

## Kotor

The coast and the Bay of Kotor are the districts which have been most exposed to townplanning in the past. Budva still maintains its urban profile. At Perast you may admire important monuments of baroque architecture.

Kotor is an unusual urban centre, which has been well preserved. The walls were built in the Byzantine, Nemanjic and Venetian periods; they are 4,5 kms long and up to 20 metres high and provide an outstanding example of European urban fortification. The city appears as a self-contained unit, from which nothing may be removed without breaking the harmony: the small streets are suggestive, there are many squares large and small and stately palaces.

The Renaissance Ducal Palace rises on the principal square: it was built on the site where the old mediaeval tower stood which had been used for torture; its baroque clock belongs to a latter period. Among the many buildings which stand out as architectural monuments in the city, there are the Renaissance-Baroque Pima Palace and St. Tripun, the oldest cathedral of Yugoslavia, built shortly after the arrival of the Slavs in 1166.

The Mediterranean and the Islamic civilisation have strongly influenced the organisation of urban life, which, however, in the end has resembled more closely the models of Central Europe. Within the walls, the dwellings are of great interest from the townplanning point of view, with their bizarre architectural appearance which bears the traces of ancient cultures and yet is linked with the new. The oriental style buildings disappeared very rapidly, so that only some architectural districts, the more compact ones have remained in a few cities. The Mediterranean influence is deeper and has been conserved almost perfectly in the district of Kotor. The architecture, however, has overall some clearly defined features, its own features, because it has absorbed the spirit of the people and the indigenous traditions of the buildings which aimed above all at being functional.

Thus the visible results of this inter-weaving and of these exchanges between different civilisations break the monotony of the urban landscape. The old architectural forms, the churches, the elaborate doorways, the remains of the gigantic walls, minarets, mosques, arches of stone bridges, worn down tombstones, steles of Bogomils, the clocks, old bells, Turkish fountains, Renaissance capitals—all these give the Montenegrin cities an attraction with unmistakable features, rich in contrasts.

In Montenegro there are different types of rural dwellings, according to the climate, the structure of the land and the position. In the mountain district the houses are scattered along the crest of the Karst fields; along the roads they stretch out in rows and in the large valleys they gather together in clusters.

The Mediterranean type of dwelling is not only found along the coast or in the cities where prosperity allowed the building of splendid houses, but also in the villages and the interior. Dressed stone is used for houses, vaults and cellars: the tiles were brought from Paštrovac to Crmnica and to the other districts of the ancient Montenegro. On the insecure and poor land of Montenegro they built ground level houses, covered with slabs of stone, with a pen for the animals and a loft for the hay and leaves. Frequent fires and war ravages have reduced the peasant's house to a very modest building. As there were few masons, the building was simply carried out by able men who had no suitable technical tools. The architecture therefore was of the people and spontaneous, without external polish or special beauty. In the mountain districts the houses were built of wood, with slanting roofs to ease the burden of heavy snowfalls. Bricks and mortar were used at a later stage. The interior of the country house in Montenegro matches its exterior, modest furniture consisting of indispensable things. Among these items musical instruments and caskets stand out for their beauty. These modest houses were built by the local inhabitants, but for the churches famous masters were called in from the coast. Even in the poorest districts the churches were made of dressed stone. Apart from their religious purpose, these churches also served to raise the prestige of the tribe, either as a temple for the cemetery or as a place for assembly. The master builders who came from the coast, especially from Kotor, built a large number of churches and monasteries and other public monuments. They were (like the master builder Vita from Kotor) the true representatives of the spirit of the people; they were architects who reconciled different styles, taking the best from Byzantium and Rome and by these assimilations reached architectural syntheses of incomparable beauty.

The territory which today we call Montenegro, was inhabited by the Illyrians, a tribe with a stormy history, who were always fighting the Celts, the Greeks and the Romans. In the middle of the 3rd century B.C., King Agron created the powerful State of Illyria, with its seat in the territory which lies between the Bay of Kotor and Lake Skadar. His widow, Queen Teuta, was defeated by the Romans.

The Illyrians dealt with cattle breeding and were brave people; they were also feared as pirates in the Mediterranean. Powerful Rome had to defend Greek ships and its own commercial interests in the Adriatic from their continuous attacks. At the beginning of this new era they had managed at last to consolidate their power over the country. Skadar and Medun were centres of one of the most important Illyrian tribes. Medun became famous in the period of the last king of Illyria, Gencije, who in the year 167 B.C. was taken to Rome to embellish the triumph of the victorious army leaders.

The territory of the Montenegro of today was part of the Roman province of Dalmatia, whose cities (Risan, Budva, Ulcinj) were concentrated along the coast. In central Montenegro lived the great tribe Dokleata. Its most important colony, Duklja, became, under Roman rule, the most advanced city in the whole area of Montenegro. All the district which in the Middle Ages was called Duklja took its name from that colony. With a flourishing economy in Duklja the natural riches were exploited, roads were built for military purposes, Illyrian rebels were pacified, trade prospered.

The administrative reform by Diocletian divided Dalmatia into two provinces, Dalmatia and Prevalitania and placed the frontier in such a way that it was also the dividing line between East and West, when the Empire was divided in 395. This division was important for the organisation of the Church: the Bishopric of the Bay of Kotor passed under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Salonika and the Church of Duklja under that of Skadar.

Even before the arrival of the Slavs therefore, Montenegro was the stage for great historical events. This was so also later on, in the new conditions which had arisen. During this preface of history, if we may call it so, we come across a people who were subjected to powerful pressure from Greece and Rome, but who managed to create their own kingdom on a territory which was at first divided among various occupying forces. With the arrival of Christianity, old cults were suppressed and a new ecclesiastical organisation was created. This was a very important development for the schism between the Oriental and Western Churches.