



Newsletter from the Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization- GCDO

Issue 3, January – February 2008

1. The Illumination of Gjirokastra's Castle vaulted entrance gallery



A renewable energy lighting specialist from the UK in conjunction with specialists from the Institute of Monuments of Culture in Tirana, are completing a lighting design which will see energy saving lighting powered by solar panels illuminate the magnificent entrance of Gjirokastra castle. It is anticipated that the project will be completed in time for the tourist season

when tourists will be expected to visit the Gjirokastra UNESCO World Heritage Site. This is the first time a historic monument will have been lit using solar energy in Albania – and the project will send an important signal that solar energy has a viable future in Albania. The project is being joint funded by the GCDO and GEF.

2. Young students plant trees near the Castle of Gjirokastra

Students of the Asim Zeneli High School in Gjirokastra, planted more than 50 trees in Gjirokastra at the beginning of January. The students were joined by the Mayor of Gjirokastra, Flamur Bime. The planting day was a boost to efforts to rehabilitate the green spaces around the castle. The project was co-funded by the Municipality of Gjirokastra and GCDO.



3. Hotel Training



USAID/EDEM and the GCDO's Tourist Information Center organized training for hotel administrators in Gjirokastra in anticipation of the growing numbers of tourists coming to Gjirokastra this year. The training aimed to install online booking service in several hotels in Gjirokastra.

4. Antigonea information brochure

A colourful new bi-lingual information leaflet has been produced for the nearby archaeological park of Antigonea. The leaflet which has been co-published by the GCDO and the Antigonea Office for Administration and Coordination, gives a fascinating historical overview of the Park as well as information on how to travel there. Antigonea is one of the 8 archaeological parks of Albania and a great asset for the development of cultural tourism in the Gjirokastra region.



5. Artisan development and the National Artisan Fair



Plans for a summer National Artisan Fair in Gjirokastra are developing well. The fair which will see artisans from all over the country bring their craftwork to sell in the old bazaar in Gjirokastra, is being coordinated and co-funded by the GCDO, the Municipality and the Association "Friendship" in Gjirokastra. In the meantime Art-Kontakt, an Albanian art NGO, has approached GCDO, hoping to organize a modern art event for the first time in the Castle of Gjirokastra. The event will take place in the middle of the coming tourist season.

6. The lost mosques of Gjirokastra

The GCDO has been sponsoring exciting research onto Gjirokastra's history, through its historical records, photographs and monuments. Gjirokastra has a thousand stories and some of these are now being uncovered by the GCDO's work. One of them is the story of lost mosques of Gjirokastra; before 1967 there were seven major mosques and tekes in the city. Now only one remains; the Bazaar mosque of Memi Pasha built in the 18th century. One of the lost mosques has already been the target of a GCDO sponsored programme in 2004. The project restored the seven fountains park in the Meçites quarter of the town where there is a fine Muslim complex comprising a mosque, its cleansing fountain and a hamam. Here is the translation of one of its main wall inscription;



*It has been constructed with a pool in
order to be of much use
Begining from its base, to gain much
prayer
The mosque shall be celebrated, so shall
its founder be
The one who built the pool
shall be happy
From all believers, to this pool and to its
builder
Since Muin Arslan¹ is the naib² and owner of the word
For me today, tomorrow for you, (even) prophets have passed away
With kindness, with pure sincerity, proper prayer to all.*



7. In the months to come in 2008, GCDO will concentrate on the following areas:

- (i). Fundraising for the Castle Museum: "Chronicle in Stone", a Museum to the Drinos Valley. The project proposal incorporating conservation plan, museum design and budget will be finalised in March/April 2008. Construction work will begin as

¹ This must be the name of the founder

² Naib is 'a substitute judge' (Ott. Tr.)

soon as fund-raising is completed.

- (ii). Completion of the installation of renewable energy powered lighting in the Castle entrance gallery and improvement of the visitor's experience in it.
- (iii). The creation of a conservation and restoration school in Gjirokastra.
- (iv). Development of Regional Crafts.
- (vi). Improvement of tourist's experience in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Gjirokastra.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this
newsletter.**

** If you would like more information about the GCDO and our efforts to help Gjirokastra, please contact the Director, Sadi Petrela on spetrela@gjirokastra.org or telephone 00355 6920 78767.*