluralism, characterized by the efforts for integration in European Community. As a result of the transition in Albania, this period is characterized from turbulence. However, to the period from 1944 and on, belong various museums, which mostly showed the political system's policy and are a clear evidence of that period as well as National Liberation War.

Objects of this kind are the National Archeological Museum, open in 1948, National Historical Museum,

open in 1981, and Folkloric Cultural Museum, all in Tirana. Also, in Tirana are inaugurated two important monuments such as that of the National Hero Gjergj Kastrioti (Scanderbeg) in 1968 in the square with the same name, as well as inauguration of the cemetery of Martyrs of Nation in 1971 at one the picturesque hills in south-east part of Tirana.

In 1970 in Shkodra is open the atelier "Marubi" with the photos and diapositives of his well-known family of photographers. During this time are inaugurated

museums and houses of distinguished personalities from this city, such as Luigj Gurakuqi, Migjeni, Vaso Pasha, Oso Kuka, etc. Today, of very interest is the house of Oso Kuka, where its function is both ethnographic and archeological museum.

Also, with the case of 100th Anniversary of the first Albanian school in Korça is open the National Museum of Education in 1967, within its surrounding, and the Museum of Mediaeval Art in 1980.

In Gjirokastra, we can cite the National Museum of Arms as well as Renaissance Museum, opened since 1971 in the house of Topulli family.

Very important are the Archaeological Museums in Durrës, Korça, Apollonia, and Ethnographical Museums in Elbasan, Berat, etc.

These objects are of significant values not only in didactic point of view, but also both informational and touristical.



*Ardenica Monastery
Foto: J. Benzenberg*



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