

SUMMARY

**THE ALBANIAN ORDER OF SKENDERBEG
(URDHERI I SKENDERBEUT)**

The Order of Skenderbeg was founded on 3 December 1925, in honour of the Albanian Prince Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeg. It was awarded to deserving Albanians and foreign citizens.

At that time, the order had the following grades: 1. Grand Ribbon with a Star, 2. Grand Officer, 3. Commander, 4. Knight. The grade of Officer was introduced in 1939, so the order then had five grades.

1st model (1925–1939): the badge is in the form of a double-headed Albanian eagle. On the eagle's chest is a medallion depicting the famous Skanderbeg Helmet, and flags.

The original helmet was made by Italian masters in around 1560, and is kept in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

The ribbon is black, with two dark red stripes.

The star of the 1st Grade is eight-pointed. In its medallion is the motif of the double-headed Albanian eagle. The badge of Grand Officer is the same as that of Commander and was worn on the sash. The star of the Grand Officer differs from that of the 1st Grade; its central medallion shows Skenderbeg's Helmet. The badge of Officer differs from all the other grades of the Order of Skenderbeg. The badge of the lowest, 5th Grade, Knight, is smaller than the Commander's and was worn on a narrow ribbon. The Orders of Skenderbeg were produced in Rome from 1925 to 1944.

The Italians ended their occupation of Albania on 13 April 1939; three days later the Italian King Victor Emmanuel III was proclaimed King of Albania, and a personal union between Italy and Albania was established. These changes affected the appearance of the order, and the second design of this decoration was created.

2nd model (1940–1944): the same design as before, with the following changes: in the central medallion of the 1st Grade star is Skenderbeg's Helmet decorated with a deer's head facing right (previously left). In the ring around the central medallion is the abbreviation: F.E.R.T., the motto of the House of Savoy. Five "love knots" separate the letters of the acronym, with roses at the beginning and end. Between the roses are two crossed bundles of rods with axes (Roman fasces), which characterized the Mussolini era.

After World War II and the establishment of the communist government headed by Enver Hoxha, a new system of decorations was established in Albania. The Order of Skenderbeg was founded on 13 October 1945; it had a different form and was divided in three grades. It was awarded until the fall of the communist regime in 1992.

3rd model (1945 - 1992): the order is shaped like a five-pointed star lying on a ten-pointed star. A laurel wreath stretches under the arms of the five-pointed star. In the middle of the order is a round medallion with a bust of Prince Skenderbeg. The order of the 1st Grade is gilded, and the five-pointed star is in dark red enamel. The order of the 2nd Grade is silver, with a gilded laurel wreath running under the arms of a dark-red, enamelled, five-pointed star. The order of the 3rd Grade is all silver, without enamel.

The orders were produced in Markneukirchen (GDR, East Germany).

The Order of Skenderbeg was restored in 1996 in post-communist Albania; this time in only one grade. The order is awarded to this day.

4th model (1996 -): consists of two five-pointed stars placed on top of each other. In the middle is a shield showing the bust of Prince Skenderbeg. The points of the stars are covered by a green oak wreath. At the top of the wreath is Skenderbeg's Helmet.