

Ecotouristic Guide KONITSA & MASTOROHORIA



**PREFECTURE OF IOANNINA
EPIRUS S.A.**

Ioannina 2008



**KONITSA
&
MASTOROCHORIA**

**Eco-
Touristic
Guide**

**Municipalities
of Konitsa
& Mastorochoria**

**Communities
of Aetomilitsa
Distrato & Fourka**

PREFECTURE OF IOANNINA
EPIRUS S.A.

Research- Text- Photographs: PINDOS PERIVALLONTIKI with the
collaboration of Vassilios Christou & Haritakis Papaioannou

Redaction- Editor: Haritakis Papaioannou

Cartography: Alkiviadis Betsis, Vassilios Christou

Separations- Image processing- Printing- Bookbinding:
Theodoridis Grafikes Tehnes, Ioannina

Translation in english: Sandra Coles (chapters: 4,5,6)

Michael Sifakis (chapters: 1,2,3,7)

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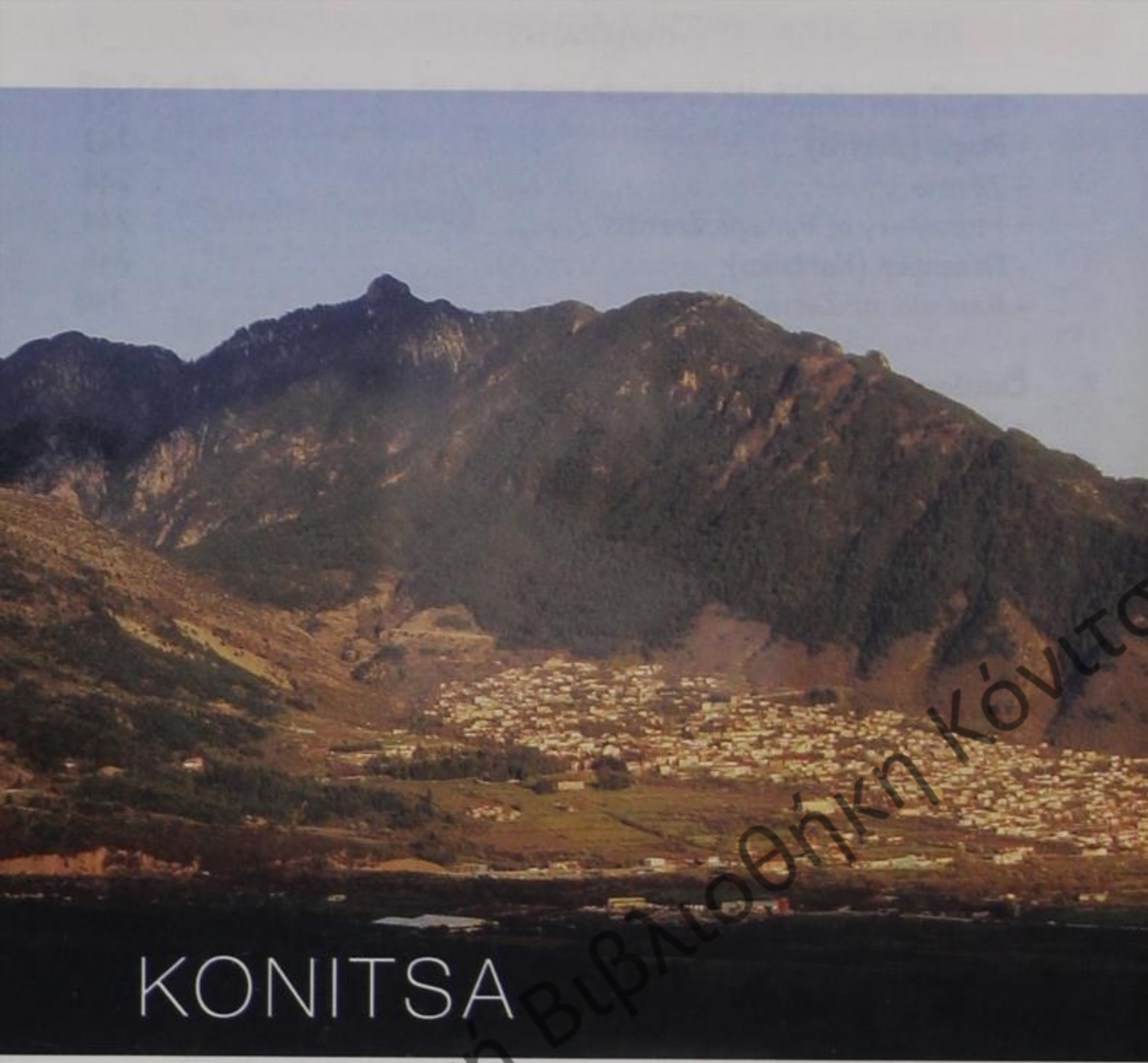
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KONITSA

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Introduction

Magnificent mountains, impressive gorges, polymorphous geological formations, extensive dense forests, rapid rivers and amidst all these, the picturesque town of Konitsa and its plain as well as the numerous villages on the slopes of Northern Pindos, compose the geographical and cultural unity of the wider area of Konitsa.

Mt. Grammos is the natural

border of the wider area of Konitsa to the northwest with the Prefecture of Kastoria and the neighboring country, Albania. Mt. Smolikas, Greece's second highest mountain, towers above the center and to the east, while a little further lies Mt. Vassilitsa, dividing the Prefecture of Ioannina in Epirus from the Prefecture of Grevena in Western Macedonia. The majestic Aaos gorge, formed between forested Mt. Trapezitsa and precipitous Mt. Tymphi to the southeast, is the natural border of the area of Konitsa with the

neighboring area of Zagori. Finally, to the south stand the imposing Mt. Nemertsika and Mt. Dousko, separating Konitsa from Pogoni and neighboring Albania.

The rapid waters of three rivers with their several tributaries run between the beautiful, but also rough mountains of Konitsa. Aaos, Voidomatis and Sarandaporos merge in the plain of Konitsa and the surrounding villages. Thereafter as one river, Aaos, their water flows to the coast of the Adriatic Sea through Albania.

The diversity of the natural environment of the wider area of Konitsa is clearly reflected in the characteristics and the habits of the people who have been living here since ancient times. A mosaic of 47 settlements, divided into 41 municipal and communal sections, belongs to two municipalities (Konitsa & Mastorochochia) and three communities (Aetomilitsa, Distrato & Fourka).

The wider area of Konitsa, which until recently constituted a county, is composed by four distinct cultural unities, with their own special characteristics. To the south, the town of Konitsa and the

villages around the plain, to the east the villages of the Aaos valley, to the northeast the Mastorochochia villages and up on the higher altitude zone of the mountains, the Vlachochoria villages.

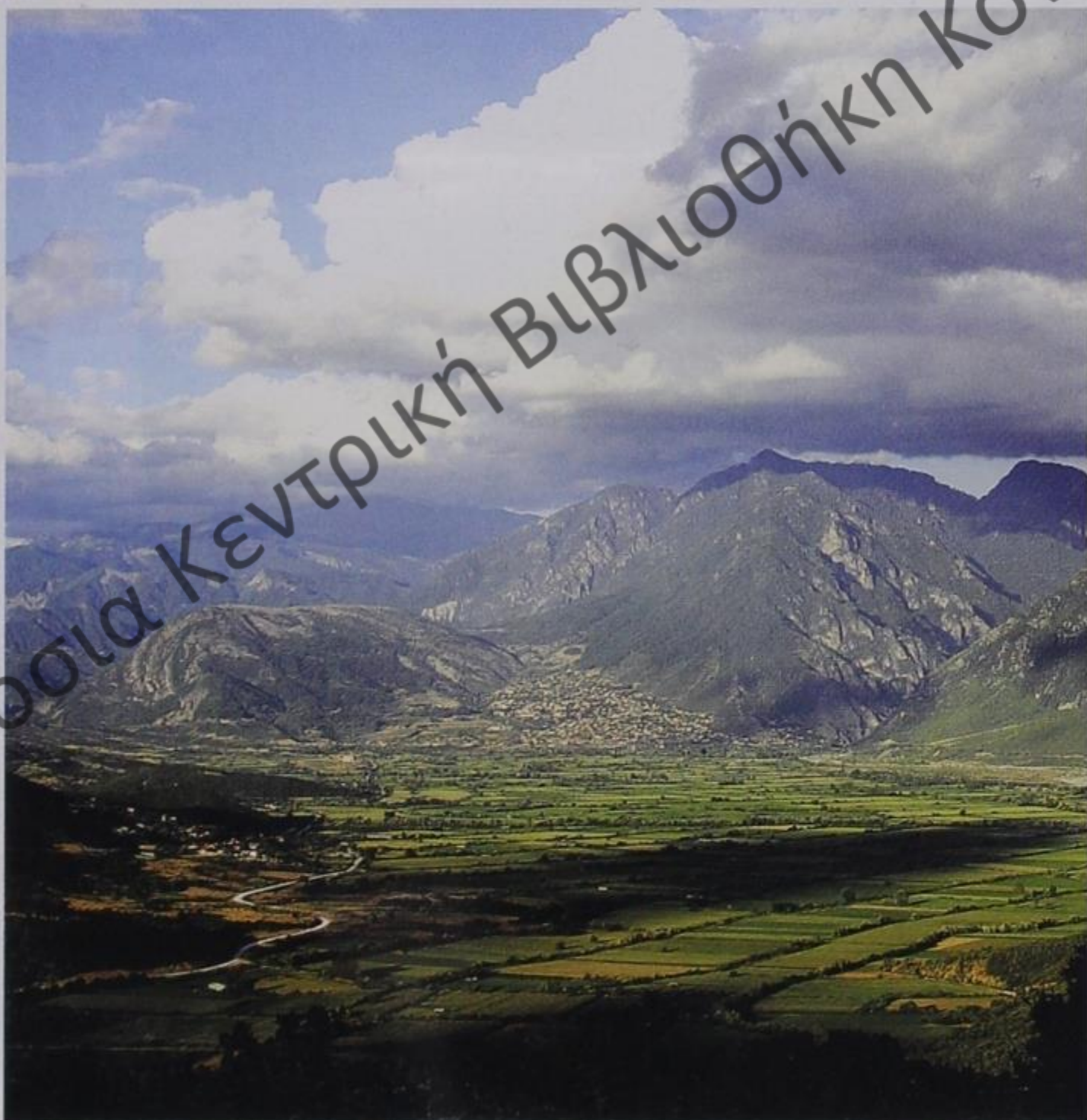
The incomparable and rich natural environment, the picturesque settlements, the interspersed monuments, the open-hearted people and the rich culture and tradition in all its expressions have established the wider area of Konitsa as one of the most popular destinations for Greek and foreign travelers.



This eco-tourist guide aims to provide you with all the information you need in order to tour the villages and the mountains of the wider area of Konitsa, ensuring that your trip is pleasant, satisfying and instructive. We hope that this book will accompany you during the beautiful and creative moments that you will spend in the charming area of Konitsa and the surrounding villages.

We wish you a pleasant stay and a wonderful tour.

1. The landscape and the villages



Konitsa is located at the place where the plain meets the foothills of Mt. Trapezitsa



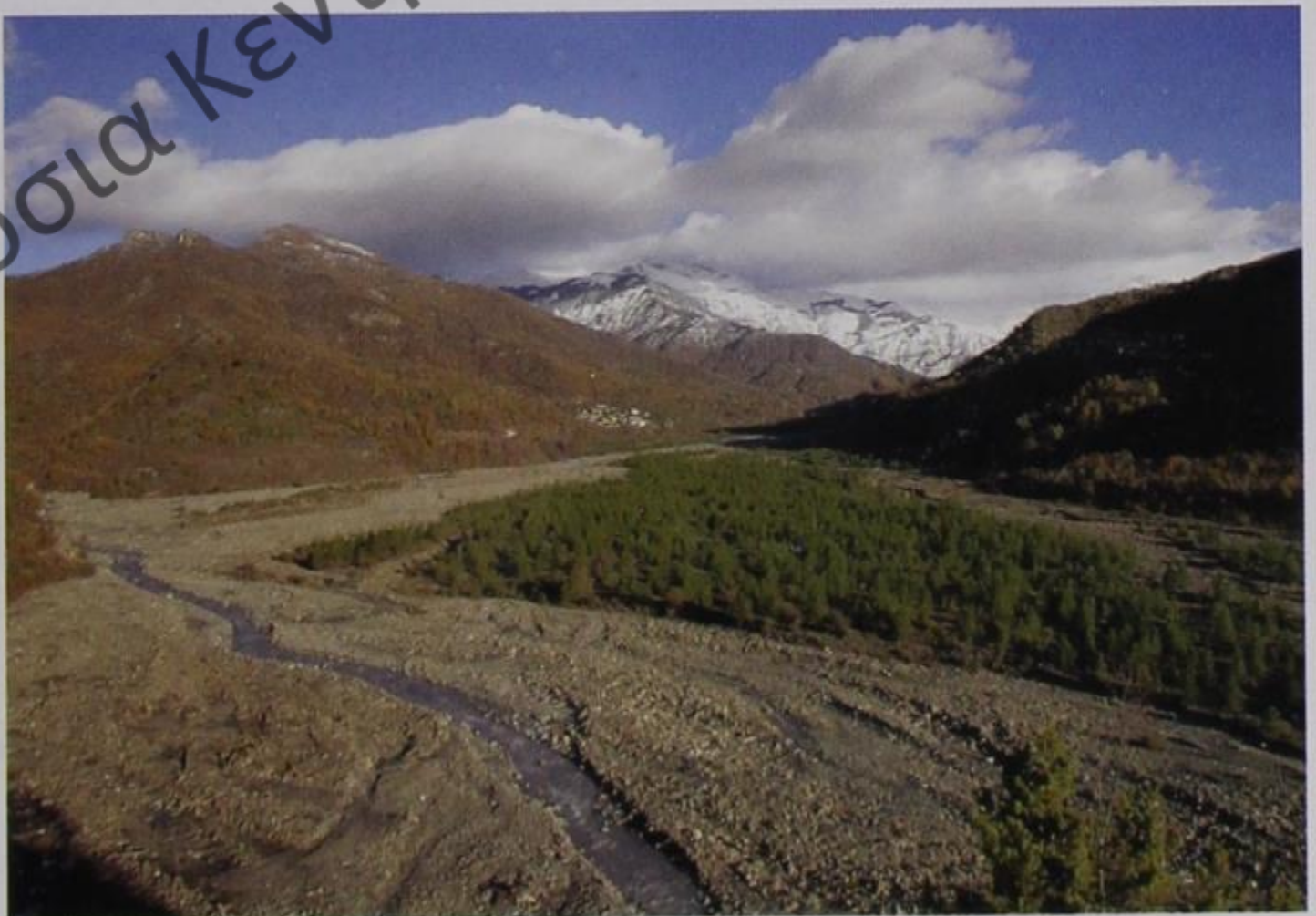
Upper Konitsa

The wider area of Konitsa covers an area of 1.000 km² at the northern part of the Prefecture of Ioannina. Concerning geomorphology, there is a strong geological relief ranging from an altitude of 375m at the lower parts of the Konitsa plain to more than 2000m at the high mountains. However, the sub-alpine plateau and the high peaks usually exceed this altitude, as is the case, for instance, with Mt Grammos (2520m) and Mt. Smolikas (2637m), the second highest mountain in Greece.

The wide altitude scale (375m – 2637m) combined with the intense geographic relief and geological substrate creates slopes of diverse exposure and incline, characterized by local micro-climate variations, which are in turn reflected in the flora. All the

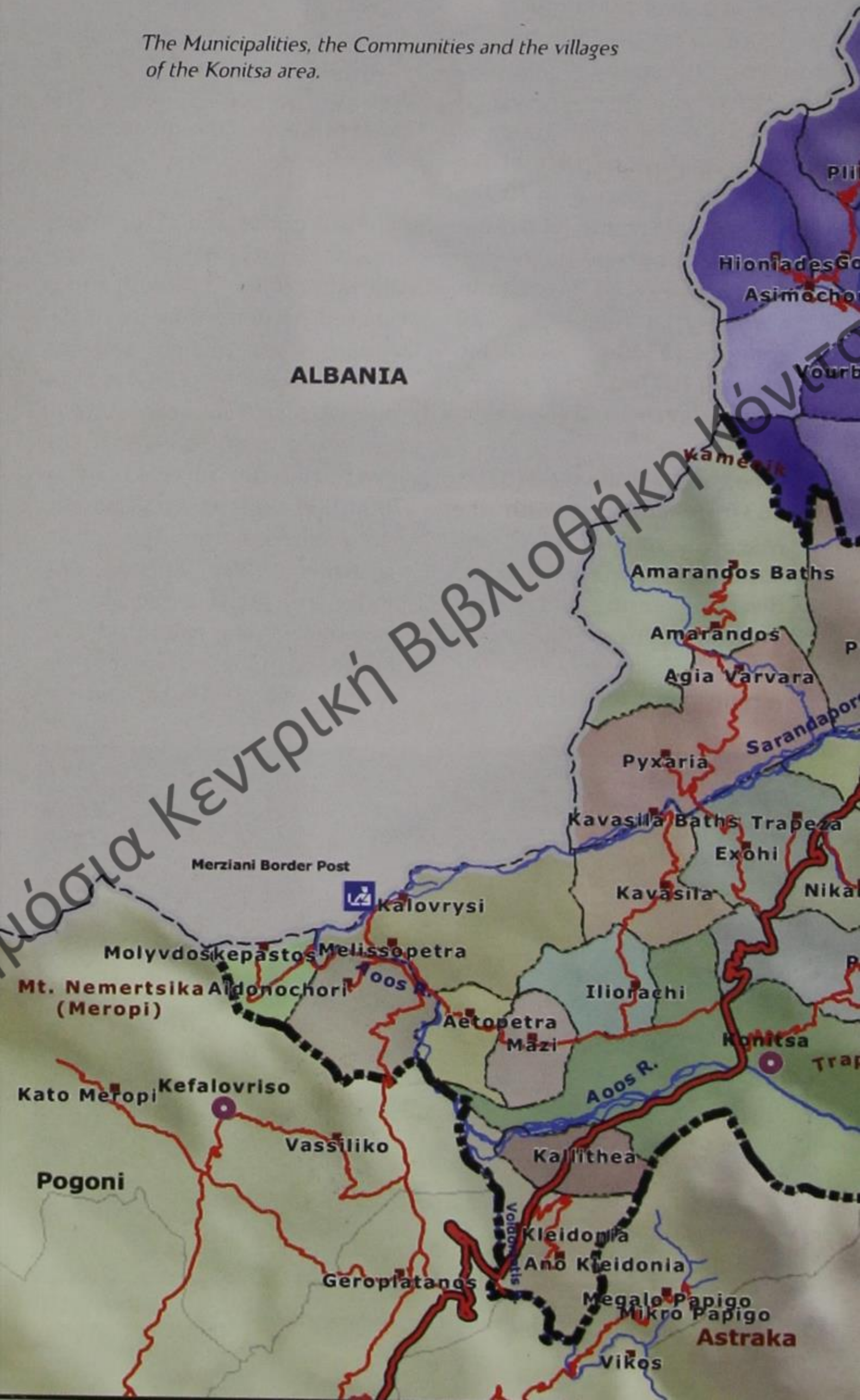
mountains of the area have steep slopes. There are a few gentler slopes as well, where the cultivated land of the several villages is located. Plains exist only in the basin of Konitsa and the surrounding villages.

Most of the land of the wider area of Konitsa lies at medium altitudes (700m – 1600m) and is covered by dense forests of deciduous trees (mainly oak and beech) and conifers (fir and black pine). A significant percentage of the whole area, located at the lower altitude zone (375m – 700m), is covered by deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs (strawberry tree, kermes oak, smoke tree etc.). At this altitude zone there is also cultivated land, though today it is restricted mainly in the plain of Konitsa and the



Mt. Grammos, Gorgopotamos valley

The Municipalities, the Communities and the villages of the Konitsa area.





Nea Kotili

Pref. of Kastoria

Kipseli

Chrisi

Grammos

Petromilitsa

Arrenes

STOROCHORIA

Lykorahi

oxia

Kefalochori

Flagiazerna

Theotokos

Eptachori

anni

Langada

Drosopigi

Kastanea

Zouzouli

Giflissa

Fourka

Mt. Taouli

idip

ta Pournia

iri

Agia Paraskevi

Samarina

KONITSA

Pref. of Grevena

Mt. Smolikas

Vassilitsa Ski Center

Elefthero

Pafioseli Pades

Mt. Vassilitsa

Armata

Distrato

Aous R.

Vrisochori

ymfi

Iliochoiri

Laista

gori

surrounding villages. Sub-alpine pastures, as well as steep rocky cliffs exist at the high altitude zone (1600m– 2600m). An exception to the absence of trees in high altitudes is the Balkan pine, known as “rombolo” in Greek. It is a hardy coniferous tree that can withstand the adverse conditions of higher altitudes and is often found in clusters of age-old trees at altitudes up to 2000m.

The administration of the wider area of Konitsa is divided into two municipalities and three communities.

Konitsa is the largest municipality with 6.217 inhabitants and 25 municipal departments, comprising 29 settlements listed below:

Agia Varvara (Plavali), Agia Paraskevi (Kerasovo), Aetopetra (Sanovo), Aidonochori (Ostanitsa), Amarandos (Isvoro) & Loutra Amarandos, Armata (Armatovo), Ganadio, Elefthero (Grizbani), Exochi (Zelista), Iliorachi (Koutsoufliani), Kavassila, Kalithea (Go-

ritsa), Kalovrisi (Pirovitska), Kleidonia (Kalivia) & Ano Kleidonia (Kleidoniaousta or Litoniavista), Mazi, Melissopetra, Molista (Messaria), Molyvdoskepastos (Dipalitsa), Monastiri (Botsifari), Nikanoras (Kortinista), Pades, Palioseli, Pigi (Peklari), Pixaria (Blithouki), Pirgos (Stratsiani), Pournia (Stari-tsiani) and Trapeza (Vranista).

The municipality of Mastorochoria has 2.076 inhabitants and 13 municipal departments which correspond to 15 settlements: Assimochori (Leskatsi), Vourbiani, Gorgopotamos (Tourново), Drosopigi (Kantsiko), Theotokos (Fetoko), Kastanea (Kastaniani), Kefalochori, Lagada (Blizdiani), Likorachi (Loupsiko), Plagia & Zerma, Plikati, Pirsogianni, Oxia (Seltsi) and Chioniades.

Apart from the municipalities, in the wider area of Konitsa three communities are also included: Aetomilitsa (Denisko) with 306 inhabitants, Fourka with 208 inhabitants and Distrato (Briaza) with 490 inhabitants.



Mt. Tymfi (2497m)

1.1. The mountains

Mt. Grammos

In the northernmost part of the wider area of Konitsa spreads a large section of Mt. Grammos. This imposing mountain belongs both to Greece and Albania. On the Greek side, it belongs to the Prefectures of Ioannina and Kastoria, and on the Albanian side to the areas of Erseka, Koritsa and Premeti. The wider area of Konitsa contains the high peaks, which more or less constitute the borders of the above mentioned administrative units, as well as the southern slopes. Grammos is the fourth highest mountain in Greece and its highest peak reaches 2520m. Within the wider area of Konitsa, Mt. Grammos forms a horseshoe shaped crest with the



Mt. Grammos (2520m)

highest peaks at the top: Grammos (or Tsouka Petsik) (2520m), Perifano (or Skirtsj) (2444m) and Kiafa (2395m). From there eastwards extends the ridge that divides geographically and administratively the Prefectures of Ioannina and Kastoria. In this direction and from higher altitudes



Sheep flock at the sub alpine grasslands on Mt. Grammos

to lower, appear the following main peaks: Souflikas (2149m), Epano Arena (2196m), Kato Arena (2089m) and Bouchtetsi (1698m).

On the other side of the horseshoe, to the southwest, extends the crest that has been the borderline between Greece and Albania since 1914. Its main peaks are Mavri Petra (2431m), anonymous (2256m), Rosdoli (1965m), anonymous (2163m), anonymous (2126m), Lessili (1913m), Vartzio-ban (1623m), Golio (1919m), Kardari (1955m), Kamenik (2042m) and Maria (1637m). Between the two main crests of the horseshoe, there is a third smaller one, which forms the peaks Gessos (2163m), Stavros (1919m) and Profitis Ilias (1518m) and subsequently dissolves in the riverbed of Sarandaporos.

In regard to geology, flysch is the dominant geological substrate, while impressive calcareous formations exist in several locations, such as Epano and Kato Arena, Kamenik, Petra Mouka e.a. In addition, tertiary sediments from the last ice age are found in several sites. Rapid torrents, such as Pistilapi, Avgeris and Gorgopotamos spring here. They flow more or less south in the wider area of Konitsa ending up at the Sarandaporos riverbed.

Fourteen settlements are located on the slopes of Mt. Grammos. Ten of them belong to the

municipality of Mastorochochia, whereas other three on the southwest side to the municipality of Konitsa and one is an independent community.

Mt. Smolikas

Over the central and southeast parts of the wider area of Konitsa towers the impressive Mt. Smolikas, Greece's second highest mountain. Its higher peaks are "Smolikas" (2637m) & "Moasia" (2610m). The main part of this massif belongs to the wider area of



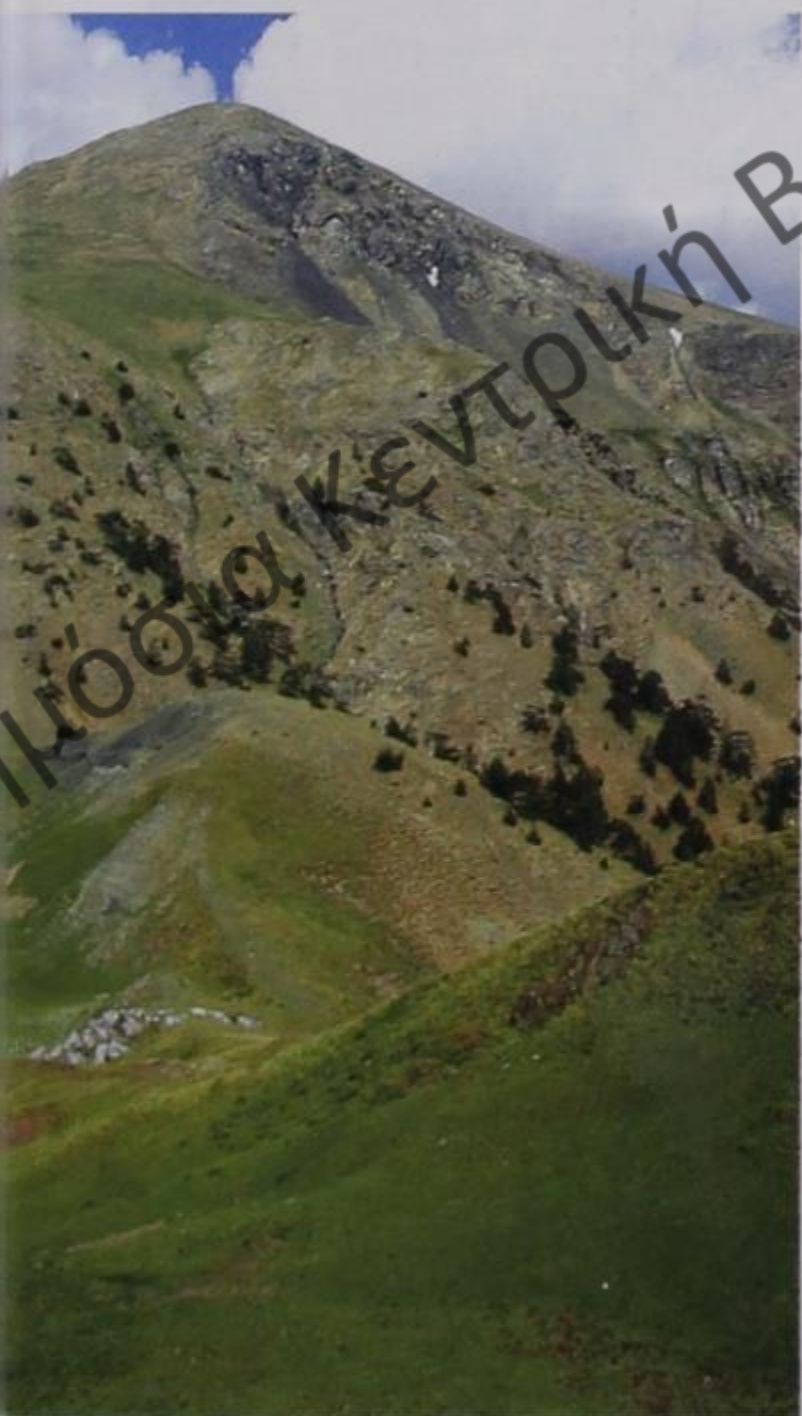
Konitsa, whereas a small part at the northwest belongs to the Pref. of Grevena.

Starting from the typical cone of the highest peak, an extended crest goes to the west and after crossing the locations "Missorachi" and "Daliopoli", ends at Kleftis peak (1847m). The streams that flow down the northern and western slopes of this elongated crest are tributaries of either Sarandaporos or Vourkopotamos river, while the rest of them on the eastern slopes go directly to Aaos river. On the southeast side,

another crest passes by the locations of "Smiliano" and "Eptavrisses" (Seven fountains) to end at "Tsouma" peak (1876m), while to the northeast, at the border with the Pref. of Grevena, the peaks "Bogdani" (2236m), "Captain Tsekouras" (2216m) and "Vouzi" (1758m) are located. A part of the mountain, starting from Bogdani, extends to the northwest, forming Mt. Tabouri with the peaks "Profitis Ilias" (1716m), "Ochiron" or "Tabouri" (1871m) and "Giftissa" (1750m). Other peaks worth mentioning are "Mougourida" (2100m) and "Alogotopos" (or Tsouma Kalioro) (2213m).

Regarding geology, ophiolite is dominant and then comes flysch, while there are a few limited locations with limestone formations. Rapid small rivers, torrents and streams, like Vathilakos, Vourkopotamos, Topolitsa, Aspropotamos, Milopotamos and Briaza, flow at the slopes of Smolikas and its branches. All of them join the main rivers further down: Sarandaporos and Aaos.

On the slopes of Mt. Smolikas and its branches (Kleftis, Tabouri, Giftissa) there are 17 villages. Most of them (13) belong to the municipality of Konitsa, few (3), located on the northern side, to the municipality of Mastorochochia and one, Fourka, is an independent community.



Dragonlake (Drakolimni) and the highest summit of Mt. Smolikas (2637m)

Mt. Vassilitsa

Mt. Vassilitsa stands east of Mt. Smolikas. It belongs to both the Pref. of Ioannina and Grevena. The Vassilitsa National Ski Center is located between its highest peaks, "Vassilitsa" (2248m) and "Gomara" (2126m).

Concerning geology, ophiolite is the main geological bedrock and then comes flysch. The streams that flow down the western slopes of this mountain join the waters of the Samariniotiko or Briaza river, which then shortly merge with Aaos river.

On the west slopes of Mt. Vassilitsa there is only one settlement, Distrato, which is an independent community.

Mt. Tymfi & Mt. Trapezitsa

Mt. Tymfi is located to the south of the wider area of Konitsa

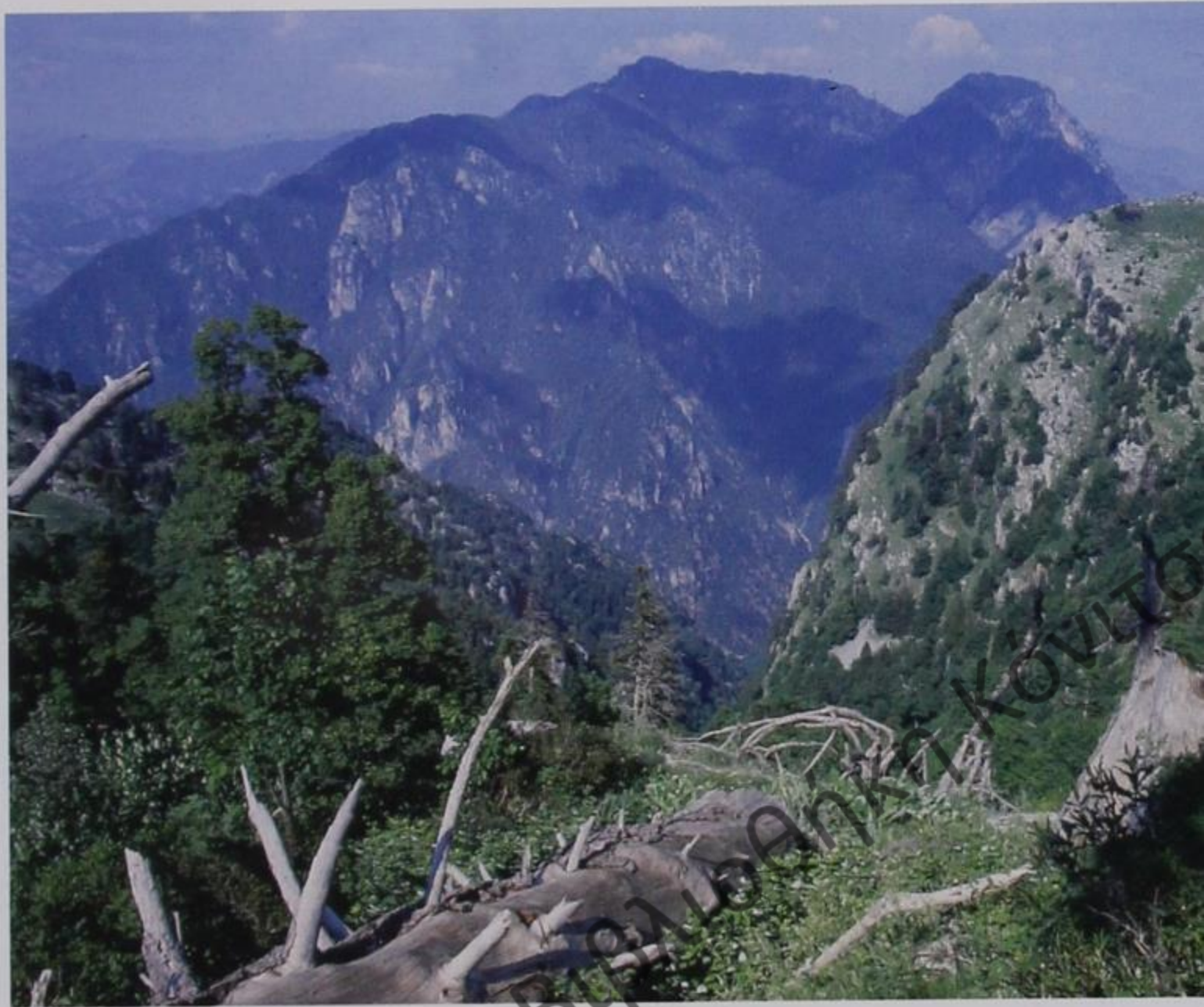


Mt. Vassilitsa (2249m)

and on the border with the area of Zagori. Its highest peak is "Gamila" (2497m). The western side of this mountain, which comprises the steep slopes of "Ploskos" (2377m), "Drakolimni" (2080m), "Lapatos" (or Lazaros) (2254m) and "Tsouka Koula" (1529m) peaks, belongs to the wider area of Konitsa. Between the northern side of Mt.

Aaos valley ends at the Aaos gorge, which is formed by the slopes of Mt. Tymfi and Mt. Trapezitsa





Mt. Trapezitsa (2024m)

Tymfi, and Mt. Smolikas there is a lower mountain, but equally imposing, rocky, precipitous and densely forested, Mt. Trapezitsa. Three are the main peaks of this mountain: Trapezitsa (2024m) at the centre, “Kolokithia” (1850m) to the north and “Roidovouni” (1985m) to the southeast.

The southern slopes of Mt. Trapezitsa and the northwestern slopes of Mt. Tymfi form the scenic Aaos gorge. In addition, the southwest side of Mt. Tymfi and the opposing mountains of Zagori form the spectacular Vikos and Voidomatis gorge.

Both Tymfi and Trapezitsa are calcareous mountains, with occa-

sional formations of flysch, mostly in lower altitudes. There are only a few streams, which flow directly into Aaos river, with the exception of those that end into Voidomatis gorge.

The town of Konitsa and the village of Pigi are built at the foothill of Mt. Trapezitsa, while three villages of the municipality of Konitsa are located at Tymfi's western edges: Kallithea, Kleidonia and Ano Kleidonia.

Mt. Nemertsika & Mt. Dousko

The northern slopes of another extensive rocky massif, Mt. Nemertsika, come down into the



Mt. Nemertsika (Meropi peak, 2209m)

southwest part of the wider area of Konitsa. Several magnificent peaks, ranging from 2000 to 2500m come after one to the other. "Papingut" peak (2486m) is the highest in the Albanian territory, whereas Meropi peak (2207m), at the easternmost point of the mountain, belongs half to Greece and half to Albania.

A part of this mountain extending to the east forms the densely forested Mt. Dousko (1168 m). Its northern slopes end in Aaos river and belong to the wider area of Konitsa, while the southern slopes belong to the area of Pogoni.

Limestone is dominant in Ne-

mertsika, and then comes flysch, while the opposite is the case in Dousko. The few seasonal streams on the slopes of these mountains facing the plain of Konitsa and the surrounding villages flow straight into Aaos river. Two villages (Aidonochori and Molivdoskepastos) of the municipality of Konitsa are located on the slopes of these mountains.

1.2 The rivers

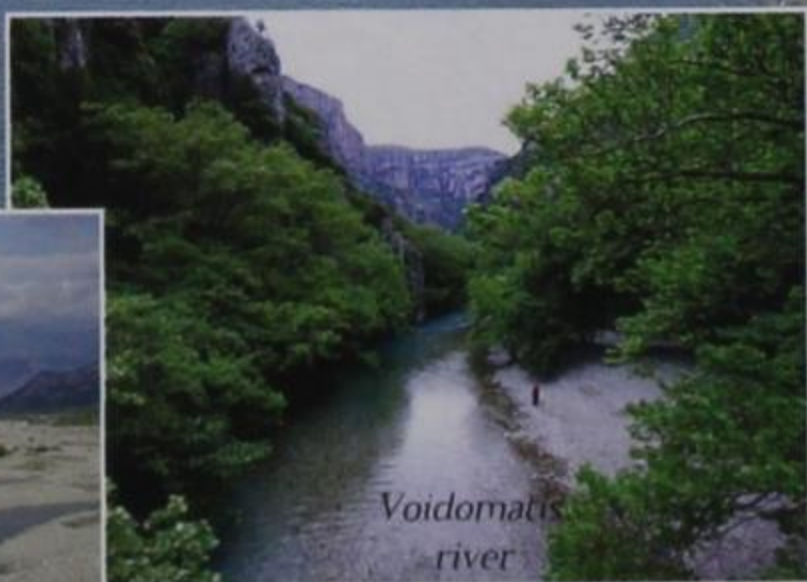
Aaos, Sarandaporos and Voiodomatis are the main rivers of the wider area of Konitsa. The villages of the Aaos valley are shared equally between Konitsa and the neighboring area of Zagori. Mts

Smolikas, Vassilitsa and Trapezitsa stand at the northern side of the valley, whereas Mts Tymfi, Flabouro and Peristeri on the southern side. Aaos springs on the slopes of Mts Augo, Zygos and Maurovouni, then flows a distance of 70 km up to the Greek-Albanian borderline. Then it crosses another 200 km in the territory of the neighboring country, up to its estuaries in the Adriatic sea.

Voidomatis' main springs are located at central west Zagori and at the famous Vikos gorge. As it flows further it forms the pretty Voidomatis gorge. Then it comes in the Konitsa area, where it joins Aaos river. Sarandaporos wipes up several streams and torrents from the two highest mountains of the area, Mt. Grammos and Mt. Smolikas, until the border with Albania where it joins Aaos, too.



Sarandaporos river



Voidomatis river

Aaos river at Bourazani

1.3 Climate

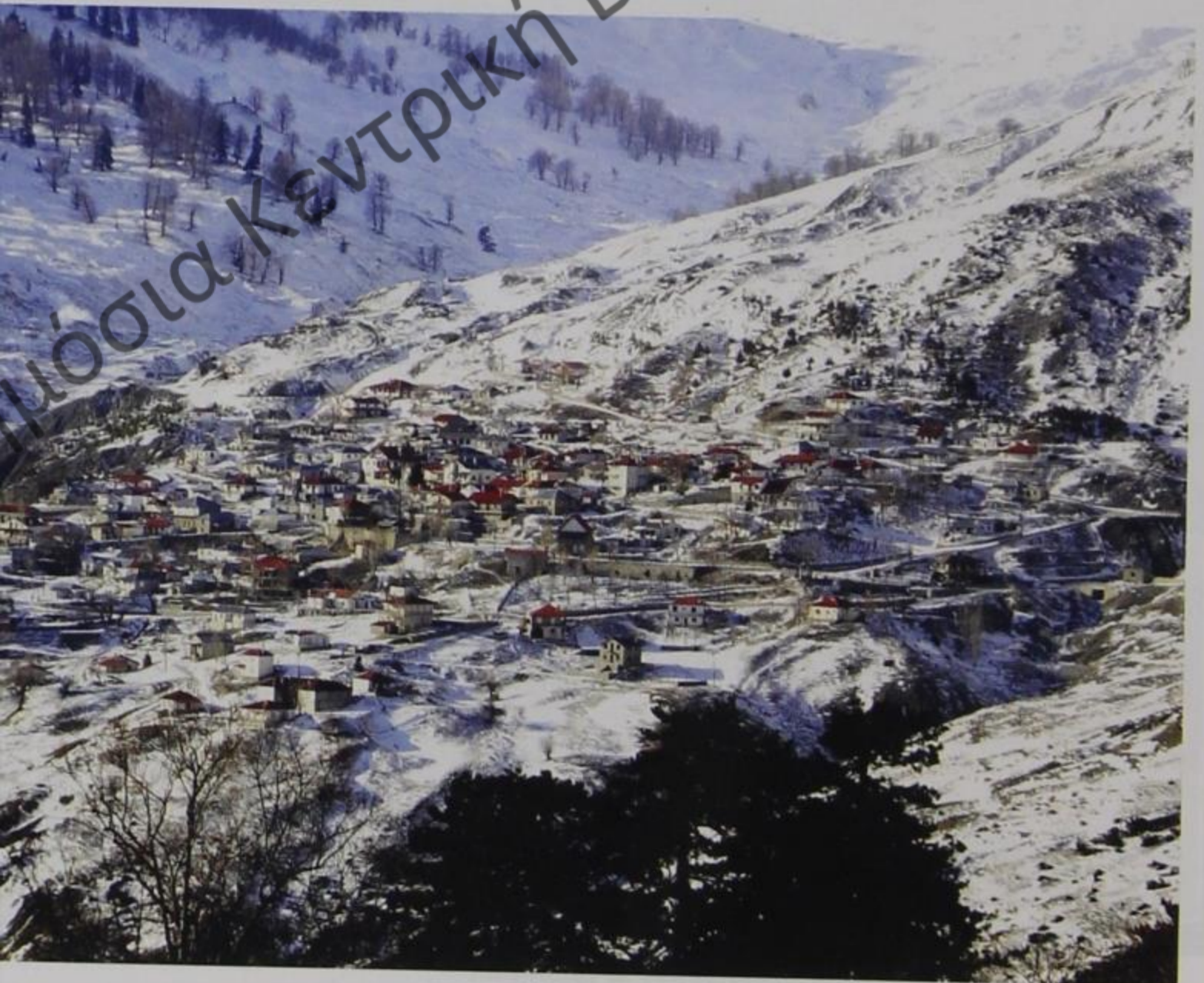
The climate at the lower altitude zone (500- 1000m), where almost all settlements are located, is of the continental climate type, with characteristics between the Mediterranean and Middle European climate types. Cold winters with many rains and warm, dry summers are typical for this climate type. Winter is extended; spring is usually short, summer hot and autumn seems to be long. Rainfall on an annual basis ranges between 1000mm to 1200mm.

At the higher altitude zone, where only few settlements are located, the climate belongs to the mountain type and higher up it

approaches the characteristics of the Middle European climate type. Winter is rough with heavy rains and snowfall.

Snow covers the earth for long periods in altitudes higher than 1500m, whereas higher than 1800m it covers the earth all winter and most of the spring. Summer is cool with light rains locally. Rainfall and snowfall annually range between 1200mm and 1400mm.

The total number of rainy days annually does not exceed 120 and in the town of Konitsa snowfall is limited to about ten days every year. July is the driest month and most rains fall in November, December and January.



Aetomilitsa in winter

2. Brief historical overview



St. Athanassios church, Ano Kleidonia



ΗΓΙΑΤΟΥΤΕΡΑ

ΜΗΡ

ΘΧ

ΤΩΝ ΧΡΑΙΩΝ

ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗ ΚΑΙ ΣΟΦΙΑ

ΓΝΩΣΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΙΑ

ΓΝΩΣΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΙΑ

ΓΝΩΣΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΙΑ

Paleolithic age

(15,000 BC – 3,200 BC)

Prehistoric hunters lived for several thousand years in the shallow caves (known as rock shelters), located at the lower parts of the ravines around Konitsa. Archaeological excavations in the rock shelters of Voidomatis gorge and especially in the most significant of them, known as “Kleidi,” “Boila” and “Megalakos,” revealed numerous bones, remnants of the hunting successes of those primitive people, as well as many stone tools. The fauna of that period (15,000-8,000 BC), which coincides with the end of the last ice age, was abundant and prehistoric hunters targeted mostly chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), alpine ibex (*Capra ibex*) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), species that thrived in this area. Flint stones, collected from certain places in the surrounding area, as well as the bones from their prey, were primarily used to make tools.

Man’s presence in these caves continued –though it was limited– over the following years (Mesolithic age) as well. Although evidence proving that men inhabited Konitsa region during the Neolithic age has not been found, it is almost certain that the area accommodated small groups of people in that period. This is supported by the results of recent excavations in the neighboring area of Doliana, a region similar to Konitsa.



The prehistoric rock shelters in Voidomatis gorge

Bronze age

(3,200 BC – 1,100 BC)

The presence of man during the Bronze Age in the wider area of Konitsa, as well as in Epirus as a whole, is rare. However some interesting findings have been excavated in several sites in the Konitsa region, such as at points where the plain joins the foothills of the mountains (Messogefira, close to the Konitsa town) as well as on some remote slopes (Mt. Grammos, Oxia village).

Iron age and historic times

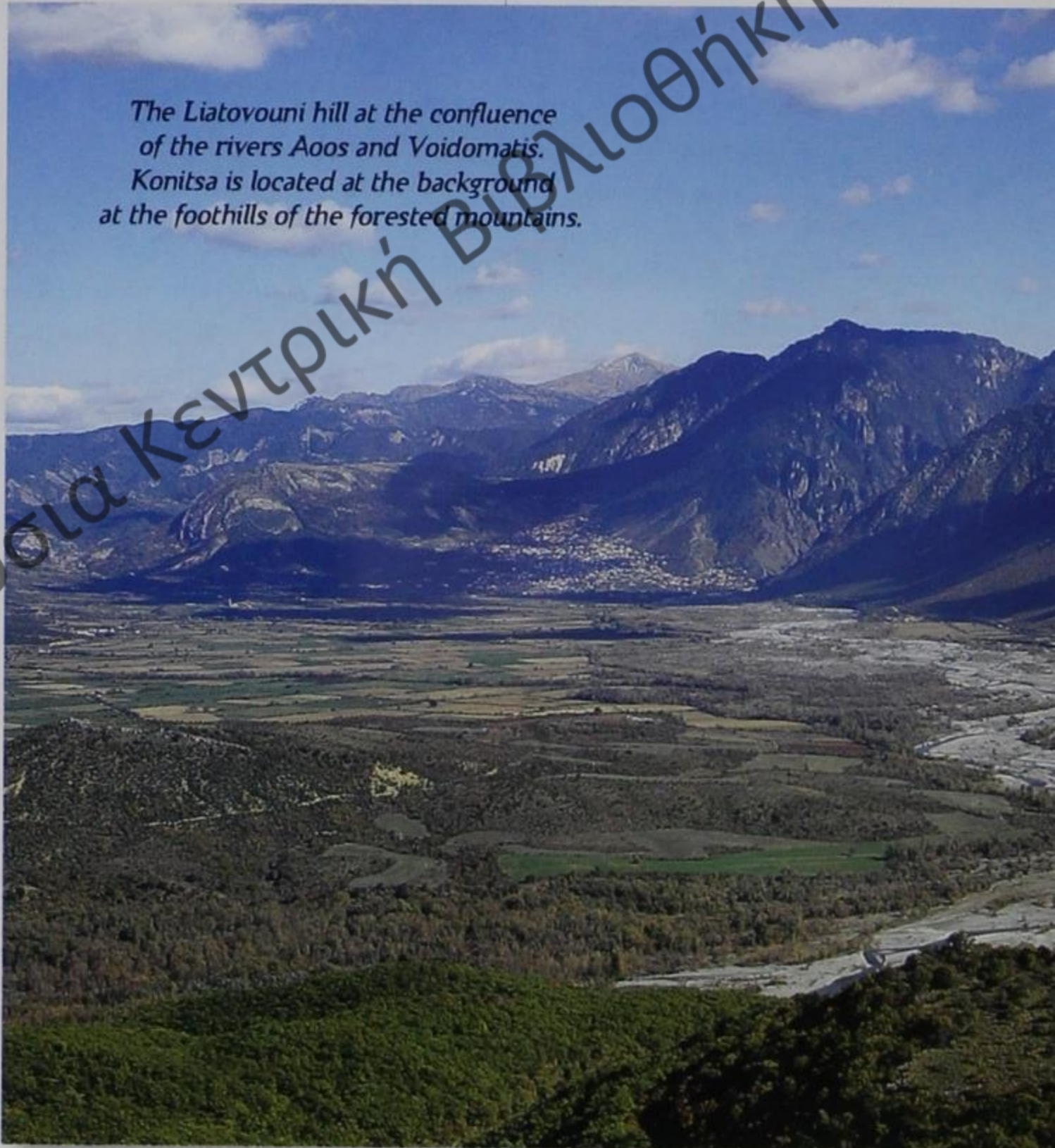
(1,100 BC – 168 BC)

The hill of Liatovouni is located in the plain of Konitsa, close to the point where the rivers Aaos and Voidomatis merge. Recent archaeological excavations here reveal a

settlement inhabited continuously from the 11th century BC up to the 4th century BC. It was a small town, inhabited by Molossoi, the more powerful tribe in ancient Epirus. The settlement included both curvilinear and rectangular buildings, with a base foundation of stones on which stood walls made of intertwined wood, covered by mortar. The floor of these residences was made by pressed soil and pebbles, and there were fireplaces. Remarkable findings came from the exca-

vations at the site's cemetery, where 103 graves have been found. It is worth mentioning that among these graves one seems to belong to a notable person, a warrior, perhaps the founder of settlement. Funereal offerings, such as clay and copper vases, copper and iron weapons, jewelry made of copper, silver, iron, rock crystal and glass, were found inside the graves. The inhabitants of the settlement were mostly stock breeders. The findings of the cemetery point to the close

The Liatovouni hill at the confluence of the rivers Aoos and Voidomatis. Konitsa is located at the background at the foothills of the forested mountains.



relation of men with weapons. It seems that these were important in their lives, not so much because they partook in large scale combats, as for the protection of the people and the animals belonging to this small community.

During this period the people of Epirus used to live in small towns, like the one mentioned above. Similar settlements probably existed in other locations of the wider area of Konitsa, even at the place where the town of Konitsa stands today.



During Hellenistic times, especially in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, human presence in the region is more pronounced and is related with the intense growth of the population and the economy that started under the reign of the most important king of ancient Epirus, Pyrrhus (297-272 BC). Remnants of settlements from this era have been found in several locations in the Konitsa plain, particularly near the Konitsa castle, Messogefira and Iliorachi. During those years there was apparently a concerted effort to fortify Epirus and many forts, known as "Castra Pyrrhi," were built in strategic locations. These include the forts of Messogefira, next to Aaos river, Iliorachi and Kastraki, located on the southern slope of Voidomatis gorge.

Roman occupation

(168 BC – 3rd century AD)

The destruction of Epirus' most important cities by the Roman legions in 167 BC, marks the beginning of the Roman occupation. It is thought that in Konitsa region the destruction was limited, since small organized communities continued to exist after that year. Ruins or other findings of these settlements have been found at Konitsa Castle, Aetopetra, Iliorachi, Kefalochori, Kleidonia and at the point where the Anagnostopouleios College of Konitsa is

located today. In addition a rural villa (villa rustica) has been excavated at the location of Servina-Paleogoritsa, between Konitsa and Iliorachi. Baths and rooms with mosaic floors are included in the ruins of this villa. Moreover a small, but high quality copper statue was found there, possibly representing an African servant.

Early Christian era

(4th – 6th century AD)

During the 4th century AD, the town of Konitsa seems to have been a traveler's junction. Branches of Via Egnatia from Thessaly and Western Macedonia lead to the Adriatic, through Aaos river. The findings from this era are extremely poor, as this was a time of extensive raids. Still, the remnants of an Early Christian building and some storage jars, were found at Paleogoritsa, a site near the road from Konitsa to Mazi.

Middle Byzantine era

(7th – 12th century AD)

Little is known about Konitsa region in this era, probably because of consecutive raids. However, it is possible that there was a small settlement at "Lakka" location, on the southeast part of Konitsa, close to the Aaos river. The only monument dated from this era still standing today is the church of Agios Dimitrios in Molyvdoskepastos (11th century AD). According to local tradition, the emperor Constans II, known as Constantine Pogonatos, founded during this era (late 7th century AD) the monastery of Panagia Molyvdoskepasti, dedicated to the Dormition of Virgin Mary.

Late Byzantine era

(1204 AD – 1430 AD)

The Despotate of Epirus was founded after the conquest of the Byzantine Empire by the Crusaders in 1203 AD. Konitsa is



Monastery of Panagia Molyvdoskepasti

referred to for the first time in the “Chronicle of Ioannina” in 1380 AD. That year the castle of the city was fortified by the ruler of Ioannina, Thomas II Preljubović. During this era there were few settlements around the town of Konitsa, like in Lakka, Servina and Paleogoritsa locations. Evidence of such settlements are the churches of Kokkini Panagia (Red Virgin Mary) (13th-14th century) and Ag. Nikolaos (14th-15th century), still standing today at the latter location. An additional part of the Konitsa region, located near the present-day borders with Albania, flourished during this era as well. The town of Dipalitsa (present-day Molyvdoskepasto village), became during the 13th century the See of the Bishop of Pogoniani. During the 14th century, both the monastery of Panagia Molyvdoskepasti and the “Metamorfosi tou Sotiros” monastery (Transfiguration of Christ) in Kleidonia were renovated. A little later, at the end of the 14th century, the Ottomans

appear in the area and gradually dominate the whole region.

Early Turkish domination

(1430 AD – 17th century)

From the first years of the Ottoman Empire the wider area of Konitsa becomes a county (“kaza”) of the regional administration (“sancak”) of Ioannina. Peripheral settlements are joined with the city of Konitsa, a part of the Christian population converts to Islam and some Muslim Albanians move to the town. In the 16th century two Muslim mosques (“Hussein Shah” and “Sultan Suleiman” mosques) were built, but today only ruins of the second one exist. At the same time, the Dipalitsa area (Molyvdoskepastos) continues to flourish. Several churches (Agioli Apostoloi, Agios Sozon, Agia Triada) and the monastery of Agios Nikolaos in Kalovrisi were built in that period.

During the 17th century, Kleidonia (Kalivia) in the eastern part of Konitsa plain is abandoned, while higher up on the mountain Ano Kleidonia (Litoniavista) flourishes and churches and monasteries are built (Agios Athanasios, Agios Nikolaos, Agioli Apostoloi monastery). The picturesque monastery of Agioli Anargyroi in Voidomatis gorge was built during this period as well. Moreover, far away from the Konitsa plain, on the remote slopes of Mt. Grammos, another well known mona-



Kokkini Panagia church, Konitsa



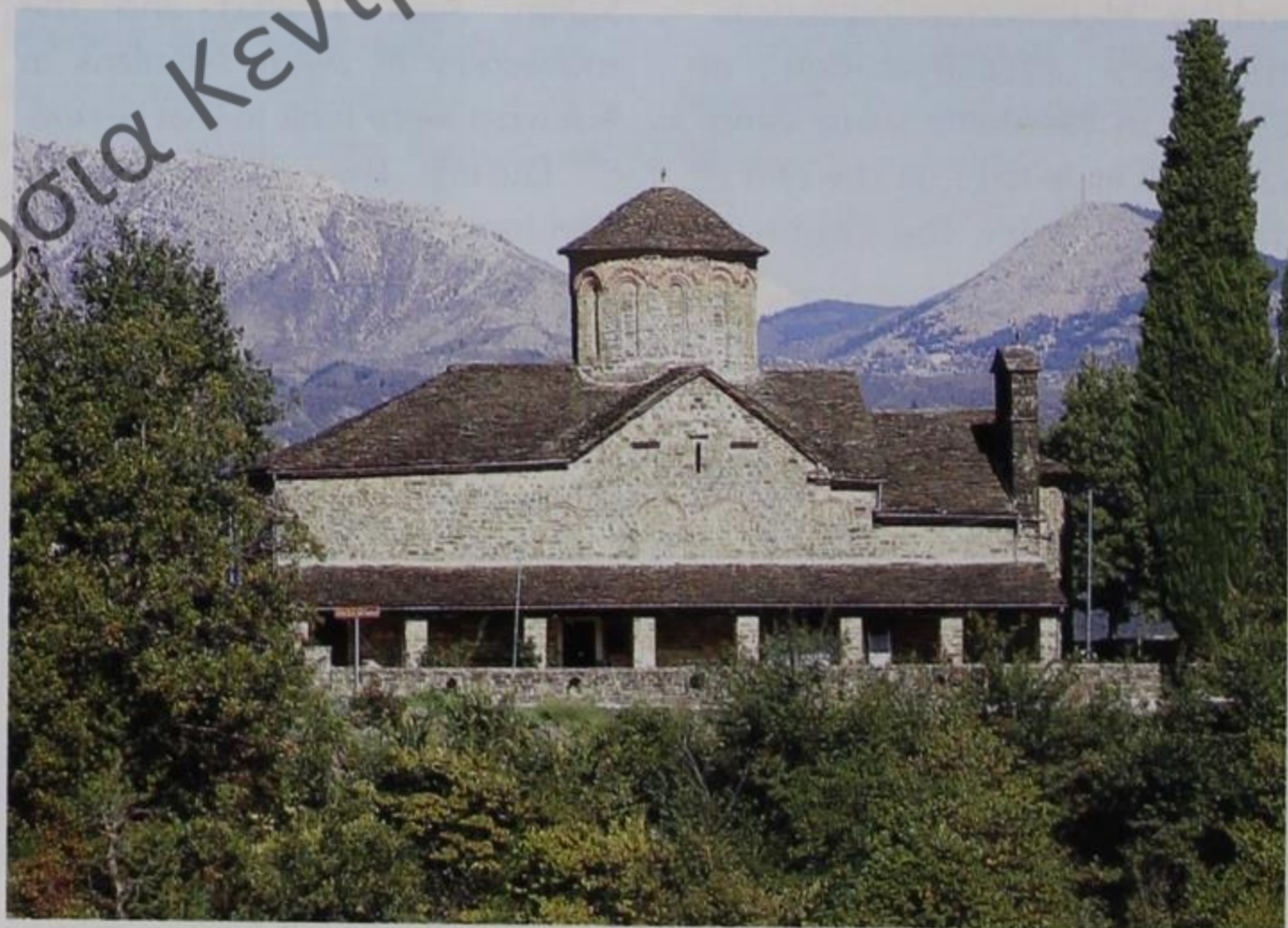
Sultan Suleiman mosque, Konitsa

stery (Panagia of Zerma), dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, is founded.

The Muslim order of the Bektashi obtains many followers during the 17th century in this area. Five “tekke” (Bektashi place of worship) were founded in the town of Konitsa, but the visitor

today can only see the ruins of three “türbe” (mausoleums) that used to be erected over the tombs of notable clerics. The best known tekke was Tekke Nevruz, which established Konitsa as a holy center for the Bektashi faithful in the Western Balkan Peninsula. During the same century, repeated bandit raids force the inhabitants of Dipalitsa (Molyvdoskepastos) and the neighboring Ostanitsa (Aidonochori) to abandon their land and move to Konitsa, which was by then the financial and administrative center of the entire region.

In this time, the people of Konitsa were apparently concentrated in two districts. In Ano Konitsa (Varossi) lived the majority of the Christian population and local lords who had converted to Islam. In Kato Konitsa lived the



Holy Apostles church, Molyvdoskepastos



St. Nicholas church, Ano Kleidonia

majority of the Muslim population, mostly Albanian workers, having come from the near by areas of Karamouratia, Leskoviki and Frasseri.

In addition the famous craftsmen (stone masons, wood carvers, painters) of the villages of Konitsa, called Mastorochoria (the craft-

smen villages), start to make an impact with their work.

Late Turkish domination (18th century – 1913)

During the reign of Ali Tepelena, Pasha (provincial governor) of Ioannina, Konitsa underwent great commercial growth. Intere-



Monastery of Panagia Zermas

stingly enough, Ali Pasha's mother, Hamko, came from Konitsa, and was the Greek-speaking daughter of Zeynel Bey, a man who was the most powerful lord in Ano Konitsa. Ruins of the fortified residence of Zeynel Bey and other notable Muslims, like Hussein Bey Sisko, together with several mansions of wealthy Christians can still be seen today in Ano Konitsa.

During this era many churches and monasteries were built in the wider area of Konitsa and the surrounding villages, such as the Cathedral church of Agios Nikolaos in Konitsa (1842), Agia Paraskevi in Paliosseli (1864), Agios Nikolaos in Pysogianni (1742), the Panagia monastery of Stomio in Aaos gorge (1774), Panagia monastery in Kavassila (Birth of

the Virgin Mary) (1816), Osios Nikanoras monastery (1816) e.a.

During this period the development of the arts and crafts – masonry, carpentry, woodcarving, hagiography and painting- practiced on a professional, corporate basis, marked the life and culture of the area and especially their villages. The work of stone craftsmen from all the Mastorochoria, together with the famous painters from Chioniades and the wood carvers from Gorgopotamos was very significant during that period. Their work can be admired even today in the churches, the bridges and the mansions of the wealthy citizens of the town of Konitsa and neighboring Zagori. On February 24th 1913, three days after the



Zeinel bey's estate (Hamko' house) in Upper Konitsa



St. Nicholas church, Pysrogianni

liberation of Ioannina, Konitsa and the wider region became parts of the Modern Greek state.

From liberation (1913) to today

One of modern Greek history's most significant events, which drastically influenced the town of Konitsa, too, was the exchange of the Muslim population in Greece

with the Christian population in Turkey. Thus, almost all of Konitsa's Muslims, mostly of Albanian, but also of Greek descent, were forced to leave their homes and relocate in distant lands in Asia Minor; the Christian populations of those lands were brought in and took over the abandoned Muslim houses in



Mt. Grammos, remnants of trenches of the Greek civil war (1946-1949)



Mt. Grammos, remnants of the Greek civil war

Konitsa in 1925. The new inhabitants of Konitsa mostly came from Farassa (today's Feke) and Misti (today's Konakli) in Cappadocia, and became farmers in the plain. They gradually adapted to the new conditions and made considerable progress.

Many inhabitants of Konitsa took part in the Greek-Italian War in 1940-41 and Konitsa was occupied first by the Italian and then by the German army. The occupation forces destroyed several villages in the Aaos valley and around the plain of Konitsa, because their population supported

the Greek resistance fighters, or as reprisal for clashes between the Greek partisans and the occupation forces in the surrounding areas.

In the Civil War that followed World War II, the Konitsa region suffered greatly. One of the Civil War's most important clashes was the "battle of Konitsa," during Christmas in 1947-8, when the leftist Democratic Army laid siege to the town for several days, while all the mountains (Kleftis, Grammos, Gyftissa etc) of the wider area of Konitsa where the stage of bloody clashes throughout that period.

In the following decades the area lost its younger population, which moved to Greece's large urban centers or emigrated abroad (mostly to Germany). The tendency of the young to leave the region has somewhat waned in recent decades, as agriculture in the plain has been developed and tourism in the region has gradually grown.



The plain of Konitsa and the northern slopes of Mt. Nemertsika

3. The people





Drosopigi, A picture of a family in the 1920s

The wider area of Konitsa comprises four distinct anthropographic units. The town of Konitsa in the recent past and up until 1925, was inhabited by Christians and Muslims. The inhabitants occupied themselves with farming, crafts and commerce, while some of them were teachers and many, mostly merchants, traveled for business to distant lands: to the Balkans, Egypt, America and elsewhere. The city remains today, as always, the administrative, commercial, financial and intellectual center of the wider region.



Part of a silver plated icon

Several villages close to the town of Konitsa, even today, are mostly dependent on its fertile soil. South of Konitsa and east of Aaos river there are Iliorachi (Koutsoufliani), Kavassila, Mazi, Aetopetra (Sanovo). Then, as the river changes direction to its north, we find the villages Melissopetra and Kalovrissi (Pirovitska). On the other side of the river there are Kallithea (Goritsa) and then Kleidonia, and further down after the river shifts direction again, the villages to the south: Aidonochori (Ostanitsa) and Molivdoskepasto (Dipalitsa), where the famous monastery Panagia Molivdoskepasti is located.

To the northeast of the town of Konitsa, on the densely forested slopes of Mt. Smolikas, are the villages of the Aaos valley ("Lakka Aaou"): Elefthero (Grizbani), Paliosseli, Pades, Armata (Armatovo) and Distrato (Briaza). In these villages, where mostly the Vlach language is spoken, the inhabitants specialized in certain professions, such as logging, tar production, transportation by mules e.a. Elefthero, not a Vlach village, is the exception, where the inhabitants were mostly small farmers and craftsmen. Distrato, the largest village in the Aaos valley, is located on the slopes of Mt. Vassilitsa, at the border with the Prefecture of Grevena. It is one of the most vibrant villages of



Musicians and dancers in Upper Konitsa, 1906

the Northern Pindos mountain range; logging is the main source of income here and secondly tourism, thanks to the nearby

Vassilitsa National Ski Resort.

On the other side, to the northwest of the town of Konitsa, along the Sarandaporos valley, are



Armata village on the southern slopes of Mt. Smolikas



Pyrsoyianni and Mt. Grammos

the Mastorochochia villages. The inhabitants of these villages specialized in masonry and other related professions. This technical specialization was the result of the demographic and economic hardship that the villages faced once they outgrew small scale, sustenance farming economy. Some of these villages collectively assumed certain activities with such success, that they have become historically synonymous with them. Organized in groups known as "bouloukia," most men from these villages traveled throughout Greece and in neighboring countries, and went as far as America, Congo, Abyssinia, Sudan or even Iran. Some of them and especially those from the villages Gorgopotamos and Chioniades, were experts in wood-carving and painting respectively, and completed the works of their colleagues the stone builders, decorating churches

with icon screens and religious icons, and mansions or houses with wood-carvings and excellent murals.

Mastorochochia were the villages: Plagia (Zerma), Kefalochori (Likorachi or Loupsiko), Theotokos (Fetoko) Oxia (Seltsi), Plikati, Gorgopotamos (Tournovo), Chioniades, Assimochori (Leskatsi), Vourbiani, Pyrsogianni, Pirgos (Stratsiani), Amarandos (Isvoro), Agia Varvara (Plavali), Pixaria (Blithouki), and the abandoned today Prosilio (Kotsartsko), west of Sarandaporos; east of Sarandaporos, the villages: Drossopigi (Kantsiko), Lagada (Blizdiani), Kastanea (Kastaniani), Ganadio, Molista (Messaria), Monastiri (Botsifari), Pournia (Staritsiani), Agia Paraskevi (Kerasovo), Nikanoras (Kortinitsa), Trapeza (Vranista), Exochi (Zelista), Kavassila and Pigi (Peglari).



Mt. Grammos, the sub- alpine pastures of Aetomilitsa

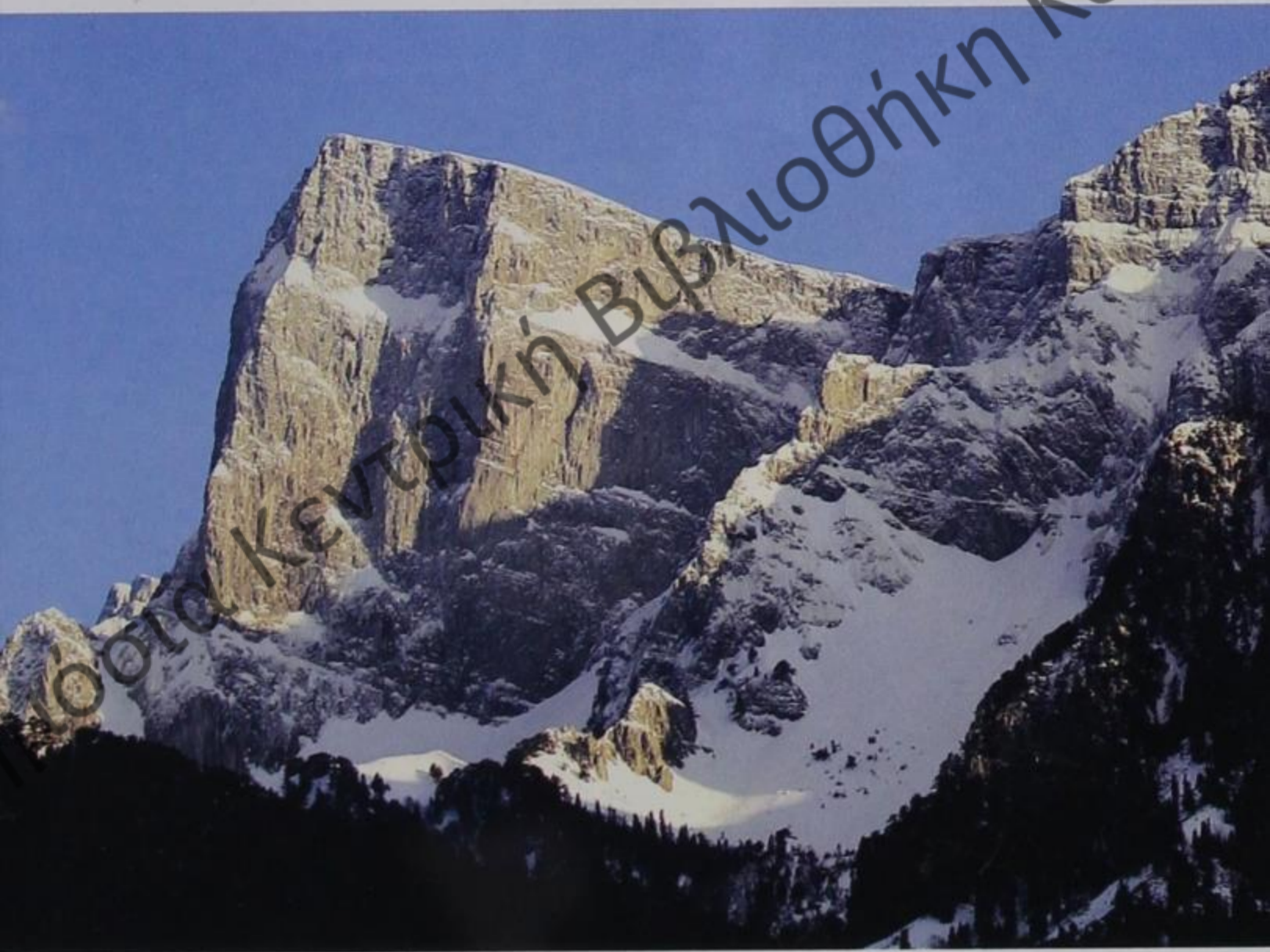
Apart from the above, there are two villages in the wider area of Konitsa in close proximity to the higher altitudes of the mountains. In those areas, where forests alternate with pastures and then higher up extensive sub alpine meadows are found, inhabitants turned mostly to stock breeding. Numerous herds, mostly sheep,

still are brought here every year from the winter habitats in Thessaly and Macedonia to the summer grazing pastures of Aetomilitsa (Denisko) and Fourka. The inhabitants of these villages were also loggers and mule drivers. In Fourka, people have gradually also become merchants and craftsmen, such as tailors.



Mt. Grammos, pastures and forests with beech at Plikati,

4. The natural environment and biological diversity

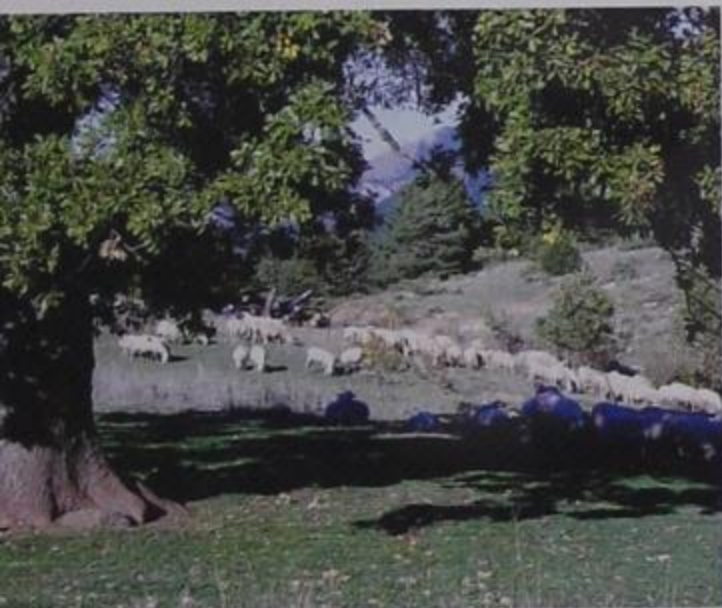


Mt. Tymfi, Gamila peak (2497m)



Orchis maritima

Five types of ecosystems are found in the wider area of Konitsa, and each of them is clearly distinguishable by its dominant vegetation. At lower altitudes (375-700m)



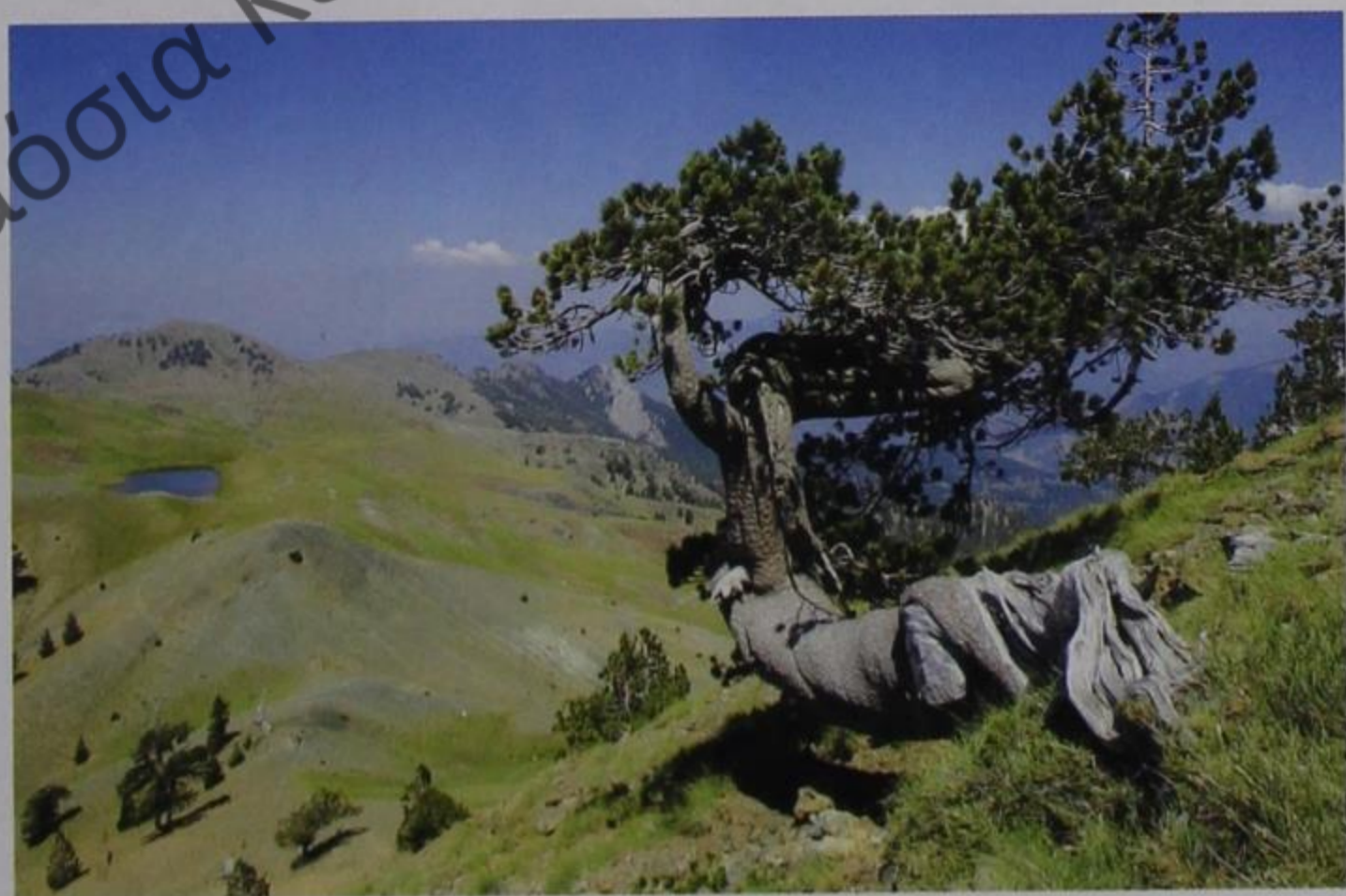
Sacred forest with oaks

evergreen, sclerophyllous shrubs dominate, followed by oak forests (700-1000m), conifer and beech forests at mid-altitudes (1000-1600m), Balkan pine forests at 1600-2000m and sub-alpine and alpine meadows at higher altitudes (2000-2637m). These ecosystems

often cover vast areas in their pure forms, or form mixed mosaic-like composites, whose different units can be identified by their leaf colours alone.

Apart from the above five main ecosystems, other less widespread types are also found in the area such as: steep mountain slopes, gorges, aquatic ecosystems (lakes and rivers) and riparian vegetation.

The area's natural ecosystems host a high number of plant and animal species. Each ecosystem differs in species variety and number depending on the ecological requirements of each taxon. Around 1200 plant taxa have been recorded in the wider area of Konitsa, although this number is likely to be higher as only few botanical studies have been conducted in the area. The area's wild fauna is also rich as c. 250 vertebrate taxa and many invertebrate taxa have been recorded here.



Mt. Smolikas, sub alpine grasslands and thickets of Balkan pine



A thousand years old Stinking juniper (*Juniperus foetidissima*)
in the Aaos gorge

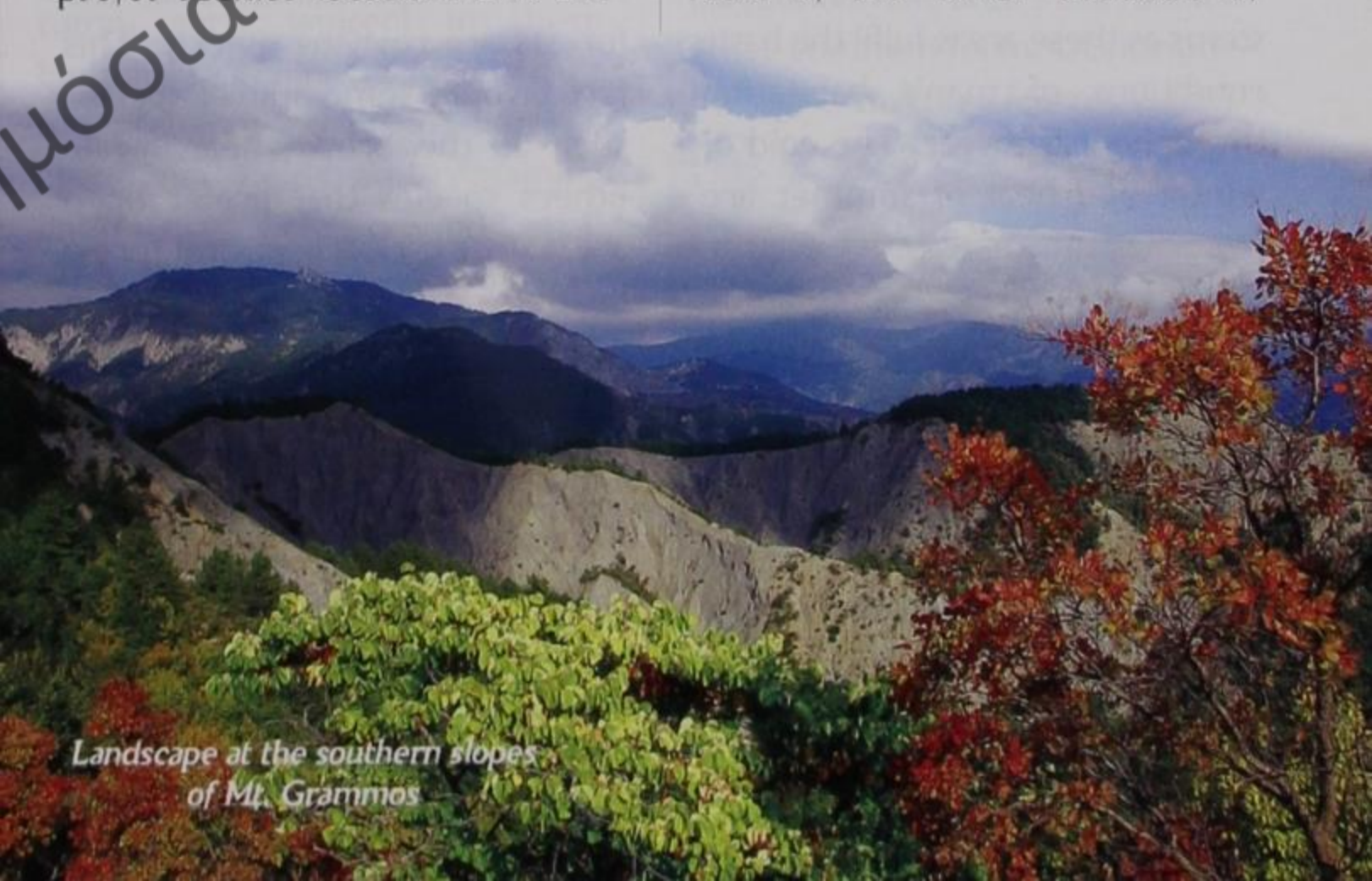
4.1 Ecosystems and wild fauna

Evergreen sclerophyllous shrubs and oak forests

Evergreen sclerophyllous shrubs, with the kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*) or the strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*) as the dominant taxa, grow on the gentlest mountain slopes at low altitudes (400-700m). Other shrubs and trees commonly found in these ecosystems include the holm oak (*Quercus ilex*), *Arbutus adrachne*, manna ash (*Fraxinus ornus*), phillyrea (*Phillyrea latifolia*), turpentine tree (*Pistacia terebinthus*), oriental hornbeam (*Carpinus orientalis*), common juniper (*Juniperus communis*), and prickly juniper (*J. oxycedrus*). Characteristic examples of this ecosystem can be seen on the foothills of the mountains surrounding Konitsa town and the lower slopes of Sarandoporos valley. Some species like holm oak and strawberry tree prefer rockier locations and there-

fore can also be seen in steep gorges such as Aaos, Vikos, Voidomatis and Sarandaporos Narrows.

Shrub formations are also found in the next altitudinal range (700-800m). These comprise mainly two hornbeam species (*Carpinus orientalis* and *C. betulus*), the hop hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*) and the kermes oak. At 800-1000m altitude, the mountain slopes are covered with oak forests comprising various oak species (*Quercus frainetto*, *Q. pubescens*, *Q. dalechampii*, *Q. cerris* and *Q. trojana*), and accompanying species such as the cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*) and almond-leaved pear (*Pyrus amygdaliformis*). Apart from the other oak species that cover large expanses of the area, the Macedonian oak (*Quercus trojana*) also covers significant areas even though it grows on the poorest and driest soils of the lower altitudes of



Landscape at the southern slopes of Mt. Grammos



*A goat flock grazing close to the Aaos river bank at Bourazani area.
Melissopetra village is at the background*

Vourkopotamos and Sarandaporos valleys, and small tributaries of the R. Aaos. The presence of *Quercus trojana* is especially significant since its forests and stands are protected by European legislation.

Most of the area's villages were built within these ecosystems as these areas fulfil the basic conditions of man's habitation throughout the year. The cold of winter and heat of summer are bearable at these altitudes. On the other hand, the vegetation, especially oak shrubs and forests, plays an important role in the life of the area's inhabitants by providing wood for fuel and heat, and its foliage provides excellent food for domestic ruminants (goats). Oak wood is also used for construction timber, furniture

production and charcoal.

As oaks usually grow on fertile soils, in the past oak forests have often been felled so as to reclaim land suitable for cultivations. Today, due to the area's population reduction, much cultivated land has been abandoned and the forests are reviving quickly. This fact favours some animal species such as the brown bear, while others species that prefer open areas, forest clearings, and forest borders are slowly reducing in numbers, such as lizards, tortoises and some birds.

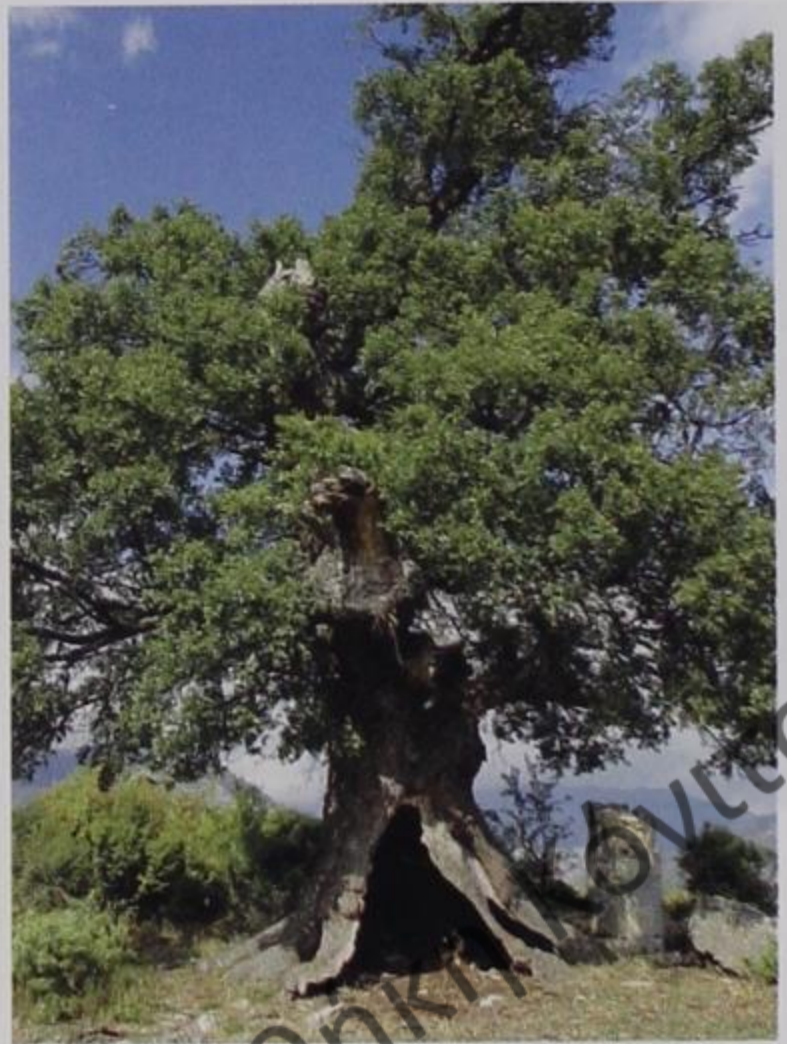
Oaks are closely connected to the area's history and traditions. Either individuals or stands of large, ancient and old trees are often found growing next to village churches thus indicating the area's



A country chapel surrounded by huge ancient oaks, close to Konitsa town.

sanctity. These ancient trees, stands or forests are special ecosystems; the first 'monuments of nature' and 'protected areas' where rare and protected animal species find refuge. In addition, they often protect soils from erosion.

Oak forests and shrubs, either evergreen or deciduous, create perfect biotopes for the area's large mammal species. The brown bear (*Ursus arctus*) spends much of the year (early summer, autumn, early winter) in these biotopes searching for food in fruit trees (cherries, damsons, apples), abandoned fields, and remaining cultivations sited around small settlements. Acorns are also an excellent food source for the bear in autumn and early winter. The wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) finds refuge under the dense oak foliage and plentiful food on or under the soil surface (*bulbs, roots, acorns, etc.*). The roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) frequents forest clearings where it feeds on the lush grass,



Old Macedonian oak (*Quercus trojana*) close to a country chapel in Agia Barbara village.

and wolves (*Canis lupus*) find refuge during the day by the cool steams covered with dense vegetation.

The wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) is another rare and protected mammal found in the area's oak forests. Other common mammals include the stone martin (*Martes foina*), the Eurasian badger (*Meles*



Piglets of wild boar in an oak forest



A wolf wandering in oak forest

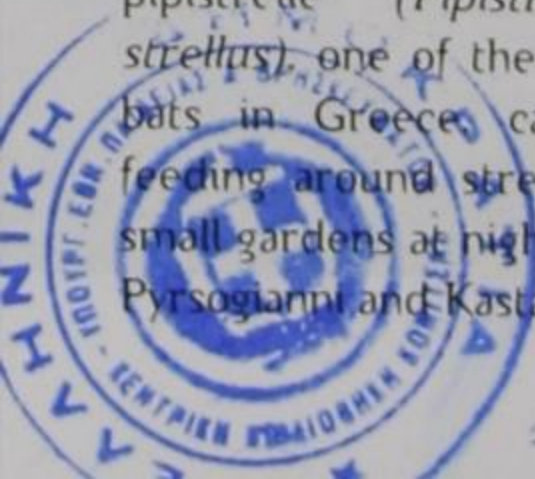
meles), foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), and hedgehogs (*Erinaceus concolor*), all found on the outskirts of village farms or house gardens. Other interesting small mammals include various bat species (family *Chiroptera*), dormice (family *Gliridae*) and shrew (family *Soricidae*) that live in the oak forests and can frequently be observed seen at night within settlements, abandoned houses and deserted churches.

All the bat species feed on insects, and from sunset onwards can be seen flying above the surfaces of the area's streams and rivers, close to riparian vegetation where the water is relatively still. Some taxa such as the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), one of the commonest bats in Greece, can be seen feeding around street lamps or small gardens at night in Konitsa, Pysogianni and Kastanea.

The bird fauna of shrubs and oak forests is also rich. The great tit (*Parus major*), blue tit (*Parus caeruleus*), long-tailed tit (*Aegithalus caudatus*), robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*), nuthatch (*Sitta europea*), and treecreepers (*Certhia brachydactyla* and *C. familiaris*), are characteristic of these ecosystems. Additionally, many woodpeckers such as the lesser spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopus minor*), Syrian woodpecker (*Dendrocopus syriacus*), and green woodpecker (*Picus viridis*) nest in these forests where they search for food (insect larva) in the trunks and branches of old and ancient trees. At the end of Spring and all summer long, one can see the small Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) flying over the



Great woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*)



Δεσφει

Ανεσφοι Ανεσφοι

area's villages. According to local tradition, the European cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) arrives in the area each year from Africa on the back of this small migrant vulture.

Most of the area's reptiles live in these ecosystems. The four-lined rat snake (*Coluber quatuorlineata*), Dahl's whip snake (*Coluber najadum*), leopard snake (*Elaphe situla*), smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), Dalmatia algyroides lizard (*Algyroides nigropunctatus*), European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*), and the rare margined tortoise (*Testudo marginata*) are some of these. All the above reptiles prefer the understoreys of old oak trees.

Conifer and beech forests

Pure and mixed forests of black pine (*Pinus nigra*), fir (*Abies borisii-regis*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) can be found growing at mid-altitudes on all Konitsa's mountains (1000-1600m). The black pine forests of Smolikas and Kleftis, the beech forests of Grammos and Tambouri, and the fir forests found in Trapezitsa and Aeos Gorge are worth special mention. Although these forests grow on most of the area's great mountains they know no administrative or geographical borders.

Various characteristic bird species are frequently seen in the coniferous forests of Konitsa, such



Black pine forest at the Pistiliapi valley on Mt. Grammos

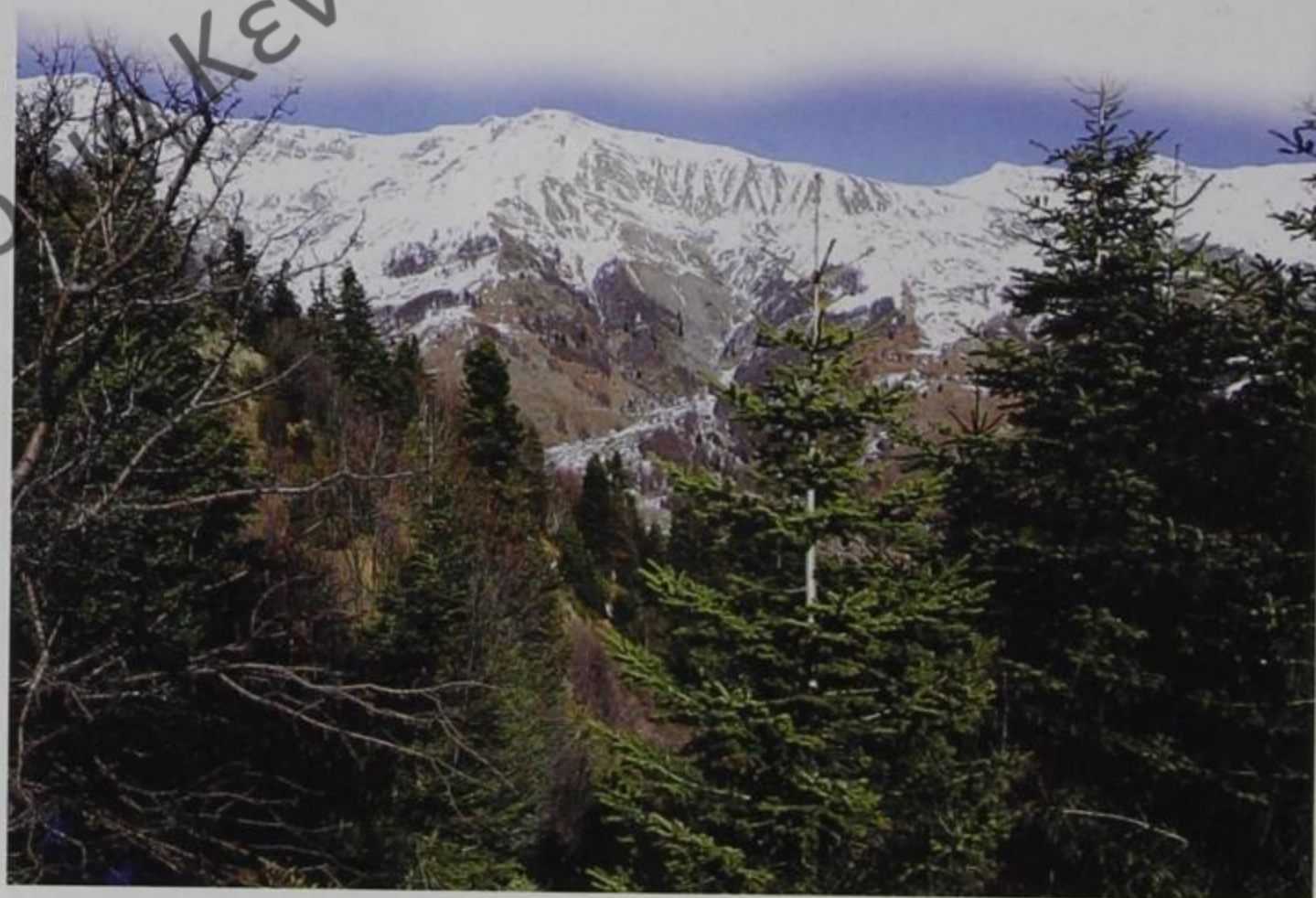


Brown bear in fir forest, Aaos gorge

as the coal tit (*Parus ater*), crested tit (*Parus cristatus*), mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*), and common crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*). Mature forests left uncut for many years and hence rich in biodiversity, such as those found in Aaos Gorge, parts of the Greek-Albanian border on Mt. Grammos, and some inaccessible zones of Mt.

Smolikas, are home to rare and protected birds such as the black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*).

Conifer and beech forests are also important for the brown bear as they offer protection and beech nuts are its autumn food source. Wild boar also live within these forests and roe deer frequent forest clearings where they feed



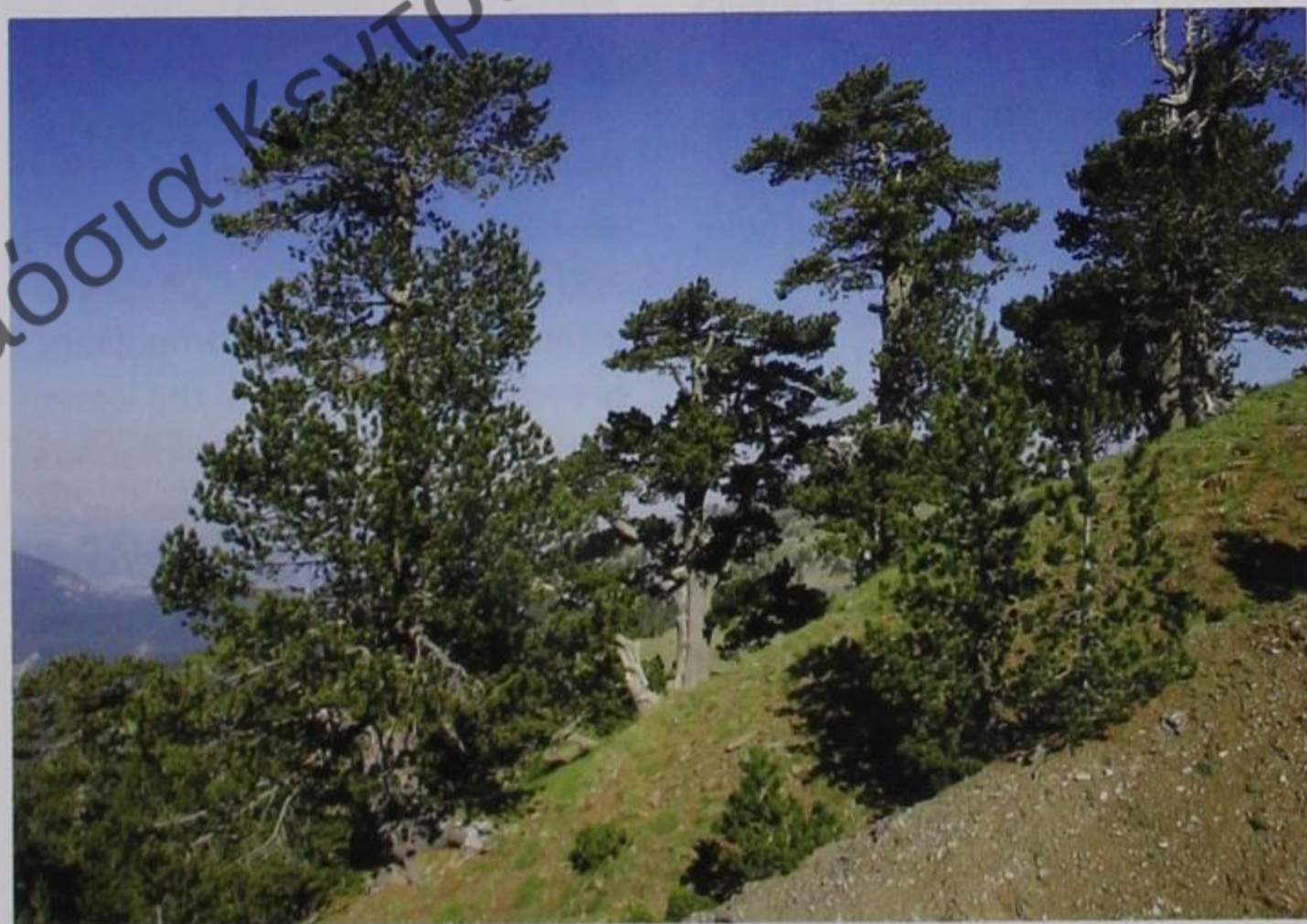
Mixed beech and fir forest on Mt. Grammos

on the lush grass. Very rare species such as the pine martin (*Martes martes*) can also be seen on Mt. Smolikas, and sightings of the lynx (*Lynx lynx*) have been confirmed. Lastly, the chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), one of the rarest and most impressive Greek mammals, can be observed wintering in secluded pockets in inaccessible areas on Mts Grammos, Smolikas, Tymfi and Trapezitsa.

Balkan pine forests

Balkan pines (*Pinus leucodermis* or *P. heldreichii*) grow in the upper forest levels (1600-2000m) on Mts Smolikas, Tymfi, Trapezitsa, Vassilitsa, and few remote areas on Mt. Grammos. The Bal-

kan pine, known as “robolo” in Greek, is a characteristic conifer that often forms stands of large ancient trees. Common birds seen in these stands include the coal tit (*Parus ater*), the short-toed treecreeper (*Certhia brachydactyla*) and the black woodpecker. These forests were once extensive, however the value of pine wood led to tree-felling and now these ecosystems are mostly restricted to steep rather than gentle mountain slopes. For this reason the chamois, whose natural habitat is precipitous mountain slopes, is seen here more frequently than any other large mammal. In this quiet landscape, far from settlements and man, the brown bear passes the period of the winter lethargy, dens and raises her cubs.



Balkan pines on Mt. Smolikas

Wild fauna

The area's wild fauna is rich in taxa, and many rare and protected species according to Greek and European legislation are found here.

Almost all the large mammals of mainland Greece have substantial populations in the area whether they are rare such as the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), wildcat (*Felis sylvestris*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra balcanica*) and roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), or more common like the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*). Other smaller mammals occurring in the area are red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), badgers (*Meles meles*), brown hares (*Lepus capensis*), hedgehogs (*Erinaceus concolor*), red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*), stone martens (*Martes foina*), and the rare pine marten (*Martes martes*). A total of about 60 mammal species have been recorded in the wider area of Konitsa.



Brown bear searching for food in a forest glade

Eighteen bat species have also been recorded in the area. This is roughly half the total number of bats recorded from all of Greece. Bats are an important component of the area's biodiversity as they comprise c.25% of the area's mammal species. Three of these bat taxa are rare in Greece (Bechstein's bat – *Myotis bechsteinii*, greater noctule bat – *Nyctalus lasiopterus*, parti-coloured bat – *Vespertilio murinus*), while almost all are protected by National and International law. The abandoned villages of Lykorachi and Zerma (Plagia) are of special interest as they host important breeding populations of the lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), one of the most sensitive and threatened taxa in Europe.

Of the 161 bird species in the area, the birds of prey are of special importance, including the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), peregrine



Balkan chamois on the high peaks of Mt. Tymfi



Bats hibernated in an old house

falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), booted eagle (*Hieraetus pennatus*), short-toed eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*), and lanner falcon (*Falco*



Egyptian vulture
(*Neophron percnopterus*)

biarmicus). Woodpeckers such as the black (*Dryocopus martius*) and Syrian woodpecker (*Dendrocopus syriaca*) are also common, along with other bird taxa like the rock partridge (*Alectoris graeca*), willow tit (*Parus montanus*) and wallcreeper (*Tichodroma mura-ria*). Other bird taxa frequent the aquatic and riparian ecosystems

either permanently or seasonally, such as: the white-throated dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*), white stork (*Ciconia ciconia*), black stork (*Ciconia nigra*), little egret (*Egretta garzetta*), black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) and pygmy cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*).

Eleven amphibians have been recorded in the area. Three important amphibian taxa include the salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*) and alpine newt (*Triturus alpestris*) and common toad (*Bufo bufo*). Of the twenty reptiles recorded, the margined tortoise (*Testudo marginata*), Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) and European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) are notable. Lastly, of the area's eleven fish species, *Oxy- emacheilus pindus* is endemic to the rivers of Konitsa. Other commoner taxa such as the brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), chub (*Leuciscus cephalus*), common nase (*Chondrostoma nasus*) and *Barbus peloponnesius*, attract amateur fishermen.



Common European toad
(*Bufo bufo*)



Brown trout (Salmo trutta)
in Voidomatis river

The wider area of Konitsa is perhaps the richest area of Greece for insect biodiversity as it hosts 141 butterfly taxa and 69 orthoptera. Twenty-five of these butterfly taxa are protected and catch the eye of every nature lover as they can only be observed in a few European sites. These protected taxa include the European endemic Grecian copper (*Lycaena ottomana*) whose distribution is limited to Greece, Albania and Turkey. Other taxa encountered are *Pseudophilotes vicrama* and *Thymelius acteon* which although not European endemics, are regarded as indicator species of protected ecosystems due to their reduced population sizes. At higher altitudes (over 1300m) for sure the visitor will have the opportunity to admire the impressive mountain (*Parnassius apollo*) and clouded apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*) with their characteristic marks which position the male on the repro-

ductive organs of the female thus preventing any future contact.

Of the orthoptera, species rarely found in Greece have been observed in the area of Konitsa. These species include *Tettigonia cantans*, *Pholidoptera fallax* and the cricket *Saga hellenica* – the largest insect in Europe (45-80mm in length).

The **Balkan chamois** (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) is one of the most rare mammal species of Greece. Few hundred individuals of this species live scattered in small isolated populations in less than 15 remote mountains all over the mainland. They love their birthplace and they don't use to move from one mountain to the other. Females, yearlings and kids form small flocks where the triptych grand mother, mother, kid plays an important role in their social life. Males live alone or in small bachelor groups,



Mountain Apollo (Parnassius apollo)

except the breeding period. Then, in autumn, they approach the female herds and conflict each other in order to dominate land and females. Mothers give birth to one kid every May. During the summertime they prefer the shady locations at the higher altitude zone of the mountains (1500m- 2650m), while in winter they move to sunny forested areas in the medium altitude zone (800m-1500m). Rocky places with steep slopes, cliffs and screes are essential element of their habitat as they offer protection against predators and poachers.

In the mountains of the wider area of Konitsa (Tymfi & Aoos gorge, Trapezitsa, Smolikas, Grammos) lives almost half of the

total population in national level. Although it is a strict protected species, illegal hunting from experienced and skilful poachers constitutes a constantly and serious threat.



Apart from the breeding period in autumn, male Balkan chamois live solitary

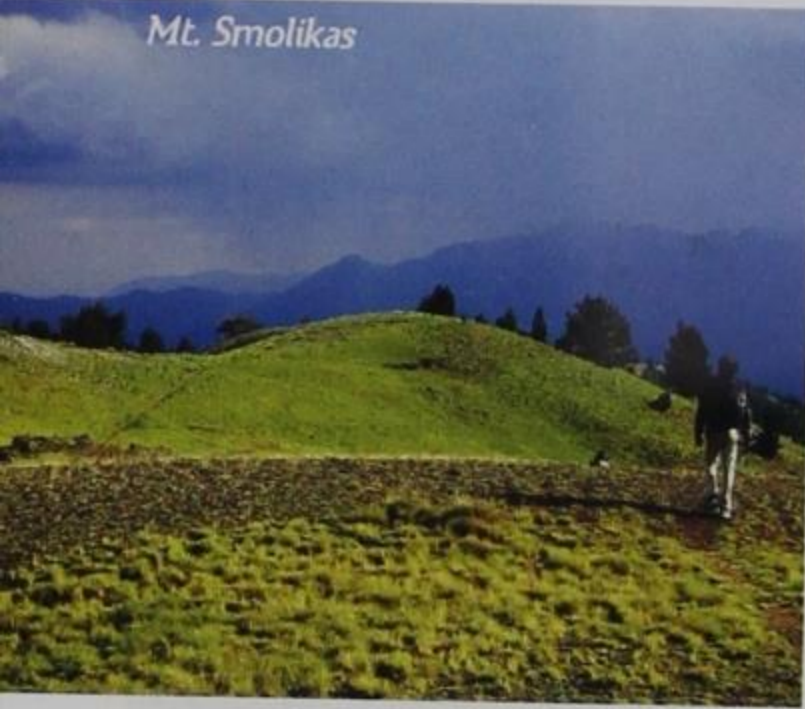


Female Balkan chamois lives in groups together with the kids and the yearlings

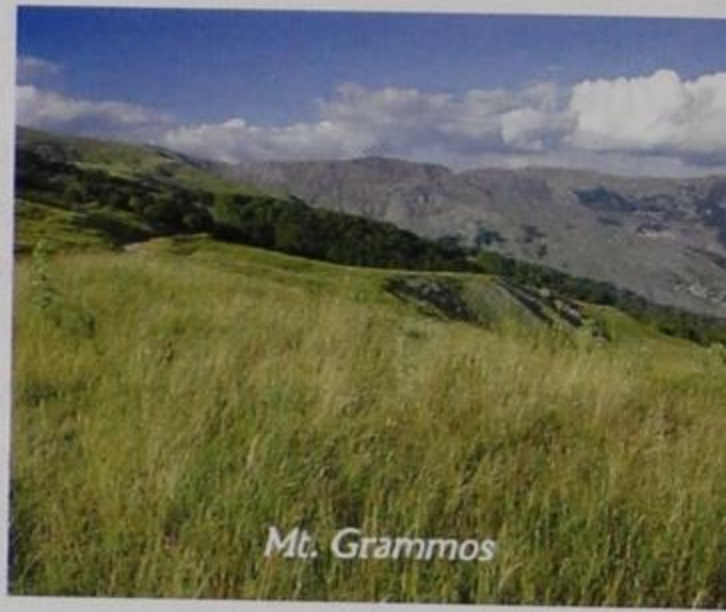
Sub-alpine and alpine grasslands

Sub-alpine and alpine grasslands comprising many herbaceous plants and small thorny shrubs grow above the tree-line at the highest mountain altitudes

Mt. Smolikas



Mt. Grammos



(over 1800m) on Mts Grammos, Smolikas, Tymfi, Vassilitsa and Nemertsika. These areas are covered with snow from late autumn to mid-Spring and do not favour tree growth. However, on

some of these mountains in summer rare bird species can be spotted such as the shore lark (*Eremophilla alpestris*), snow finch (*Montifringilla nivalis*), alpine accentor (*Prunella collaris*), rock partridge (*Alectoris graeca*), pipits (*Anthus sp.*). Each mountain is also territory for one pair of golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) that nest in the adjacent gorges. On Mts Grammos, Tymfi and Nemertsika, griffon vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) were seen quite frequently searching for carcasses of dead



Mt. Grammos

sheep and goat. Unfortunately, their presence in the area is now rare. Until recently, each of the area's mountains also hosted at least one pair of Europe's rarest vulture, the Lammergeier or bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*).

**Sheer mountain slopes,
cliffs and gorges**

High cliffs and sheer slopes are undoubtedly characteristic landscape of Tymfi and Trapezitsa's mountain massifs, and the most dramatic examples of these can be seen within the vast Aaos Gorge situated between these two mountains. Smaller cliffs and less sheer mountain slopes however can be seen in all the mountains in the wider area of Konitsa. For example, characteristic rocky formations exist NW of the peaks of Mt. Smolikas where Vathylakkos Gorge starts, and to the south at Alogotopos (Tsouma Kalioro). Characteristic sheer mountain



Crag martin (Ptyonoprogne rupestris)

slopes are also present on Mt. Grammos on the peaks of Pano Arrena and Kato Arrena, and the location Skotadi, close to Plikati village.

Sheer mountain slopes do not always lack vegetation. Grasses, small shrubs and even trees can be found growing on small ledges formed between the vertical rocks. At lower altitudes the holm oak, in tree or shrub form, often occupies these slopes, while at altitudes over 1500m, the Balkan pine manages to survive in these



*The northern cliffs of Mt. Tymfi as
seen from Mt. Smolikas*

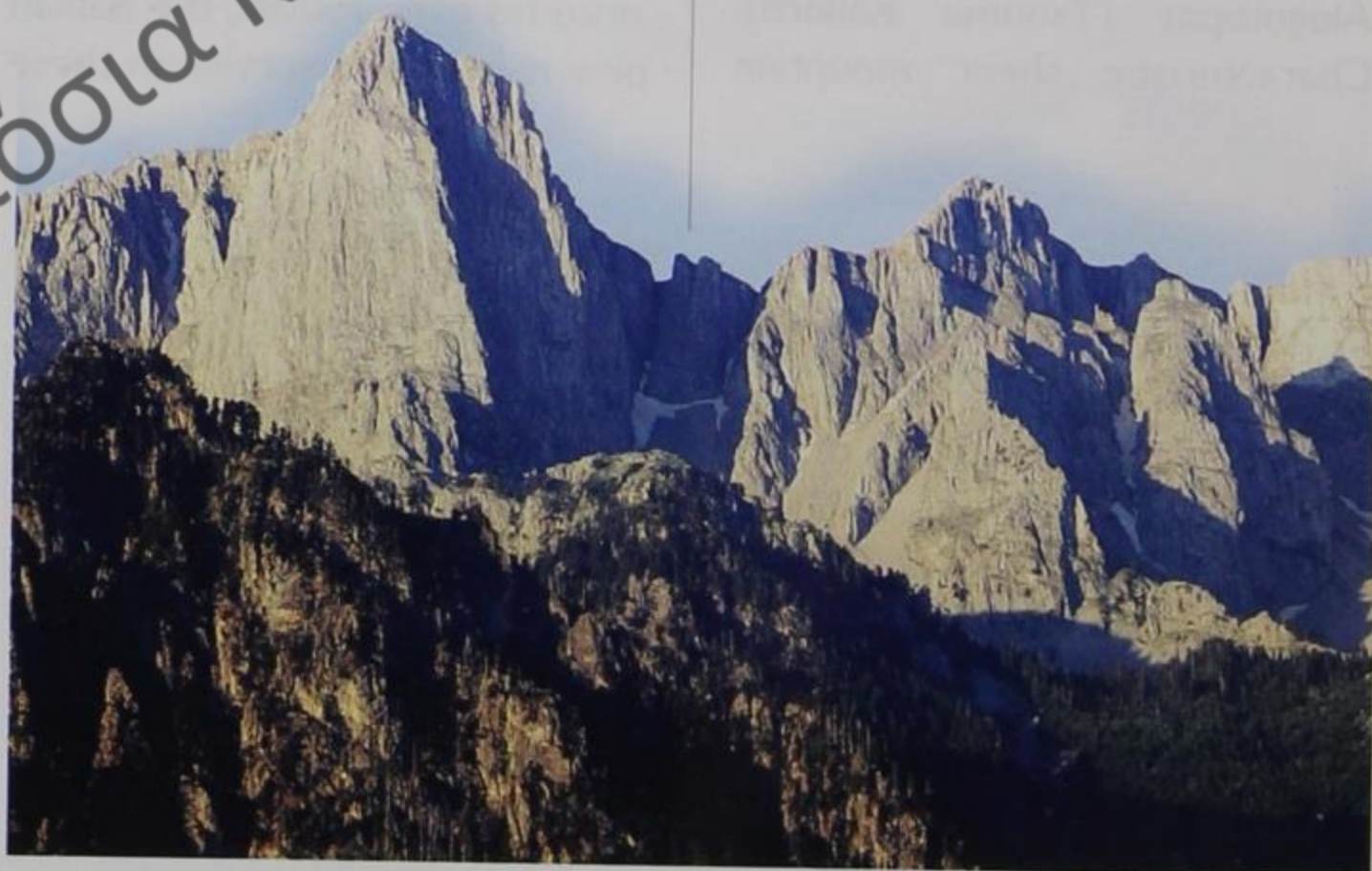
hard conditions.

In these areas we can see various bird species that are specially adapted to live here. The wallcreeper (*Tichodroma muraria*), a rare and impressive bird coloured red, grey and black, can climb the sheer mountain slopes with great dexterity, constantly fluttering its wide wings like a butterfly. The restless crag martin (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*) builds its nest in rock hollows sheltered from rain. The two chough species, alpine chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*) and red-billed chough (*P. pyrrhocorax*) distinguished by their different coloured bills (yellow and red, respectively), fly in large flocks and roost on the vertical rocks. Additionally, almost all the area's birds of prey nest in these ecosystems (golden eagles, peregrines, kestrels, Egyptian vultures). Finally, the scarce herds



Balkan chamois crossing a scree on Mt. Tymfi

of chamois seek summer refuge on these steep, shady mountain slopes, protected from both wolves and poachers. When winter sets in, the chamois leave the high altitudes and descend to sunnier lower slopes where they feed in the forested gorges. Some of the largest Greek populations of this animal, approximately half of the total national population, are found in the wider area of Konitsa.



Gamila (2497m) is the highest peak of Mt. Tymfi

Mountain lakes

The presence of small lakes at high altitudes on Konitsa's mountains is not common. Nevertheless, two of Greece's most famous alpine lakes are located here:



Drakolimni (Dragonlake) of Mt. Tymfi

Smolikas' Drakolimni and Tymfi's Drakolimni. Other smaller, shallower, temporary lakes are also found in areas close to springs, or in hollows where streams of melted snow water collect in spring



Skirtsia lake on Mt. Grammos

and early summer. Such small lakes are found on Mts. Smolikas (Epta Vryses), Tambouri, Vassilitsa and Grammos (Aetomilitsa). These lakes are of great importance for the feeding and reproduction of at least four of the area's ten known amphibian species: the alpine newt (*Triturus alpestris*), yellow-bellied toad (*Bombina variegata*), green toad (*Bufo viridis*), and great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Tempo-



Drakolimni (Dragonlake) of Mt. Smolikas



Alpine newts (*Triturus alpestris*)

rare lakes also function as watering holes for stock herds that graze on the mountains in summer, and generally give a special splendour at the harsh mountain landscape.

Rivers and riparian vegetation

The River Aaos and its large tributaries Voidomatis and Sarandaporos traverse the Konitsa area. All three rivers receive water from the area's multitude of small streams and other tributaries.



Voidomatis river

Throughout the length of the extensive Aaos valley, the River Aaos receives water as well from the southern slopes of Mt. Smolikas, from the streams of Briaza near Distrato, and from Aspropotamos and Mylopotamos near Armata and Pades villages. Besides, Konitsa valley receives water from the River Topolitsa which springs from Mt. Kleftis. Sarandaporos receives its water from the Rivers Gorgopotamos and Vourkopotamos as well as other smaller streams. However, the smaller catchment area of River Voidomatis and the permeable bedrock of Mt. Tymfi and the surrounding mountains do not allow the formation of secondary tributaries to R. Voidomatis. The only exception to this is the water originating from central Zagori via Vikos Gorge during periods of intense rainfall.

On the banks of Rivers Aaos and Voidomatis, and to a lesser degree Sarandaporos, oriental planes (*Platanus orientalis*), black poplar and aspen (*Populus nigra* & *P. tremula*), willows (*Salix sp.*) and common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) grow. The riparian vegetation of Voidomatis Gorge is of special interest, as is the riparian forest on the banks of Aaos and Voidomatis where the two rivers unite in Konitsa valley. This forest is one of the last remaining in Greece where one can find rare bird taxa, and for this reason the area has been proposed as an Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Eleven fish species live in the three rivers of the Aaos catchment basin. Of these, the best known are the brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), European chub (*Leuciscus cephalus*) and nose carp (*Chondrostoma nasus*), while others, such as *Oxynoemacheilus pindus*, are endemic to the R. Aaos.

Four species of water frogs (*Rana* sp.), two water snakes (*Natrix natrix* & *N. tessellata*), and the common toad (*Bufo bufo*) that approaches the water only during



Oxynoemacheilus pindus

its reproductive season, can be found living in the streams and small ponds by the riverbanks. Concerning the waterfowl, the rare white-throated dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*) impresses visitors by flitting over the water surface, and it is almost certain that in open areas outside the gorges one can spot the grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*) and white stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) that nests near



European chub (*Squalius cephalus*)

settlements on Konitsa plain. During migration seasons (spring and autumn) the visitor may be lucky and spot the little egret (*Egretta garzetta*), black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), the rare black stork (*Ciconia nigra*), osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), and various duck species.

Finally, the otter (*Lutra lutra*), one of the rarest mammals in Europe, can be found along the lengths of all the area's rivers wherever dense riparian vegetation exists and plentiful fish are available for food. The frequent otter sightings in Konitsa's rivers prove that the area's aquatic ecosystems are in excellent ecological condition.



Common nase (*Chondrostoma vardarense*)



Riparian forest of Aaos and Voidomatis rivers

4.2 Flora

More than 1200 plant taxa have been recorded in the wider area of Konitsa to date. The high floristic value of the area can be fully appreciated when one considers that this number corresponds to one sixth of the plant taxa recorded from the whole of Greece. Some of the reasons for this high plant biodiversity are the high altitudinal variation (375-2637m altitude) and the complex relief of the mountain ranges, as well as the prevailing specific environmental conditions.

The majority of the 1200 plant taxa do not possess common names as man only paid attention



Martagon lilly
(*Lilium martagon*)



Spring Gentian (Gentiana verna)

to a small number of them, usually those with some particular use for him or those that impressed him with their beautiful colours.

The most impressive flowers of Konitsa's mountains that interest the visitor are the wild lily species which only grow in forested areas and are easily recognizable by their size and bright colours. Konitsa's five lily taxa are: *Lilium candidum* (Madonna lily) a rare lily with white flowers usually found around settlements such as Profitis Ilias; the red-flowered *Lilium chalcedonicum* (scarlet martagon) and *Lilium heldreichii* (Heldreich's lily) found in forests such as those in Aaos Gorge and on Mt. Grammos; the yellow *Lilium albanicum* (Albanian lily) found on Mt. Smolikas and Vassilitsa, and lastly the Turk's cap



Phryns mammosa

lily (*Lilium martagon*) with its pink flowers which is found on Mt. Grammos and in Aaos Gorge. Other plants with beautiful flowers that can be found on the



Peony
(*Paeonia peregrina*)

mountains of Konitsa include: the white-flowered Poet's narcissus (*Narcissus poeticus*) that grows in forest clearings, the wild tulip (*Tulipa sylvestris* subsp. *australis*) with its yellow flowers that grows on sunny slopes in woods and meadows, the spring gentian (*Gentiana verna*) of the sub-alpine meadows with its deep blue flowers, the red *Sempervivum marmoreum* (houseleek), the yellow-flowered alpine Jovibarba heuffelli, and various saxifrages such as *Saxifraga spruneri* and *S. marginata* that grow in rock crevices at high altitudes.

Several of the area's plants have medicinal properties such as: mint (*Mentha longifolia*), common sage (*Salvia officinalis*), winter savory (*Satureja montana*), thyme (*Thymus leucospermus*), mountain tea (*Sideritis raeseri* and *S. montana*), hellebore (*Helleborus cyclophyllus*), spurge olive (*Daphne oleoides*), rosebay willow-herb (*Epilobium angustifolium*), hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), myrtle spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*), dwarf elder (*Sambucus ebulus*), white hellebore (*Veratrum album*), and many more.

The flora of mountains with ophiolitic substrate, such as Smolikas and Vassilitsa, is of special interest as many of the plants found here have adapted to survive on soils containing high concentrations of metals. Such taxa include:

Serbian phoenix flower
(*Ramonda serbica*)



Pinguicula crystallina ssp. *hirtiflora*



Early Spider Orchid
(*Ophrys sphegodes*)



Allysum smolikanum, *Allium sphaerocephalon*, *Viola albanica*, *Galium ophiolithicum*, *Cerastium smolikanum* and *Centaurea ptarmicaefolia*.

The mountains of Konitsa host many rare, endemic and protected taxa. The most interesting endemics include: *Centaurea tymphaea*, *C. pawlowskii*, *Sedum typhaeum*, *Bornmuellera tymphaea*, *Alyssum heldreichii*, *Silene pindicola*, *Onosma epirotica*, *Minuartia pseudosaxifraga*, *Valeriana crinii*, *Soldanella pindicola*, *Saxifraga biflora* subsp. *epirotica*, *Galium sacrorum* and *Hieracium dasycraspedum*.

Other noteworthy plants of the area are: *Ramonda serbica* which is found only in the gorges of Aaos, Vikos and Voidomatis, the insectivorous *Pinguicula crystallina* subsp. *hirtiflora* found near the streams of Smolikas and Vassilitsa, *Iris germanica* found growing on narrow ledges on the steep slopes of Mt. Tymfi, and *Solenanthus albanicum* on Mts. Grammos and Nemertsika. The rare plant taxa of Mt. Grammos include: *Fritillaria epirotica*, *Thesium vlachorum*, *Athamantha albanica*, *Dactylorhiza pindica* and *Ligusticum rhizomaticum*, and taxa of the genera *Petrothagia* (*P. saxifraga*) and *Ptilotrichum* (*P. cyclocarpum* ssp. *pindicum*) can be found growing on Mt. Nemertsika.



Lady Orchid (*Orchis purpurea*)

5. Protected Areas



Mt. Tymfi, The northern cliffs of Lapatos (or Lazaros) peak (2252m)

Ελλάδα Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσας

Typical landscape at the upper
altitude zone of the Aous
gorge. Roudoumi peak
(1722m) of Mt. Trapezitsa is
at the background

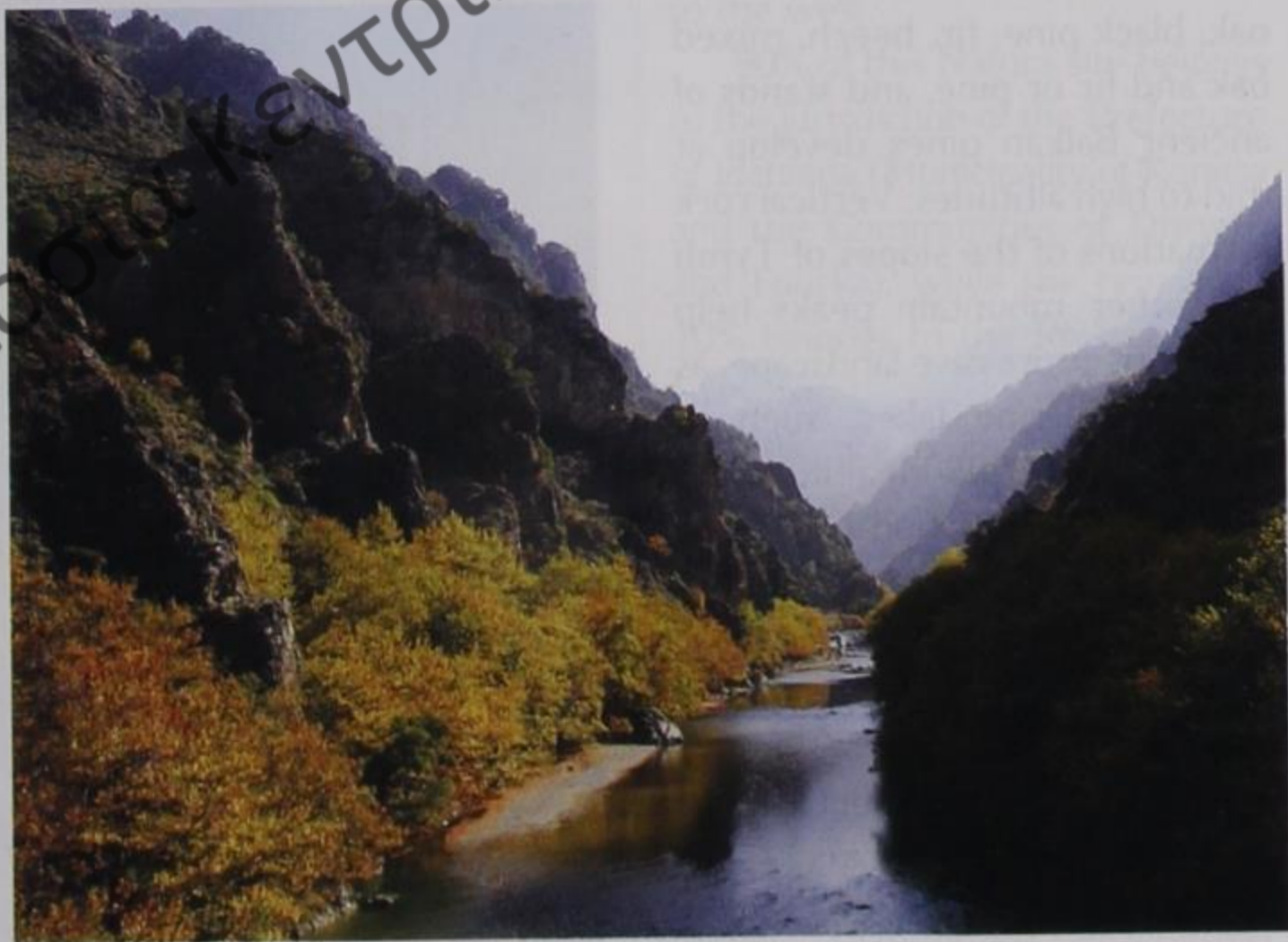
Four large areas within the wider region of Konitsa have been incorporated into the Natura 2000 European network of protected areas. These are: The National Park of Vikos-Aoos and the whole Tymfi mountain range, the Smolikas mountain massif, and the majority of Grammos and Vassilitsa mountain massif. Apart from the above four sites, the northern section of another Natura 2000 site, Mt. Dousko & Nemertsika, also geographically belongs to the Konitsa area. Thus, Konitsa has five Natura 2000 sites within its broader regions. A smaller area of Vikos-Aoos National Park, comprising Vikos Gorge and Voidomatis River, has been declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Three other localities have also been

proposed as AONB's: Aaos Gorge, Sarandaporos Narrows, and the confluence of Rivers Aaos and Voidomatis.

5.1 Natura 2000 sites

Vikos-Aoos National Park (Natura code GR 2130001) and Mt. Tymfi (GR 2130009)

The National Park of Vikos-Aoos was founded in 1973. The Park comprises the gorge of the River Aaos to the north, the gorges of Vikos and Voidomatis to the south, and a large expanse of the Tymfi mountain range in the centre. The park covers a surface area of 13,000 hectares, of which 3,400 ha constitute the core zone (Vikos and Voidomatis Gorges), and 9,600 ha the peripheral zone (Mt. Tymfi and Aaos Gorge). The



Aaos gorge

southern region of the Park (Vikos Gorge and Voidomatis River) has been declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the Aaos Gorge to the north is a proposed AONB.

The Park is shared between the Municipalities of Konitsa, Central Zagori, Tymfi, and the Community of Papingo. The western region of the Park belongs to the jurisdiction of Konitsa forest inspection service and the eastern region to the Ioannina forest inspection service.

The Park contains ecosystems ranging from Mediterranean in the lower, warmer and drier altitudinal ranges, such as the Aaos and Voidomatis gorges, to sub-alpine meadows at higher altitudes. At these higher altitudes, climatic conditions are especially adverse. Excellent ecosystems of oak, black pine, fir, beech, mixed oak and fir or pine, and stands of ancient Balkan pines develop at mid to high altitudes. Vertical rock formations of the slopes of Tymfi and other mountain peaks help create an impressive landscape, as do small alpine lakes, such as Drakolimni at 2,050m altitude.

Vikos-Aaos National Park is characterized by the presence of beautiful scenery, and a large variety of ecosystems, flora and fauna (chamois, brown bear, wolf, birds of prey, woodpeckers, trout, alpine newt). Some of the most impressive traditional settlements of Konitsa (Ano Kleidonia) and Zagori (Papingo,

Aristi, Vikos, Monodendri) are found in and around the Park.

The western and northern



Virgin forests of Black or Balkan pine, fir and beech exist at the steep slopes of the Aaos gorge. Thickets of rare vegetation formations, such as Mountain hazel and Maples can be found here as well.

sections of the National Park are situated in the wider area of Konitsa, especially Konitsa Muni-

cipality (Konitsa, Kleidonia, Kallithea, Pigi, Elefthero), located on the western slopes of Mt. Tymfi, Trapezitsa Aaos and Voidomatis Gorges. The entire Tymfi mountain range and its surrounding gorges (Aaos, Vikos, Voidomatis) was recently incorporated as a single site in the Natura 2000 network. Vikos-Aaos National Park and Mt. Tymfi were included into the larger National Park of Northern Pindos in 2005.

Mt. Smolikas (GR 2130002)

This Natura 2000 site comprises almost all the Smolikas mountain range (19,975 ha) stretching from River Kerasovirikos and Vouzion summit to the north, the River Aaos to the south, the Samariniotiko stream to the east, and Kleftis summit (1,846 m) to the west.

90% of this Natura site belongs to the jurisdiction of the Prefecture of Ioannina (Municipality of Konitsa and the Communities of Distrato and Fourka), while the remaining 10% belongs to the Prefecture of Grevena.

The site is characterized by sub-alpine meadows, extensive black pine forests, smaller fir forests, forests and stands of Balkan pine in excellent condition, and beech forests. At lower altitudes, oak forests of various species are found and these are gradually encroaching and overtaking abandoned agricultural





Mt. Smolikas, the highest peak (2637m)

fields. The site has many excellent habitats for rare animal species such as brown bear, roe deer, wild boar, chamois and birds of prey. Mt. Smolikas was incorporated into the National Park of Northern Pindos in 2005.

Mt. Grammos (GR 1320002)

The section of Mt. Grammos included in the Natura 2000 network has a total area of 34,468 ha

shared between the Prefectures of Ioannina and Kastoria. 45% of the site belongs to the Prefecture of Ioannina and covers parts of the wider area of Konitsa (Mastorochochia Municipality and Aetomilitsa Community). Generally, this site includes the high mountain summits of Grammos (2,520m), Perifano (2,446m), Kiafa (2,392m), Epáno Arrena (2,192m), Kato Arrena (2,073m), and the catchment basins of Aetomilitsa, Kefalochori and Gorgopotamos streams.

At higher altitudes sub-alpine meadows dominate, followed by extensive conifer forests (black pine and fir) at mid altitudes. Oak forests surround the settlements of the lower altitudes. This Natura 2000 site contains habitats for wild animals such as the chamois, brown bear and golden eagle. A special environ-



Mt Grammos, Landscape close to Plikati village

mental study is currently (2008) being conducted for the site, and it is probable that this study will lead to the designation of the area as protected (i.e. National Park).

Mt. Vassilitsa (GR 1310001)

This site contains Mt. Vassilitsa (2,249m) and stretches from the villages of Avdella and Smixi to the east, Distrato to the west, and the River Aaos to the south. The site has a total surface area of 8,012 ha, of which 60% falls under the jurisdiction of the Prefecture of Grevena and 40% the Prefecture of Ioannina (mostly Distrato Community). The geological substrate comprises flysch and ophiolites. The site is located in the centre of the mountainous zone connecting the National Park of Valia Kalda with Mt. Smolikas. The site's vegetation consists of sub-alpine meadows, conifer forests (mainly black pine but with sparse forests and stands of Balkan pine), and beech forests. The



Mt. Vassilitsa, a sub alpine pond at 1550m covered by ice and snow in winter

site contains habitats for the brown bear and other rare animals. Vassilitsa was incorporated into the National Park of Northern Pindos in 2005.

Mts Dousko, Nemertsika and the area of Pogoni (GR 1310010)

This site contains Mts Dousko and Nemertsika (2,209m) located SW of the wider area of Konitsa. It also contains a large expanse of land in the neighbouring area of Pogoni. The site covers 17,883 ha but only a small portion of this belongs to the



Mt. Nemertsika, the border line between Greece and Albania

area of Konitsa (Municipality of Konitsa). The geological substrate comprises limestone and flysch. Beautiful forests of oak, hornbeams, and mixed stands of maple and hickory dominate, while sub-alpine meadows are seen at higher altitudes. The site's rock formations are very impressive. Many bird taxa frequent the area, especially birds of prey such as the golden eagle, Egyptian vulture, short-toed eagle and bicoloured hawk.

5.2 Areas of outstanding natural beauty

Riparian forest of Aaos & Voidomatis

This beautiful riparian forest is a remnant of the area's historic riparian forests, and comprises

ancient plane trees, willows, aspens and alders. The ecosystem is in excellent ecological condition and hosts important and rare vegetation types in addition to many rare, protected and endemic plants and animals. This area has been proposed as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty due to its aesthetics and uniqueness.

Sarandaporos Narrows

The Sarandaporos Narrows are almost 1km in length and is located between the villages of Eksochi, Pyksaria and Kavasila on the Greek-Albanian border. The site has vertical cliffs over 150m high and is characterized by excellent riparian and Mediterranean vegetation.



The virgin riparian forest at the plain of Konitsa, close to the Aaos and Voidomatis confluence



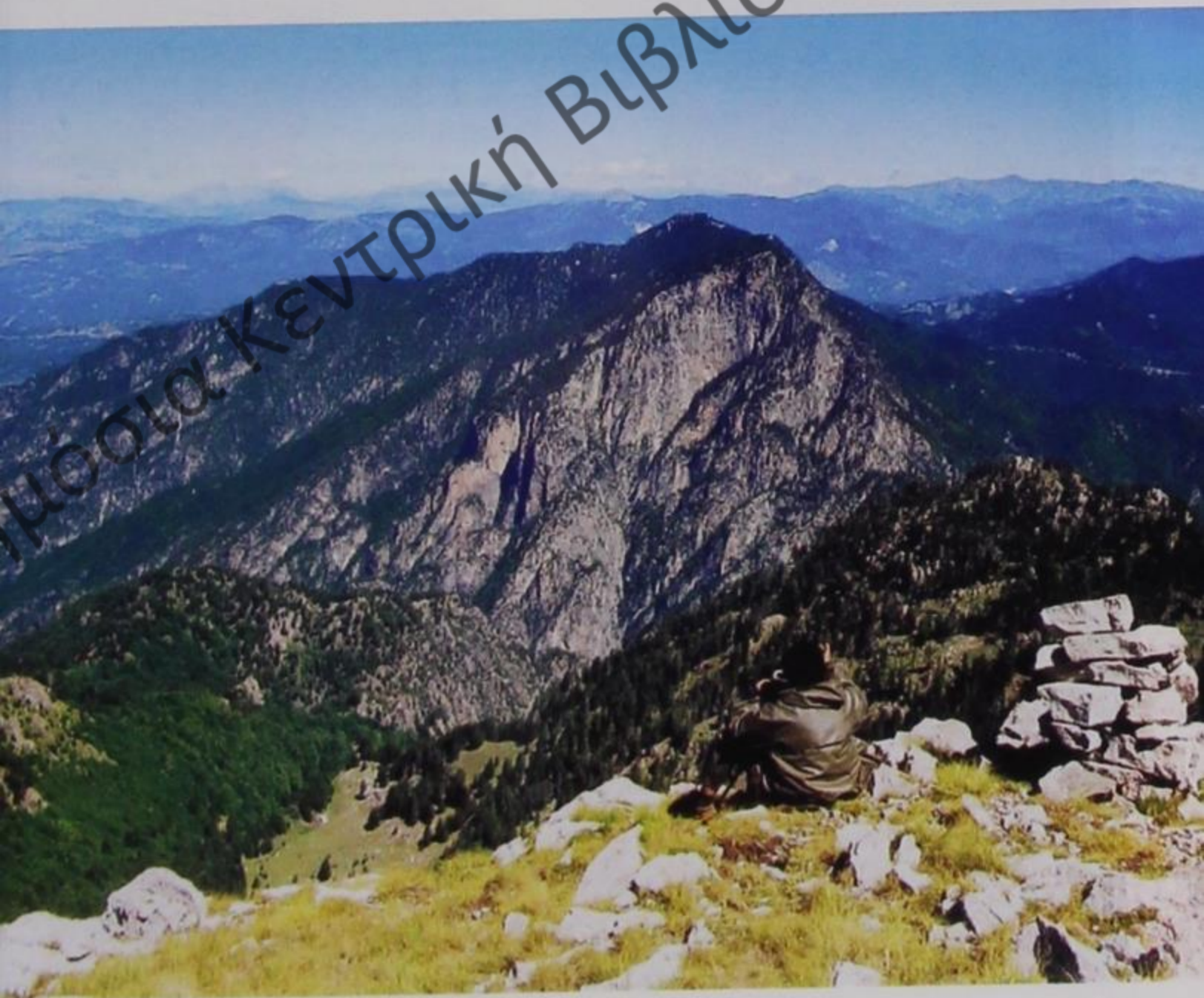
Sarandaporos Narrows

5.3 Northern Pindos National Park

The Northern Pindos National Park covers the majority of the

North Pindos mountain range and has a total surface area of 2000km². The Park was established in 2005 when the two existing National Parks of Vikos-Aoos and Pindos (Valia Kalda) were merged. Apart from the protected areas of Vikos-Aoos and Valia Kalda, the National Park of Northern Pindos comprises another seven Natura 2000 sites, some of which are found in the area of Konitsa.

The park was established with the aim of protecting and effectively managing the ecosystems, habitats, wild fauna and flora of the area, in combination with the mild



Mt. Trapezitsa and Aoos gorge as seen from Limeria Klefton location on Mt. Tymfi

ALBANIA

Agia Paraskevi

Ganadio
Pournia
Monastiri
Molista
Nikanoras
Pigi

Drakolimni
MT. SMOLIKAS

KONITSA

Elefthero
Palioselli
Pades
Armata

Kallithea
Klidonia
Ano Klidonia
Vikos-Aoos National Forest
Aaos river
Vrisochori
Iliochoiri
Aaos gorge
Laista

PAPIGO

Mt. TIMFI

Mesovouni
Agios Minas
Voldomatis river
Vikos
Vikos gorge
Aristi

TSEPELOVO

Elafotopos
Vradeto
Kapesovo
Koukkouli
Skamneli
Negades
Elatoxori
Makrino

ASPRAGGELI

Kato Pedina
Ano Pedina
Vitsa
Dilofo
Kipi
Fragades
Dollant
Kastanonas

Leptokaria

Metamorfosi

Manassis
Dipotamo
Anthrakitis

IOANNINA

Dikorfo
Kaloutas
Kavallari
Karyes
Miliotades
Kriovrisi
Itea

Arahtos river

ΠΡΕΦΕΚΤΗΡΙΑ ΚΟΝΙΤΣΑΣ
ΠΡΕΦΕΚΤΗΡΙΑ ΤΣΕΠΕΛΟΥ
ΠΡΕΦΕΚΤΗΡΙΑ ΑΣΠΡΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΥ
ΠΡΕΦΕΚΤΗΡΙΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΙΝΩΝ



The Northern Pindos National Park and the four protected zones



Mt. Tymfi, Gamila (2497m) and Ploskos (2377m) summits as seen from Lapatos (or Lazaros) peak

development of the local communities found within its boundaries. The National Park contains areas belonging to the Prefectures of Ioannina and Grevena. The Park's large moun-

tains include: Smolikas, Kleftis, Vassilitsa (including Tsourgiakas and Orliakas), Lyngos and the Valia Kalda area, Tymfi (including the Gorges of Vikos, Voidomatis and Aaos), Trapezitsa, Mitsikeli,



Mt. Smolikas, subalpine meadows with sparse Balkan pines at the upper altitude zone

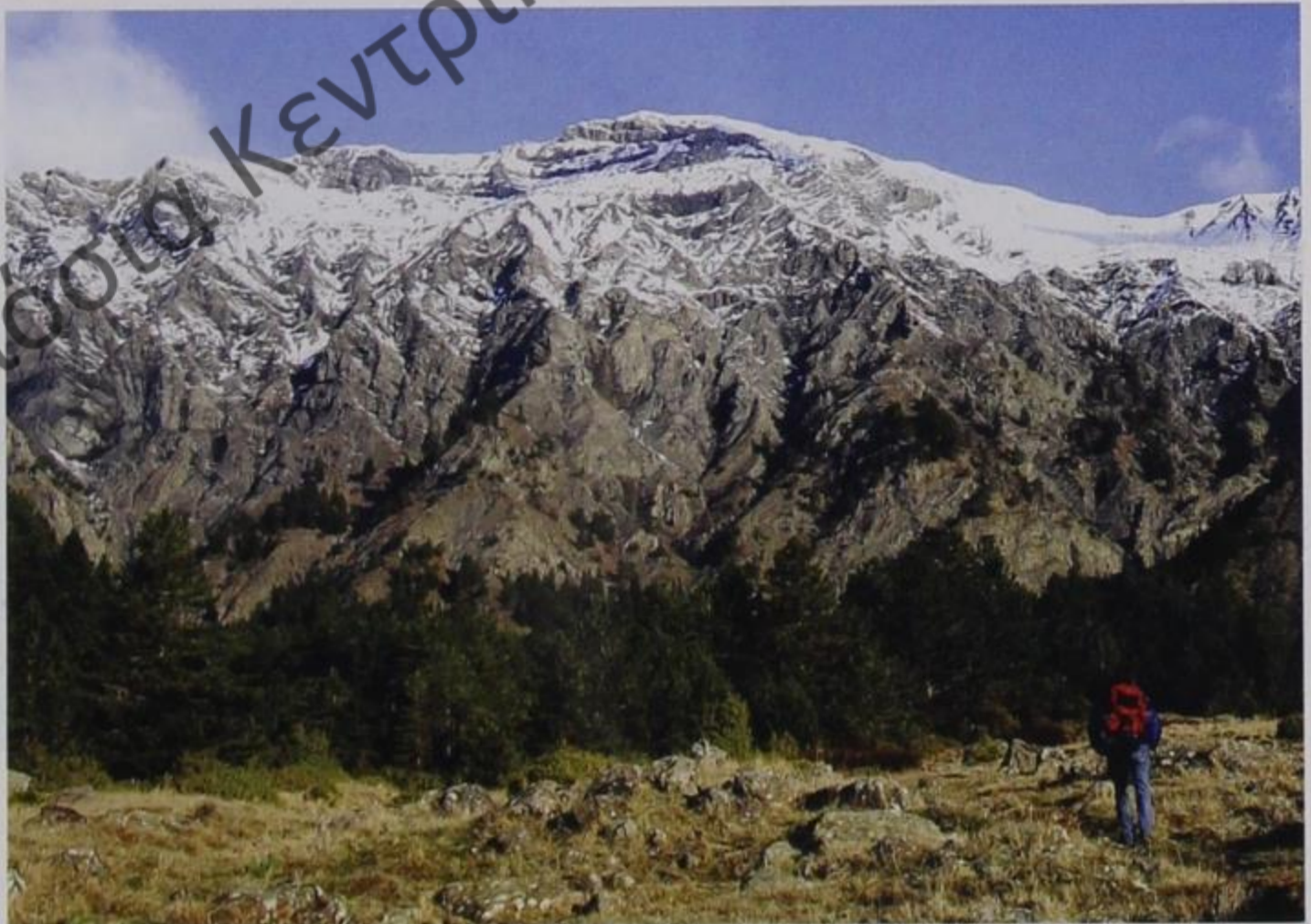
and the mountains of central and eastern Zagori. The entire south-eastern division of the wider area of Konitsa (Smolikas, Vassilitsa, Trapezitsa, Tymfi, Voidomatis Gorge, Aaos Gorge and valley), is included in the National Park of Northern Pindos. This part of the National Park belongs to Konitsa Municipality and Distrato community.

The National Park comprises four distinct graded protection zones: Nature Protection zone, Habitat and Species Preservation zone, main National Park zone, and the peripheral zone. In the wider area of Konitsa, the Aaos and Voidomatis Gorges are within the Nature Protection zone, while the Habitat and Species Preservation zone comprises all the other areas of Tymfi mountain

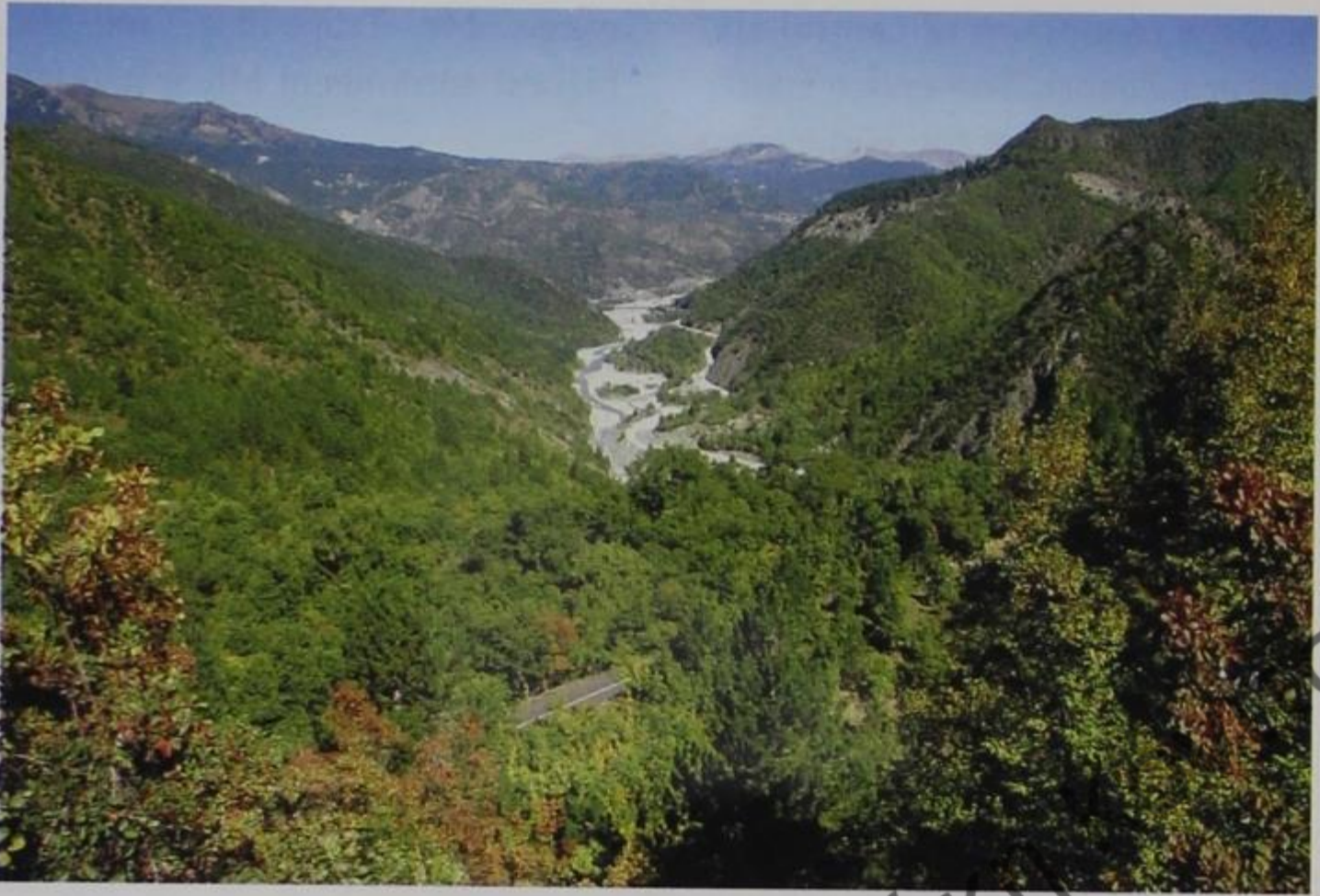
range, Mt. Trapezitsa, and the highest summits of Mt. Smolikas.

5.4 Wildlife Reserves

contains some areas that have been designated as Wildlife Reserves or areas where hunting is temporarily banned. Generally speaking, although human activity could be significantly reduced within these areas and emphasis given to the protection of wild animals using more scientific methodologies, the only usual restrictions applied here are those concerning hunting. Wildlife Reserves could be incorporated into other protected areas such as National Parks and Natura 2000 sites, since the designation of these protection categories does not necessarily eliminate hunting.



Mt. Grammos, Precipitous rocky formations close to Plikati village



Oak and Black pine forests at Sarandaporos valley

In Konitsa, wildlife reserves and hunting restriction zones exist in Aaos Gorge, on Mt. Tymfi, Mt. Trapezitsa, and the area south of Mt. Smolikas between the villages of Pades and Armata. Other

wildlife reserves are also found in the Sarandaporos valley between Pyrgos and Pysogianni villages, and on Mt. Grammos near Plikati village and the forests and plateau of Aetomilitsa.



Mt. Dousko, ancient forests surround a country chapel dedicated to Virgin Mary (Panagia Aidonolalousa) close to Aidonochori village

6. Exploring the area



Exploring Mt. Grammos at the beginning of spring.

Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσας

1st Trail: Konitsa and the surrounding villages

Pigi - Kallithea - Kleidonia - Iliorachi - Kavasila - Mazi - Aetopetra





Entrance of a mansion in Upper Konitsa

The town of Konitsa

lies beneath the impressive summits of Tymfi mountain range at altitudes of 400-800m, 64km from Ioannina city. It is built in amphitheatre style on the foothills of Mt. Trapezitsa, whose densely forested eastern summits reach an altitude of 2022m. To the north of the town stands Profitis Ilias summit (1071m), the balcony of North Pindos, and to the south the majestic Gorge of the River Aeos dominates the landscape together with the steep slopes of Mt. Tymfi, the highest of these, close to Konitsa, is Lazaros summit (2254m). The plain of Konitsa stretches far to the west until it reaches the foothills of Mt. Nemertsika and the

Greek-Albanian border. Konitsa plain is traversed by the Rivers Aeos and Voidomatis that both converge with the area's third largest river of Sarandaporos on the country's border line.

There are many theories as to the origin of Konitsa's name. According to tradition, the town of Konitsa is built on the site of ancient Konissos. However, the Epirot historian P. Aravantinos suggested that the name originates from a corrupted name-form of the ancient continental city of Knossos. Pouqueville, the French traveller and envoy at the time of Ali Pasa, believed the name to derive from the Slavic Konitza, namely "land of horses". Most



Konitsa at the sunset



A christian lord in Upper Konitsa, 1870

modern authors and historians agree with the latter origin, connecting Konitsa and her then renowned annual animal trade fair, as a place of horse trading (horse bazaar). Other local legends speak of a lord 'Koni' who founded the castle, remains of which can be seen today near the church of St. Barbara to the east of the town.

Konitsa settlement was formed before 1000AD. It was first known as a farm animal trading settlement and an important stop in the crossing from modern Albania to Macedonia and Epirus. The original location of the modern town was in Epano (upper) Konitsa (Roumani machalas quarter), but it later expanded to Kato (lower) Konitsa



Mucisians and dancers during a local festival in Upper Konitsa, 1906

as the town's bazaar and trade fair developed.

The original structure of the bazaar area dates to the end of the Byzantine period and coincides with the end of the Despotate of Epirus. The first written reference to the town of Konitsa is found in "Ioannina Chronicles". The town was important during the period of the Ottoman Empire due to its geographical position. For centuries, Konitsa was the major administrative, economic, commercial and cultural centre of the area and connected all the villages of the wider region.

The town became well-known in Greece due to the "Battle of Konitsa" that took place at Christmas 1947 between the Left Democratic Army, who held the town under siege, and the Right National Army. A small section of the town was destroyed during the battle but fortunately, the town did not suffer serious damage and many of its monuments were saved. Fifty of the most representative architecturally mansions were later declared as listed buildings by the Ministry of Environment and Public Works.

The 1996 earthquakes caused many problems and destroyed many of Konitsa's buildings. Some old mansions still stand in Epano



*A Muslim lord with his guards
in Upper Konitsa, 1880*

Konitsa and show the visitor how the town once was. Today, Konitsa is a modern town with many retailers, a traditional market, hotels, tavernas, coffee houses, shops selling local products and crafts, etc. The town attracts many travellers, mountaineers, hikers, lovers of water sports (kayak, rafting) and paragliding, and many other people who visit Konitsa to rest and admire her monuments and the natural beauty of the surrounding district.

When staying in the Konitsa area you would be well advised to visit some of its impressive monuments.

Epano (Upper) Konitsa

While wandering the alleys of Upper Konitsa, the visitor gains an idea of the local architecture and the layout of the old town. Fortressed houses once belonging to rich Muslims and sun-washed houses with beautiful gardens that once belonged to the town's richest Christians, are laid out



amphitheatrically from the cathedral of St. Nicolas at upper point of the town to the central square in the town centre. Of the fifty listed buildings the following stand out: Hussebey (home of Hussein Sisko), Bekiareiko (home of Bekiaris), Floreiko (home of H. Floros family), Papdiamantis, Schoinia, Kousios, Vasadis, and Housios mansions.



Mansion of Hussein Bey Sisko (Hussebey) (1845)

The Muslim family Sisko was one of the foremost families in Konitsa and probably originated from Islamized Christians. Members of this family held high positions during the last period of the Ottoman Empire. Their mansion is situated in Upper Konitsa and was built in 1845. It is Konitsa's largest listed building and has a tall square tower in its eastern part that was used for protection. The main rooms of the mansion all contained elaborate decorative wood carvings that were carved by local wood carvers. Unfortunately, only a few examples of these remain in the mansion today. The main residence is surrounded by very high protective walls with elaborately decorated arched entrances. At the end of the last century the building was used as a



Hussein Bey (Hussebey) Sisko's estate
in Upper Konitsa

secondary school. Since then it was abandoned and has suffered from damage and neglect, made worse by the earthquakes of 1996.

Hamko's Estate (Zeinel Bey) (18th-19th Century)

The Hamkos estate is a complex group of buildings dating from the 18th-19th centuries. The estate belonged to Zeinel Bey, the father of Ali Pasha's mother, Hamko. Ali Pasha was the most powerful ruler of west Greece during the first decades of the 18th century. The buildings, of which few remain today, were surrounded by an enclosure with crenellations and secret entrances. The tower-like structure of the estate and sturdy building construction showed the wealth and strength of this family, which was the most important Muslim family in Konitsa. They also owned properties and estates in Thessaly.



The defensive tower of Zeinel bey's estate
(Hamko's house) in Upper Konitsa



The statue of patriarch Athinagoras 1st at the courtyard of St. Nicholas cathedral in Upper Konitsa

Today, the visitor to Upper Konitsa can only see the remains of the estate: the impressive arched entrance, the elevated tower, some outhouses, and sections of the enclosure.

Church of St. Nicholas

The church of St. Nicholas is the parish church of Upper Konitsa. It

dates from 1842 and was built on the site of an older church built in 1612. The church has elaborate masonry and is rectangular in shape. The interior of the church is divided into three sections each containing both small and large domes. There are also two living quarters at different levels. The iconostasis is wood carved and has eight large and thirty small icons in two rows, made during and after 1850.

Chapel of Neo Martyr St. George of Ioannina

This is a private chapel found within a residence of Upper Konitsa. The residence was the home of the monk Chrysanthos Lainas (c. 1800-1880) who witnessed the martyrdom of Neo Martyr St. George firsthand. Even



The gate of the house where a chapel dedicated to Neomartyr St. George of Ioannina is hosted



*One of the main entrances,
ornate with arches and
engraved stones, at Zeinel
Bey's estate in Upper
Konitsa*

today the locals speak respectfully about the generous charity work of monk Lainas who helped all the needy, regardless of their religion. Some years after his death, his cell was transformed into a chapel storing 120 icons, all typical work of Chioniadites hagiographers. Among these, two icons of the Neo Martyr St. George are especially noteworthy. They are unique in that they were constructed a few days after the saint's death and under the guidance of monk Lainas. The chapel celebrates the saint on 17th January.

Konitsa Cultural Centre

The cultural centre of Konitsa is housed in the Municipality's town hall. The centre is well-organized and contains a music hall, choir, radio station, cinema and ballet. The centre organizes scientific meetings and conferences with emphasis mostly on local history, tradition and art. The

Municipality of Konitsa has a fully-equipped conference room available for anyone who wishes to organize conferences or seminars.

Konitsa Library

Konitsa library is located in the new market site and contains 72,000 titles of which some date back to the 17th century. Books can be borrowed throughout the year.

Church of St. Kosmas the Aetolian

The church of St. Kosmas is situated in the centre of the town and was built in 1975. The church contains two chapels, one of which dedicated to St. George and the other to Neo Martyr St. John of Konitsa. The wood-carved iconostasis is the work of Konstantinos Skalistis from Gorgopotamos who is the descendant of a long line of professional wood carvers. St. Kosmas is celebrated on 24th August, with a traditional service attended by many people.



The Town hall of Konitsa



The Episcopate Sebastian's statue at the courtyard of the cathedral dedicated to St. Kosmas the Aetolian

Church of the Apostles

This church is found a few metres away from Suleiman mosque at the highest point of



A fresco, dated from 16th century, at the church of Holy Apostles in Lower Konitsa

Lakka quarter on the SE edge of the town. Until recently it was the parish church of Lower Konitsa. Its foundation date is unknown, but its last recorded renovation was undertaken in 1791. In the northern section of the church next to the chancel one can observe two layers of wall-paintings from different time periods, some older than the last-known renovation date. Some

icons of the iconostasis pre-date 1791 and they either originate from an older church or were brought here from elsewhere.



Church of Holy Apostles

Suleiman Mosque

This is the last standing of the two mosques that were once found in Konitsa town. It was built in 1540 in a pretty location on the edge of the town (Lakka quarter) next to the River Aaos. It is supposed to have been built by Sultan Suleiman the first (1520-1566). The mosque has been greatly damaged by neglect and the 1996 earthquake, but a hexagonal Islamic tomb and a two-



Sultan Souleiman's mosque and the nearby 'turbe' in Lower Konitsa



The photographic exhibition of the history of the Konitsa area

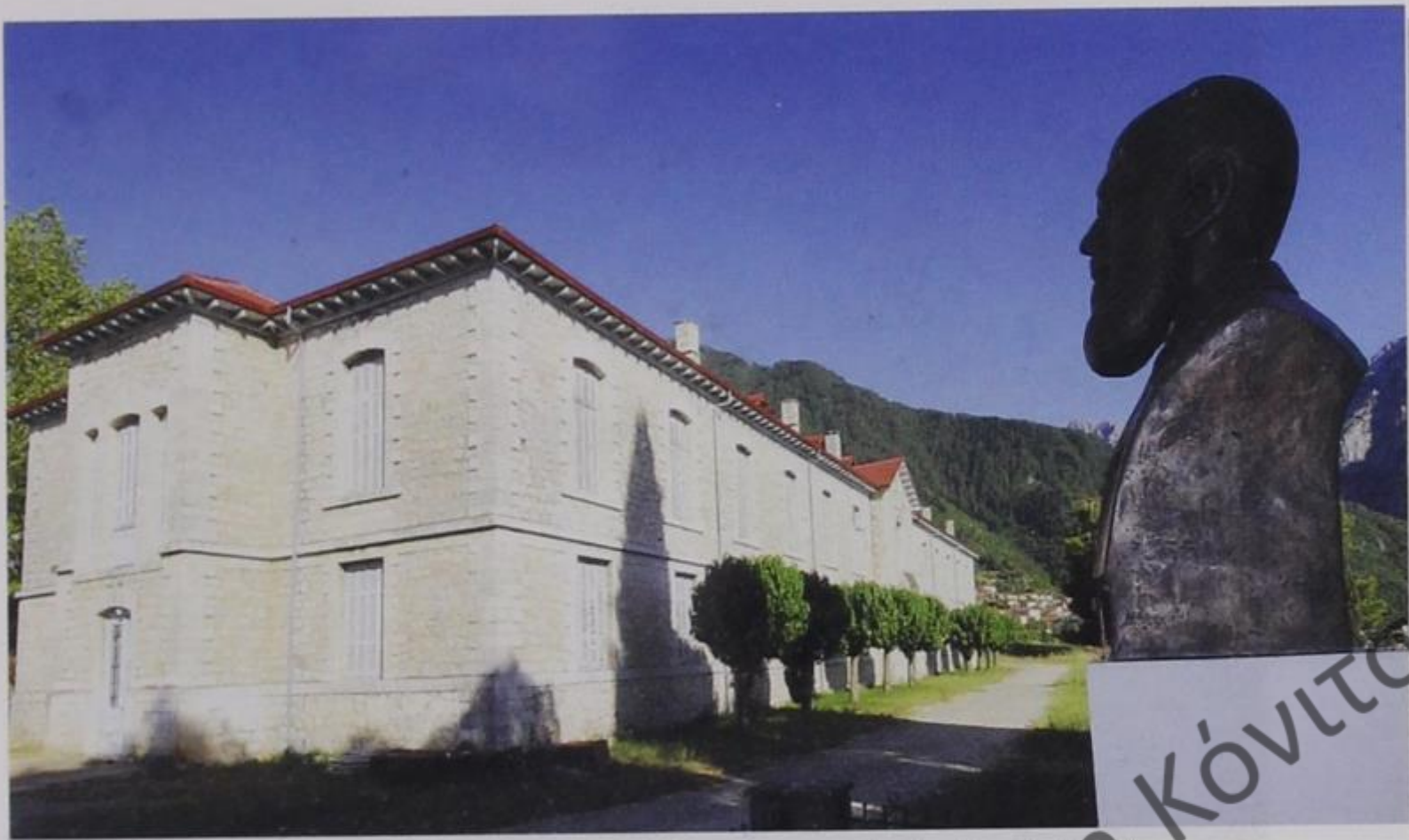
storey residence remain. The second mosque of Hussein Siah was built in c. 1500 by Sultan Vayiazit the second, and was located close to the central square on the site of the present church of St. Kosmas the Aetolian.

Photographic exhibition of the history of Konitsa

The photographic exhibition of Konitsa's monuments can be found in a renovated traditional building to the SE of the city close to the Aaos bridge and next to the



The old Muslim school in Lower Konitsa, where the photographic exhibition is hosted



The glance of the statue of Michael Anagnostopoulos is directed to the Anagnostopoulos Agricultural School, built by his donation in 1926

Suleiman Mosque. According to the Arabic inscription seen just to the left of the building's entrance, the structure was erected in 1869-70 and was designed to be used as a theological college. The building was established by Sheikh Zou-rambi who described the school as 'light of learning and knowledge'. Following the liberation of Konitsa in 1913, the building was used as a nursery school for many years. Today the building hosts the photograph exhibition and is used by the Ministry of Culture to promote the monuments and antiquities of Konitsa and its surrounding area. The exhibition covers a large time span of human presence in the area from 15,000BC to the end of the 19th century.

Anagnostopoulos Agricultural College

The college is located in the NW section of the city in the centre of an extensive farm that has now been planted with vineyards. It was built in 1925 financed in agreement with the will and mandate of the Zagorian benefactor Michael Anagnostopoulos (1838-1906). Anagnostopoulos was the director of the Perkins school for the deaf and dumb in Boston, USA, for many years. This impressive stone building has excellent architecture. The central building was connected with animal feeding units which were extremely modern for their time. The building was used as a college for many years and during this time employed novel European and American teaching



Activities at the Environmental Education Centre of Konitsa

methods. When the agricultural college closed, the buildings were used as both a technical school and a technical college.

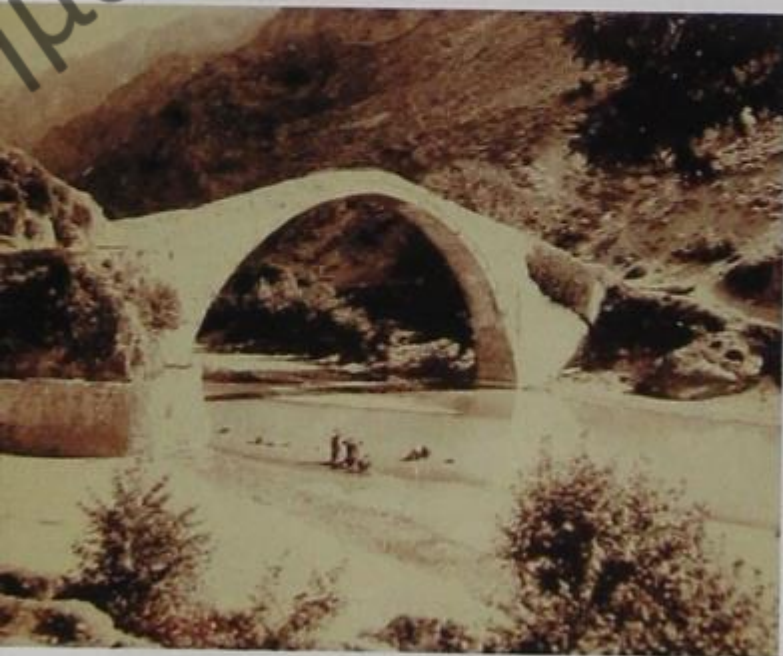
Environmental Education Centre of Konitsa

The centre is located in Lower Konitsa. It is owned by the Ministry of Education and was

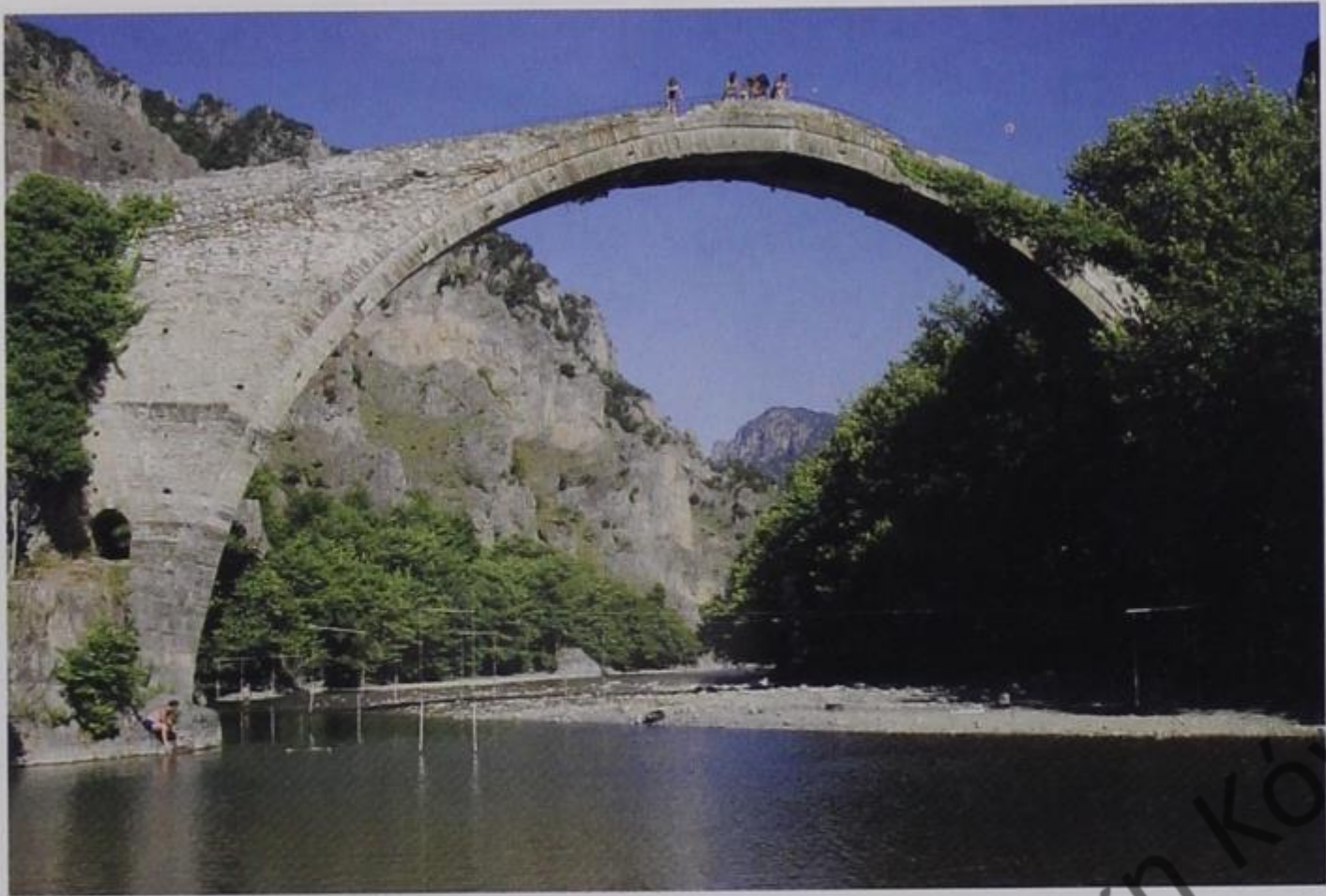
established in 1995 with the aim of promoting and developing environmental education and awareness in school pupils and teachers. The centre runs short courses and seminars on the nature and culture of the area (forests, water, protected areas, local architecture, etc).

Konitsa Bridge

The single-arched stone bridge of Konitsa was built over the River Aaos at the point where the Aaos Gorge gives way to the plain. The impressive bridge was built in 1870-71 by a group of fifty craftsmen under the guidance of the chief craftsman Ziogas Frontzos from Pirsogianni village. It was built using donations from all the town's inhabitants but mostly those of Ioannis Loulis who



Konitsa bridge on Aaos river at the beginning of 20th century



Konitsa bridge

donated almost half the total construction cost. A wooden bridge had been built at the same location in 1823 but it could not withstand the force of the river and collapsed shortly after. The present stone bridge is 40 metres long and 20 metres high and under its arch one can see a small bell that would chime when high

winds gusted from the Gorge to warn passengers of the danger.

Modern sculpture in Konitsa

In 1995 ten famous sculptors stayed in Konitsa for few days. Each one produced a piece of art during their stay. All these sculptures are now positioned within the town.



A card postal of Konitsa bridge at the end of 19th century

Wandering around the city

Konitsa Castle

The castle is found on the east side of the town, just above the pretty chapel of St. Barbara, on a naturally fortified rocky site. It is a mediaeval castle probably built over the remains of older walls that were later added during the years of the Ottoman Empire. It is said to have been built in the 6th Century BC by Justinian or in the early 14th Century by Sirianis Epikernis Palaiologos the sovereign of Epirus. Today the castle is in ruins. In some places one can see a few tiles and in others, slab-shaped rocks in horizontal layers separated by white mortar. However, the legends are still alive and speak of how the castle was captured by the Turks during an important local celebration. They also speak of secret passageways leading to

the river that provided a water supply to those trapped inside when the castle was under siege. The castle can be reached by less than one-hour hike from the centre of the town, and the view of the valley and Aaos Gorge below is superb.

Profitis Ilias

The balcony of North Pindos, the hill of Profitis Ilias (1071m) is reached by following the B-road out of Konitsa for about 2.5km. The hill can also be reached by scenic pathways but these are not yet signposted. This place offers the visitor the best view of all the mountains of North Pindos. To the south stands the impressive Tymfi mountain range with its steep Lazaros summit and Gamila peak (2497m) in the distance. To the east lie the forested slopes of Mt.



The chapel of Prophet Elias (Ailias)



*Konitsa city as seen from Prophet Elias (Ailias)
peak (1074m)*



Passengers on Konitsa bridge

Trapezitsa (2022m) and Kleftis (1847m) with the snow-capped summit of Smolikas (2637m) behind them. To the north one can see all the huge peaks of Mt. Grammos (2520m) and some of the Mastorochoria (craftsmen villages). Konitsa town lies to the southwest and all her characteristic monuments can be seen from this point. In addition Konitsa plain crossed by the meandering R. Aoos, and the steep slopes of Mt. Nemertsika (2486m) far away to the west on the Albanian border, can be seen by this nice hill. The graphic church of Profitis Ilias is found on this hill and on 20th July every year is celebrated with a ceremony and many visitors.

The remains of trenches from the Greek civil war can also be seen here. Part of the narrow spine of the hill is used as a runway for paragliding and gliding.

Panagia church

Panagia church, built in the entrance of a small cave, is located about 1.5km above the town. The church is once said to have been a monastery and this is proved by the nearby buildings which were possibly cells. The traditional annual celebration of the church takes place on 15th August under the shade of the plane trees. Close to the church are other two chapels, that of St. Nicholas and St. Athanassios. Between them exists



At a pretty chapel, dedicated to Panagia in Upper Konitsa, a ceremony with a lot of people is taken place every year on 15th of August



a small memorial for the soldiers who fell in 1940 during the Greek-Italian war.

Monastery of Panagia Stomiou

The monastery is found in a very impressive location on a ledge in the Aaos Gorge. It was originally established in 1442 on the slopes of Mt. Trapezitsa, at the site



known today as 'Paliomonastero', means "Old Monastery". It was moved to its present location in 1774 by the abbot Konstantinos, but was almost totally destroyed by the Nazi in 1943. The monastery is active today as 2 monks live here all year round. It consists of 11 newly built cells, outbuildings, and a small cross-



The nave of Panagia Stomiou monastery in the Aaos gorge

shaped chancel and cupola. The iconostasis is of special interest with its Byzantine icons. The monastery is reached after a two-hour hike from Konitsa bridge. It is dedicated to Panagia (Virgin Mary) and is celebrated on 8th September. The celebration is attended by many worshippers who travel from Konitsa and the surrounding area.

Kokkini Panagia

On a hill a small distance NW of the town, stands the church of Kokkini (Red) Panagia. The church is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary - Source of Life and was built



This church dedicated to Panagia, westwards of Konitsa city, is known as Kokkini Panagia (Red Virgin Mary)



The frescoes in the interior of the church of Kokkini Panagia are dated back to the 14th century



St Nicholas church in Palaigoritsa

at the end of the 13th century with a single nave and wooden roofed basilica. The masonry contains many stones that originate from a nearby old Roman building. Although many of the frescoes have been destroyed, the few that survive in the cancel are of special interest as they date from the end of the 14th C. It is possible that the church was once a parish church for a nearby settlement that no longer stands.

Palaigoritsa

The site of Palaigoritsa is located 2km from Konitsa on a small hill next to the B-road leading from Konitsa to Mazi village. Today the site is dominated by the modern cement silos, but archaeological remains dating from 2nd to 6th century AD have been excavated from here and are now displayed in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina. NW of this hill two rectangular graves can be seen chiselled onto a large rock. In this area also lies the shrine of St. Nicolas which has been standing there since the 14th century AD.



Liatovouni

This hill is located at the point where the River Voidomatis meets the River Aaos in the Konitsa valley. It's a very important archaeological site with an extensive burial ground and the remains of a

settlement both dating to the 11-4th centuries BC. Finds from the excavations (weapons, vases, jewellery) are on display in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina.



Findings of the archaeological excavations in Liatovouni, Konitsa

Local products and recipes

Old recipes from Konitsa and the surrounding villages, the products of the mountain stock-breeding and the tiny gardens, as well as the traditional tastes of Cappadocia compose an exciting culinary mosaic. Try the characteristic pies, such as mountain greens pie, cheese pie, milk pie, “batsaria”, “pepeki” with cheese, zucchini and corn flour without eggs.

Up in the mountains, exquisite cheeses like “kefalotiri” and feta stand out, while “manouri,” and “ourda” from Aetomilitsa, are

indeed incomparable. Meat cooked in earthenware pots or lamb over charcoal, accompanied by tsipouro and wine, wait for you to enjoy them in the small tavernas.

In Konitsa, however, you will be most of all impressed by the sweets. Small workshops produce a wide variety of jam, baklava and similar sweets baked in large tin pans (*gliká tou tapsiou*), special sweets made by fruits and sugar syrup (*gliká tou koutaliou*), liqueurs, and the distinguished “*Skér Bourek*”, made with wild rose extract and almonds.



Traditional sweets
(*Skér burek & Klostari*)



Sugar sweets



Preparation of traditional pie,
Distrato



Preparation of bread, *Theotokos*

The Aaos river and its gorge from Konitsa bridge



The villages around Konitsa

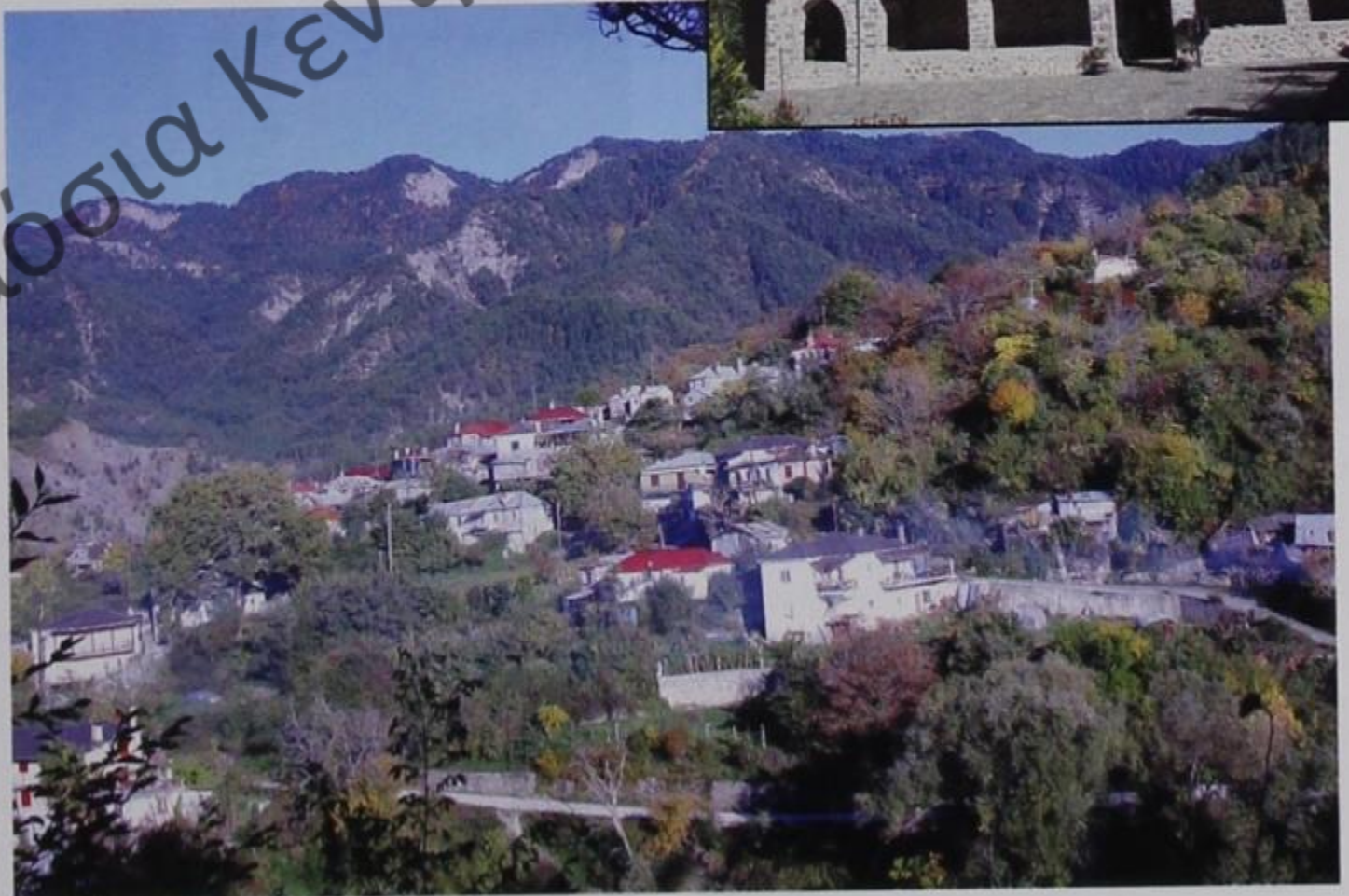
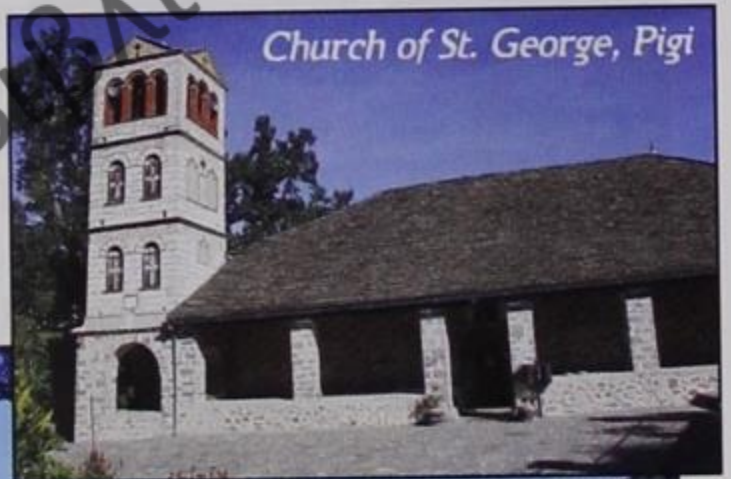
The villages around Konitsa town are built on the foothills of mountains and hills surrounding Konitsa plain. They are all located to the west of the town with the exception of Pigi that lies to the east, and can be reached by the road leading to the villages of the southern slopes of Mt. Smolikas.

Pigi (Peklari)

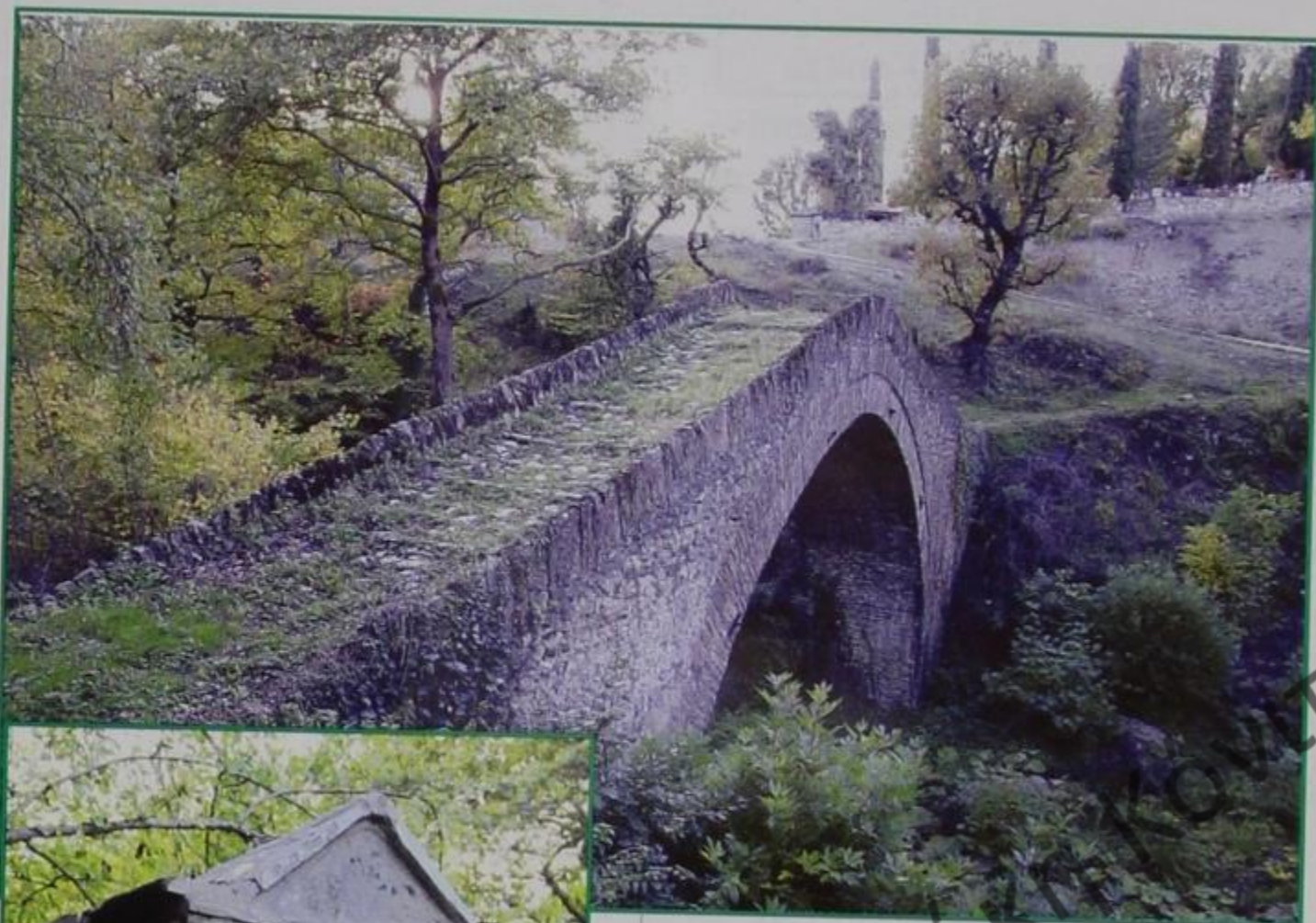
Pigi village is located about 6.5km NE of Konitsa. The village is built amphitheatrically in the inner valley of Topolitsa stream at an altitude of 750m, and is surrounded by dense pine forests. The peaks of Mt. Trapezitsa stand impressively above the village. The village was probably first inhabited in the 13th or 14th C and its original name was 'Embekler'. The name

'Pigi', which means 'spring' in Greek, was adopted in the 1950's due to the many springs and streams that flow through the village.

The village is divided into four quarters: Pano Machalas, Kato Machalas, Mantzeoi and Spaneoi. The few villagers still living here are mostly woodcutters or craftsmen for which the village is renowned. The church of St. George is of interest due to its beautiful hagiography and intricate iconostasis with painted floral motives. The church of St. Panteleimonas in Pano Machalas



Panoramic view of Pigi



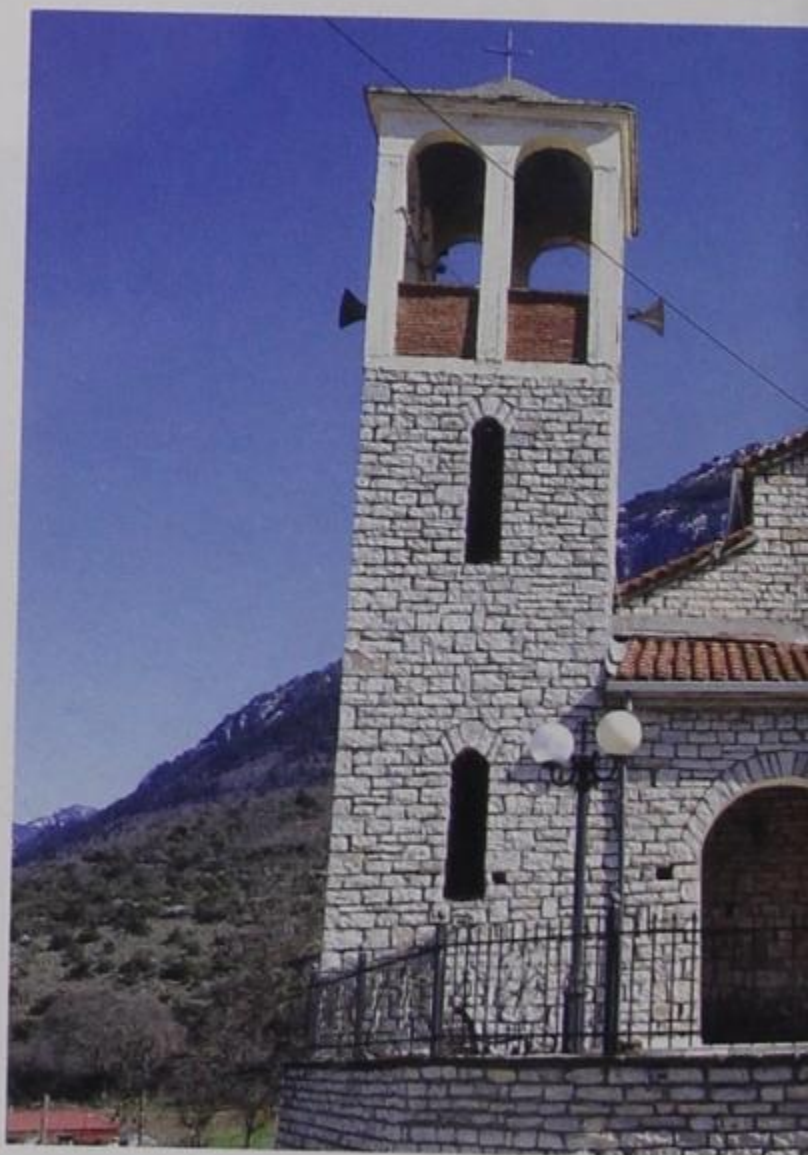
Karayanni's bridge, Pigi

Kallithea (Goritsa)

Kallithea is built at an altitude of 600m on the NW slopes of the western peak of Mt. Tymfi



with its ancient plane tree is also worth a visit, as are the churches of St. Paraskevi and St. Nicolas, the village's many springs and the stone-built school building. The single-arched stone bridge of Karayanni that adorns the village was built in 1903 and financed by the benefactor Georgios Karayannis. The village's annual celebration occurs on 26 July, the celebration date of St. Paraskevi.



Church of St. George, Kallithea

(Tsouka Koula 1529m), about 7km NW of Konitsa. The name 'Kallithea' in Greek means 'good view', and the village does indeed have an excellent view of the Konitsa plain, Mt. Nemertsika and Mt. Dousko. The village was once named Goritsa and was first recorded by the historian Aravantinos in 1866. The village was set on fire by the Nazi in 1943 during the German occupation, and the following year was bombed. The villagers, that presently number 200, are farmers and stock-breeders, and supply the surrounding Prefecture with sweet peaches and melons. In summer and autumn the local fruit produce is also sold from small kiosks set-up next to the main road. Notable archaeological finds



Church of Sts. Constantine & Eleni, Kallithea

have been found in the sites of St. Athanasios and St. Konstantinos. These date to the 11th-8th centuries BC and prove that the area was inhabited in ancient times. It is thought that the modern village arose from the amalgamation of four smaller settlements that no longer exist (St. Konstantinos, St. George, Panagia and Amari). The old stone church dedicated to Saints Konstantinos and Helen can be found just outside the village next to the new monastery of the Holy Cross. The village's central square is dominated by the church of St. George and north of the village



Panoramic view of Kallithea

stands the cathedral of Panagia. The village's annual celebration occurs on 7th July.

Kleidonia

Kleidonia is an agricultural village situated on the edge of Konitsa valley close to the River Voidomatis. It was settled by inhabitants of the older village Kleidoniavitsa (or Litoniavista, the present Ano Kleidonia) located further up the mountain, who moved here in recent times. The village is about 10km SW of Konitsa and stands at an altitude of 500m. In older times the site of the present village was used by the inhabitants of Ano Kleidonia for temporary living quarters and storing agricultural equipment.

The villagers are mostly farmers but there are some stock-breeders and trout farms owners. On the footpath that ascends to Ano Kleidonia, one can see the church of the Transfiguration of Christ which was once the nave of a monastery. According to tradition the church was built by Konstantinos Pogonatos in the 7th century AD, but some written records date the church to the mid 15th century. On the north side of the village there is a spring with thermal waters and it is probable that medicinal baths operated here in Roman and Byzantine times. The whole village celebrates in traditional style on 6th August each year and the fete is organized by the village's various



Kleidonia

cultural societies. Kleidonia has taverns, rooms to let and two petrol stations. An old stone bridge is found close to the village and this point marks the start of the beautiful pathway through Voidomatis gorge.

Voidomatis Gorge

This magnificent gorge begins at the stone bridge of Kleidonia and ends at the western entrance to Vikos Gorge, between the villages of Papingo and Vikos. Ancient planes, alders and other trees help form the beautiful landscape. The crystal water of the River Voidomatis is home to brown trout and is also a popular tourist resort for those who love rafting and kayaking. A well-defined pathway on the river

shore entices the visitor deeper into the gorge. The gorge can be traversed in about two hours, passing shallow caves (rock shelters) that were inhabited in prehistoric times, and the tiny church of Agioi Anargyroi.

Kleidonia Bridge

The bridge of Kleidonia (or Voidomatis) is found on the plane-covered banks of River Voidomatis 2km away from Kleidonia village. The bridge is single-arched and was built in 1853 financed entirely by the benefactor Balkiz Hanoum. According to local tradition the present bridge stands on the site of an older one which was the scene of a massacre between the two related but rival families of Stamatis and Gerenis. As the



Voidomatis gorge



Voidomatis bridge, Kleidonia

bridal procession of the Geremis family passed over the bridge, they were confronted by the Stamatis tribe and the massacre ensued. The bridge is found in a pretty location and marks the start of the trail into Voidomatis Gorge.

Kleidi, Boila and Megalakkos caves

These are three shallow caves (rock shelters) that were inhabited by man in prehistoric times. Many

stone tools have been found in these caves together with the bones of various animals such as chamois, deer, fish, etc. Boila cave is found close to the stone bridge of Kleidonia and the other two caves are situated further inside the gorge close to the trail. Archaeological findings show that the area was inhabited from 15,000 to 8,000 BC by small groups of prehistoric hunter-gatherers.



*Prehistoric tool from the excavation
at the rock shelters of Voidomatis*

Agioi Anargyroi Monastery

After a 1^{1/2} hour hike from Kleidonia bridge and close to the pathway, one comes across the remains of the old monastery of Agioi Anargyroi. It was built in 1658 and today only the church remains standing with its iconostasis and beautiful frescoes. Every year on 1st July, a traditional church service and celebration is held here under the ancient plane trees on the riverbank.

Kastraki

The remains of an ancient castle can be seen on a densely-forested hill in the SW section of Voidomatis Gorge. The castle is called Kastraki which means 'small castle' in Greek. It was first built in

the Hellenistic period (3rd century BC) and was then added further fortified until the start of the Ottoman occupation. Within the outer confines of the castle one can see the remains of old dwellings and shrines. The only church still standing here today is that of Evaggelistria. Geographically, the site belongs to the Zagorian village of Agios Minas. The castle is certainly worth a visit,

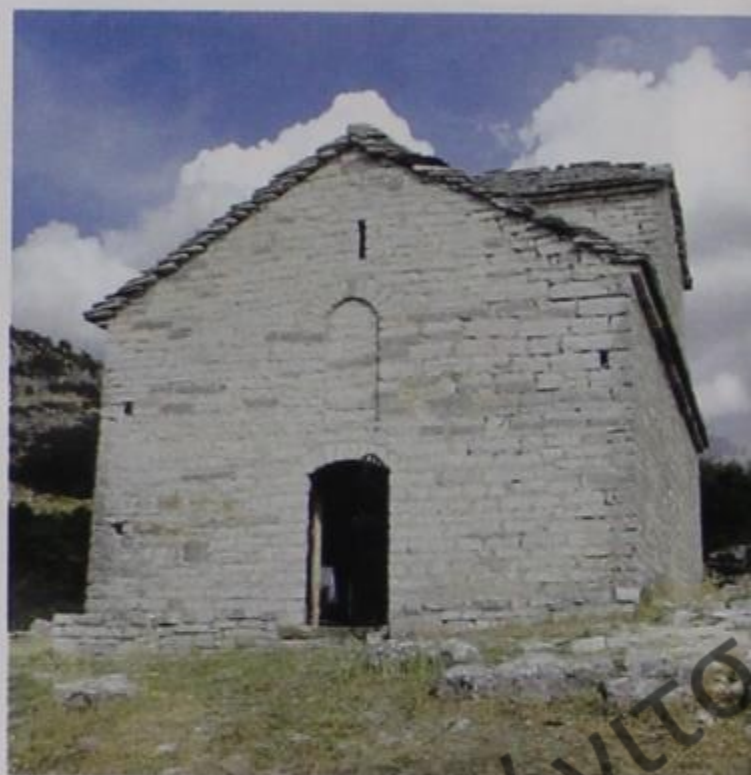


Sxs. Anargyroi monastery

despite the 1-hour hike required to reach it.

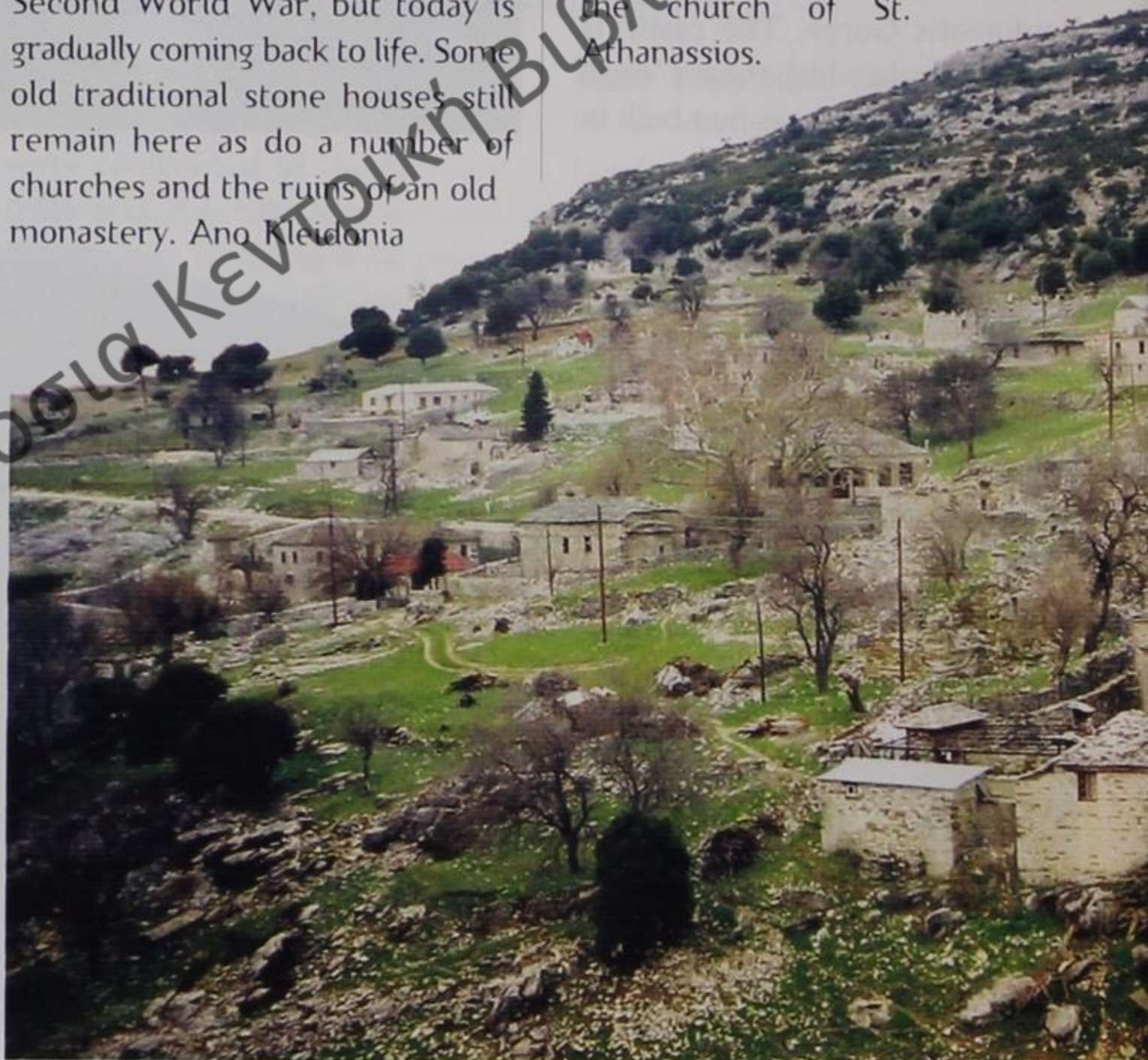
Ano Kleidonia (Litouniavista or Kleidoniavista)

Built on the southern slopes of Tsouka-Koula summit (1529m) at an altitude of 880m, 18km from Konitsa, stands Ano (or upper) Kleidonia. A century ago it was called Litouniavista and was one of the Zagorian villages. The view from here is outstanding and covers Konitsa plain and its surrounding villages until the confluence of the Rivers Aous and Voidomatis. The village was practically abandoned after the Second World War, but today is gradually coming back to life. Some old traditional stone houses still remain here as do a number of churches and the ruins of an old monastery. Ano Kleidonia



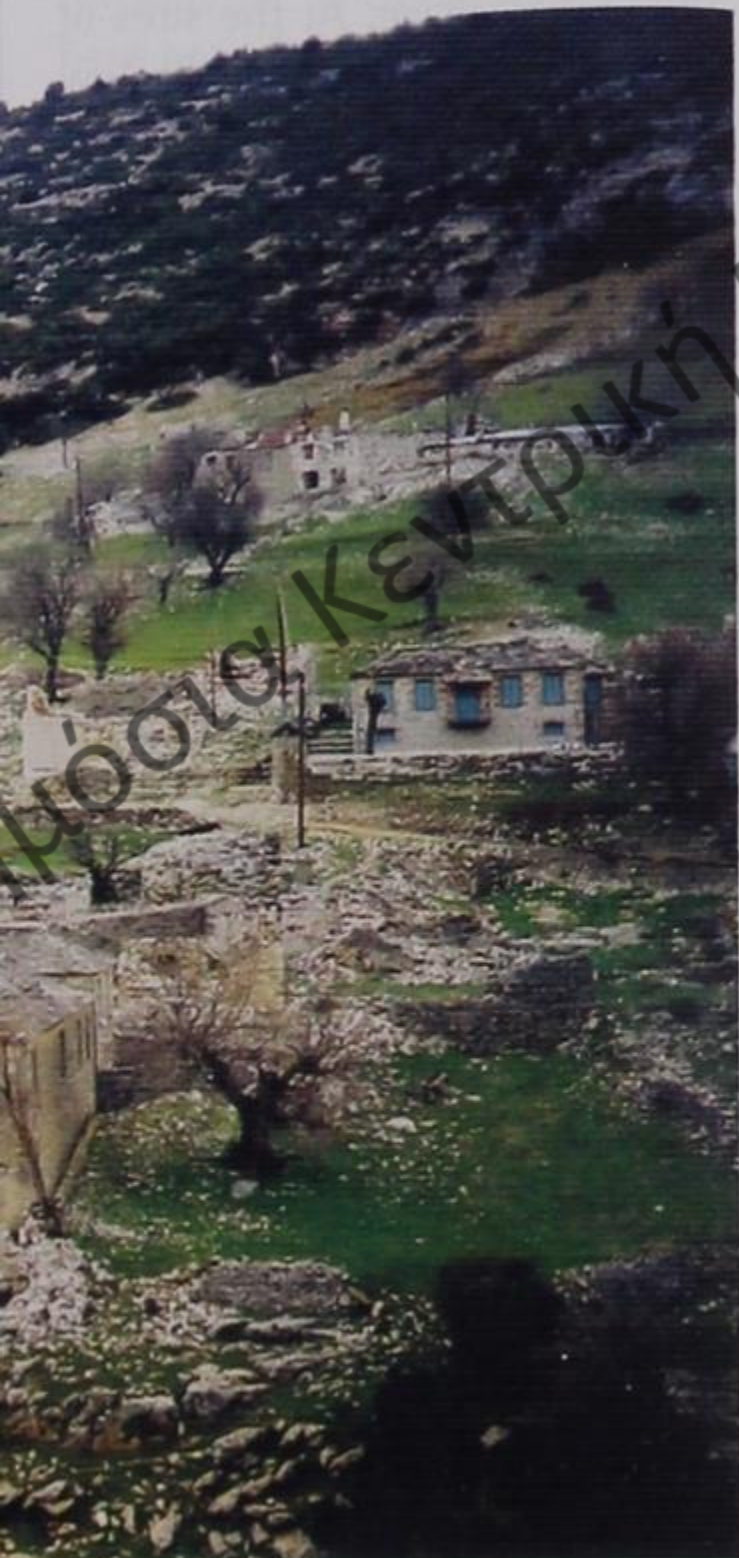
Church of St. Athanassios, Ano Kleidonia

is known for its post-Byzantine monuments. At the entrance to the village just above the pathway leading to Kleidonia, one can find the church of St. Athanassios.



Panoramic view of Ano Kleidonia

The church was built in 1617 with a full view of Konitsa plain, and its cross-shaped nave is covered with intricate frescoes. The parish church in the centre of the village dates to the 17th C, and the church of St. Nicolas (built in 1620) on a hill to the SE, is of special interest due to the small chiselled stones found at the base of its masonry. Other smaller churches in the village include Profitis Ilias and St. Paraskevi to the north. A 15-minute walk SE of Ano Kleidonia leads to the Monastery of Holy Apostles that



Frescoes in St. Athanassios church, Ano Kleidonia

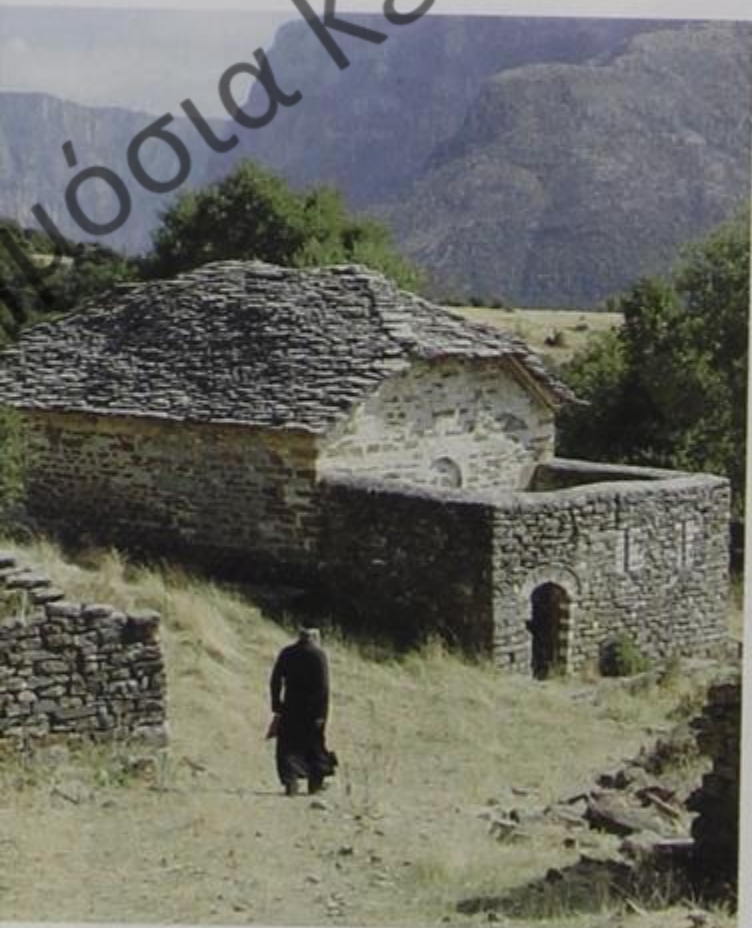
was built in 1662. This listed monument has beautiful frescoes on the walls of its nave. All the portable holy icons found in the village have been transported elsewhere for safety. There is a hostel here, which serves meals as well. A number of hiking trails start from Ano Kleidonia either ascending to Koula summit or Papingo village, or descending to the village of Kleidonia and the Konitsa plain.



Fresco in church of Panagia, Ano Kleidonia

Iliorachi (Koutsoufliani)

About 6km west of Konitsa on a tributary of the main road leading to Bourazani and the Greek-Albanian border is the settlement of Iliorachi. The village, at 556m altitude, is built on a sun-washed slope above the Konitsa plain, and offers the visitor an excellent view. Roughly 100



Monastery of Holy Apostles, Ano Kleidonia

people live in the village today, mainly farmers and stock-breeders. The village is known to have the most fertile soils of all the Konitsa plain. One can see some old stone houses here that remind us of previous times, but most of the houses here are modern. Noteworthy are the village's large stone-built school and the stone springs. Small traditional coffee shops

can be found in the central square and upper village. At the sites of Bihli and Agia Triada, just below the modern village, various



Iliorachi village and Konitsa city at the background



Church of St Nicholas, Iliorachi

remains of ancient settlements have been found dating from 13th-3rd century BC. These finds



indicate that the hills below the modern settlement were once the site of an ancient town that flourished as the largest Epirotan tribe of Molossoi developed economically and demographically under the rule of King Pyrrros (297-272 BC). The most recent inhabitants of the modern village originate from the, now ruined, nearby village of Derveni in the valley of Sarandaporos River. Iliorachi has several interesting churches and chapels including St. Nicolas (built 15th century AD), St. Basil and Agia Triada (Holy Trinity). The village holds its annual celebration at St. George day (usually on 23rd April).

Kavasila

Kavasila stands 5km north of Iliorachi. It is built at an altitude of 680m and is surrounded by hills with dense vegetation of oaks and strawberry trees. It is said that the village took its name from Alexios Kavasilas, a general of the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos the second (1282-1328), and was originally built around the monastery of Panagia, located 2km north of the present village. The c. 50 villagers living here today are farmers and herders. The village has a hostel and a small coffee shop. Kavasila has two annual celebrations, one following Easter and the second on 8th September.



Kavasila, the central square

Monastery of Panagia, Kavasila

This monastery is located 2km north of Kavasila village. It was built in 1816 on the site of previous older monastery. Only the nave remains intact with its stone iconostasis and wall frescoes dating from 1864. The site is surrounded by a low-walled yard.

Therapeutic Baths of Kavasila (Loutra Kavasilon)

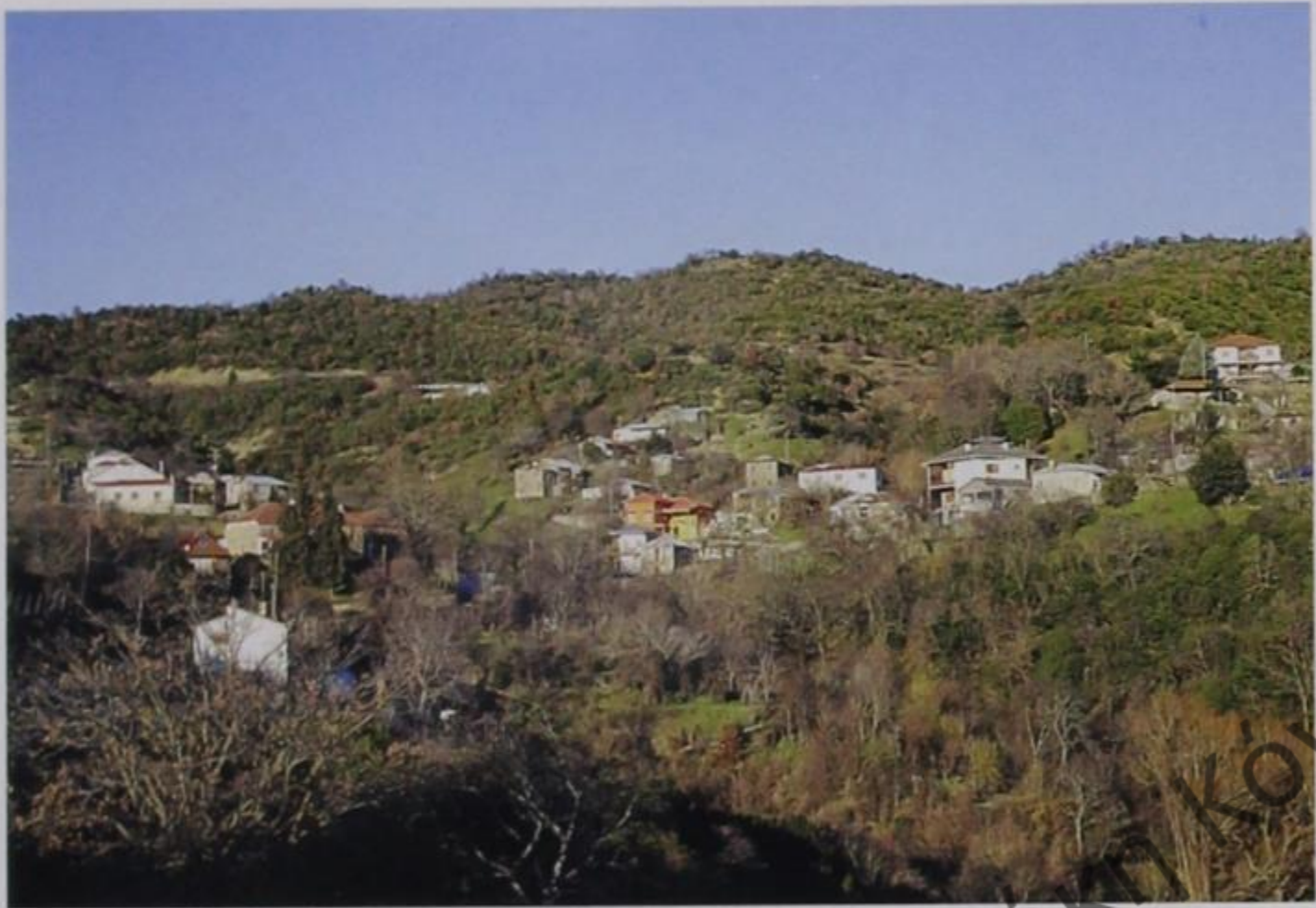
North of Panagia monastery on the left bank of the River Sarandaporos, at 410m altitude, are the therapeutic thermal baths of Kavasila. The site is situated 5.5km from the main village of Kavasila and 16.5km from Konitsa. It is said that the waters here help



Monastery of Panagia, Kavasila



Frescoes in the interior of the nave of the monastery of Panagia, Kavasila



Panoramic view of Kavasila

treat rheumatism, orthopaedic, dermatological and gynaecological conditions. Inhalation of the steam also improves respiratory problems such as asthma, bronchitis, emphysema and pharyngitis, and drinking the water is said to cure ailments

of the digestive system, liver, gallbladder and kidneys. Apart from bathing in the water, bathers also cover themselves with the therapeutic mud. The covered area comprises one large pool where the water temperature



Sarandaporos Narrows



Thermal Baths of Kavasila

reaches 38°C, and a two-roomed sanatorium (one room for men and one for women). The outside site has another large pool where the average water temperatures reach 32°C. The organized site also has a doctor and a snack bar. The thermal baths operate only during the summer months (1st June to 30 September). The medicinal properties of these springs were known from the mid-

Byzantine period. The old baths which were located on the opposite bank of R. Sarandaporos were destroyed during the Second World War.

Mazi

On the main road leading to Bourazani and the Greek-Albanian border is the village of Mazi. It stands at 480m altitude, 8km from



Church of St. Nicholas, Mazi



Panoramic view to the mountains of Konitsa (Trapezitsa, Tymfi and Smolikas) from Mazi village

Konitsa and is sunlit all year round. It is built on a low hillside and offers a good view of Konitsa plain and the western peak of Tymfi mountain range (Lazaros or Lapato, 2254m). The village has a tavern, coffee shops and a petrol station. Villagers of Mazi are farmers growing their crops on the fertile soils of the Konitsa plain. Local tradition states that the village was first built in its present location in the 17th century. The chapels of Profitis Ilias, St. Efthymia and St. Konstantinos are worth seeing, as is the stone-built spring at the village entrance. The village celebrates on 21st May and 20th July.

Natural history and folklore museum

This museum is located at the entrance to Mazi village, and

displays artefacts from the 19-20th centuries. The museum is divided into several sections displaying natural history, folklore, agricultural practice and weapons.

Aetopetra (Sanovo)

Aetopetra is built at an altitude of 540m on a small hill on the west of Konitsa plain. This agricultural village has about 180 inhabitants today and most are farmers or



The Folklore Museum in Mazi

stock-breeders. Some also practice organic farming. The stone church of St. Athanasios (19th century), church of St. Paraskevi and the chapels of Panagia, surrounded by huge oaks, and Taxiarchi are worth seeing. The chapel of Panagia was recently renovated. Next to the chapel, box-shaped graves and pieces of pottery dating back to the 1-2nd century AD have been found, in addition to a collection of large ceramic early Byzantine vessels, the largest of which (1.05m) is now on display in the Archaeological Museum of



Church of St. Athanassios, Aetopetra

Ioannina. The village's annual celebration is held in the central square on 15th August.



Panoramic view of Aetopetra



The church of Panagia, close to Aetopetra is surrounded by huge oaks



Oak forests close to Aetopetra village

2nd Trail

The villages at the confluence of the rivers Aeos and Sarandaporos

Bourazani – Aidonochori – Molydoskepastos
– Melissopetra – Kalovrysi



Aoos river at Mesogefyra



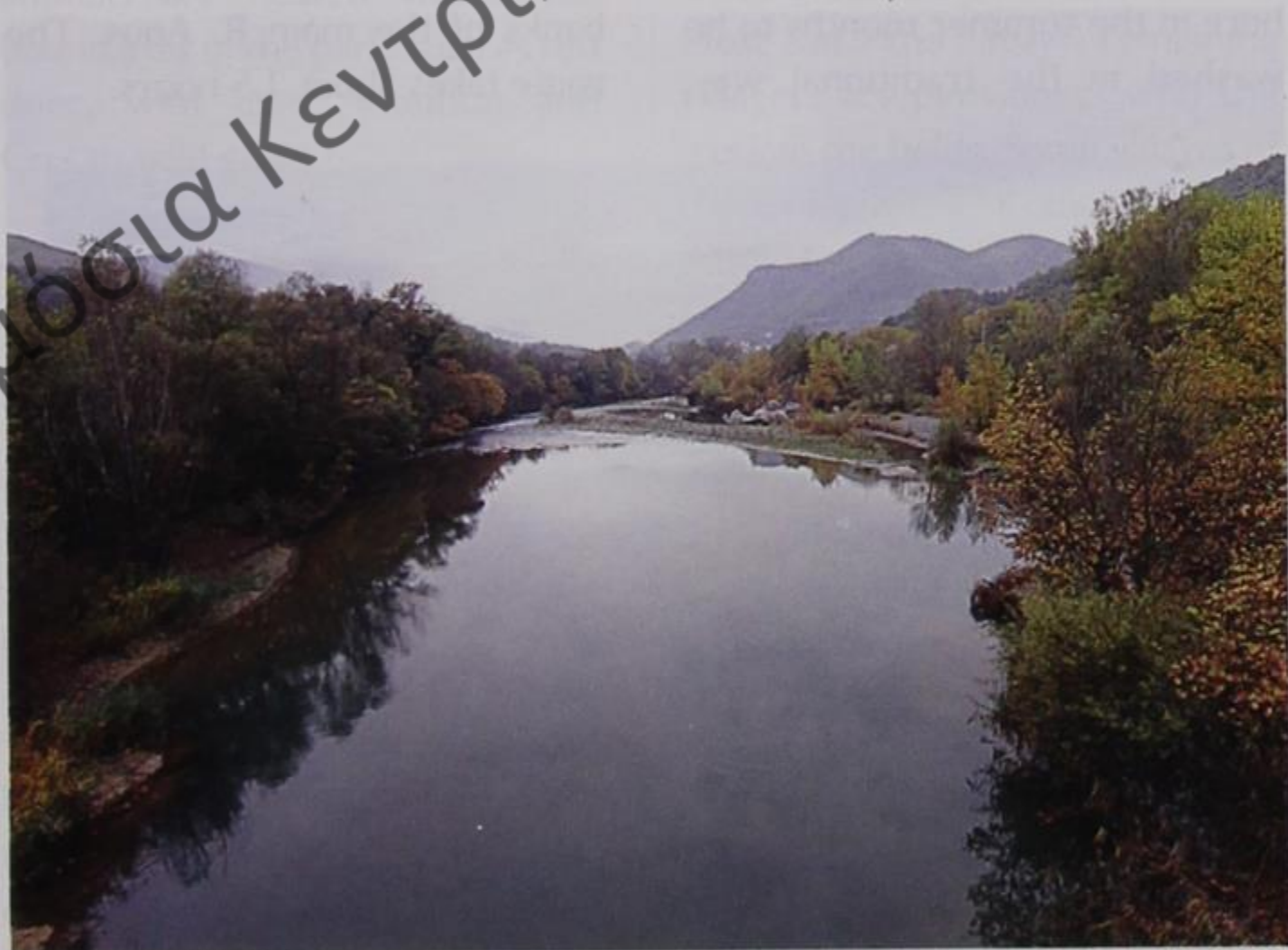
Old mountain hazels (Corylus colurna)

Bourazani

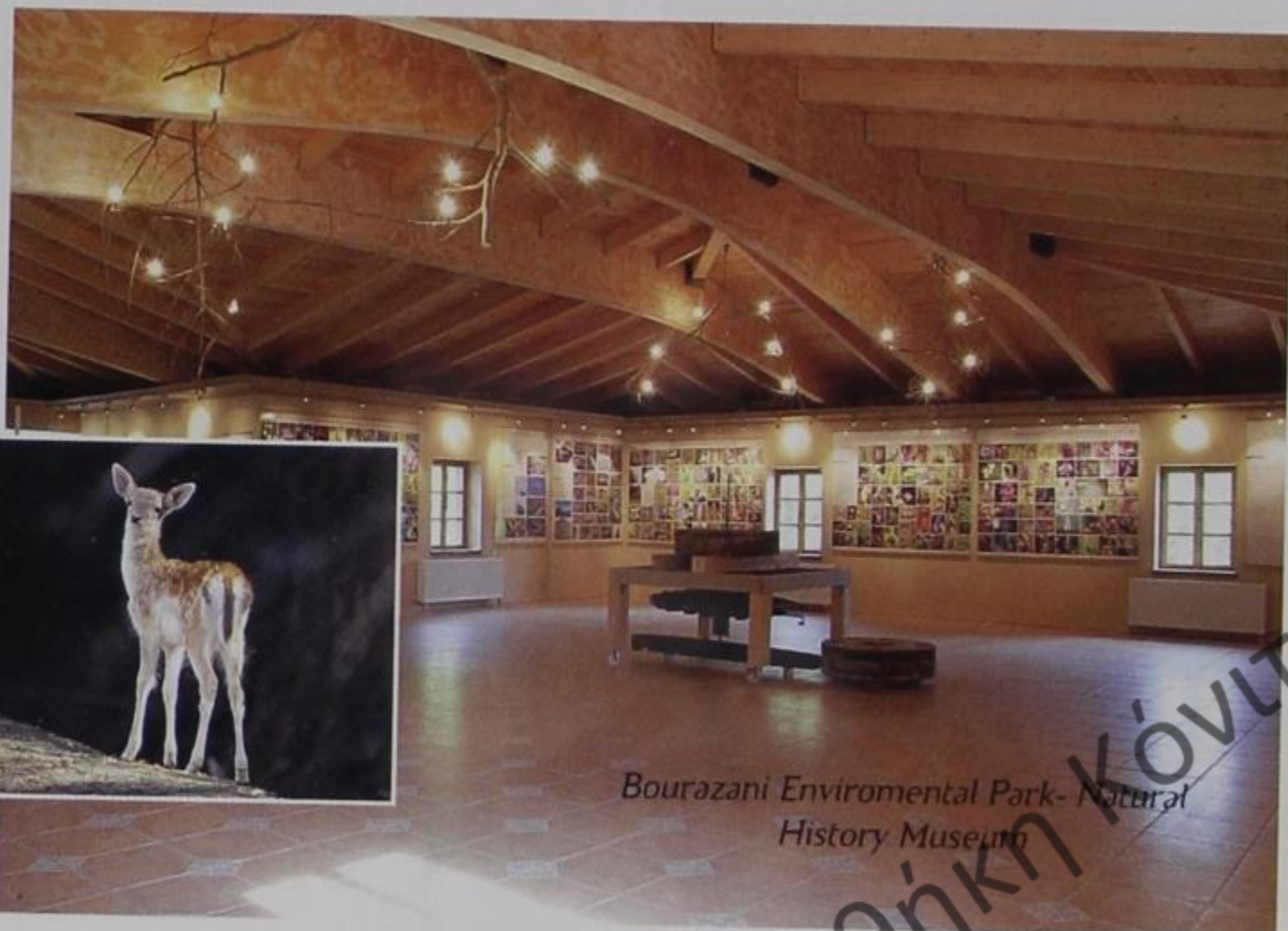
This trail takes us from Bourazani, 12km from Konitsa, and leads us in two directions: one to the left bank of the R. Aaos towards the villages of Aidonohori and Molyvdoskepastos, and the other to the right towards Melissopetra and Kalovrysi. Bourazani itself is a small settlement close to the southern bank of the R. Aaos and that belongs to the neighbouring village of Aidonohori. The area is of impressive natural beauty due to the River Aaos that can be seen cutting through the rock formations between the rich riparian vegetation. Here, visitors can find coffee shops, restaurants, hotels, a textile workshop, and a shop selling organic products. Bourazani Environmental Park is



Water power washing machine at a small tributary of Aaos river, Bourazani



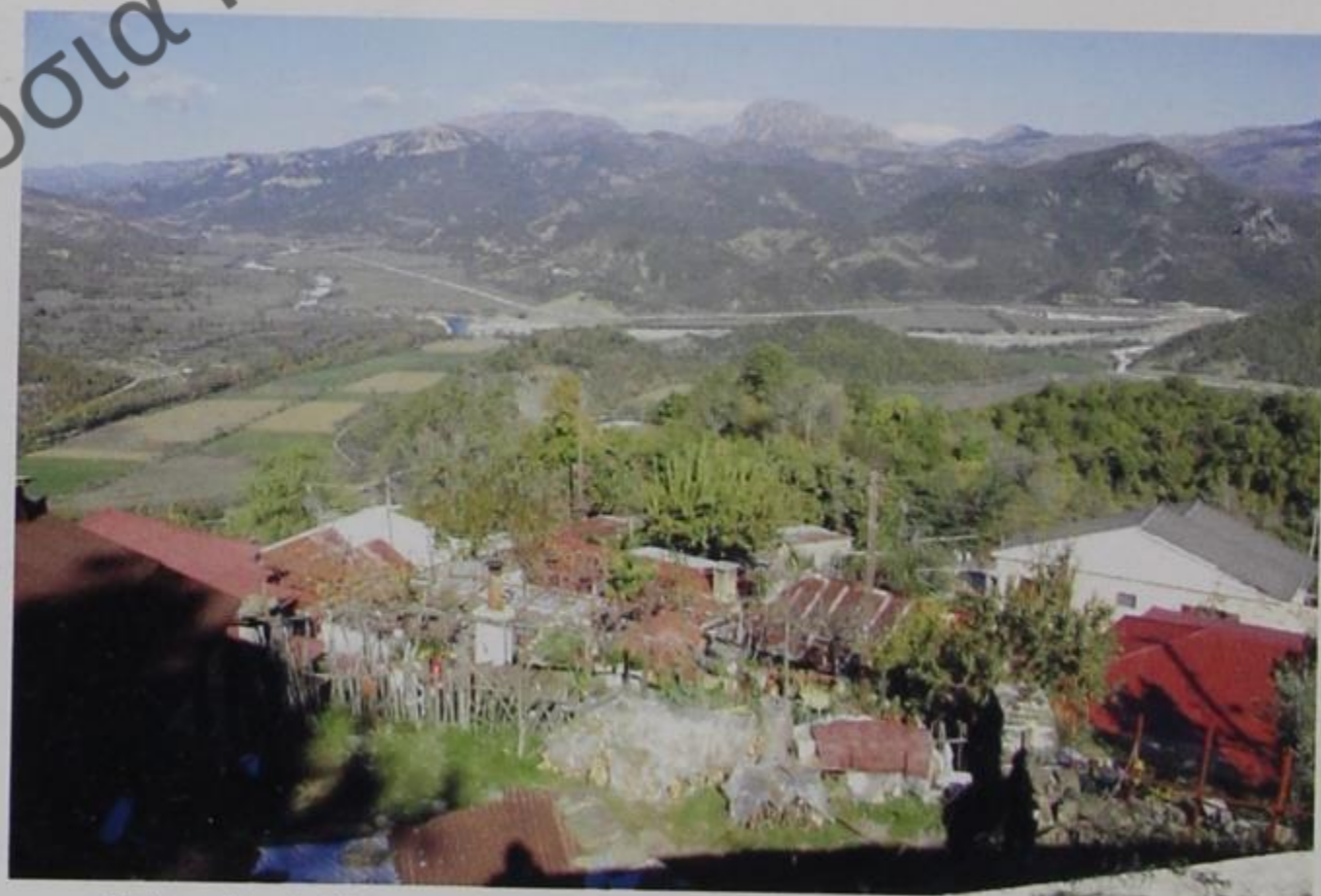
Aaos river at Bourazani



Bourazani Enviromental Park- Natural History Museum

located here and there is also a 19th century water mill that is open to the public. The water mill as a hydropower installation offers additional operations, and locals bring their heavy rugs and blankets here in the summer months to be washed in the traditional way.

Bourazani has an organized environmental interpretation trail which commences at a spring of a small Aaos tributary, passes the water mill, continues through the riparian forest, and ends at the banks of the main R. Aaos. The route takes about 1.5 hours.



Aidonochori village and the Greek- Albanian borders at the background



Aidonochori village

Bourazani Environmental Park

The Bourazani Environmental Park covers an area of 205 ha with oak and other trees and shrubs. Small populations of various wild animals are hosted within the boundaries of the park, such as red deer, wild boar, mouflon and Cretan wild goats.

Aidonochori (Ostanitsa)

6km from Bourazani and 18km from Konitsa on the forested slopes of Mt. Dousko stands the village of Aidonochori. The village is built at 600m altitude and has a panoramic view of the R. Aaos and the surrounding area. The old village (called Ostanitsa) had many beautiful mansions but was burned down by the Nazi during the German occupation. The village has over 15 churches of which Agioi Apostoloi (built in

1857) is of special interest with its intricate iconostasis and wooden chapiters. Other chapels worth seeing are St. Paraskevi, St. Konstantinos, Profitis Ilias, St. John, and the Transfiguration of Christ. Most of the fifty remaining villagers are pensioners who still work in the fields. Some villages of the wider area of Konitsa are traditionally known for its woodcarvers. This tradition still survives in this small village and one should visit the local gallery to admire the detailed carvings displayed there. The village's private museum displays old household utensils, weaponry from the last wars, and other everyday items used by villagers long ago. The annual fete is held just after Orthodox Easter. Before leaving Aidonochori, one should rest at the coffee shop and taste the local produce.

Goura Monastery

This monastery is located on a rocky, protected site about 2km west of Aidonohori. It was built during the 16thC and offers the visitor a fantastic view of the area where the Rivers Aoos and Sarandaporos join each other. It is dedicated to the Archangels Michael and Gabriel –“Taxiarhes” in Greek. The monastery was one of the richest and most important in the area of Epirus and owned glebes in Romania. For centuries it was the religious and cultural centre of the wider area and helped all the locals in times of need. The chancel was destroyed by the Turks in 1829, and all efforts to rebuild the monastery from 1854-1857 were unsuccessful. Thus today one can observe only its foundations lying on the



*Landscape at the Greek- Albanian
borderline*

rocky ledge. Close by however, stands the chapel of St. Haralambos that dates from the 17thC. A two-metre-deep domed crypt is positioned beneath the sanctuary. Services are held in the chapel every time the monastery has a celebration. The whole site is enclosed by tall walls giving it a castle-like appearance, and within



Monastery of Archangels (Taxiarches) of Goura, Aidonochori



Mesogefyra bridge during the WW II.

the yard one can see the remains of cells, a workshop and a school that were used from the 16thC. Many of these buildings were recently renovated and the site now holds a children's camp in the summer months. The monastery celebrates twice annually: on 10th February (St. Haralambos' day) and on 8th November (Archangel's day).

Mesogefyra bridge

At the site where the B road leading from Bourazani to Molyvdoskepastos approaches the R. Aoos, one can see the ruins of this ancient bridge. It was built in a strategic location and its foundations were probably first laid by the emperor Konstantinos Pogonatos in the 7th century. Looking at the ruins, it is hard to imagine the majestic three-arched bridge that once stood here. The middle arch

was larger than the two side ones, and the bridge was unusual in that the upper parts of it were level and not inclined. The bridge was blown up by the Greek army in 1940 to help prevent the invasion of Italian troops during the war. A few years later in 1944, the bridge was completely destroyed by the Nazi.

Mycenaean swords and other prehistoric finds have been excavated from the area around the bridge known as Agia Triada. Remains of buildings dating to the 4th-2nd century BC were recently found on a hill next to the bridge. Pottery, bronze artefacts, weaver's weights, female figurines and many silver and bronze coins have also all been found in this site. It is noteworthy that the silver coins originate from various mints of the ancient world such as Pella, Amphipolis, and Babylon.



Monastery of Panagia Molyvdoskepasti

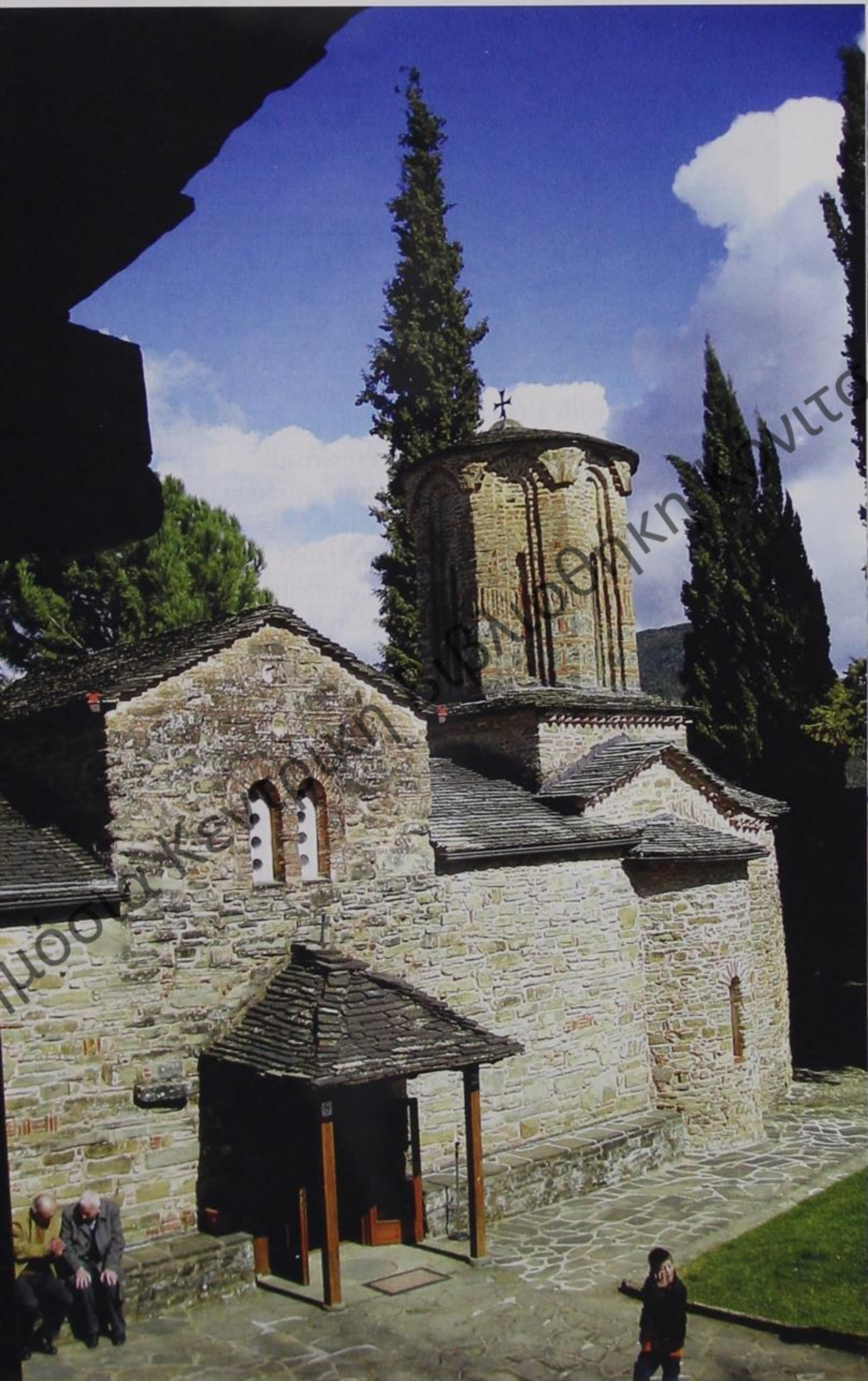
Monastery of Panagia Molyvdoskepasti

This monastery is found on the foothills of Mt. Nemertsika near the confluence of Rivers AooS and Sarandaporos. Molyvdoskepasti means 'lead covered' in Greek, and the monastery obtained that name because of the lead slabs it was originally roofed with, instead of the usual tiles or stone slabs. It is dedicated to the Assumption of

Virgin Mary – "Panagia" in Greek. It was founded by the emperor Konstantinos Pogonatos when he returned from a military expedition to Sicily (671-672 AD) and was later renovated by the emperor Andronikos Palaiologos (1328-1341 AD). In more recent times the monastery was renovated by inhabitants of the area of Pogoniani, who decorated the nave with frescoes in 1522. The monastery was the base of the



The monastery of Panagia Molyvdoskepasti is located at the confluence of the rivers AooS and Sarantaporos



The nave of the Monastery of Panagia Molyvdoskepasti



Church of Holy Apostles



The farming cooperation of Molyvdoskepastos produces traditional products such as tsipouro (strong alcoholic spirit, similar to arrack), jams, sweets, etc. At the



The stone made fountain at St. George chapel

end of November every year the village holds tsipouro festival where the liquor is boiled in huge vats. One can stay overnight in the community hostel and enjoy good local food in the village's coffee shops.



Vineyards close to Molyvdoskepastos village and the Grika gorge at the background



Apiary at Molyvdoskepastos

Pogoniskos (Bontsiko)

Returning from Molyvdoskepasti to Konitsa, turn south and ascend the road up the narrow gorge of Grika towards the settlement of Pogoniskos. This small village, belonging to the nearby Municipality of Ano Pogoni, is built at 760m altitude at the bottom of the valley surrounded by the slopes of Mt. Nemertsika. Today, only a few families of herders remain living here.



Church of St. Athanassios, Pogoniskos

Melissopetra

Melissopetra is located at 418m altitude on a slope close to the right bank of the River Aoos. It is about 2km from Bourazani and 14km from Konitsa. The village church of St. George is built with a wonderful view of the R. Aoos, Bourazani valley and the slopes of Mts Dousko and Nemertsika. A stone school can be seen next to the church. Noteworthy is the church of St. Paraskevi found NW of the village.



Church of St. George, Melissopetra



Panoramic view of Melissopetra

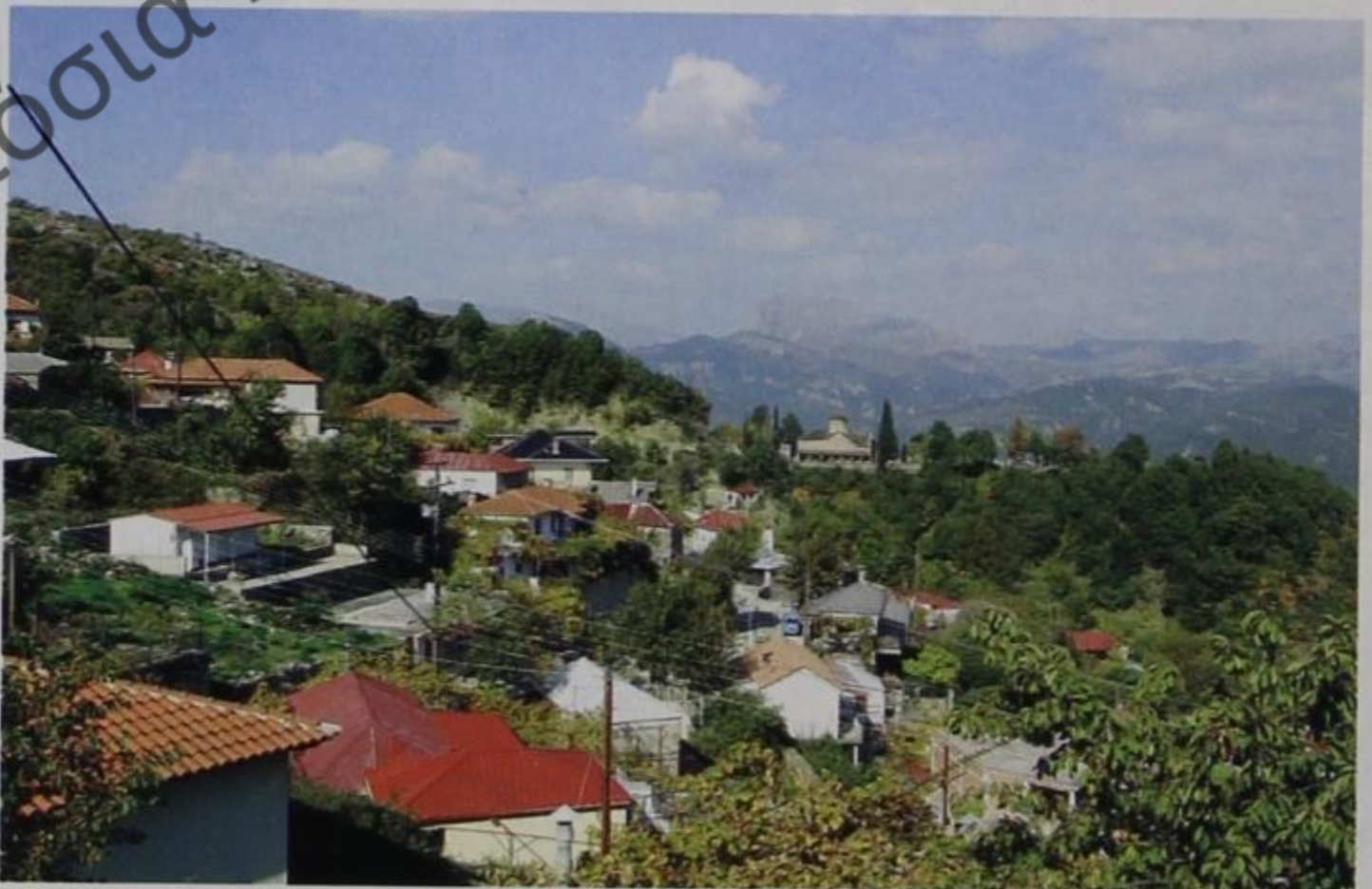
Pogoniani archbishopric from 12th-17thC, and a scripture school was run here since the 14thC. Many famous authors and scholars of these times had been schooled here. In June 1943 the monastery was bombed by the Nazi who then burned down the cells.

Today the monastery has a fort-like appearance, with renovated cells, two bell towers and pretty gardens. The nave is of Byzantine style with a tall dome and well-preserved frescoes from the 13-18thC. On the western side one can see frescoes picturing the Byzantine emperors Konstantinos Pogonatos and Andronikos Palaiologos. The wooden iconostasis is supported upon the remains of an older marble iconostasis. Here lives a small community of monks. The monastery celebrates each year on 15th August. The service comprises a vigil starting the previous night and followed by

dawn prayers. At the eastern side of the nave stands the grave of Episcopo Sebastian, who was very active in religious subjects during the previous decades.

Molyvoskepastos (Dipalitsa)

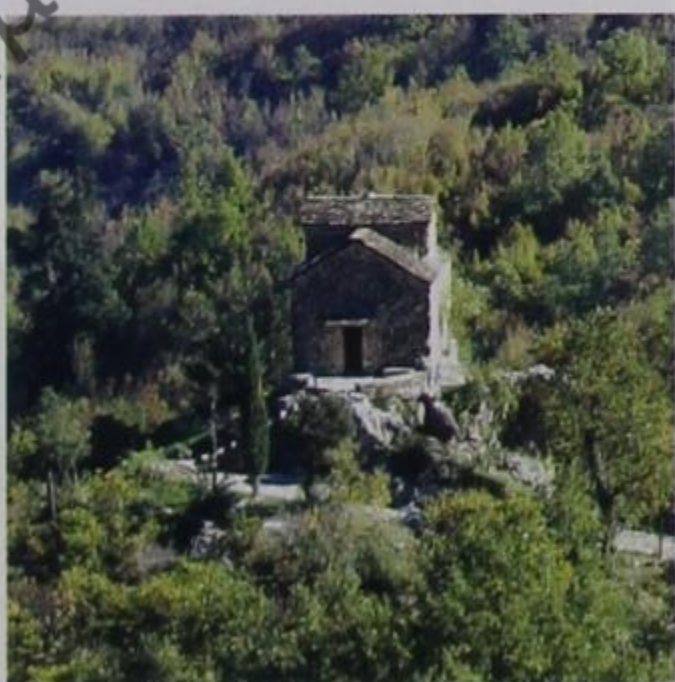
This village is built at 596m altitude on the eastern slopes of Mt. Nemertsika. It is located 17m from Konitsa town and only a few hundred metres from Albania. This settlement was once a major crossroads, commercial and administration centre. Many of its inhabitants were merchants and migrated to Moldovlachia and Constantinople. The village was plundered many times until it was finally destroyed in 1657 by raiders from the area of Albania. In later years the modern village gradually developed into the quiet, beautiful, village that it is today surrounded by lush vegetation, looking to the valleys of the rivers



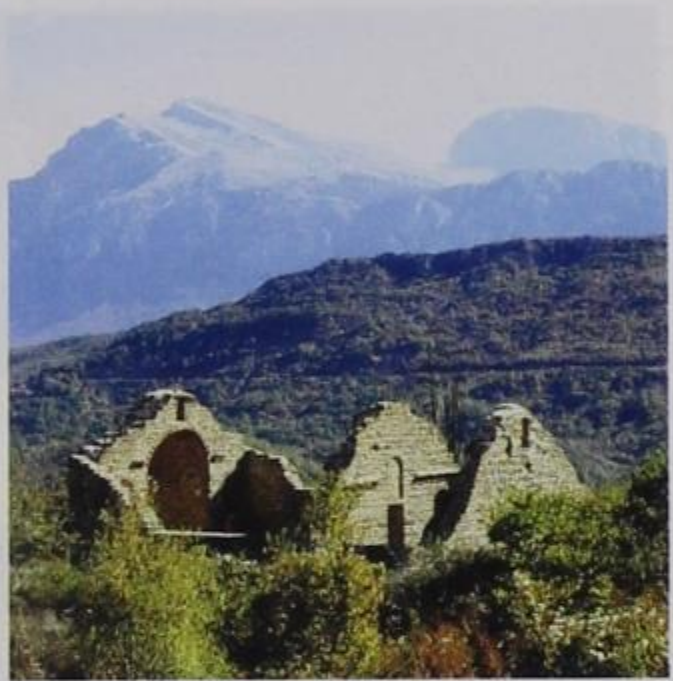
Panoramic view of Molyvoskepastos village and the church of Holy Apostles at the background

Aoos and Sarandaporos. The village has c. 50 inhabitants during the winter and about 200 during the summer. They are mostly farmers, stock-breeders and beekeepers. Unfortunately, no houses with traditional architecture are left standing today as the village was destroyed by the Nazi in 1943. In and around the village there are about twenty churches and chapels, the most noteworthy of which are: Holy Trinity (Agia Triada, 12thC), Nativity of the Virgin Mary (Panagia, 9thC), St. George, the ruined St. Dimitrios, Zoodochos Pigi (1604), and the ruined St. Sozon (15thC) that stands on the uppermost point of the village.

The church dedicated to Apostles (Agioli Apostoloi) is found on the western side of the village on the Greek-Albanian border, and the site offers a panoramic view of the Aoos valley and R. Sarandaporos. The church was probably built in 1537 although some place its construction in the



Church of Holy Trinity



Church of St. Sozon



13thC. This is the main village church and until 1857 was the base of Archbishop of the area of Pogoniani. It is cross-shaped with a dome, five-sided recess and wonderful frescoes.

Around the village one can see the ruins of old water mills, one of which remained in operation until the 1960's. Small stone bridges can be found within the village at the St. George spring and the Borogia stream.

The village's religious and folk celebration is held yearly on 29-30th June in St. Efstathios square. The festivities are accompanied by musicians and dancing.



Melissopetra and the nearby forests

The village has fertile soils due to the alluvium deposited by the R. Aaos, and for this reason most of the villagers are farmers. The village has a hostel with excellent local food, and a picturesque coffee shop under the plane tree in the central square. The annual celebration is held on 26th July.

The border post of Mertziani

The frontier and customs station of the Greek-Albanian border is located 3km from Bourazani and 15km from Konitsa. The modern bridge of Mertziani is also located here. The station, operational since 2004, is the only one in the area of Konitsa that



Sarandaporos valley and the southern foothills of Mt. Grammos

connects Greece and Albania, and has greatly helped the contact and trade between people on both sides of the border.

Old Mertziani Bridge

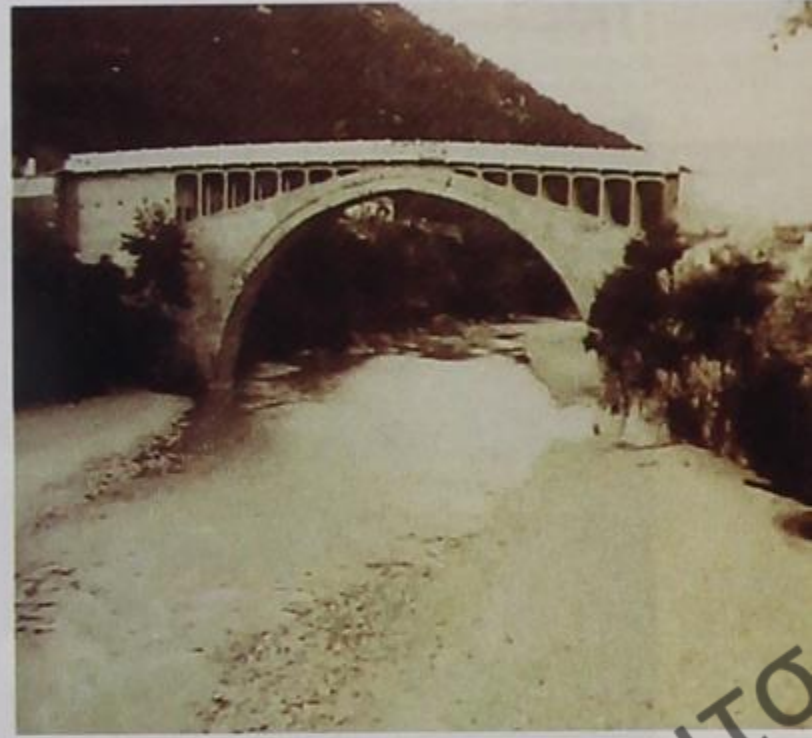
The ruins of the old bridge are located between the villages of Melissopetra and Kalovrysi, on the left side of the main road where the two banks of R. Sarandaporos are at their closest point. Until 1943 this bridge connected Greece and Albania. Today only its two pedestals remain standing. The bridge was destroyed during the Second World War (1943) by partisans, in order to delay Nazi troop reinforcements. In Byzantine times the Egnatia road that connected North Epirus with Konitsa and the rest of Greece was thought to have run through this area.

Kalovrysi (Provitska)

This small settlement is found at 424m altitude on a densely vegetated hill slope. It is 5km from Bourazani and 17km from Konitsa. At the base of the hill stretches the



The pedestals of Merziani bridge today



Mertziani bridge as it was before the WWII

valley of R. Sarandaporos that forms the natural physical border between Greece and Albania. The few remaining villagers are farmers and herders.

St. Nicholas monastery

Above the settlement of Kalovrysi on the peak of a densely vegetated hill stands the monastery of St. Nicolas. It can be reached by a 45 minute hike (or 2km of dirt road) and offers the visitor a magnificent view of all the surrounding area from Mt Nemertsika to Mt Grammos. The



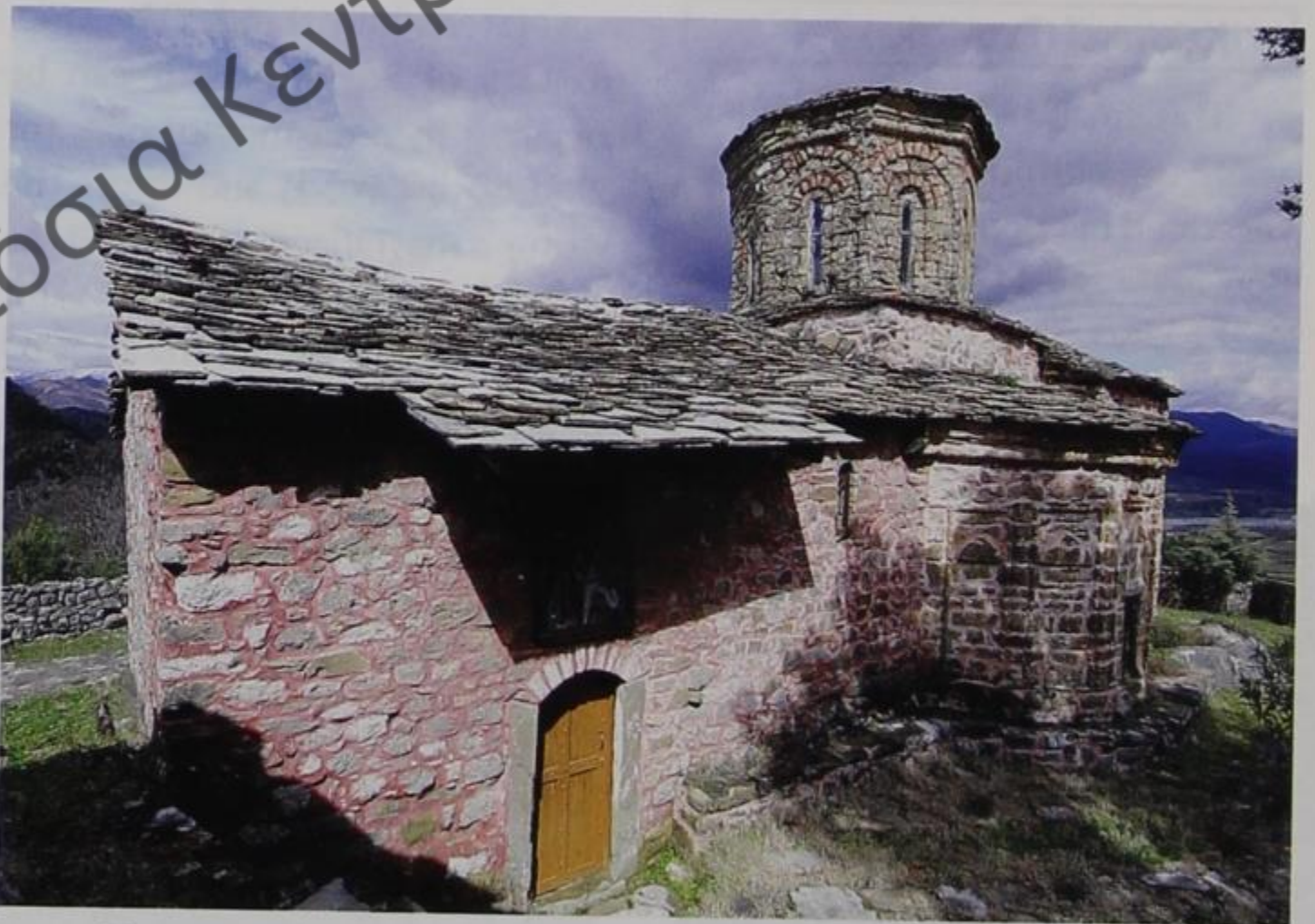
The old elementary school in Kalovrysi



Kalovrysi village is located at the Greek- Albanian borderline next to Sarandaporos river

monastery was built in the 16thC and is a listed monument. Today only the nave remains standing with a few remaining frescoes on

its dome. Around the nave one can see the remains of the monastic cells.



The nave of St. Nicholas monastery is located on a hill close to Kalovrysi

3rd Trail

The villages in Aaos valley (Lakka Aouu)
Elefthero – Palioseli – Pades – Armata – Distrato



Balkan pine on Mt. Smolikas



Elefthero (Grisbani)

Elefthero can be reached by following the road leading east from upper Konitsa town for 22km. This village is built on the southern slopes of Mt. Kleftis at 904m altitude close to Perdikadisi stream, and has a beautiful view of the forested slopes of Trapezitsa. It is in a beautiful location with plenty of running water and many gardens. Apart from farmers, many of the villagers were craftsmen and many travelled to other parts of the world (Romania, America) to find work. Today, the few remaining villagers are craftsmen and foresters working in the slopes of Mts Smolikas and Kleftis. The modern church of St. Nicolas has its foundations on the site of an older church built in 1859, but that was destroyed by the Nazi during the 2nd World War. The older church was full of

excellent frescoes. Other modern churches of the village are Panagia and St. Minas. The chapel of St. Dimitrios was built in 1858 as shown by the engraving in its entrance, and has many old holy icons such as the icon of St. Dimitrios which was made in 1792. Other chapels in the village include Profitis Ilias, Agioi Anargyroi, St. George, Transfiguration of Christ, and St. Athanasios.

The village was burned down in the Second World War, but



Panoramic view to the high peaks of Mt Tymfi from Elefthero



Panoramic view of Elefthero



Church of Panagia

some old houses of traditional Epirotic architecture can still be seen. Of the four mills once standing in the area, only one is functional today.

Elefthero is the only village of the Aaos valley where the locals do not speak the Vlachic dialect. It is said that the present inhabitants originate from an old settlement



The waterfall on Mt Kleftis



The elementary school

(named Grisbani) found in the area of Plakoti village in the Prefecture of Thesprotia. They migrated to the present village in the 16thC to escape the frequent landslides that were destroying their village.

The village celebrates on 6-7th August each year with traditional dancing and songs. On these days the visitor can hear many local folk songs. Interesting local customs can be observed on St. Dimitrios day, lent and Epiphany. The village has an attractive coffee shop in the central square.



Church of St. Nicholas, Elefthero

Palioseli

Our next stop on this trail is the village Palioseli situated 31km from Konitsa on the south slopes of Mt. Smolikas at 1080m altitude. Pine and oak forests surround the village where agricultural fields once stood. The village has much running water, high altitude, dense vegetation and a good view of the peaks of Mt. Tymfi on the opposite side of the Aaos valley. It is thought that the modern village stands on the site of an ancient Roman settlement. Characteristic of Palioseli and all the other villages found in Aaos valley is that the inhabitants speak Vlachic dialect and most have professions connected with the forest (e.g. wood cutters, sawyers). In older times, some of the men of the



village were muleteers and millers, and many travelled to other places of Greece, Romania and Con-



The bell tower and the church of St. Paraskevi at Palioseli



Church of St. Paraskevi, Palioseli

stantinople to find work. As with all the villages of Aaos valley, Palioseli was the site of important battles during the 2nd World War. The village was gunned by the Nazi and only the church of St. Paraskevi survived the destruction. The church has a noticeable lean to the left due to land subsidence. Its nave has three sections, a wooden roof, a narthex and a propylaeum in its southern entrance. The church was built in 1864 and is filled with frescoes dating from the 19thC. It contains a beautiful iconostasis, many icons, and a wood carved ceiling made in 1871. The village's central square is worth visiting as one can see the ancient plane tree next to the intricate village spring, the primary school building, and the few remaining traditional stone houses.

Palioseli has hostels and restaurants. The annual village celebration, as with the majority of Aaos valley villages, occurs on 15th August.



The old wooden hiking refuge on Mt. Smolikas



Hiking trail to Mt. Smolikas

Mountain refuges

The wooden mountain refuge of Palioseli is found north of the village at an altitude of 1650m. It can accommodate 20 visitors. Higher up the mountain at 1750m one can find the modern stone-built refuge which accommodates 30 people. The modern refuge has a fireplace, dormitories and a kitchen. It is open throughout the summer months and can be opened on arrangement during the winter. To stay in the wooden





The mountain refuge of Mt. Smolikas refuge, one must first make arrangements with the local council of Palioseli. The refuges can be reached by a dirt road (5km to the old refuge and 7km to the new) that leads from the village, or by a hiking trail that takes about two hours.

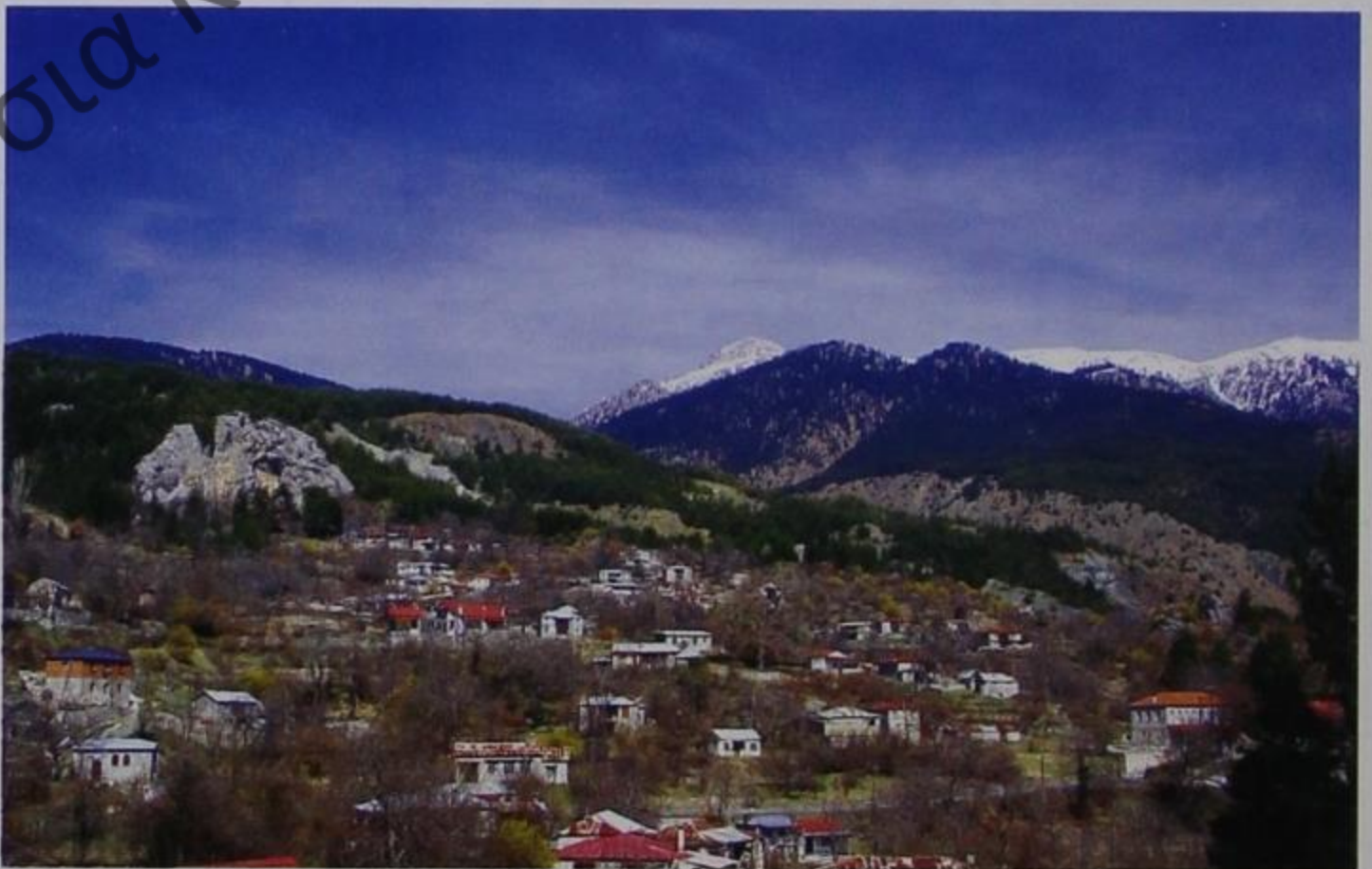
Pades

5km from Palioseli and 36km from Konitsa lies the village of Pades. The village is located at 1140m altitude on the south slopes of Mt. Smolikas, close to a



Pades, the stone made fountain at the central square

characteristic large rock named 'Petrini Gria'. It is surrounded by dense forests of oak and black pine. The name 'Pades' most likely originates from the Vlachic word 'pande' meaning plateaux or flat area. The first inhabitants of the



Mt. Smolikas, panoramic view of Pades



Church of Panagia, Pades

village are thought to originate from the Zagorian area of Gyftokambos, and the original village was probably situated in the nearby areas presently known as Kiatra Drigalou and Kranies. The first known written record of the village Pades is from 1692 in the statute of the Macedonian monastery of St. Nikanor of Zamborda. In this record, Pades is referred to as one village attended to by the bishop of the region of Vela. The village church was built in 1784 and contains many holy icons from the 15th and 16th centuries, thus proving that the history of this village is indeed long. It is believed that the village of Vogopetra in Kozani region was first established by villagers of Pades in the 17thC.

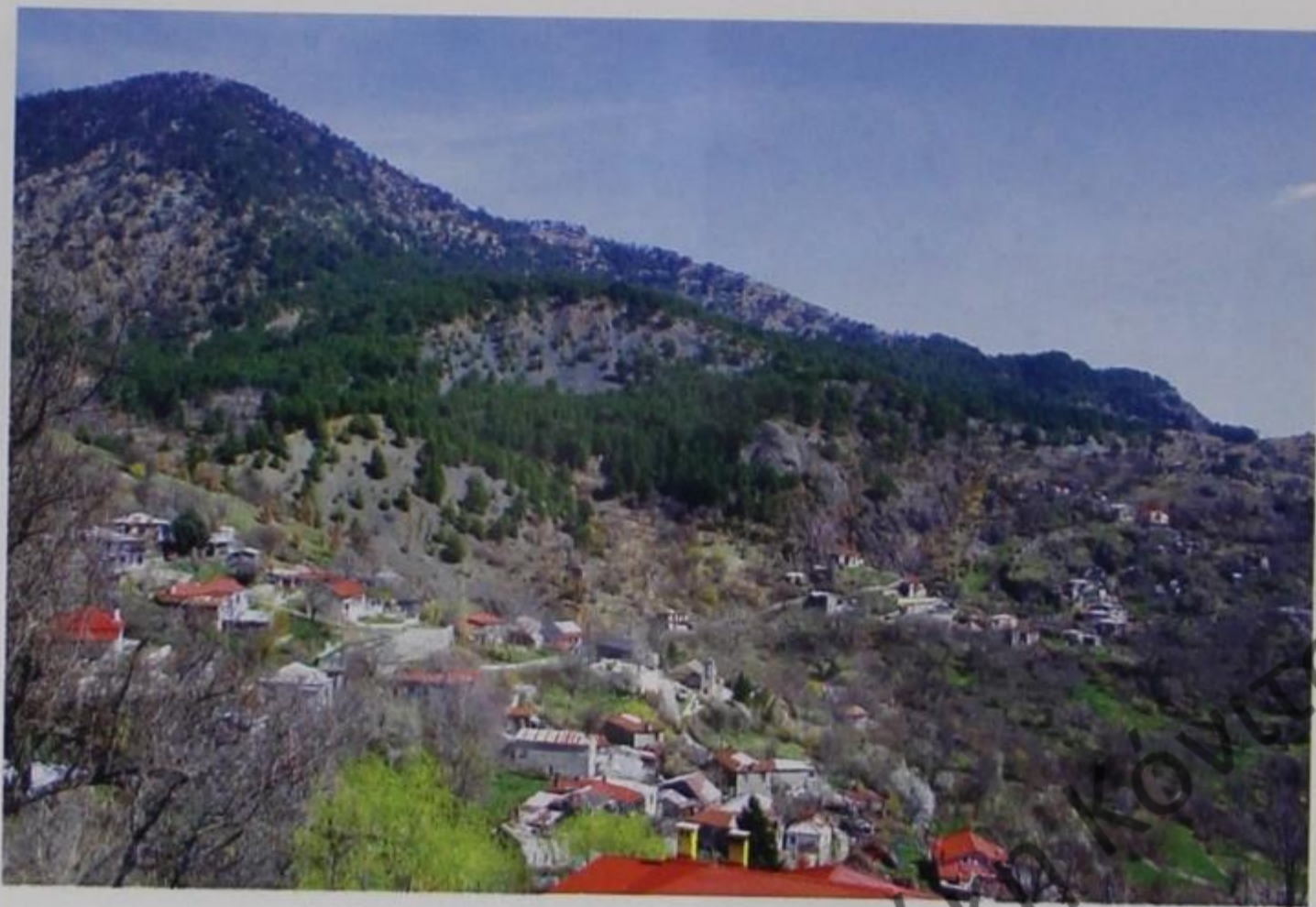
In the past, the inhabitants were mainly farmers, stock-breeders, wood cutters, muleteers, merchants and saddlers. Many travelled to find work in distant cities and countries (Russia, Rumania, Constantinople, Drama and Kavala) where they later became wealthy. Today, the few villagers still living here are mostly pensioners. The village

becomes lively only in the summer months when family members return home.

The parish church in the centre of the village, dedicated to Panagia (Virgin Mary) is of special interest. Its nave was constructed in 1784 and contains hagiographs made in 1823. The church's small bell tower is in the churchyard on an ancient plane tree. Other sites of the village include: St. Nicolas church (17thC) at the entrance to the village, Panagia church with icons from the 16th and 17th centuries, Agioi Apostoloi church (built 1895), St. Dimitrios church, the old chapel of Profitis Ilias, and the old watermills of Mylopotamos. The village also has a folklore museum that displays traditional items and many photographs. The village celebrates on 15th August with traditional revelry lasting three days. Another celebration takes place on carnival Sunday (the day before Orthodox lent) where traditional bean soup is made and served to visitors. Pades has three hostels and few taverns where the visitor can enjoy traditional food.

Armata (Armatovo)

After crossing the steep pass of Skala, one reaches the village of Armata, 10km from Pades and 46km from Konitsa. The village stands at 1030m altitude between many running streams and the dense black pine forests on the slopes of Smilianos peak. The last



Panoramic view of Armata

remaining inhabitants of the village are mainly wood-cutters but the vegetable produce grown in the gardens here is well-known. It is said that this area has subsoils rich in copper and other metals. The village was completely destroyed by the Turks in the 17thC and many inhabitants then moved to Trieste (Italy). The village was also gunned by the Nazi during the Second World War.

Many streams and rivers that

lead into the River Aoos, spring from the slopes of Mt. Smolikas around Armata. The largest of these are: Aspropotamos, Katrania, Potami, Asvestaria, Valia Siaka, Skrakas, and Gavril. On a small plateau called 'Varkos' at 1600m altitude, one can see two small temporary seasonal lakes. Armata is surrounded by the summits: Epta Bryses, Pantiafento, Smilianos, Tsiouma, Kyrgouri, Kapa Tourko, Dzilourousiou, Kiatra Beti and Panagia that have heights of 2000-2500m, and are all covered with dense oak, black pine and Balkan pine forests.

In the centre of the village, next to the stone school, stands the church of St. Nicholas that was built in the late 18thC after St. Kosmas the Aetolian passed through the area, and was later hagiographed by Samarinian pain-



Typical house at Armata



Traditional water power saw in Armata

ters. At the entrance to the village on an ancient oak tree one can see a cross placed there by St. Kosmas himself. The churches of St. Dimitrios and Panagia were destroyed by Nazi troops in 1943 but



A house wall made from stones of ophiolite

were later rebuilt in the 1970's. The church of St. Paraskevi was constructed in 1972 on the site where a monastery once stood. The monastery was destroyed by a fire in 1964. The village's hydropower



Church of St. Nicholas, Armata

installation is worth seeing, as is the area's only operational water-powered sawmill. The latter mill is constructed in traditional style with wooden presses.

The annual celebration of Armata on 15th August comprises traditional revelry with folk music, dancing, local food and wine. One musical rhythm most commonly heard in these celebrations is "Gaida", which originates from Macedonia region. The village offers the visitor a small coffee shop which can also serve food. There are few rooms to let as well.

Distrato (Briaza)

At the end of our journey to the villages of the Aaos valley lies Distrato. It is built at the foot of Mt. Vassilitsa at an altitude of 1000m. Its distance from Konitsa is 49km and from the National Ski Resort of Vasilitsa only 13km. Historical data about the village are absent as the steep slopes of the



surrounding mountains have hidden all the signs of the first residents.

It was renamed from Briaza to Distrato in 1928 and it owes its present name to the fact that it has two routes, one to Grevena and one to Ioannina. Its residents are all Vlach speaking, used to work in the past as mule drivers, tar producers, woodcutters and skillful waterpower saw operators. Nowadays, these professions have virtually been abandoned and the residents have turned in the seco-



Panoramic view of Distrato and Mt. Vassilitsa



Water power washing machine

ndary sector of the wood processing and tourism.

The tar was produced by the burning of specific wood of black pine, abundant in resin, and called 'dadi' within a specially made hole in the ground. It was used as an excellent medicinal product for the treatment of the wounds of animals and humans as well as insulation in ships.

The water power saws constructed by the men of Briaza were great facilities of the pre-industrial period. People from Briaza were famous for their spe-



Water-power saw timber men from Distrato on Mt. Grammos in 1927



Church of Panagia, Distrato

cialization on the technical construction and operation of them.

Distrato was burned entirely twice by the Nazi occupation army, which explains so far the missing elements of the particular architecture of the village, since it was built entirely after the Greek Civil War (1946- 1949).

Apart the Community Office, Distrato has some additional faci-



The bell tower of the church of Panagia in Distrato



The last tar worker in Distrato

ities, such as Citizen Centre Office (KEP), Regional Medical Center, Cultural Centre, Tapestry School, Community Library, Kindergarten and Elementary School.

The parish church, a basilica dedicated to Virgin Mary (St. Maria), is the heart of a three-day festival in mid-August. It was built by the master craftsman Martsekis Alexis from Pырsogianni in 1909.

North of the village, in a prominent position, is the chapel of Prophet Elias, which was built in 1814 with porous stones, carried by the inhabitants from the close area of Vovoussa. All the other chapels were built by the woodcutter's cooperatives and show the loggers' piety.

Distrato has considerable infrastructure for accommodation in hostels and rented rooms as well as taverns and cafe-bars where visitors can eat and have fun. In the wood and wax carving workshops you can buy shepherd's crooks, wood carved pictures and other ornate wooden artworks.

Famous are the trouts that are being reared in the two fish farms of the village. On the way to Mt. Vassilitsa just outside the village, one can visit the small hydroelectric plant operating by the waters of the stream Dristeli.



The chapel of Prophet Elias

National Ski Resort of Vassilitsa

The National Ski Resort of Vassilitsa, is located on the borders of the Prefectures of Ioannina and Grevena. It is one of the most famous Ski Resorts in Greece and in its facilities are included two chalets, a refuge, 18 ski slopes (the 2 of Olympic standards), 2 sliding lifts for adults, 2 for children, 1 triple lift and a two-seater (chair type). Some of its facilities (the Chalet Distrato, a ski school and a canteen) are located within the administrative boundaries of the Community of Distrato. The base of the Ski Resort is located at 1762m altitude and the highest point is the peak of

Mt. Vassilitsa at 2249m.

Due to the short distance from this Ski Resort (13 km paved road crossing beautiful forests of black and Balkan pines) the whole infrastructure of Distrato has Vassilitsa as its benchmark. One kilometer before the saddle of the two major peaks of the mountain, Vassilitsa and Gomara, there is a charming sub alpine pond with a colony of the rare amphibian alpine newt. Its distance from the main road is only 80m and one can easily go and admire the small lake surrounded by ancient Balkan pines.





National Ski Resort of Vassilitsa

4th Trail

The villages around Sarandaporos Narrows at the southernmost slopes of Mt. Grammos

Exohi – Agia Barbara – Pyxaria – Amarandos





The bell tower of the church of St. George in Amarandos

Exohi (Zelista)

Exohi village is built at the base of Mt. Koukos at an altitude of 720m, 10km from Konitsa. The area is covered by dense oak forests and has a good view of R. Sarandaporos. Oak forests are also found surrounding the village and in the areas of Vaenia, Limnioti and Tsournokia. Within Exohi (also called Zelista in previous years) one can see several traditional stone houses built with particular mastery. Churches of interest within the village are: Taxiarches (Archangels), St. Dimitrios, St. Kyriaki, St. Kyrikas, St. Minas, Agioi Anargyroi, St. Nicolas, St. Athanasios, Panagia and Profitis Ilias. About 1km from the village centre one can see several old water wells. Today 30 inhabitants remain in Exohi during the winter, pensioners and stock-breeders, but in the summer the population rises to 150. The village has a small



A typical house in Exohi



Country church of St. Demetrius, Exohi



Exohi is surrounded by dense oak forest



*Church of Archangels
(Taxiarhes) in Exohi*



Stone made fountain close to Exohi

coffee shop where the visitor can taste the local tsipouro and food. On 15th August each year the villagers celebrate with local dances in the central square.

Pyxaria (Belthouki)

Pyxaria is located 17.8km from Konitsa at 600m altitude. It is built at the highest point of Hondrovouni hill which is the southernmost part of Mt. Grammos. Belthouki, as it was named in the past, is surrounded by oaks, strawberry trees and boxwood. A few old stone houses have been saved as well as springs and wells. The natural thermal spa just below the village is impressive as the hot water gushes from the rocks and falls straight into the Sarandaporos River. Today the baths are not utilized, but before the Second World War they were fully operational and some of their old buildings can still be seen between



The landscape around Sarandaporos river



Well in Pyxaria



Typical houses in Pyxaria

the dense foliage. The chapel of Profitis Ilias is found just before the entrance to the village on a hill of the same name, and from here

one has a view of Kavasila therapeutic baths and River Sarandaporos. Other small chapels situated around the village are St. Kyriaki, St. Minas, St. Paraskevi and Virgin Mary (Panagia).

Agia Varvara (Plavali)

On a densely vegetated slope of altitude 720m, on the NE face of Goritsa hill, lies Agia Varvara village (22km from Konitsa). The men of this village travelled to other nearby regions and even to America and Romania where they



Church of St. Nicholas in Agia Varvara



Agia Varvara

worked as masons. Today, their work decorates many distant buildings. For example, the impressive church of St. Nicolas in the Zagorian village of Kipi was built in 1779 by masons of Agia Varvara. In the 17th century the village was located on the sites of Tseperovo and Katakolo. This village had special privileges while under Turkish rule, and gradually developed into a small town. In later years however, following an invasion of Albanian raiders, the

village was transformed into a large estate. The village was freed in 1913 and took its modern name in 1930.

Today, Agia Varvara has about fifty inhabitants, most of them farmers and builders. Sarandaporos River flows beneath the village and after a few kilometres crosses the border into Albania. St. Athanasios church is worth mentioning and the village also has two single-arched stone bridges – one next to the village cemetery



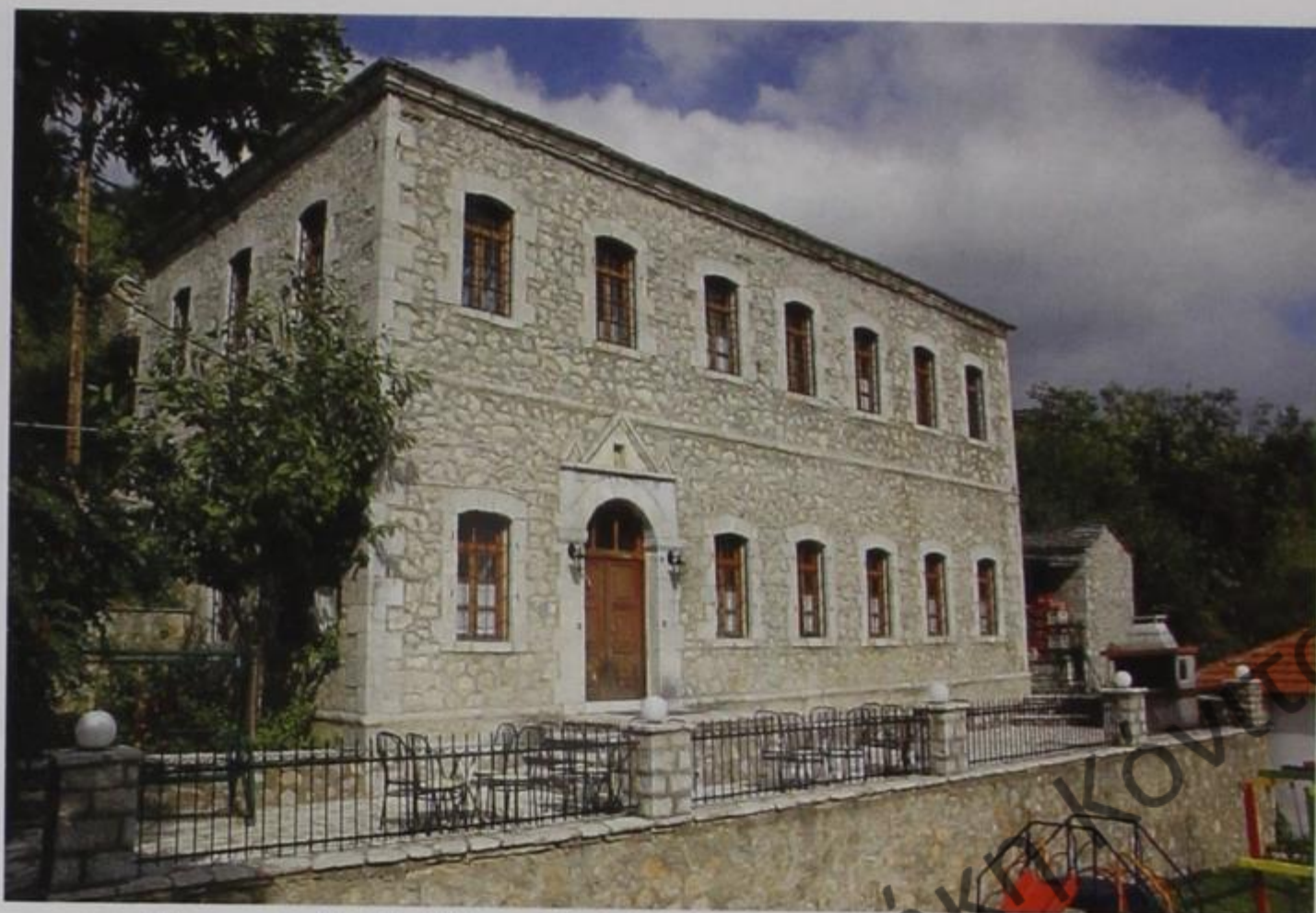
Stone made arched bridges close to Agia Varvara

and the other positioned over the stream that flows near St. Athanasios. Each year on the first Sunday following 15th August, the village relives the “custom of the cauldron” with a two-day celebration in the central square accompanied by traditional music. The central square is also the location of the tiny stone-built coffee shop which sometimes serves food.

Amarandos (Isvoros)

5km north of Agia Varvara at an altitude of 960m, and literally drowned in a sea of green, one can find Amarandos village. This village, which is known for its thermal spa, is located 27km from Konitsa town and is built on the eastern slopes of the southernmost peaks of Mt. Grammos (Kamenik 2042m and Maria 1637m). Amarandos is surrounded by dense forests of oak, beech and black pine and under this foliage arises the source of R. Ziasikas – a R. Sarandaporos tributary. From Kamenik peak the visitor has a wide view of the other





The renovated building of the old elementary school in Amarandos

peaks of Mt. Grammos, Mt. Smolikas, Mt. Tymfi and the mountains of Albania. It is thought that this area was an important transportation node in ancient and Roman times, and it once had a

military station that was functional until the Turkish invasion in the 15th C. The village also had many thriving processing trades such as cheese-making, textile industry, watermills and distilleries. The



Church of St George, Amarandos

area surrounding Amarandos, especially Kamenik peak, was the scene of fierce fighting during the Greek civil war.

Sights of the village include St. George's church, built in 1889 with its wood carved iconostasis and hagiography, and the chapels of the Holy Trinity, St. Nicolas, St. Panteleimon and St. John.

Apart from the above, one should also pay a visit to the stone-built school (dating to 1903), the single-arched stone mill bridge (constructed in 1862), the stone springs and the old watermill situated just below the village. The old secondary school building is also interesting. It was built in 1870 and is now used as a community hostel. A cultural society operates in Amarandos and publishes the journal "Amarandos-Isvoros". There is also the

Amarandos Society of St. George in Athens. These two societies organize the annual village celebrations on 14th and 15th August.

Therapeutic baths of Amarandos (Loutra Amarandou)

5km north of Amarandos village the road leads us to the thermal baths of Amarandos, located at the base of a vast limestone rock (1260m a.s.l.). The water has therapeutic qualities and is suitable for many conditions such as rheumatism, sciatica, etc. The steam which exits the rock via 15 karstic fissures reaches temperatures of 37°C. The spa has modern facilities with bathtubs and single rooms. The area around the spa has evolved into a summer tourist site with hotels, rooms to let and restaurants. The baths are operational from June to late September.



Thermal baths at Loutra Amarandou



5th Trail

The villages at the southern slopes
of Mt. Kleftis and Pyrgos

Trapeza – Nikanoras – Pyrgos – Molista – Ganadio – Monastiri





Church of Archangels, Ganadio

This journey starts from Konitsa and heads north on the Konitsa-Kozani National Road. After the junction to Amarandos we see many consecutive secondary roads that lead in the following directions: Trapeza to the left, Nikanoras to the right, Molista-Monastiri-Ganadio to the right and Pyrgos to the left.

Trapeza (Vranista)

A left turn off the National Road leads to the village Trapeza that is located 11km from Konitsa at 720m altitude. It is found on a trapezoid-shaped ledge above the Koulious stream between lush oak vegetation and has an excellent view. Vranista, as the village was named in older times, is today a small settlement surrounded by flat meadows, with only a few remaining inhabitants that are mostly farmers. In previous years the inhabitants of this village were masons who travelled throughout the Balkan region. Examples of their masonry can still be seen in the village today with its impressive dry-stone houses. Around Trapeza there are many



Trapeza



Typical house in Trapeza

chapels such as Profitis Ilias, St. Kyrikas, St. Athanasios and St. John.

Nikanoras (Kortinista)

Following the Konitsa-Kozani National Road, at the 12.5km point take the secondary road to the right and after 3km you will reach Nikanoras village. At 720m altitude Nikanoras is built amid a beautiful oak forest. Its few inhabitants are farmers, builders and foresters.

The parish church is found in the centre of the village and is dedicated to St. Marina. Other smaller churches found in or around the village include: St. Nicolas, St. George, Panagia Evangelistria, Metamorfofi tou Sotiros (Transfiguration of Christ) and St. Athanasios. Around Nikanoras small pathways lead to the springs of Dimortsa, Machaira, Pournia and Soutiniades. Above the village one can see the oak, black pine and fir forested peaks of Krevvatia (1280m) and Kleftis (1847m).



View of Nikanoras



The central square of Nikanoras and the church of St. Marina

These peaks witnessed fierce fighting first between Greeks and Italians in the Second World War, and then later in the Greek civil war. Village celebrations are held on the day of St. Marina (17th July) and again on 7th August (St. Nikanoras day). The latter



The decorated pulpit in the church of St. Marina

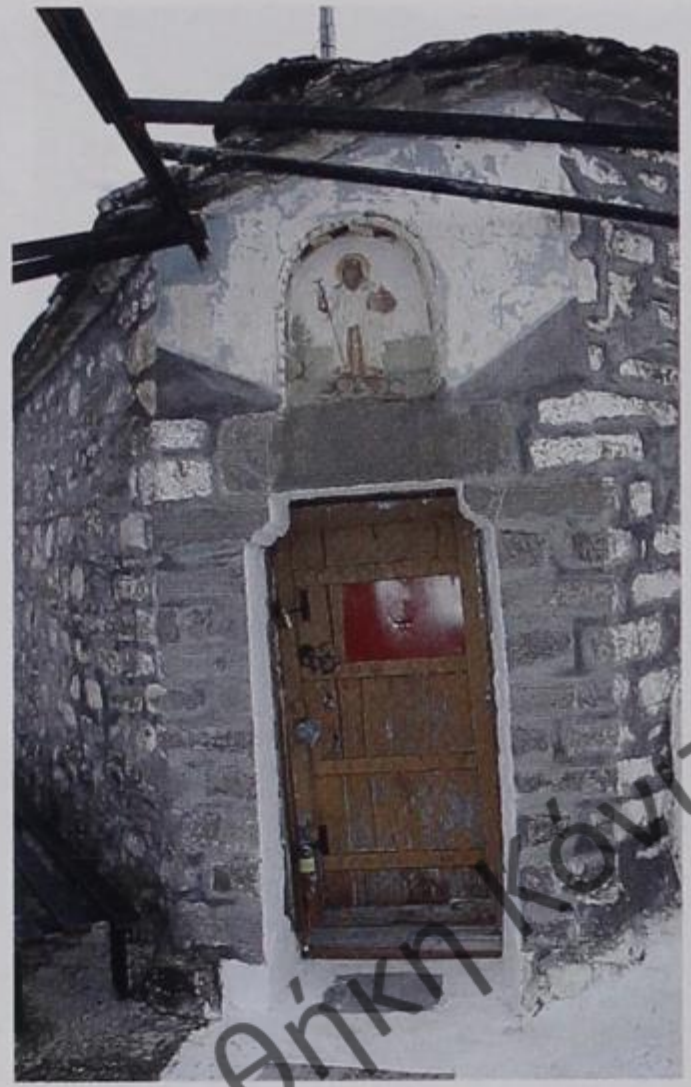
celebrations are held at the St. Nikanoras monastery where villagers and visitors pay their worship then celebrate with traditional songs and dancing.

Vergos bridge

Vergos bridge is a single-arched stone bridge built over Kryoneri



Vergos' bridge



Monastery of St. Nikanoras

stream (a Sarandaporos tributary) next to the old Vergos Inn. It was built in the late 19th C by the craftsman Fotis Lolos from the nearby village of Trapeza.

Monastery of St. Nikanor

This monastery is found on the top of a precipitous rock sited above and north of Nikanoras village. It was built in 1816 following the plague epidemic that struck the village in 1815. Access to the monastery is by a narrow tarmac road that starts close to the village. The only parts of the monastery still standing are the chancel, a small basilica and some cells. To visit the chancel one must climb sixty steps that have been carved into the rocks. Above the

small entrance to the chancel one can see an inscription that refers to the monastery's murals (dated 1826). All the monastery's artefacts are now stored somewhere else for safety.

Pyrgos (Stratsiani)

Pyrgos is built at 940m altitude on the SW slopes of Kamenik peak (Mt. Grammos) beneath the lower Pyrgos peak (1419m). The village has a wonderful view of the Sarandaporos valley and Mt. Smolikas. From the Konitsa-Kozani National Road Pyrgos is reached by turning left, onto a B' road just after the junction of rivers Vourkopotamos and Sarandaporos (Laskaridou bridge) and travelling for 6km (25.5km from Konitsa).



An elaborated gate at Pyrgos

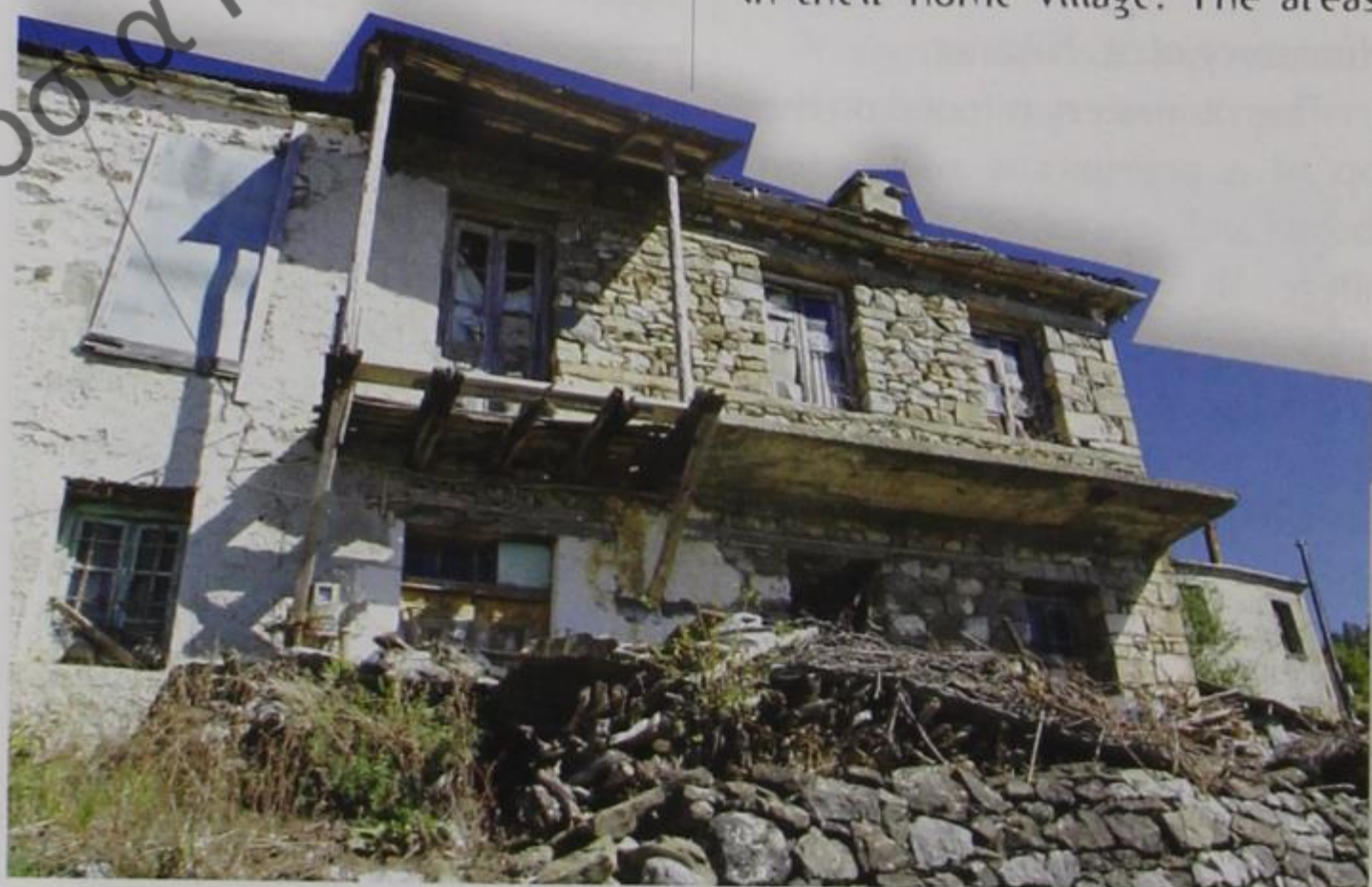


An engraved key stone of a house entrance

The local photographic exhibition housed in the village school is of special interest as it shows pictures of Pyrgos and the surrounding area as it was in the past. The old stone mansions, village squares, wells and derelict houses remind us how the village once was. In previous times, the inhabitants of Pyrgos migrated to far away countries such as Congo in Africa, where they work and became rich.

Some even became benefactors funding construction work in their home village. The areas

The few villagers still living here are mainly builders and pensioners. The churches of St. George, St. Paraskevi and Panagia are remarkable.





Church of St. George



The elementary school



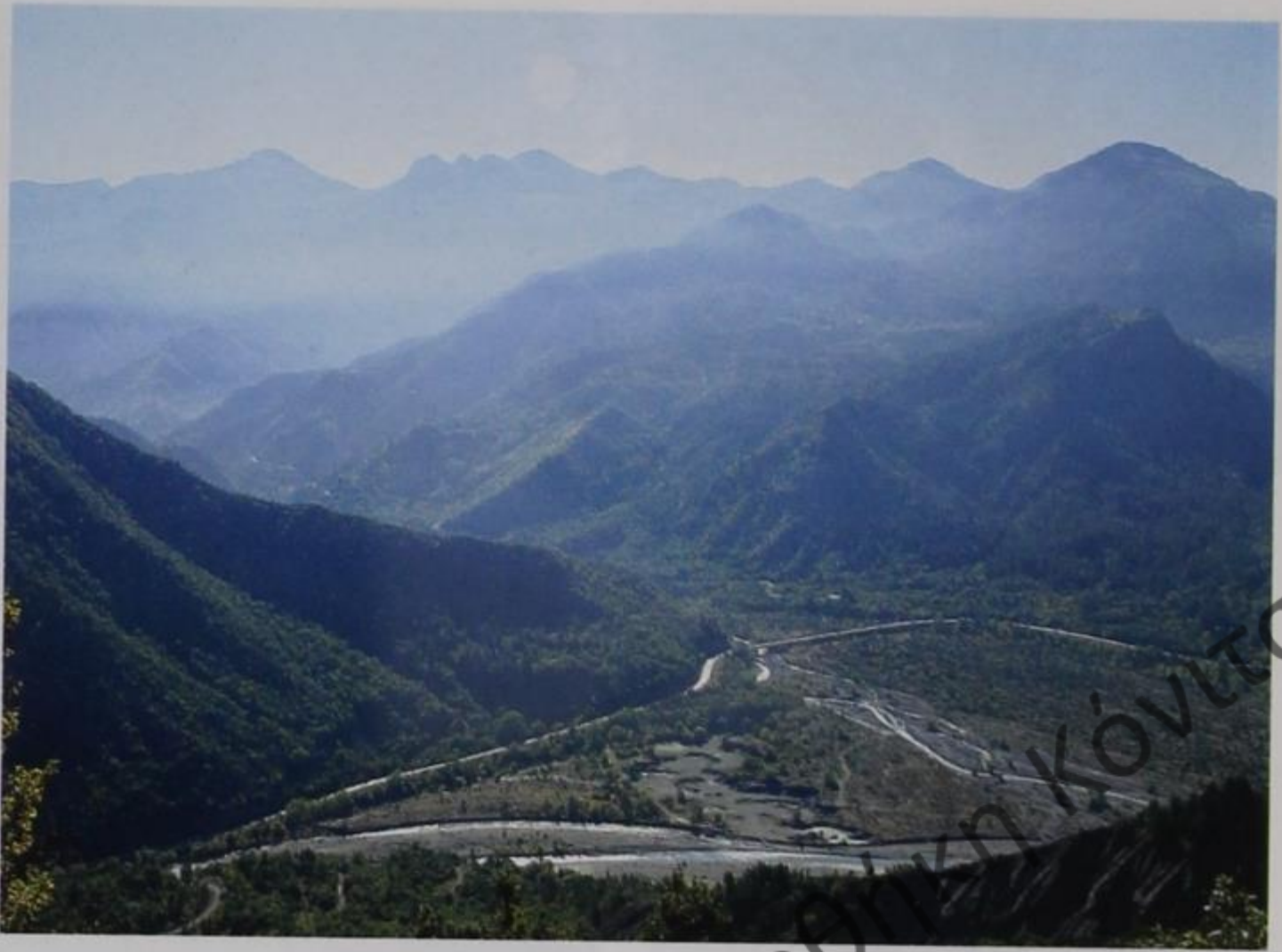
The memorial at the entrance of the village



Sarandaporos bridge



Engraved symbolic stones



Mt. Smolikas and Sarandaporos river from the road to Pyrgos

around the village saw aggressive fighting during the Greek civil war. The Pyrgos annual fete is held on 15th August in the central square.

Stratsiani Monastery

Following the uphill footpath for about twenty minutes from Pyrgos village, we reach the ruins of Stratsiani Monastery of the Holy Trinity. The monastery was completely destroyed in c. 1930 and its iconostasis and holy icons are now housed in the parish church of St. George in Pyrgos. Today, next to the ruins one can see a spring. The church of the Holy Trinity was built in 1910 on a site northwest of the now ruined monastery.

Molista (Mesaria)

Molista is built at 840m altitude on a densely forested slope of Mt. Kleftis, 21.6km from Konitsa town and 4.4km from the National Road. Molista is the central village and until 1926 also included the two nearby settlements of Ganadio and Monastiri. It is said that these three villages once formed a single settlement called Molista until a smallpox epidemic wiped out much of the population and those remaining moved into the smaller settlements of Mesaria, Ganadio and Monastiri. Many believe the village was first founded in the late 17th C. Today, all three villages have very few inhabitants, mostly pensioners.



People from Molista and other villages of Epirus in Bucharest, Romania, in 1913

The church of St. Nicolas in the centre of the village was built in 1864 by local hands. It has an intricate iconostasis which is

especially impressive. Its tall bell tower close to the ancient oak tree and the beautiful roofed veranda of the church complete the picture of



Rich merchants from Molista in Bucharest, Romania, at the beginning of the 20th century



Wood sculpture ceiling

the pretty village square. Other churches are positioned in beautiful locations in and around the village such as: St. Paraskevi, St. Varvara, St. Dimitrios, St. Haralambos, St. George, St. Minas, Agioi Apostoloi, Panagia, Agioi Theodoroi, Transfiguration of Christ and the church of the Holy Trinity.

Most of the inhabitants of Molista were farmers or craftsmen (stone masons, plasterers or



Elaborated cornerstones



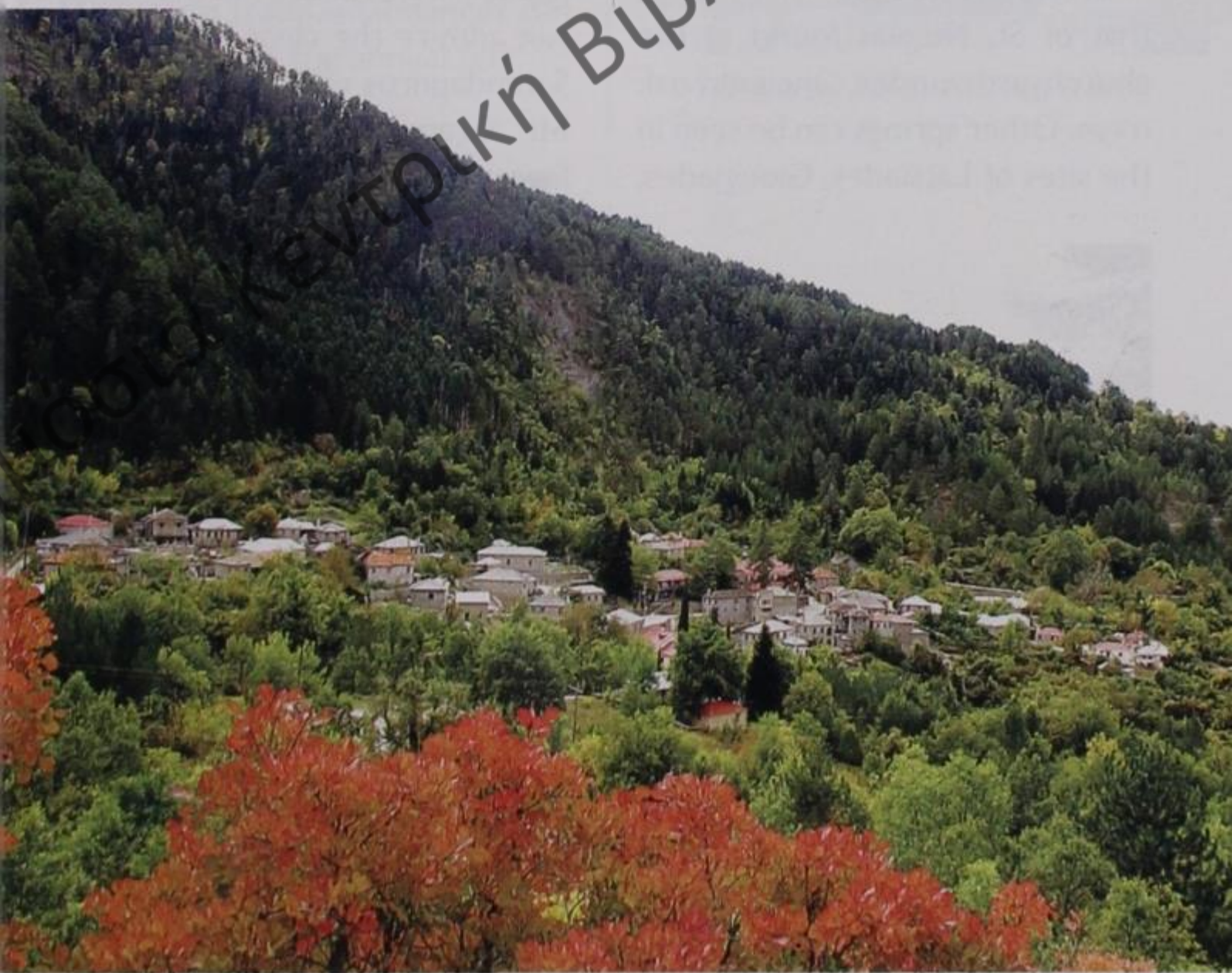
Church of St. Nicholas, Molista

carpenters). Some well-known Molistan craftsmen of the previous century were Vasilis Harisiadis and Athanasios Serifis. Additionally, many men of this village were well-known tradesmen in Bucharest and Cairo and “brought their money home in barrels”.

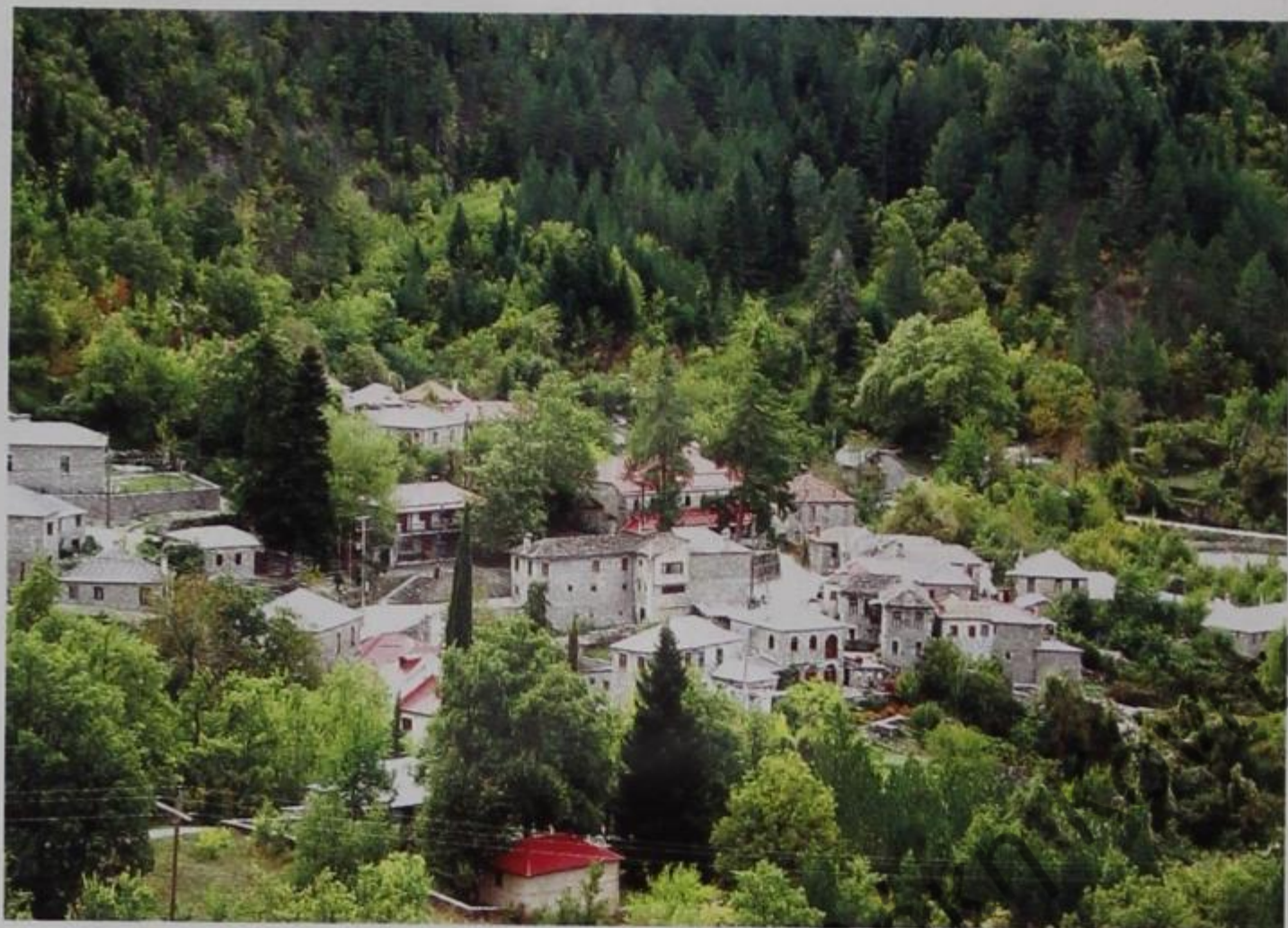
The mansions of Molista are all beautiful and were built in fort-like style. There are also simple rectangular houses with attached roofs. These simple houses had two storeys: the lower storey used for animals and comprising a cellar, and the upper storey with the living quarters. Two mills were also operational in the village in the past.



Entrance door in Molista



Molista is surrounded by dense forest



The village has numerous springs with fresh crystalline water. The prettiest of these is that of St. Nicolas found in the churchyard under ancient oak trees. Other springs can be seen in the sites of Latsiades, Giougiades,

Tzouadiko, Kallimanou, Desi, Stopito and Pigadouli. From the top of the Tziantora hill the visitor can admire the clear view of the Sarandaporos valley, the ridges of Mt. Grammos and the densely forested Mt. Kleftis.



On the first Saturday following 15th August the village comes alive with traditional folk dancing and song during the annual fete. In the past, the women of the village volunteered to help in the monastery-owned agricultural land two or three times a year. These working days concluded with a celebration held in the village square. Molista celebrations can be divided into three categories: "Esperides" where snacks and wine were provided by the host in the evening, "Ziafetia" which were held in the open air, and folk dances which were attended by all the villagers. The latter category was held during carnival, Shrove Monday, Easter and Christmas. Many local traditional dances can be seen during the annual fete.



The entrance of St. Nicholas church



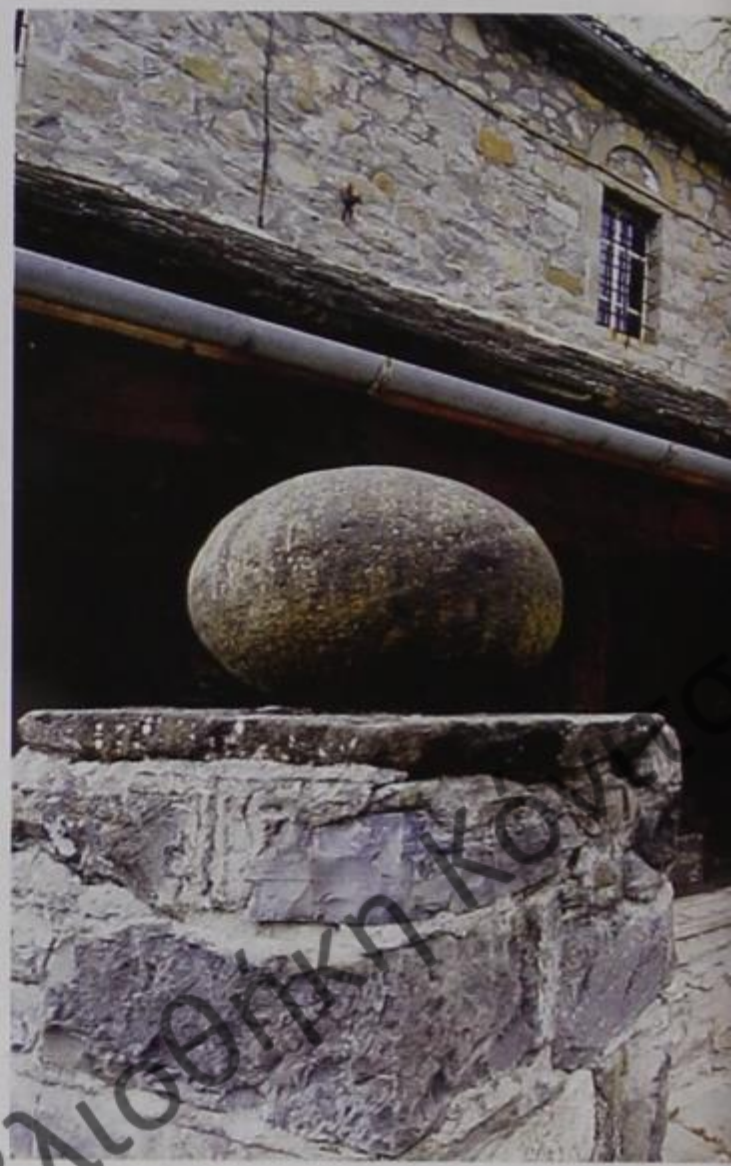
Restored house in Molista

Molista village has a traditional hotel that also offers meals with local specialities.

Ganadio

The next stop on our journey is Ganadio, located 22,7km from Konitsa and 5,5km from the National Road. The village is built at 890m altitude on the slopes of Mt. Kleftis (1847m). It is one of the prettiest traditional villages of the Konitsa region and is known for its beautiful mansions and charming alleyways.

The residents of this village were among the richest of the area as they were mostly merchants and bankers, as can be seen by the lavish mansions. Some inhabitants were masons, the most famous of which were Alexis Papadimitriou and Apostolos Dokos. Today, the winter residents of Ganadio rarely number more than 15 and their



income is derived from small allotments, vineyards and tsipouro production. In the summer months the population reaches 200.



A mansion in Ganadio

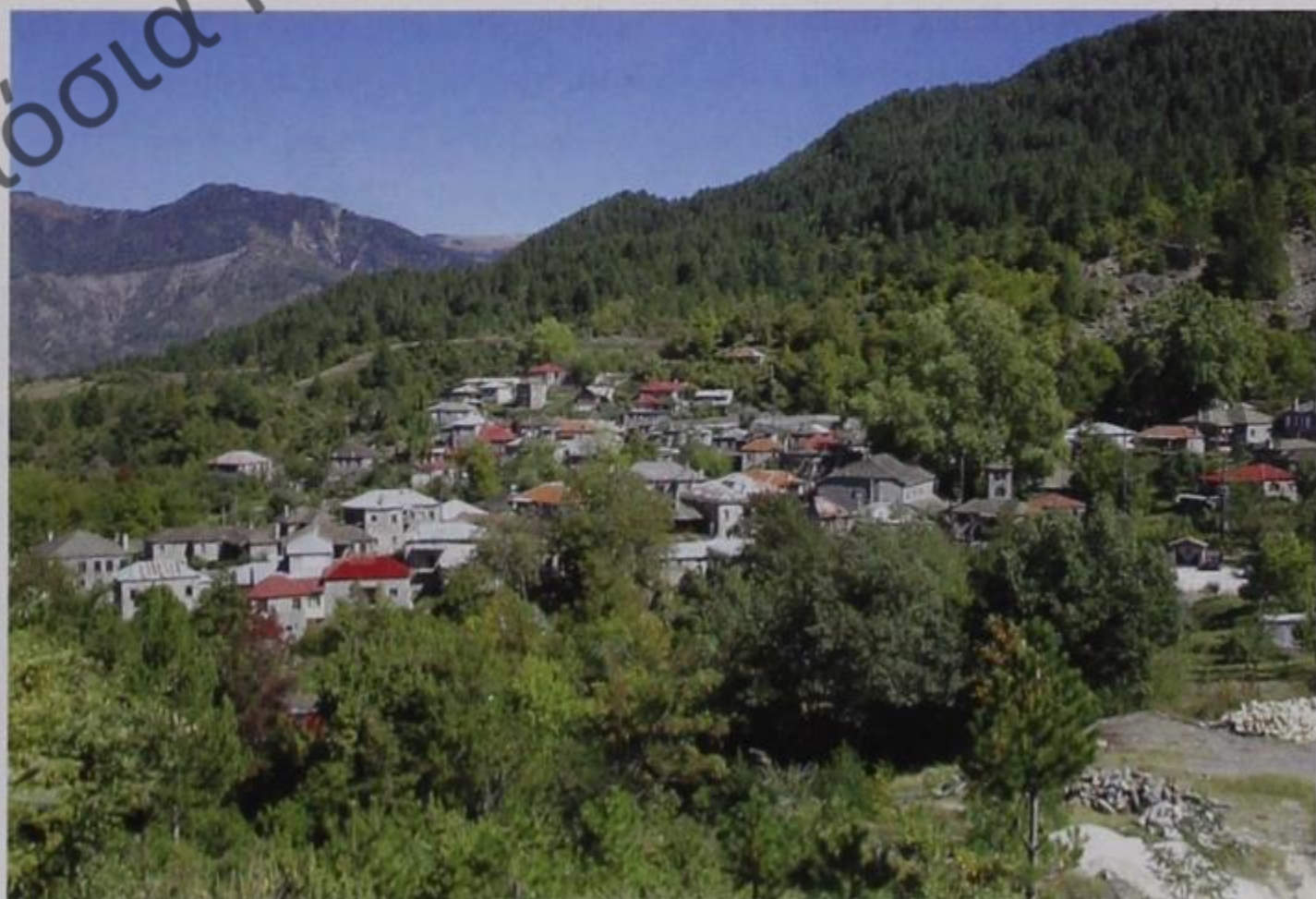


Church of Archangels (Taxiarches), Ganadio

The original Ganadio village was located on the site "Livadi" and was built in the 17th C. The modern settlement was constructed in 1818. In the central square

one can see the church of Taxiarches (Archangels) that was built in 1856 by the craftsman Harisiadis. Its three-aisled basilica and local grey-black stone are characteristic. Small chapels are also found throughout the village, as are four small arched stone bridges that were built in about 1890. The stone well "Natsaioi" provides the village with potable water.

The stone built houses are recognizable by their black stone, tiled roofs and fort-like construction. On the edge of central square one can see the three-storeyed house of Lazaros Xinos (built in 1860) with its characteristic tower that offered defence from frequent raids by bandits. Nearby is the impressive Giousiou family house, built in 1909. Its stones are carved to the left and it has a small arched



Panoramic view of Ganadio

bridge in its entrance.

Spyros Xinos (1820-1865) was a local benefactor who left all his wealth to the village. Using these funds the "Spyridonios School" was established in the entrance to the village. This primary school and lyceum functioned continuously until 1928, and at one time had 80 pupils from the surrounding area. Xinos's endowment also helped finance the girl's school and boarding school.

The annual fete of Ganadio is a special occasion and is held on 15th August in the village square. Local musicians and traditional folk dances accompany this celebration until the early hours of the morning. On 20th August 1930 the holy icon of the crucifixion shed tears and each year on that date the locals gather in the central square to dine on Lenten food. On 8th November each year the parish church of Taxiarches celebrates and the villagers dance local folk dances. The small coffee shop in



the central square serves traditional delicacies.

In the neighbouring Vourkopotamos valley one can see two ruined watermills and two small arched stone bridges which can be reached via the road that leads to Pournia and Agia Paraskevi.



This elaborated house in Ganadio demonstrates the old stone masons' craftsmanship



The iconostasis of the church of Archangels (Taxiarches)

Monastiri (Botsifari)

The next stop in our tour is the picturesque village of Monastiri (900m altitude), 21.5 km from Konitsa. This is a tiny village that until recently was part of the settlement of Molista. It is built on the SE edge of Mt. Kleftis between



Ganadio

dense vegetation with oaks, dogwoods, hornbeams and wild pears. The Greek name of this village means 'monastery' and the monastery of Molista is found at a short distance from the village. Monastiri was probably established in the 12th C at the same time the monastery was built.

This traditional village of Konitsa has stone-paved streets and stone houses. In the winter it has very few inhabitants but in summer they number about 100. The villagers are pensioners who work in their gardens or make wine and tsipouro from their vines. One can see many springs on the outskirts of the village, such as Pigadi and Draziou to the north, Platonas to the east, and Giogou next to the church of Panagia.

The forest of Tsoumbani starts at the village boundary and stretches to the peak of Mt. Kleftis covering an area of 15,000ha. The forest comprises black pines and firs.

The parish church of St. Athanasios (dated 1927) has a single-aisled basilica, two-domed



Elementary school in Monastiri



A cobbled alley in Monastiri

roof and a columned arcade. Many small churches can be found in the area, such as Agioi Taxiarches, Profitis Ilias, Panagia (Nativity of the Virgin Mary) and St. Haralambos. The village's annual celebration takes place on 5-6th August in the central square with revelry and traditional folk dances and songs. The celebration is preceded by the custom of "Auctioning the Cross" where the bids are made in olive oil.

Monastery of Panagia Molistas

The monastery is located in a forested area just above the village of Monastiri. It can be reached by taking a left turn off the main road just before entering the village, or by taking a narrow footpath from the village centre. The monastery was first built in 1672 but in a

different site. It was rebuilt in its present form in 1819. Of the monastery one can visit the chancel, double bell tower, old stables, and two-storeyed cells that were inhabited by monks until 1975. Today these cells are used as hostels for pilgrims. The chancel has a single basilica with two doors and women's quarters. Two stone candelabra dating to 1831, the wood carved iconostasis and some



A gate with a symbolic engraved stone in Monastiri



Engraved stone at the entrance of Panagia Monastery

rare holy icons can be seen in the nave. In difficult times (draught, epidemics, etc), the holy icon of the Mother Mary would be removed from the monastery and

circulated around the village to bless the locals. The monastery celebrates annually on 21st November with a special service.



The entrance of the monastery of Panagia

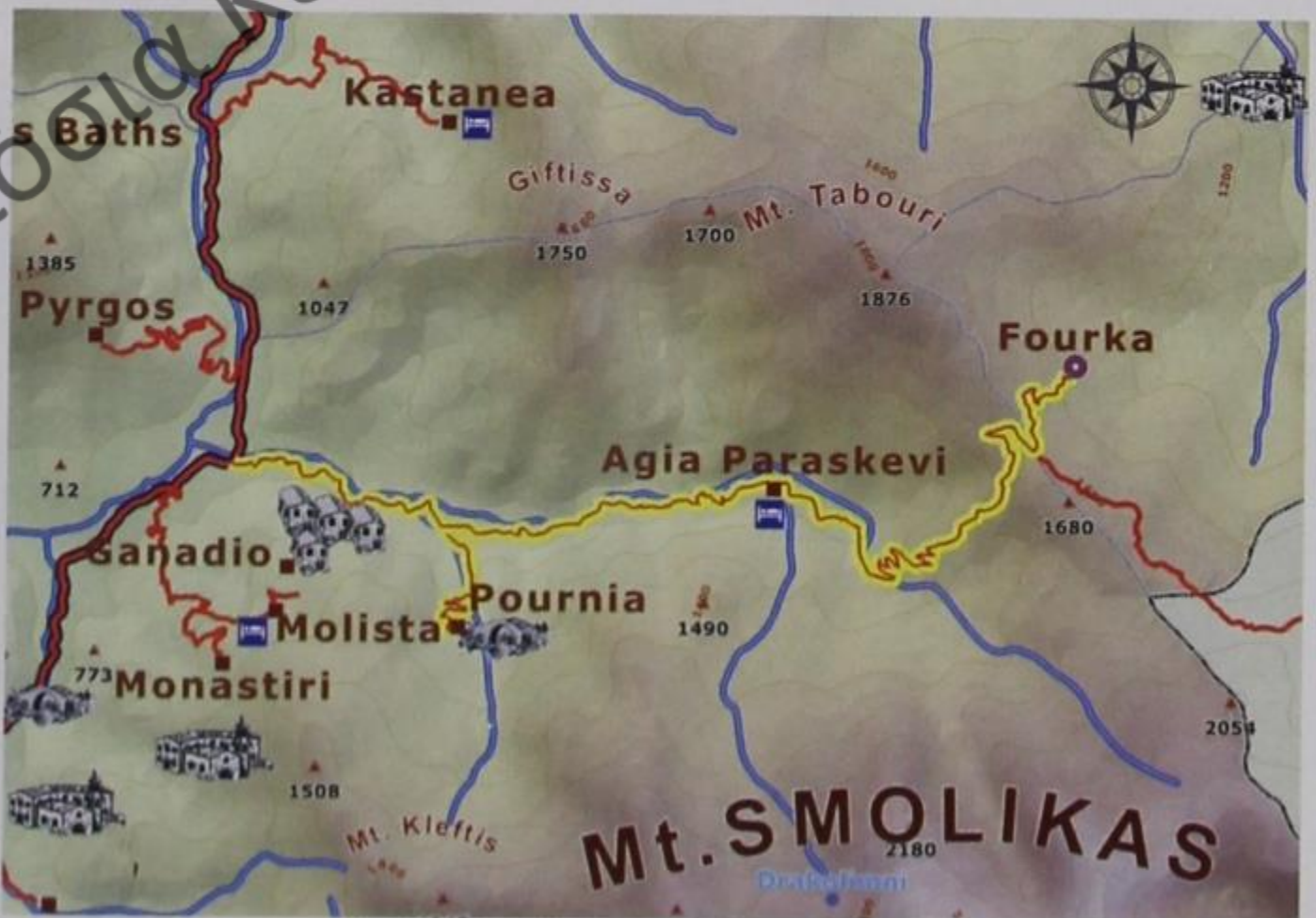
*Black pines on the route
to Fourka*



6th Trail

The villages in Vourkopotamos valley
on Mt. Smolikas

Pournia – Agia Paraskevi – Fourka





The bell tower of the church of Panagia in Agia Paraskevi

This trail commences from the Konitsa-Kozani National Road, 18.2 km from Konitsa. Just before the confluence of the Rivers Vourkopotamos and Sarandaporos (at Laskaridou bridge), turn right off the National Road and follow the B' road to the villages of Pournia, Agia Paraskevi and Fourka.

Pournia (Staritsiani)

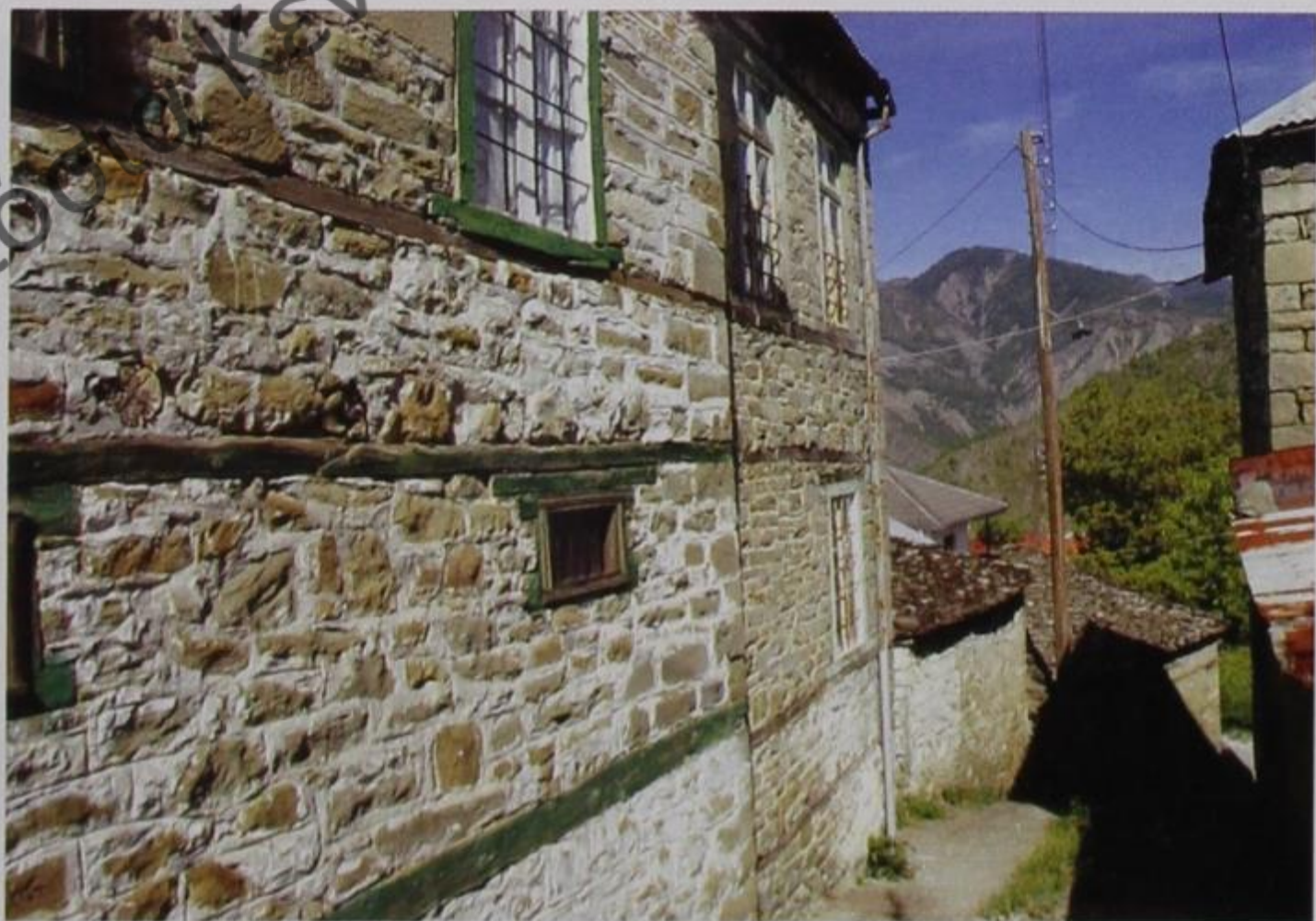
As we ascend the beautiful valley of Vourkopotamos, we turn right and after 3km arrive at the pretty village of Pournia. The village is located 25.1 km from Konitsa and 6.9km from the National Road. Pournia has plenty of cold fresh running water and dense forests of oak and black pine, while further up the slopes of Mt. Kleftis and the peak of Daliopoli (Mt. Smolikas) a beech



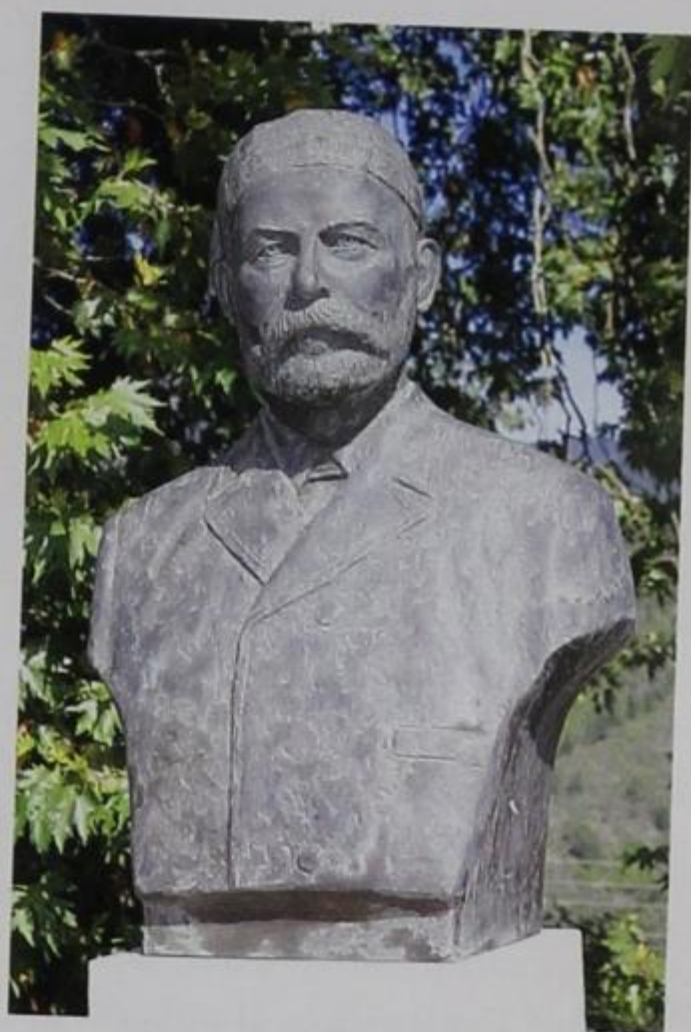
An ornate gate in Pournia

forest dominates. Just before entering the village the visitor encounters the bridge of Mavri Petra that has been standing in that position since 1817, and the icon of Pantocrator that is etched onto the sheer face of a nearby rock.

Walking through the narrow streets one can see beautiful intricate doors, sturdy buildings and grand mansions that signify the prosperity of this village in



A cobbled alley in Pournia



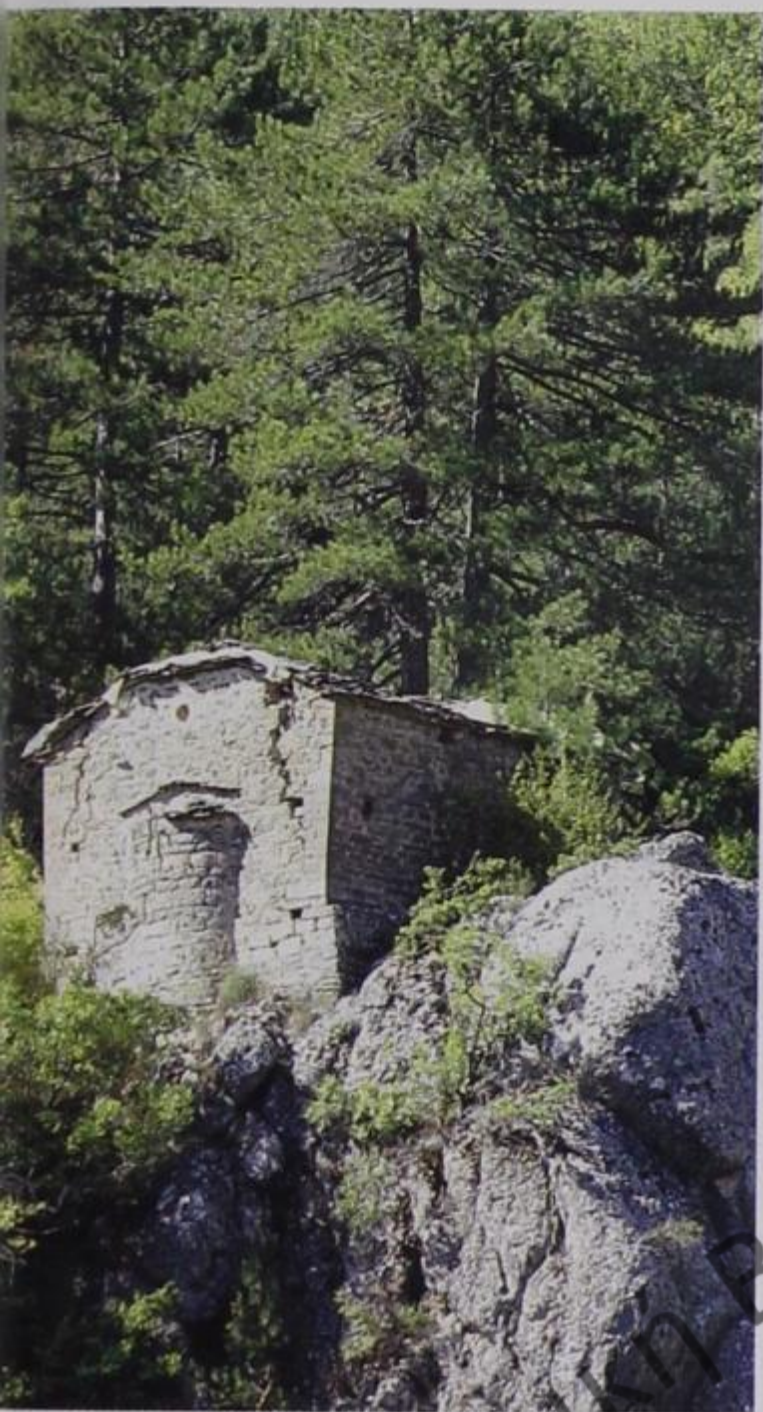
Vassilios Exarhos, the most significant donator of Pournia



older times. An important religious monument is the central church dedicated to the archangels Michael and Gabriel, the patron saints of the village. The

modern church stands on the site of the older one. Other significant public buildings include the school and an old hostel east of the main church building. The single-arched

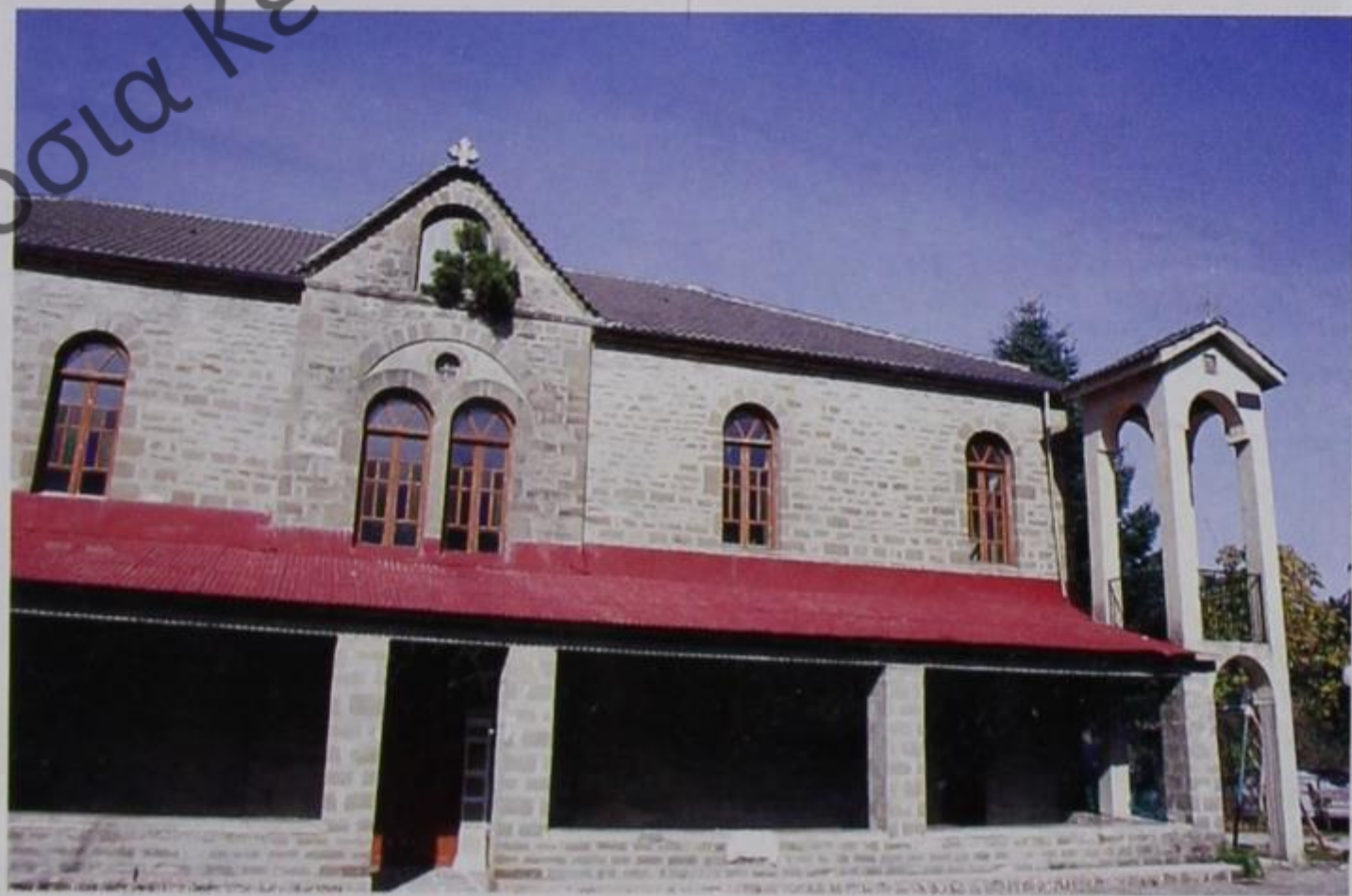




A chapel, dedicated to the Transfiguration of Christ, on a precipitous rock close to Pournia

bridge of Selio (constructed in 1871) is also worth a visit. It is said that the village once comprised three quarters: Staritsa, Selo and Anagyroi, and the older name of the village was derived from that of the Staritsa quarter. The village was renamed in 1928 and its modern name means “damson”.

According to another tradition, Pournia arose from an older village named “Trapia” a short distance away from the present site. Trapia was once one of the largest villages in the area with 300 families and 1200 inhabitants, mostly farmers and craftsmen. However, in the 14-16th Centuries the plague forced them to move from their homes and Trapia was left deserted. The present inhabitants of Pournia are retired farmers and woodcutters. The annual village celebration is held on 15th August in the central square.



The parish church of Taxiarches at Purnia with the unusual black pine on its roof

From the village many forest roads and footpaths lead to scenic locations. From the "Daliopoli" site near Kleftis, which was the site of fighting during the Greek civil war, one can admire the panoramic view of the mountain ridges and slopes of Mts. Trapezitsa, Tymfi, Grammos and Smolikas. Pournia has a hostel, tavern and a coffee shop.

Mavri Petra bridge

The bridge of Mavri Petra (Black Stone) is located just before Pournia village and was built in



The bridge of Mavri Petra close to Pournia

1817. Its arch is 20m in length and 20m tall and has two additional characteristic quadrantal supporting buttresses. The icon of Pantocrator etched onto the sheer face of a nearby rock, the well and the old ruined watermill all complete the picture of this attractive area.

Agia Paraskevi (Kerasovo)

The road crossing Vourkopotamos valley leads to Agia Paraskevi, 28km from Konitsa. This is the largest village in the area with 200 permanent inhabitants and many more in the summer (c. 1000). The village is situated at 1046m altitude next to the River Vourkopotamos. The village was renamed in 1953 but the locals prefer its old name of Kerasovo. It is a beautiful village



The fresco of Pantocrator on the cliff next to Mavri Petra bridge



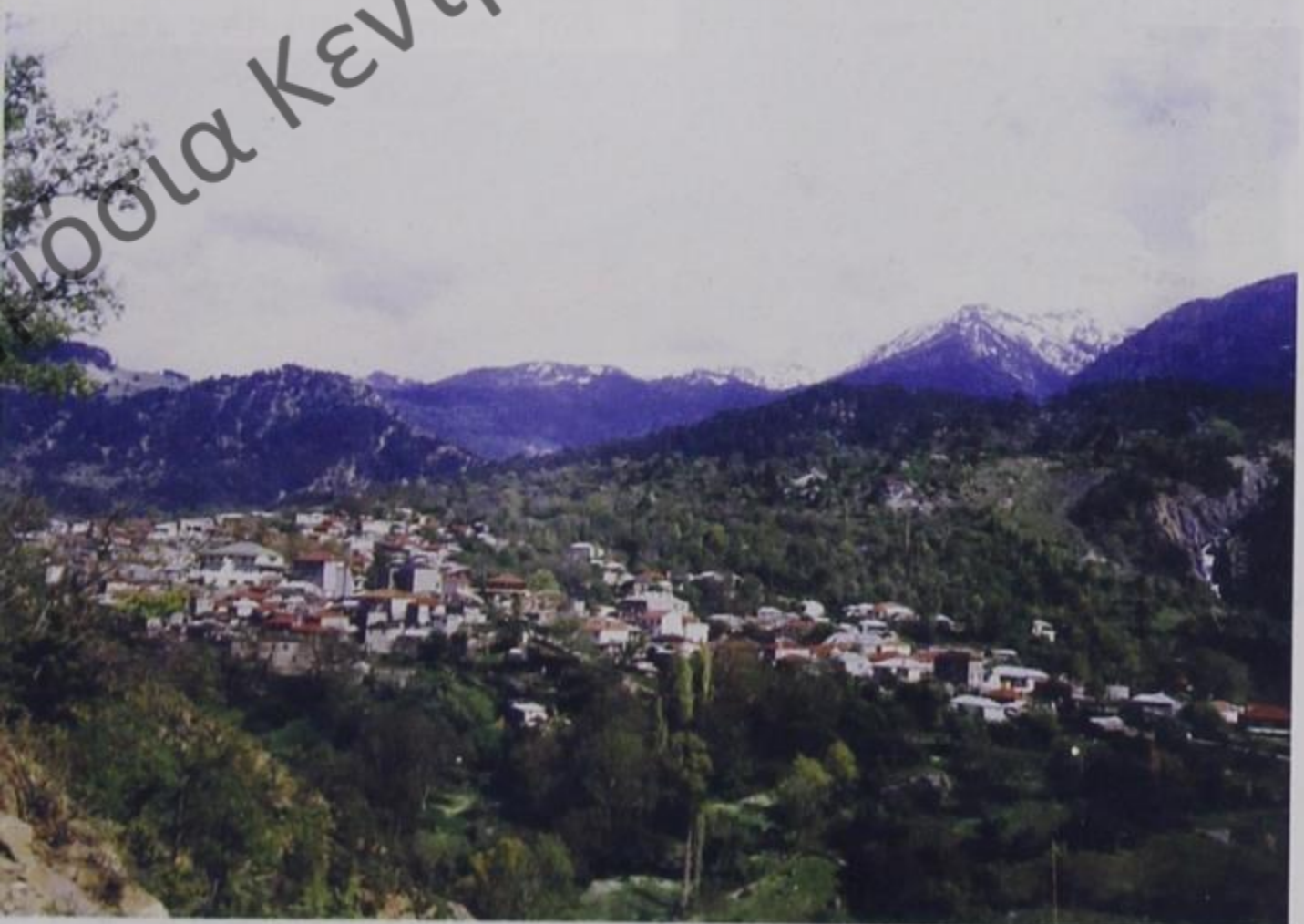
*The parish church of Panagia
in Agia Paraskevi*

with pretty houses, many streams, extensive conifer and beech forests, and alpine meadows. Kerasovo found itself in the centre of the Second World War during

the first days of the Italian invasion into Greece.

In older times the villagers were mostly craftsmen and muleteers. Stone masons from Kerasovo once worked in many parts of Greece and other countries. Today the inhabitants are farmers and woodcutters. Cattle, goats and sheep graze on the slopes of Mt. Smolikas and Tambouri.

The village has many churches such as Panagia (Dormition of Virgin Mary) built in 1812, St. Nicolas (built 1850), St. Paraskevi (built 1850), St. Dimitrios (built 1926), St. Athanasios, St. Varvara, Profitis Ilias, Holy Trinity, and others. The old mills and wells in the village are worth seeing, as is the old primary school. In the centre of the village one can see a large building that belongs to the Fellowship of Agia Paraskevi. The



A panoramic view of Agia Paraskevi



village is built in concentric style with the centre comprising the

*Drakolimni (Dragonlake)
on Mt Smolikas*

inner village, two uneven squares and twelve districts that belonged to the twelve most influential families.

The musical traditions of this village are special. Even today well-



The elementary school of Agia Paraskevi



The church of St. Paraskevi

known musicians of Kerasovo entertain the public during the area's local festivals. The annual festival of Agia Paraskevi (26th July) is a two-day celebration that starts with a church service and continues with much music, folk dancing and feasting in the village square. On 24th June, there is an oregano festival where the women of the village gather oregano from a nearby mountain (a three-hour walk from the village) then return to the central square to sing and dance.

Kerasovo has hotels and rooms to let and plenty of traditional taverns where the visitor can enjoy good food (especially roast lamb and entrails). The mountain paths to Dragon lake (Drakolimni) and Smolikas peak (2637m) commence from Kerasovo village,



*Water power washing machine
at Vathilakos stream,
close to Agia Paraskevi*

as do many other smaller paths to the area's forests.

The Musicians

The local music tradition of Konitsa comes to life in the summer festivals, where even now the descendants of renowned families of musicians perform well known and beloved tunes such as "Peklari," "Leskovikiariko," "Zermatino" and "Gaida," recalling age-old memories. The music of the Konitsa region differs from the musical tradition of the rest of Epirus, having been positively influenced by the traditions of Western Macedonia and Southern Albania.

The musicians know the customs of each village very well and every generation passes on to the next the words, rhythms and sounds of the songs for weddings, festivals, christenings and other events. The band, which includes a clarinet, a violin, a lute and a tambourine, is the dominant

instrumental unit of the musical tradition in Epirus. Its members have a steady professional relationship between them, their leader is the clarinet player and the band is named after him.

The clarinet and the violin are melodic instruments and with them musicians display their abilities. They take advantage of the instruments' melodic range to explore the full potential of traditional musical scales, performing the characteristic slides of the musical style of Epirus, the ornate melodies and the mellifluous dialogue between the two instruments, characteristic of the "gaida" of Pirsogianni.

The "gaida" is special kind of instrumental piece in the Konitsa region, dance tunes that are named after a bagpipe instrument of Western Macedonia called "gaida," and here the



Traditional festival at the chapel of Prophet Elias (Ailias) on Mt. Grammos, Lykorachi



The role of the traditional music groups of the area of Konitsa in several social and private events, especially during summer, is fundamental

clarinet mimics the technique and the sound of that instrument, bridging the musical traditions of Epirus and Macedonia. Usually these tunes start with a slow rhythm and eventually pick up tempo, while the musicians improvise on the basic melodies of the music and the dance.

There are many variations of the basic melody, named according to the area where they are

most common: "gaida paidiotiki," "gaida pirsogiannitiki" etc. Kerasovo (Agia Paraskevi) was the cradle of most musicians of the Konitsa region, with families like the Filippideoi and Betzeoi being legendary for generations. Other important musical families of the region which preserve the tradition today are the Chalkiades, Alexeoi and Panousakides.



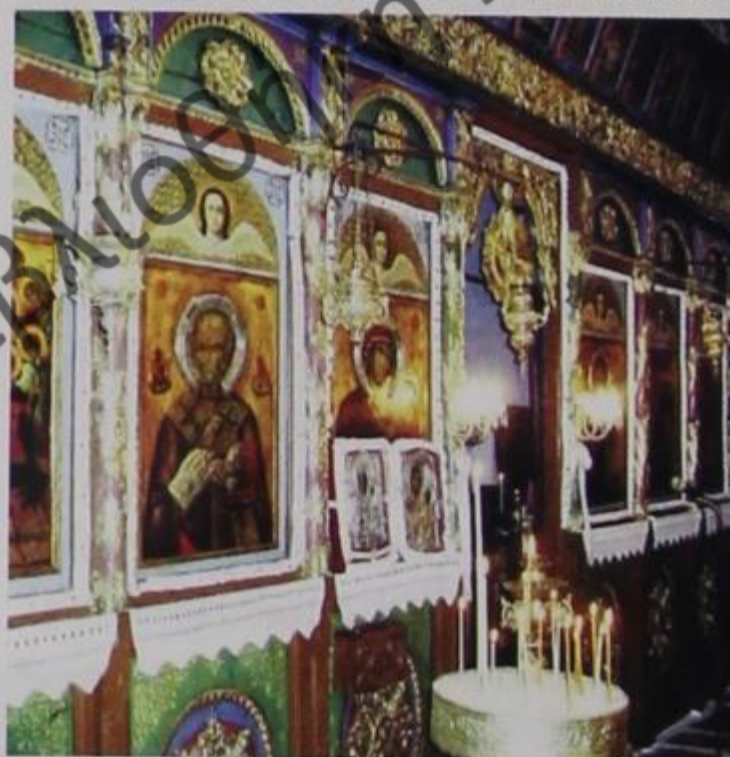
Fourka

Continuing the ascent of Vourkopotamos valley, 11km from Kerasovo, and on the slopes joining Mts Smolikas and Tambouri we arrive at Fourka village. The village has an amphitheatre style and is built at 1360–1450m altitude, 40km from Konitsa. It is the highest village in Greece that its inhabitants lived here all year round, in contrary to other Greek villages built over 1100m where the inhabitants deserted their homes in the winter months. Fourka is surrounded by dense forests of oak, beech, black pine and fir, and extensive meadows. For this reason, farming and tree-felling are the main professions of the villagers here.

Fourka is also a historical site as brutal fighting occurred here during the Greek-Italian war. The colonel Konstantinos Davakis was wounded and lieutenant Alexan-



The parish church of St. Nicholas, Fourka



Panoramic view of Fourka



Panoramic view to Mt Grammos from Mt. Prophet Elias of Fourka

dros Diakos took his last breath on Profitis Ilias summit to the north of the village.

The history of Fourka dates back before the 16th C. The village arose by the union of the four settlements of Palaiochori, Liatsikas, Mavrovo and Fourka. The village then numbered 3000 inhabitants who paid very low taxes to the Ottoman admini-

stration because of its mountainous location. Social and economic reasons together with frequent looting by Albanian raiders all contributed to the dispersion of villagers during the 17-19th Centuries. More recently, the wars of 1940-1949 and population migration to urban areas have greatly reduced the population of Fourka.



The memorial on the top of Mt. Prophet Elias, close to Fourka, is dedicated to the Greek soldiers fell during the first days of the Italian invasion in Greece in 1940



Fourka, located at 1340m altitude, is the highest village in Greece, inhabited by people even during the winter

Only 25 villagers remain today and these are farmers and tree-fellers. However, the village livens up in the summer months when many relatives and villagers return to their birthplace. Additionally, many nomadic farmers move up to this mountain village in the summer thus increasing the population to c. 300.

The churches here are worth visiting (St. Nicolas, St. George, St. Athanasios, Profitis Ilias), and so is the Cultural Centre with its library, and the Folklore Museum with its displays of agricultural life in the village. The village also has some interesting local customs.

Tambouri and Profitis Ilias peaks can be reached by the forest road and footpaths leading from the village. From these points the visitor can admire the area's natural beauty with forests, alpine

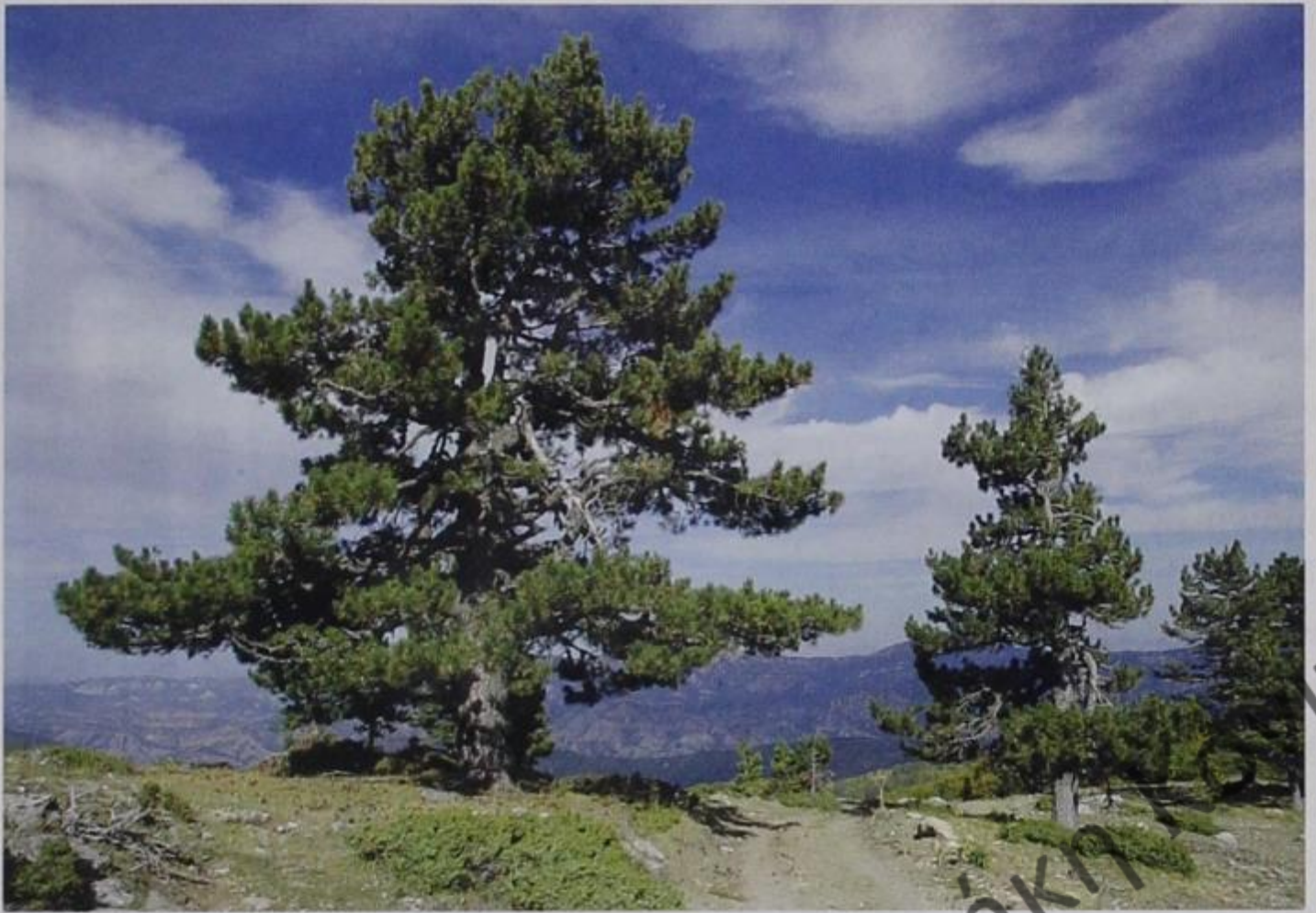


Folklore Collection of Fourka

meadows, mountain ridges and ravines of Mts Smolikas and Grammos. Every year on 20th June



The Community hostel



Old black pines on Prophet Elias peak

a ceremony is held on Profitis Ilias peak to honour the services of the women of Pindos during the Greek-Italian war in 1940-1941. Roads starting from Fourka also lead to Samarina (12km) and the

neighbouring area of Grevena.

The village has a hostel, restaurant and a grocery/coffee shop. Like most of the area's villages, Fourka holds its festival on 15th August.



The small pond at Romios source on Mt. Smolikas

Monastery of Panagia Kladormis

The monastery is built on a pretty site amid an oak forest below the village of Fourka. It is accessed by a 7km dirt road or a 1.30 hour walk. The monastery was first built in the 12th C but its modern form is dated at 1747, as shown by the stone inscriptions. Today, the visitor can see its nave which is cross-shaped with an octagonal dome. The inner walls are decorated with murals painted by H. Mokas in 1930 and the iconostasis has interesting holy icons. On the right side of the monastery one can see a low belfry. There is also a well and the ruins of some cells. The valuable icons of the monastery are now stored somewhere else. The monastery celebrates on 8th Se-



ptember every year. It is customary, on this day, for the monastery to offer lunch, accompanied by traditional music and dance, for free to all the pilgrims and visitors.



The nave of the monastery of Panagia Kladormis

7th Trail

The villages in Gorgopotamos valley on Mt. Grammos

Pyrsoyianni – Vourbiani – Oxia – Asimochori,
Hioniades – Gorgopotamos – Plikati



*The iconostasis of the parish church
of St. Athanassios in Ioannina.
An artwork made by the famous
woodcarvers of Gorgopotamos*



This trail starts at the 24.9km point of the Konitsa-Kozani national Road. About 2km after Spiliotopoulos bridge, take the road across the Gorgopotamos valley to the left. After another 2km you arrive at Pysogianni, the first and largest village of the area.

Pysogianni

Pysogianni is built at an altitude of 860m on the slopes of Steno peak (1900m) of Mt. Grammos, about 27km from Konitsa. It is slightly higher than the point where R. Gorgopotamos meets R. Sarandaporos and is surrounded by dense oak forests. The village has a wonderful view of the surrounding mountains and forests, and is sunlit all day.

Walking around the village one can admire the traditional man-

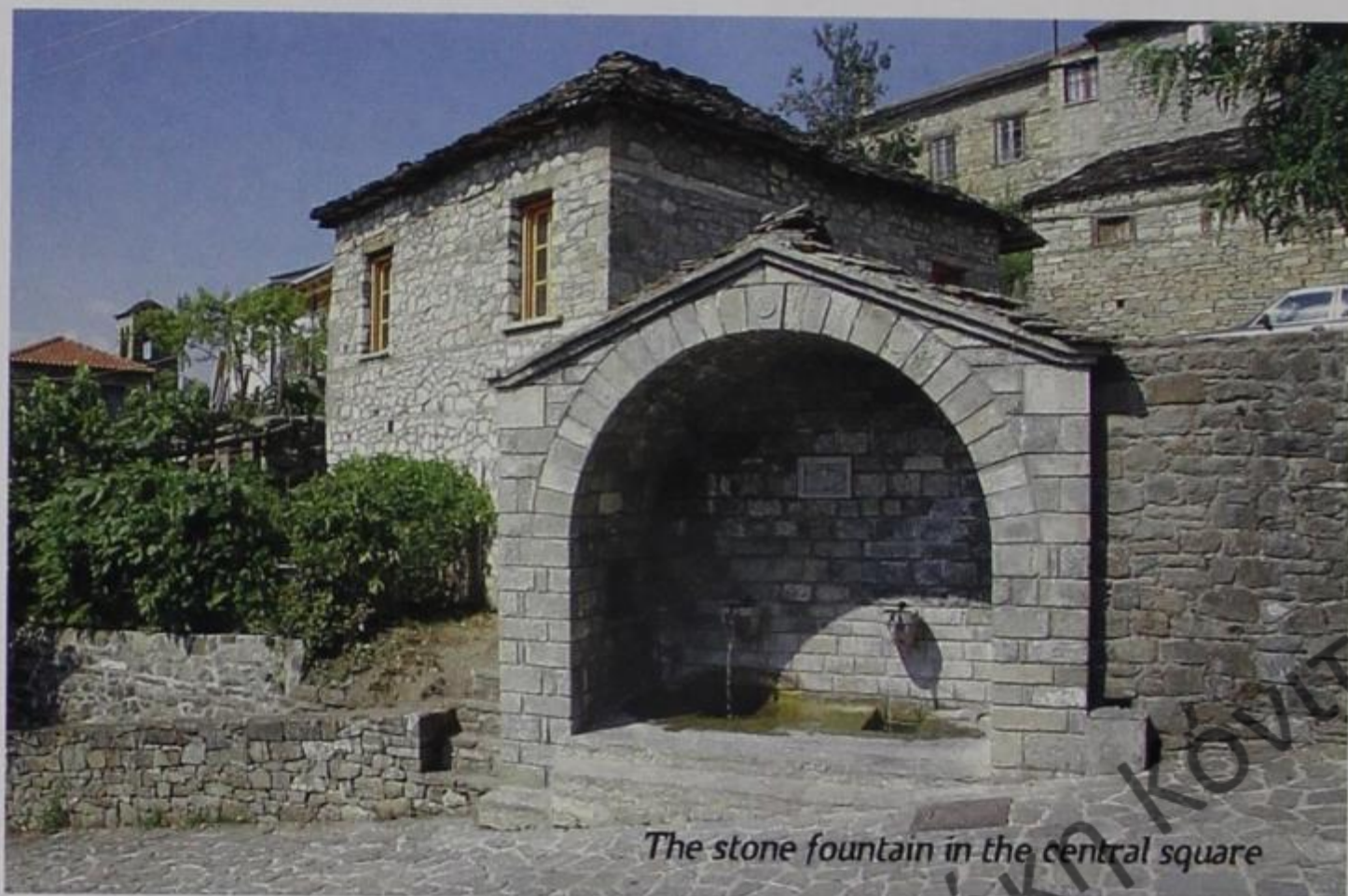
sions with their intricate doors and stone wells. According to the stone inscriptions most of these houses were constructed from 1750 onwards. Many of them have two or three storeys and are surrounded by small stone-paved squares, steps and narrow streets. In addition many houses have interesting stone carvings on their walls. St. George's church (1904)



Engraved stone at Pysogianni



A view of Pysogianni



The stone fountain in the central square

is built on the site of an older church (1712). The size and workmanship of its bell towers are very impressive. The wood-carved iconostasis was made by the local craftsman Vassilis Skalistic in 1926, and the surrounding decorations by the Serbian hagiographer Miltiadis Nikolich. St. Nicholas (built

in 1772) is the oldest church in the village and has a three-aisled basilica, a tower-like belfry and a roofed colonnade. The churches of St. Athanasios (1864), St. Minas (1853), Panagia (1867) and Analipsi (Ascension of Christ) are also worth visiting.

Pyrsoyianni village once had

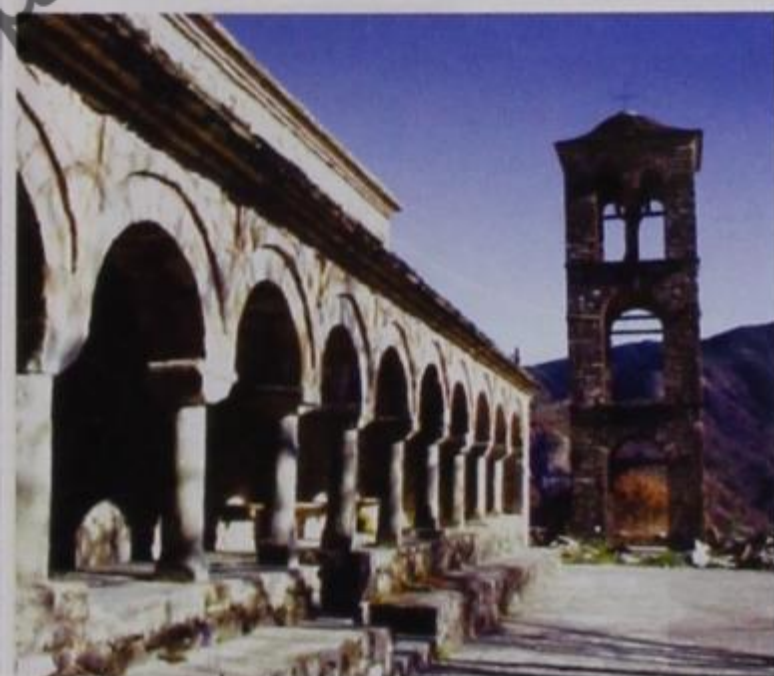


The parish church of St. George



Church of St. Nicholas

360 families and a total of 1800 inhabitants, and most of the men were craftsmen. For four centuries, this village was the birthplace of the most famous skilled stone masons and craftsmen who until 1950, often migrated to work in distant cities and countries (The Balkans, America, Persia, Sudan, etc) and constructed fine, intricate buildings. In 1871, a group of eighty skilled craftsmen from Pysosgianni and Vourbiani lead by Ziogas Frontzos, built the Konitsa bridge. Today the village has 200 permanent inhabitants but this number increases in the summer. Their professions are mainly farming, tree-felling or services but



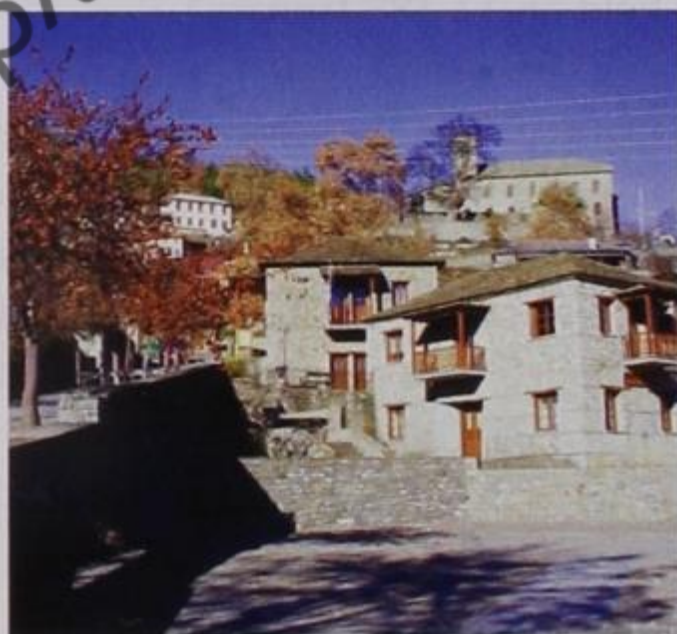
The loggia at the church of St. Nicholas



Engraved cornerstone



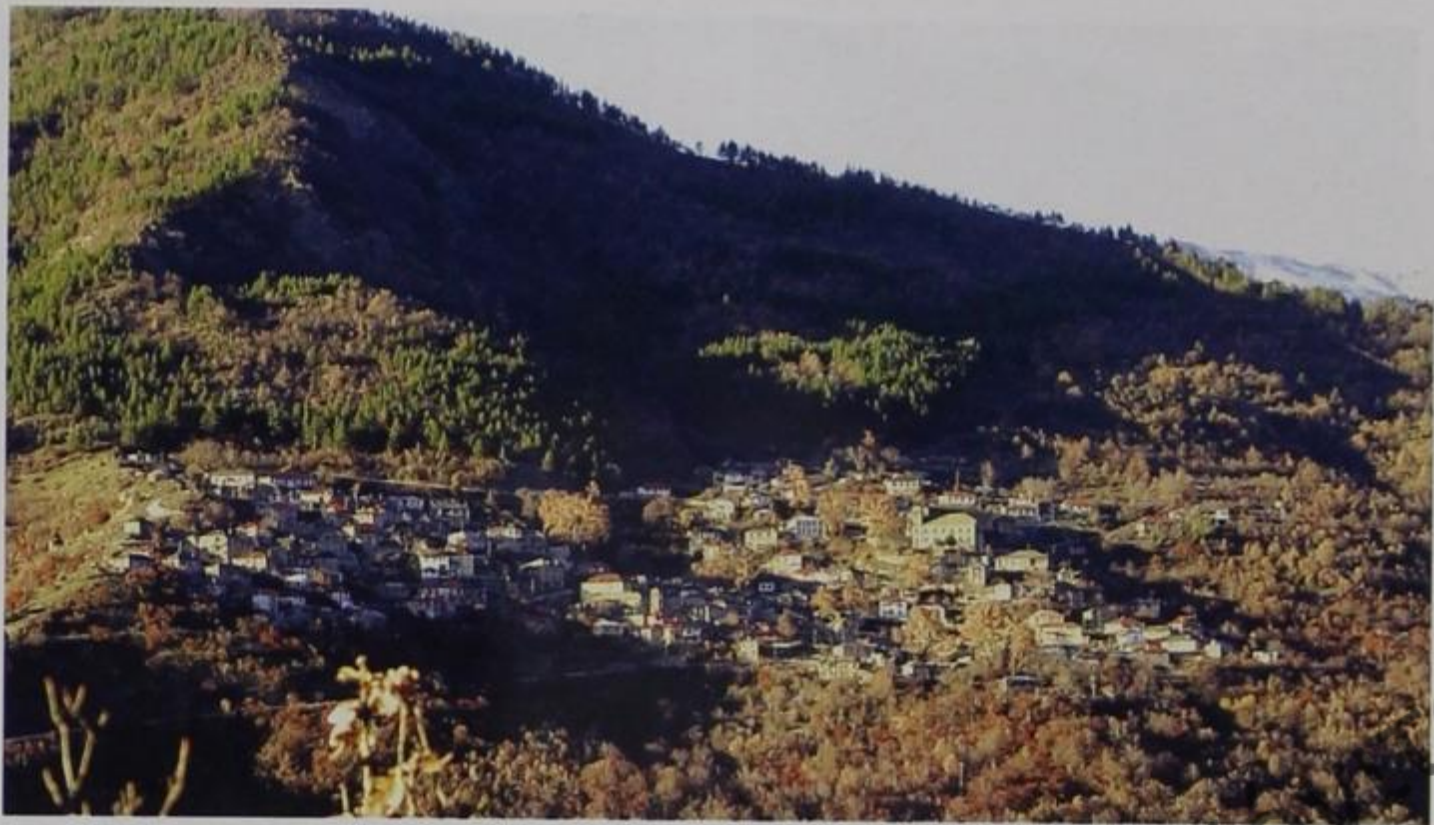
Pysosgianni



only very few are trained stone masons.

Pysosgianni is the centre of the Mastorohoria Municipality and one can find here the town hall, police station, post office and a border guard post.

The annual village celebration is held on 15th August. The festival first starts on the meadows around the country church of Panagia until



Panoramic view of Pysogianni

midday, and in the evening continues with traditional food and local musicians in the central square. Another celebration is held on 17-18th January.

The visitor can rest for the night in the pleasant hostel that also offers traditional food, and in the quaint coffee shops and stores one can taste local delicacies and tsipouro. You can find fresh baked bread at the local bakery.

Ethnological Museum of the Craftsmen of Epirus

The old stone school building of Pysogianni was constructed in 1927. It was recently renovated and now houses the Museum of the Craftsmen of Epirus. The museum has about 2500 photographs, sketches, imprints, maps, tools, contracts, and other rare items that show the history of these special craftsmen and their



The Ethnological Museum for the Epirotan Stone Craftsmen, Pysogianni



The parish church of Panagia, Vourbiani

trade. The items displayed in the separate museum of the Stone Masons of Pysogianni are a systematic documentation of local architecture, local materials, and the aesthetic building styles of the previous three centuries in the Balkans.

Vourbiani

Vourbiani is built on the north eastern slopes of Kardari peak (1955m) at the Grammos mountain range, at 900m altitude. It is surrounded by dense oak forests. The village is about 5km from Pysogianni and 32km from Konitsa. In 1854 the village had 384 families and was the second largest village of the Konitsa region. It saw significant economic growth in the 18th and 19th centuries. The men of the village were skilled craftsmen (stone

masons, carpenters, plasterers, painters), and many also become wealthy merchants. Vourbiani also provided good education in the sciences and literature after the establishment of the area's first secondary school in the mid 19th



The sundial on the wall of the church of Panagia, Vourbiani



The old high school of Vourmiani

C. The communities of the villagers in distant places also played important active roles in other areas of Greece (Athens, Lavrio, Evvia Island, Patras, Ioannina, Thessaloniki) and other countries (Ethiopia, Sudan, America). In and around the settlement there are more than 15 churches, the largest of which is Panagia (Dormition of Virgin Mary) in the village centre that was renovated in 1903. A section of the church's original iconostasis that was made in 1780 is now stored in the modern church together with some precious holy icons. The chancel of the modern church contains an icon of St. George that is the earliest known work of the

craftsman Konsta from Hioniades village and is dated 1747. The churches of Apostles (built 1824), St. Dimitrios (built 1859), St. John (built 1808), and St. Paraskevi are all worth a visit.

Noteworthy are also the old stone mansions, wells, the two-storey lyceum (dating to 1927) and the bridge of Ambelones that was built in 1872. The yearly festival is held on the day of Profitis Ilias on 20th July, and other traditional celebrations are also held for carnival and on 15th August. In the village square one can find a pretty hostel with a restaurant and few traditional coffee shops.

The master stone masons

From the early 16th century and for more than three centuries, stone masons from Konitsa region traveled all over Greece and the Balkans creating beautiful masonry. They were organized in groups (known as “sinafia”, “companies”, “sintrofies”, “bou-loukia”). The Ottoman administration had issued edicts granting them official status, ensuring the faster completion of construction projects.

The masons formed groups, known as “koudareiki para”. Each of them included persons specialized in certain work, such as builders, plasterers, stone

cutters, mud mixers. The groups were well organized in a hierarchy. There was a head master, who selected the members of the group, run operations and closed deals. He led the craftsmen, mostly stone masons, their assistants and the apprentices. They all followed unwritten, but firm, rules, and moved through various regions, constructing all sorts of buildings: bridges, schools, churches, inns, palaces, mosques, baths, mansions, lighthouses, mills, oil-presses etc. Through the years they developed their own code language, “koudaritika,” so they could communicate between





them, while their employers could not understand what was being said.

During their most productive years, the last years of the 19th century, they were undertaking more modern assignments in other lands, such as Egypt, Sudan,

Ethiopia, Congo, Tanganyika, Iran, Asia Minor (Smyrna, Proussa, Zonguldak), Russia (Irkutsk, Vladivostock), France and even America.



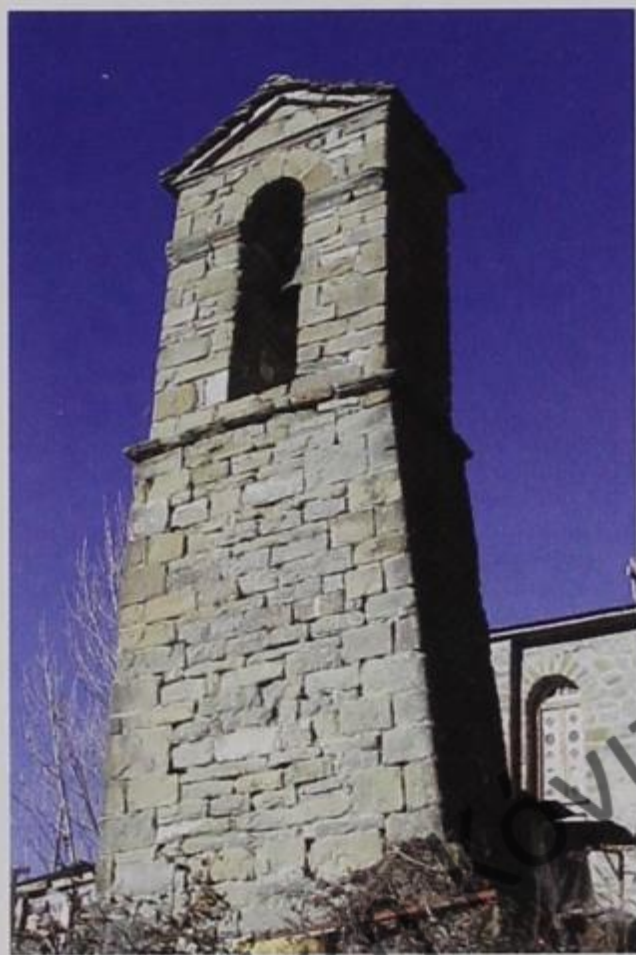
Oxia (Selsti)

About 39km from Konitsa and 7km from Vourbani, after having passed the bridge over Vourbianitiko stream, turn east and you will soon come at the entrance of the village Oxia. This village is built at 1020m altitude on the southern slopes of Profitis Ilias peak (1516m) on the mountain range of Grammos. The men of the village were mostly skilled stone masons



and travelled many miles to find work. Work by stone masons from Oxia has been found in Khartoum in Sudan.

Oxia was established by those who deserted their old ruined



villages, especially the now deserted nearby village of Pistiliapi. The church of St. Nicholas (dating to 1857) has an intricate iconostasis and remarkable hagiographies. The village square is also charming with its small grocery/coffee shop that is housed in the old stone school (built in 1871). The church of the Holy Trinity is built on a hill of 1010m altitude and from this point one



The parish church of St. Nicholas, Oxia

has a wonderful view of the Sarandaporos valley. The view from Profitis Ilias church located on a hill above the village is also beautiful. The village celebrates on 20th July each year and the festivities last until the early morning hours.

Asimochori (Leskatsi)

The next step in our journey is the village Asimochori (970m a.s.l.), 6.5km from Vourbiani and 38.6km from Konitsa. Asimochori is a well-preserved village with many stone houses. It is built beneath an oak-forested mountain slope through which two small tributaries of R. Sarandaporos flow: Megas and Mikros Lakkos. Higher up the mountain, approaching the peaks of Vartzioban (1623m) and Golio (1919m), one can find beautiful forests of beech, black pine and fir.

Asimochori is the birthplace of skilled carpenters who once wor-



The old school in Asimochori

ked in various countries of the Balkans, Khartoum, and America. One of these carpenters was the famous Georgis Christou who worked in Leskoviki, Filiates, Premeti and Thessaloniki. The village was also known for its silversmiths.

Many craftsmen migrated to other countries but they never forgot their home village and often founded societies such as the St. Paraskevi society in U.S.A. that was established in 1915. Members of these societies also became village benefactors.

The village was the scene of



Panoramic view of Asimochori



Traditional cafe shop in Asimochori

violent fighting during the Greek civil war when many houses were destroyed. These houses were later rebuilt in the 1950's. In the small square in the village centre one can see the old two-storey school that dates to 1907.

The church of Panagia is built in 1877 on the site of an older church that was constructed in 1823. It has an intricate iconostasis that was the work of craftsmen from the neighbouring Tourново village (Gorgopotamos). The shrine of the church of St. Dimitrios is also of interest. The village has two quaint coffee shops, and the annual fete is held on 20th July.

Hioniades

Hioniades village is built at 1120m altitude amidst a dense oak forest. It is located 2km from Asimochori and 40,6km from Konitsa on the eastern slopes of Lesili peak (1913m) near the Greek-Albanian border. Before entering the village it is worth a stop at Paraspori point to see the recently renovated stone bridge. This bridge was first constructed in 1800 by craftsmen from the



village of Pysogianni.

Most of the few villagers living in Hioniades are retired. Wandering around the village one can admire the traditional stone houses built in the local architectural style. The pretty square has a beautiful view of the Gorgopotamos valley and the surrounding peaks of Mt. Grammos. Here stands the church of St. Athanasios (1866) which has some interesting



A fresco made by local hagiographers in the church of St. Athanasios, Hioniades



The small bridge at Paraspori location, Hioniades

portable icons made by artists originating from this village. The stone school building (built in 1905) now houses the local coffee shop which opens only in the summer and on public holidays. In the upper section of the square, next to the stone spring, there is a large stone building which will soon house the Museum of the Artists of Hioniades.

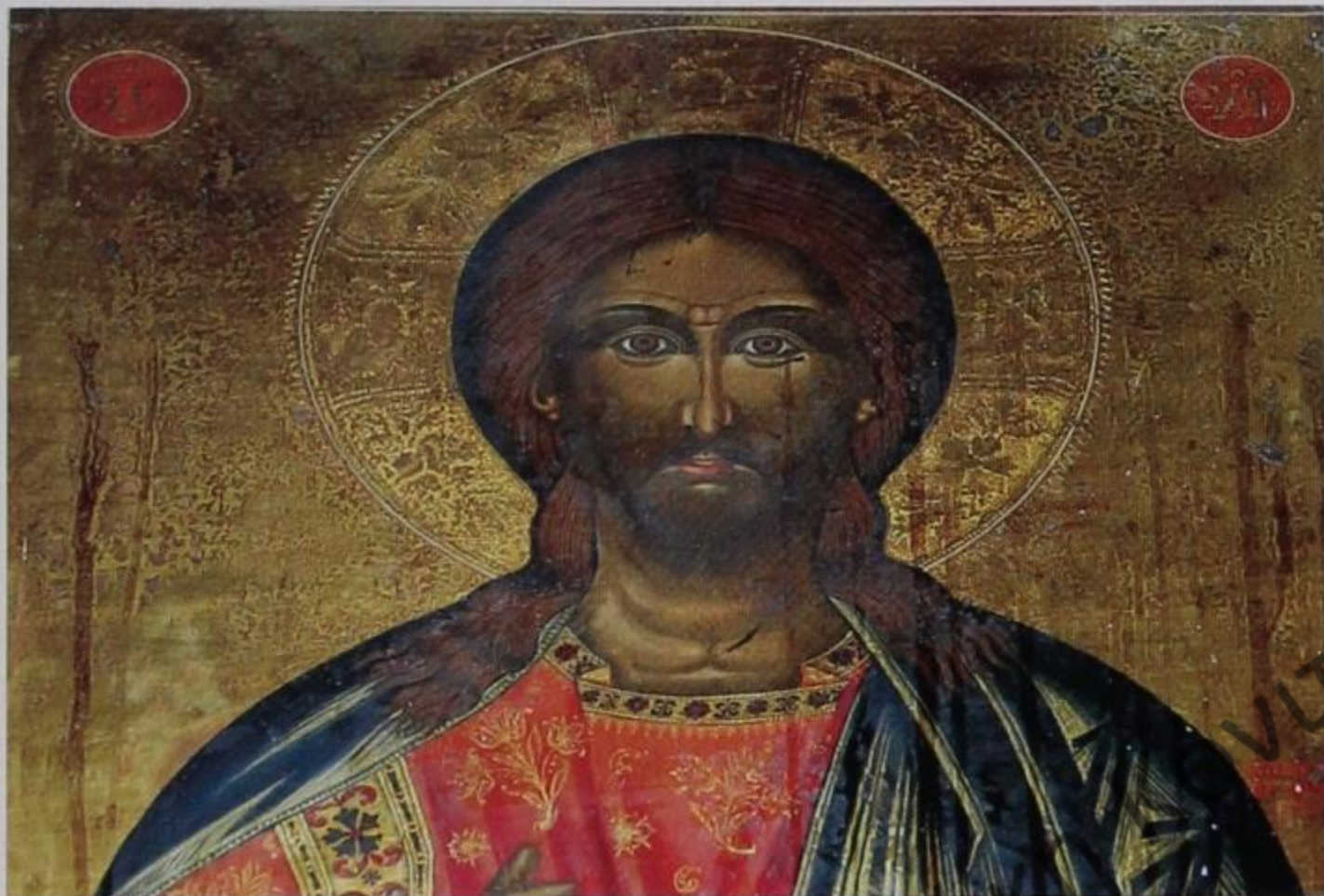
The church of Profitis Ilias stands above the village at 1550m altitude and offers a wonderful

view of the whole area including the Bantra Pass. For centuries Bantra was one of the main communication routes between the Greek and the Albanian villages of both sides of Mt. Grammos. The Italians invaded Greece via this pass during the first night of the Greek-Italian war in 1940.

This village is mostly famous for its skilled artists who travelled to areas of the Balkans and created various elaborate religious and



The parish church of St. Athanassios in Hioniades



An icon of Christ made by Hioniadites hagiographers

popular works of art. At least 65 famous popular artists originate from Hioniades village and they were mostly active during the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of their significant works can still be seen today in churches and mansions throughout the areas of Konitsa and Zagori and others villages and towns throughout Greece. These

artists were unique in these times as they made both religious (hagiography, mobile holy icons, iconostasis icons, murals) and popular art.

The traditional annual festival of Hioniades is held on 20th July and is accompanied by local musicians.



A country chapel accompanied by an old oak tree, close to Hioniades

The famous painters from Hioniades

The Hioniadites painters were active in the whole Balkans for two and half centuries. They created ornate religious and lay paintings, dating from late post-Byzantine years till recently. They did not organize themselves in professional groups, like other craftsmen did, but held on to a family tradition, "fara," forming groups of artists with common descent from the father's side.

Hioniadites painters traveled in several places in the Balkans, where they painted wonderful works of art in churches and mansions, as they specialized not only in religious painting (icons, murals) but also in lay, popular designs.



During the first years of their activities they followed traditional prototypes in regard to the decoration of churches and the



A fine work of Hioniadites hagiographers in the parish church of their village



style of the iconography. Typical works from this period exist, for example, in Avel monastery (1770) in Vissani at neighboring Pogoni. Similar paintings were created a few years later by the

artist Pagonis in Mt. Pelion, in the churches of Agia Marina, Kissos (1802) and Agios Georgios, Drakia (1815) e.a.

In following years, until the beginning of the 20th century, in relation to the sweeping changes in Europe and the Balkans, new artistic fashions and styles began to spread and affected Greece and the Hioniadites painters as well. One worthy example from this period is the workshop of Marinades, one of the two best known Hioniadites painters' families, who specialized in icons.

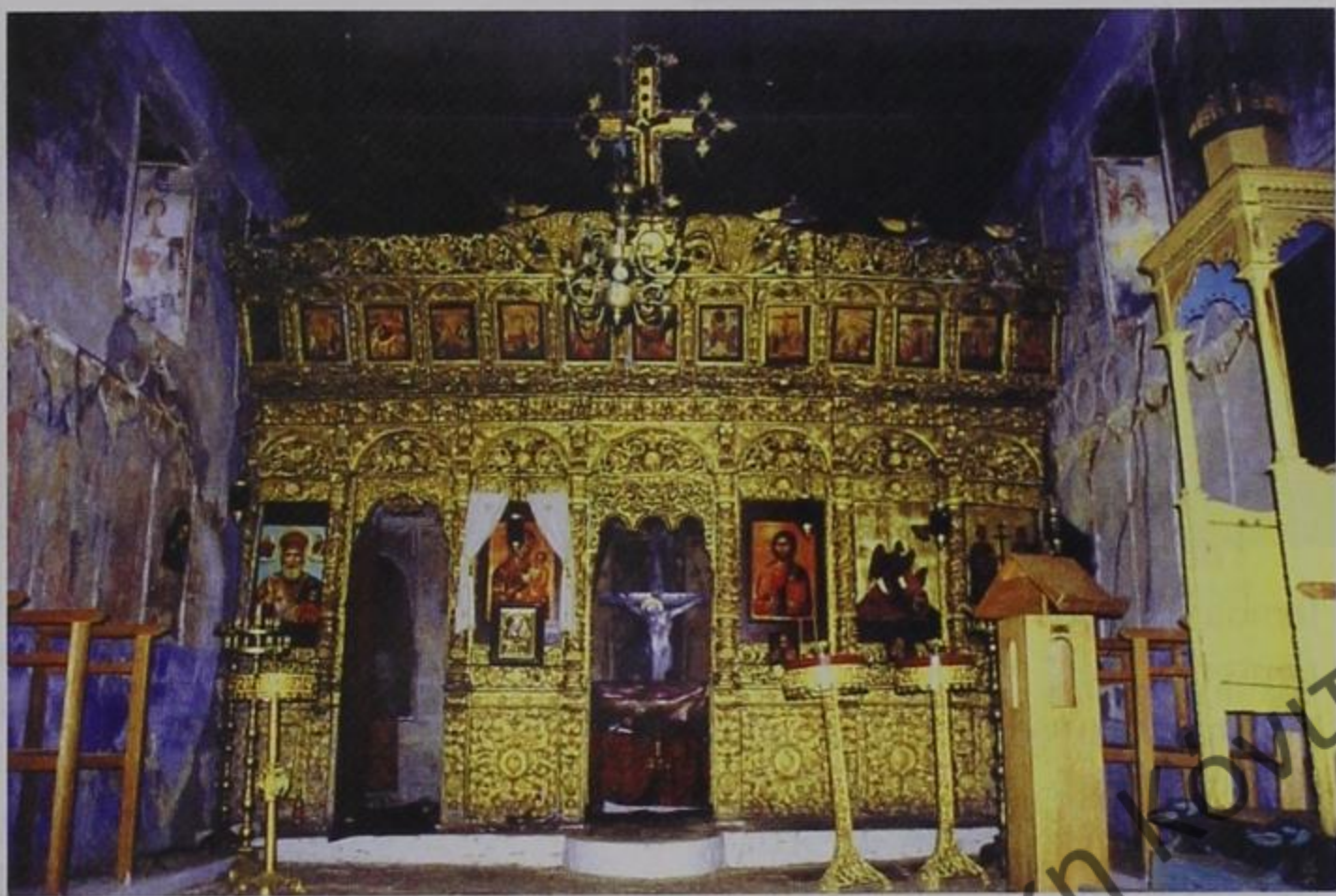


"The nativity of Christ", a fresco made by hagiographers of Hioniades in 1770 in the nave of Avel Monastery at Vissani, Pogoni

The famous wood-carvers

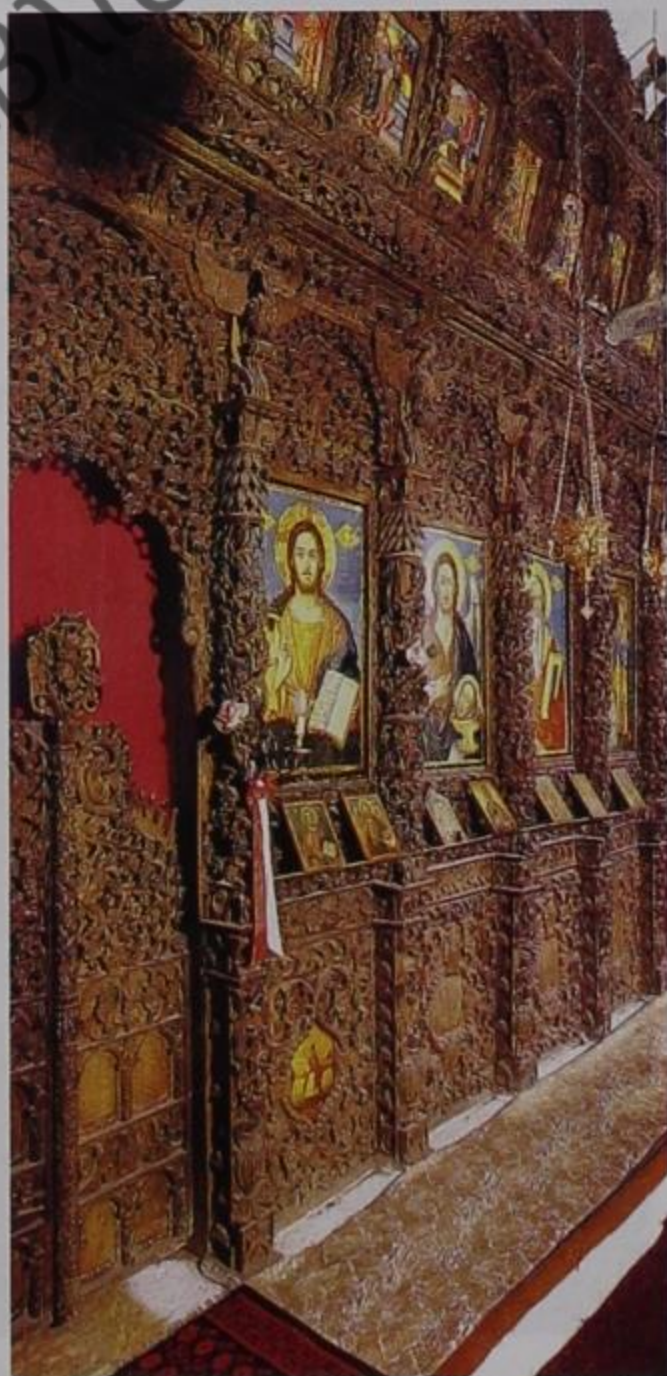
The wood-carvers of Konitsa, the famous "taliadoroi," were known already in Byzantine times. In few villages almost all the men had developed great skills in the art of wood-carving and they were famous all over the Balkan peninsula and even farther on. Such villages were Gorgopotamos (Tournovo) and also Asimochori (Liskatsi), Vourbiani and Hioniades. Wood-carving, in all its forms, has always been fascinating for its originality and powerful inspiration. Especially in its use for the decoration of houses and churches, this art has produced true masterpieces.





The iconostasis in the nave of the monastery of Iakov in Doliana, an artwork made by woodcarvers from Gorgopotamos

Wood-carvings are not constricted to places of worship, but can be found in household decoration, such as in ceilings, closets ("messandres"), carved furniture ("kasseles") e.a. Magnificent icon screens made by the wood-carvers of Konitsa decorate among others, the Cathedral of Agios Haralambos in Preveza, the Cathedral of Agios Athanasios in Ioannina and many other churches in Pogoni, Argirokastro, Agioi Saranda, Heimara and Premeti.



The iconostasis in the church of Panagia in Ano Ravenia, an artwork made by woodcarvers from Gorgopotamos

Gorgopotamos (Tournovo)

Gorgopotamos stands at 940m altitude on the eastern slopes of Orla peak at the Grammos mountain range. It is built next to the riverbed of R. Gorgopotamos. The village is situated 3.5km from Asimochori, 5km from Vourbiani and 37km from Konitsa.

Tournovo is known for its famous wood carvers and carpenters that worked in the surrounding villages and other distant places. As in the case of Hioniades village with its artists, the majority of the men of Tournovo were trained wood

workers.

It is worth seeing the beautiful iconostasis of Panagia church (the church dates to 1914) that was made by Vassilis Skalistic, and St. Nicolas (19th Century), both found at the entrance to the village. Today, only a few of the old mansions still stand in the village, but most of these still contain beautiful wood carvings. The most famous of these craftsmen come from the Skalistic and Taliadoros families. Many intricate iconostases made by these craftsmen can be found in the cathedrals and churches in Epirus, Southern Albania and other distant places. The village has a small traditional coffee shop. The annual festival is held on 15th August. Opposite the village one can see the two small chapels of St. John and Apostles.



Gorgopotamos is located on the forested slopes of Mt. Grammos



Part of a wooden iconostasis made by the woodcarvers from Gorgopotamos

Plikati

Heading north, you come across the last village on this route. Plikati village is located at 1240m altitude at the inner part of Gorgopotamos valley. The village is 11km from Pysogianni and 43m from Konitsa. The surrounding slopes of Mt. Grammos are covered with dense forests of oak, fir, black pine and beech, and many springs create plentiful small streams. Around Plikati village the visitor can observe one of the most beautiful remaining rural mountainous scenes in Greece. However, the small cultivated fields are gradually being abandoned and forest vegetation is starting to encroach the outskirts of the village. Time seems to have stopped here as one views the small fields with their annual crops, fruit trees, hedges, and large oak trees on their borders. Numerous pathways connect these fields and the scene is completed with tiny streams flowing through the fields. Throu-



ghout the village one can still see many houses built in traditional local architectural style.

Plikati was the birthplace of many craftsmen who travelled far to find work. Work by people of this village can be found in Athens, Mesologgi, Astakos, Thesprotia, Kavala, Albania (Delvino, Koritsa), France, Asia Minor (Proussa) and Russia (Irkoutsk, Vladivostok). Many of these craftsmen migrated to other areas of Greece such as



Plikati, coming back to the village, after the collection of herbs from the high altitude zone



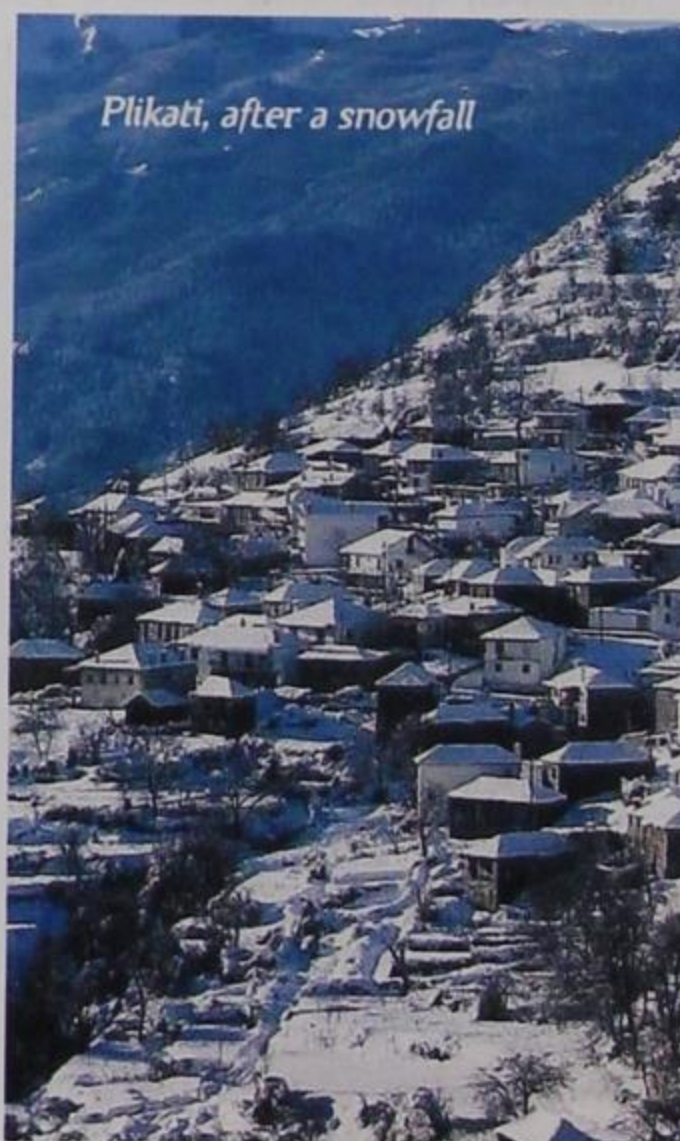
Drosopigi and Flabouro in Florina region and Ambelonas in Thessalia region.

The church of St. Athanasios is impressive with its iconostasis and beautifully painted ceiling. This church also houses parts of the iconostasis of the old church of Panagia Plikaditissa that was completely renovated after the Civil war. The parish church of Panagia celebrates on 16th February each year, and on that day the holy icon of the Virgin Mary is brought out of the church and taken around the village in a procession.

Today Plikati is a lively agricultural village. In addition nomad stock breeders come every summer and their herds of goat, sheep and cattle graze the extensive pastures of Mt. Grammos. The village has few rooms to rent

and three tiny old traditional coffee shops that serves excellent tsipouro and local delicacies.

Many mountain paths start

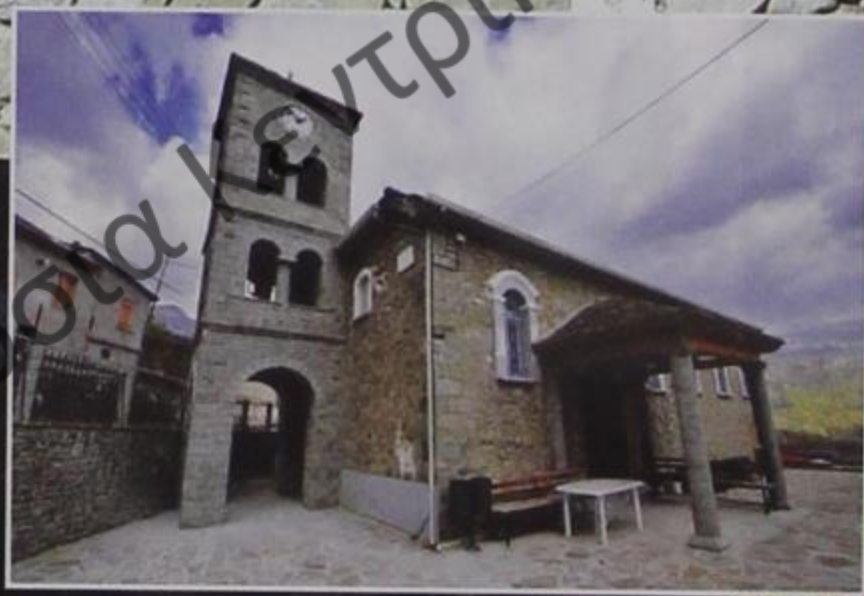




from this village. These treks lead to the area's beautiful forests and the high peaks of Grammos such as Tsouka Petsik (2520m) and

Perifano (2444m).





Plikati

8th Trail

The villages in Sarandaporos valley and on the high altitude zone of Mt. Grammos

Kastaniani – Langada – Theotokos – Kefalochori –
Lykorahi – Drosopigi – Plagia – Aetomilitsa





άκρη κάσταν

κόσια Κε

A paved alley in Kastania

This trail runs alongside the main valley of R. Sarandaporos and starts from Spiliotopoulos bridge.

Kastanea (Kastaniani)

This village is built on the lush western slopes of Mt. Gyftissa (1750m) in the bed of R. Gostaniko at 880m a.s.l. Its distance from Konitsa is 28.7km. The rare architectural elements seen in Kastaniani demonstrate the fine work of stone masons that once lived in this area, and for this reason the village should be declared a protected traditional

settlement.

In the past many of the villagers converted from being stone masons to contractors in charge of constructing public works such as the Mesogefyra bridge over the R. Aaos, the Arinisti-Kakavia bridge, the Zouzouli bridge, the monastery of Panagia Stomiou in the Aaos valley, the clock tower in the central square of Ioannina city, and the facade of the Zosimaia College in Ioannina.

All the houses of this village are built in stone, have two storeys, a yard, and low stone benches next to the front doors.

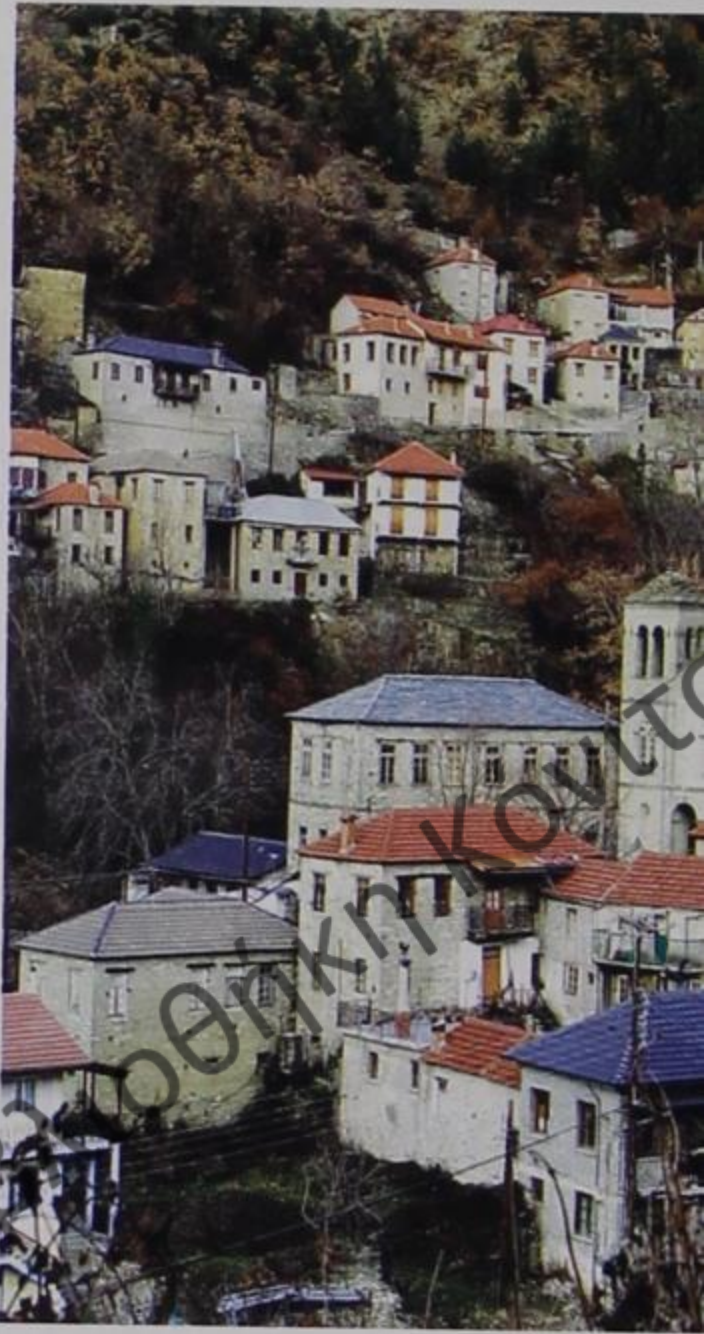


View of Kastaniani

Fireplaces are found in most of the rooms, especially in the reception room and they are usually adorned with ornate engravings.

The inscription in the church of Panagia in Galina district, states that the village was first built on its present site around 1018. Kastaniani is said to be the birth place of Kostas Grammatikos, Ali Pasha's secretary. Ali Pashas was the most important ruler of the Epirus region during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Characteristic in this village is the abundant flowing water, springs, the seventeen churches and chapels, and its four bridges. The single-arched, beautiful stone bridges are: Galina (built in 1936), Rachi (1895), Mitsaioi (1845), and Malnitsa (1934).



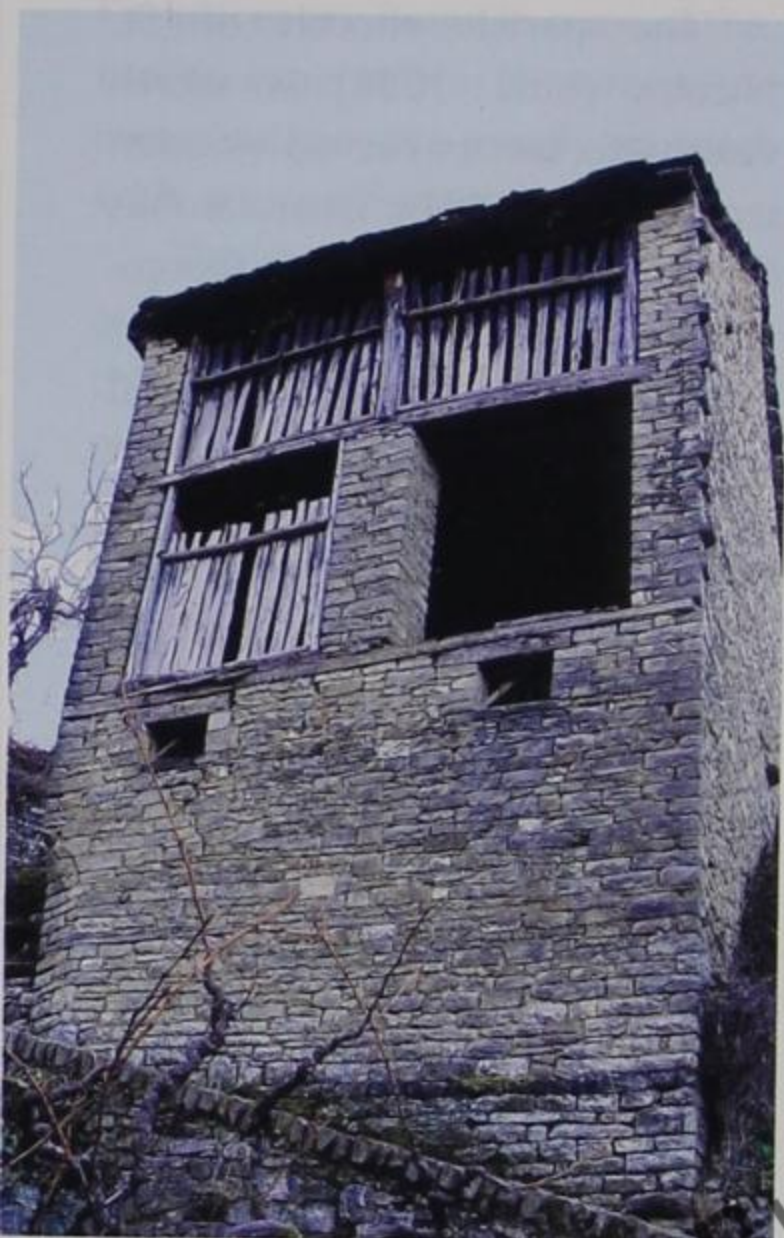
The bridges which connect the neighbourhoods of Kastaniani



The parish church of St. Nicolas (built 1926) is worth visiting to see its carved wooden iconostasis built by Charalambos Skalisticis from Tournovo (Gorgopotamos) village. St. Dimitrios (1670) is one of the oldest churches in the village. The pretty two-storey primary school was built in 1894 and is worth a look, as is the Gasios mansion, the chapel of Apostles at the village's highest point, and the watermill of St Athanasios (Aithanasis).

Few people live in Kastaniani in the winter and c. 350 in summer. Most of them are pensioners or still craftsmen, small scale stockbreeders and cultivate few fields inside and around the village. On 24th June each year the





celebration of St. John is held. Following the church service the villagers hold a celebration with food and traditional dancing. On the day of St. Paraskevi, 26th July, the villagers also hold a celebration with traditional dancing in the village square. During the summer many cultural events are organized such as theatre performances and musical evenings. The village has a traditional stone-built hostel where visitors can rest, and the local coffee-shop serves excellent food.



The parish church of St. Nicholas at the centre of Kastaniani

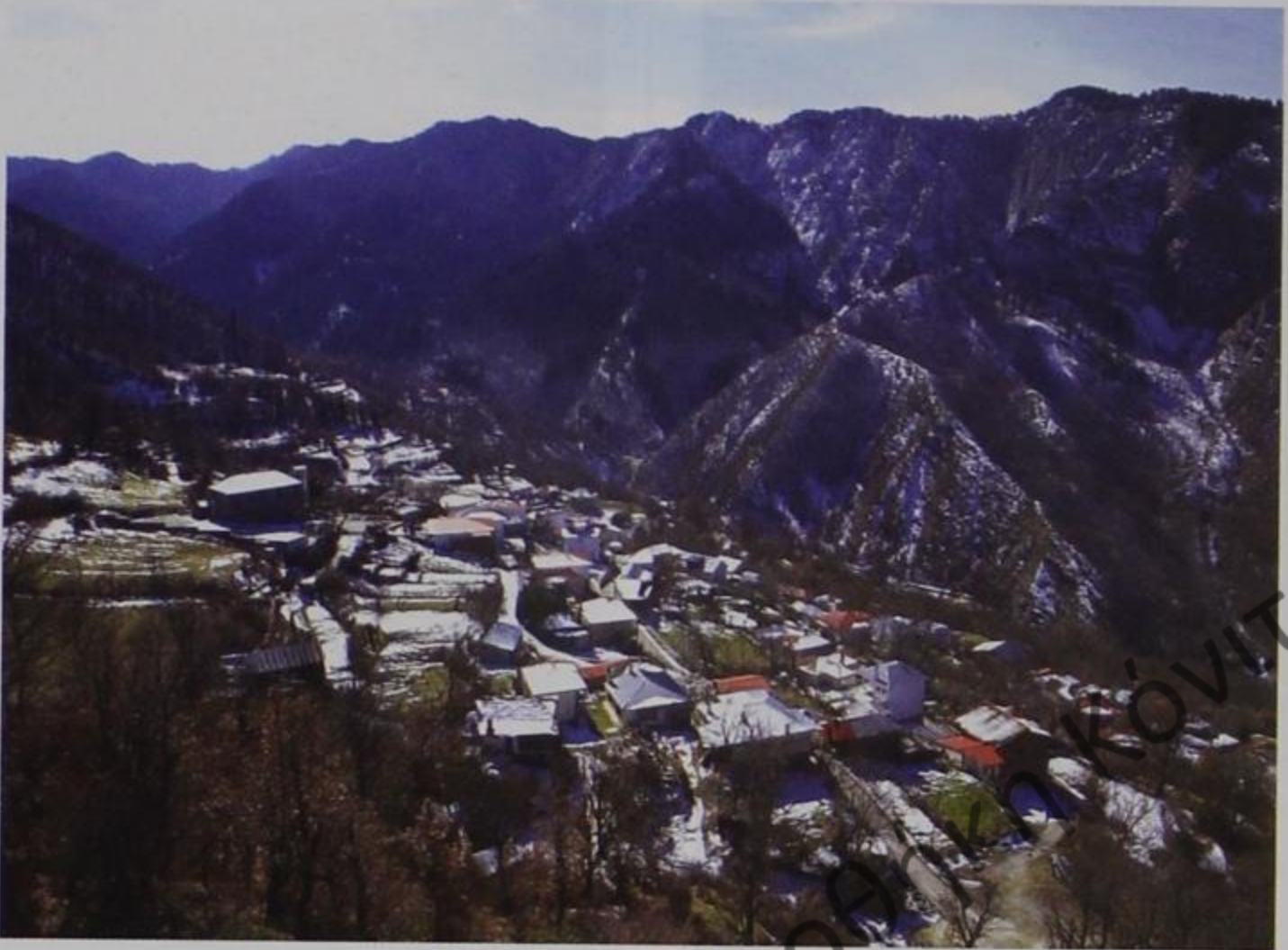


Langada (Blisdiani)

Exit the Konitsa-Kozani national road at the 30,7km point, turn right and cross one more bridge over the R. Sarandaporos to ascend to the village of Langada.

This village (once named Blisdiani) is built at 900m altitude on the western slopes of a wide valley north of Mts Tambouri (1876m) and Gyftissa (1750m). The village was the birth place of many stone masons. Many of the famed mansions of Siatista town have inscriptions with the names of masons from this small village. For example "Lord, if you ask which mason built this mansion, Nakos is his name from the village Blisdiani, Konitsa, 1740". An





Panoramic view of Langada

inscription saved in Gorgogyri village (Trikala region, Thessaly) informs us that masons from Blisdiani village built the parish church in 1857. In addition during the mid 19th century the majority of the population of Blisdiani, mainly families of masons, moved permanently to Drakotrypa village in Thessaly.

Today, only a few stone houses remain in Langada to remind us of its heyday. The few villagers living here are herders, woodcutters (the village has two sawmills) and builders. The church of Panagia and the old school building stand out within the settlement. In the chapel of St. Paraskevi one can see excellent murals painted by artists from Hioniades village. Picturesque locations around the village include the springs of Glykoneri

and Elatia and the Livadia plateau located east of the village. The village annual festival is held on 15th August.

Theotokos (Fytoko)

Theotokos village is found next to the Konitsa-Kozani national road, c. 33km from Konitsa at an altitude of 700m. The older village, called Fytoko, was built on the site of Megali Rachi at an altitude of 1000m, but was moved to its present location after the Second World War. The village is located next to R. Sarandaporos and comprises few houses and several taverns and coffee-shops that serve visitors. Only a few signs of the old village remain today in Megali Rachi, and many of these were destroyed by a large fire in



Panoramic view of Theotokos

1984. The village suffered much in previous years but always managed to recover. Many inhabitants dispersed to the Balkans mainly due to economic factors and some reached as far as Russia where they worked as builders. When visiting the old village today, one can see the half-ruined church of St. Dimitrios standing between the ruins. The chapel of St. Athanasios (built in 1624) also remains standing on a hilltop (890m) and has beautiful murals now left exposed to the elements. The annual village festival is held on 26th October (St. Dimitrio's day).

Aetomilitsa (Denisko)

Aetomilitsa is located on the southern slopes of Mt. Grammos, beneath the summits of Gesos

(2165m), Skirtsí (2444m), Kiafa (2395m), Tsouma (2174m) and Epano Arena (2196m). It is built at 1430m altitude and is the highest village in the Konitsa region. It is located about 16km from the Konitsa-Kozani national road and 50km from Konitsa itself.

The life of the local inhabitants is tied to semi-nomadic herding. For centuries the villagers left their homes in winter and returned in the warmer summer months. In early June each year the stockbreeders and their herds, which number thousands of sheep, still spread out over the vast meadows of central Mt. Grammos. In early autumn the stockbreeders and their herds return to the plains of Macedonia and Thessaly.

The village saw its heyday in 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries as it was economically self-



Landscape close to Aetomilitsa in winter

sufficient and the villagers owned 40,000 sheep. The muleteers and merchants of this village travelled as far as Avlona in Albania and Nigrita in Serres.

The area was often destroyed during the Greek-Italian and Greek civil wars, and this resulted in many inhabitants moving to other Greek cities or countries, usually in Eastern Europe. Today the village has retained its nomadic lifestyle and it is also a place for restful summer holidays. The village is known for the local types of cheese 'manouri' and "ourda" and its tasty meat of the sheep grazing at the sub-alpine pastures around it.

Aetomilitsa is the starting point for mountain hikes leading to the beautiful peaks of Mt. Grammos,



Aetomilitsa is located at the high altitude zone of Mt. Grammos



Panoramic view of Aetomilitsa

perfect for hiking and mountaineering.

The newly built mountain refuge is situated within the village. Taste local food can be offered here as well. It can accommodate 20 people and is open all year round. Rooms to let

are available and the two taverns serve traditional roast meat. The church of Panagia at the centre of the village, celebrates on 15th August each year and the village holds a large festival where all the people reunite.





*Distillation of
tsipouro in
Kastaniani*

mass left once grapes have been pressed for wine-making. Distilling *tsipouro* is an occasion for villagers to meet and have a good time, celebrating the end of the grape season.

All villagers get together and visit all distilleries, and enjoy themselves till late at night with music, drink and food.

Over the last few years, every November the Municipal Admi-

nistration of Konitsa organizes a special event, "tsipouro night." People bring tsipouro, sweets, various pies and other foodstuffs. The women prepare the special dish "bolia" (porridge made from corn and wheat). Then, a band plays local traditional music and everyone has a great time. A similar, well organized event takes place at Molivoskepastos village.

Traditional dance during the annual festival in Kastaniani





The Folklore Collection of Kefalochori

beech forest at 1500m altitude on the slopes of Kato Arena summit. The church service is followed by traditional revelry with food, wine and dancing that lasts all day.

Lykorahi (Louspiko)

The old settlement of Lykorahi (1000m altitude) is located on the slopes of Epano and Kato Arena



The old village of Lykorahi

Kefalochori

Kefalochori is built in the bed of Divoika stream at 720m altitude. It is situated very close to the national road and 34km from Konitsa. This is a new settlement whose inhabitants originate from the now derelict neighbouring village of Lykorachi. Kefalochori is one of the most organized and productive villages of Konitsa. It comprises newly built houses; modern road infrastructure, open village squares, and houses the nursery and primary schools of the Municipality of Mastorochochia. Most of the inhabitants are farmers (there are several new stockbreeding units) and tree-fellers.

The folklore museum and the church of St. Konstantinos and Eleni are worth visiting. This church is located in the large central village square and houses the large iconostasis from Taxiarches church of Lykorachi which was engraved by Haralambos Ska-

listis from Tournovo (Gorgopotamos) village. A Roman tiled tomb was excavated in the area and the various artefacts it contained are now displayed in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina.

The village has a hostel and taverns that offer good food and coffee houses that serve the local tsipouro. Kefalochori holds its annual festival on 20th July. On this date the chapel of Profitis Ilias of Lykorahi celebrates his name day. The church is found in a dense



Traditional costumes at the Folklore Collection of Kefalochori



Only few elementary schools, like this one in Kefalochori, are still in operation in the area of Konitsa

Zerma

Among the hornbeam and oak forests, 3km from Plagia, one can find the deserted village of Zerma, the birthplace of chieftain Gian-noulis Zermas (19th century). This village was a centre for artists. The

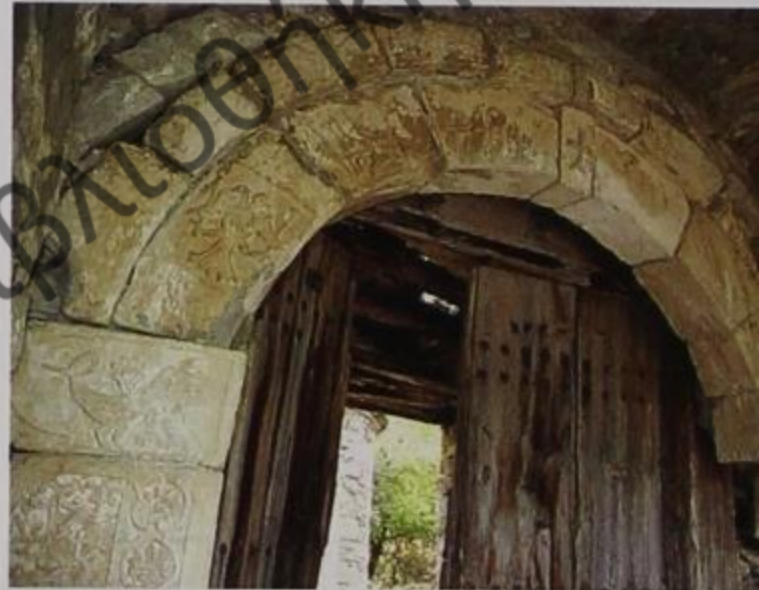
Michalis from Zerma. Additionally, Zerma was also the birthplace of many stone masons. Groups of craftsmen from Zerma worked in Mt. Athos, Agrinio, Amfilochia, Thesprotia, Thessaly and Albania (Delvino, Argyrokastro).



saved inscription of the hagiograph of Kamenas monastery in Delvino town in Albania dates back to 1662 and names its artist as

Monastery of Panagia Zermas

This is one of the oldest monasteries of the Epirus region. Today, the nave is saved together with an engraved marble gate and a few remaining cell walls. The architecture of the monastery is unique for the region of Epirus and



The arch with the engraved stones at the entrance gate of the monastery of Zerma



The nave of the monastery of Panagia Zermas



The restored watermill

summits and can be reached by the dirt road from Kefalochori. A few old houses, the church of Taxiarches (built 1929) and its restored mill as well as the chapel of St. Paraskevi can still be seen in the remote village. Several mountain hikes start from Lykorahi and lead to Epano and Kato Arena summits and at the beautiful lake of Moutsalia on the other side of the mountain in the Prefecture of Kastoria.

Plagia (Zerma)

Plagia is located at 1060m altitude on the southern slopes of Kato Arena summit (2089m). It is



Cattle stocking on the slopes of Mt. Grammos

about 4km from the national road and 41km from Konitsa. Plagia is a small, modern village with beautifully built new houses, flower-filled yards, vines and fruit trees. The village was created in 1970 and all its inhabitants come from the neighbouring village of Zerma which was abandoned because of landslides. The few villagers living in Plagia are herders and many move to warmer places in the winter months together with their herds. Each summer the village holds theatre performances in the large central village square. The annual festival is held here on 15th August.



A house at the old village of Zerma



View of Drosopigi

America. Important structures built by masons of this village in the surrounding area include the stone arched bridge of R. Sarandaporos that was built in 1747, and Kladormi monastery found in the neighbouring village of Fourka. The barrel makers

originating from this village were also famed, and often travelled to other parts of Greece to work. According to the tradition the village existed in its present position before the year 1600. During the Ottoman period Drosopigi experienced significant



The central square of Drosopigi



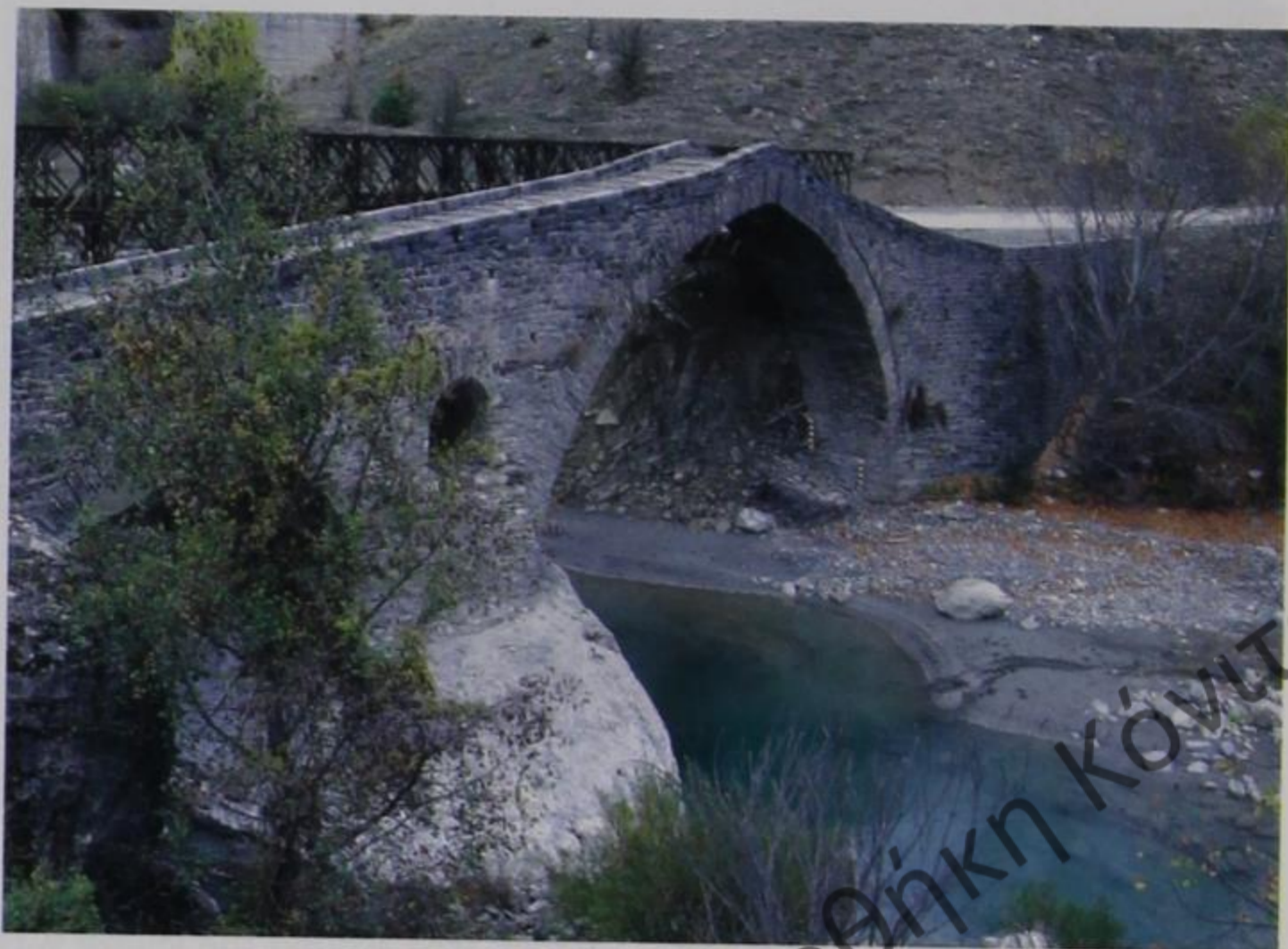
Frescoes at the inferior of the nave of the monastery of Zerma

some beautiful murals from several periods exist inside the nave. The monastery was said to be built by the Byzantine emperor Konstantinos Pogonatos (668-685 A.D.) in the neighbouring site of "Paliomonastiro" but was moved to its present site after it was renovated in 1656.

Drosopigi (Kantsiko)

This beautiful village is built at 1050m on the western slopes of Mt. Tambouri (1876m). It lies 43km from Konitsa and 5km from the national road Konitsa- Kozani. Drosopigi was the birth place of many stone masons who travelled to work in Sudan, Persia and





The bridge of Drosopigi- Zerma on Sarandaporos river

lent examples of local architectural styles. The impressive paved central square is built on two levels. The huge plane tree at the square, planted in 1886, is accompanied by a pretty stone-built spring. The large parish church of St. Paraskevi was built by local masons in 1930 and has a double bell tower. In the yard surrounding the church one can see the bust of the village's benefactor Yiannis Lytras. It is worth visiting the chapels of St. Athanasios (built 1906), St. Nicolas (1916), St. Panteleimon (1927), Panagia (Dormition of Virgin Mary, 1902), the school (1927), and the community building (1903) which houses the tavern "Ameliako". Few inhabitants remain in the village during winter and these are mostly

builders, farmers and gardeners. In the summer the village has about 400 inhabitants. The yearly festival is held on 15th August and is one of the most famous held in the area. The festival lasts for three days and during this period athletic events are held.

Kantsiko or Zerma bridge

The symbol of Drosopigi (Kantsiko) and Plagia (Zerma), the stone arched bridge of Sarandaporos, is located between the two villages. This is one of the oldest bridges of Epirus as it was built in the mid 18th century (1747 as indicated on the carved inscription). The main pedestal of the bridge has been grounded on a huge rock in the middle of the river. Two characteristic arches,



An old house in Drosopigi, made by local craftsmen

development and was allowed special administration and religious privileges. It was during this period that most of the village's houses were built, as shown by the inscriptions on their facades. The

wider area around the village was the scene of heavy fighting during the Greek-Italian and Greek civil wars.

The village is well-kept and hospitable to visitors. It has excel-



The parish church of St. Paraskevi



Εθνική Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κοινο

Old house
in Drosopigi



The chapel of Panagia on the route to Drosopigi

starting from this point, lead to both banks of the river. An additional smaller arch, located above this rock, allows the river to pass through when the water level is high. This is the only old stone bridge that still stands over the main River of Sarandaporos. For this reason this bridge has been chosen as the emblem of the Municipality of Mastorochoia.



Woodcarved ceiling at the interior of a house in Drosopigi



The impressive mountainous area of Konitsa is a paradise for naturalists and hikers. The national trekking trail O3 crosses the whole region, coming from the nearby area of Zagori. This path crosses Mt Tymfi, through Karteros passage, up to Vrysochori village. Further on, it climbs up to Palioseli and Drakolimni (Dragon lake) on Mt. Smolikas, then goes down towards Agia Paraskevi

Apart from the mountains, the beautiful rivers of the region, especially Voidomatis and Aaos, are suitable for outdoor activities, such as kayaking and rafting. You may also go mountain biking, paragliding, horseback riding or test your skills in archery. Every year, in Konitsa, the “Evathlos” tournament takes place, with many outdoor sports contests, such as



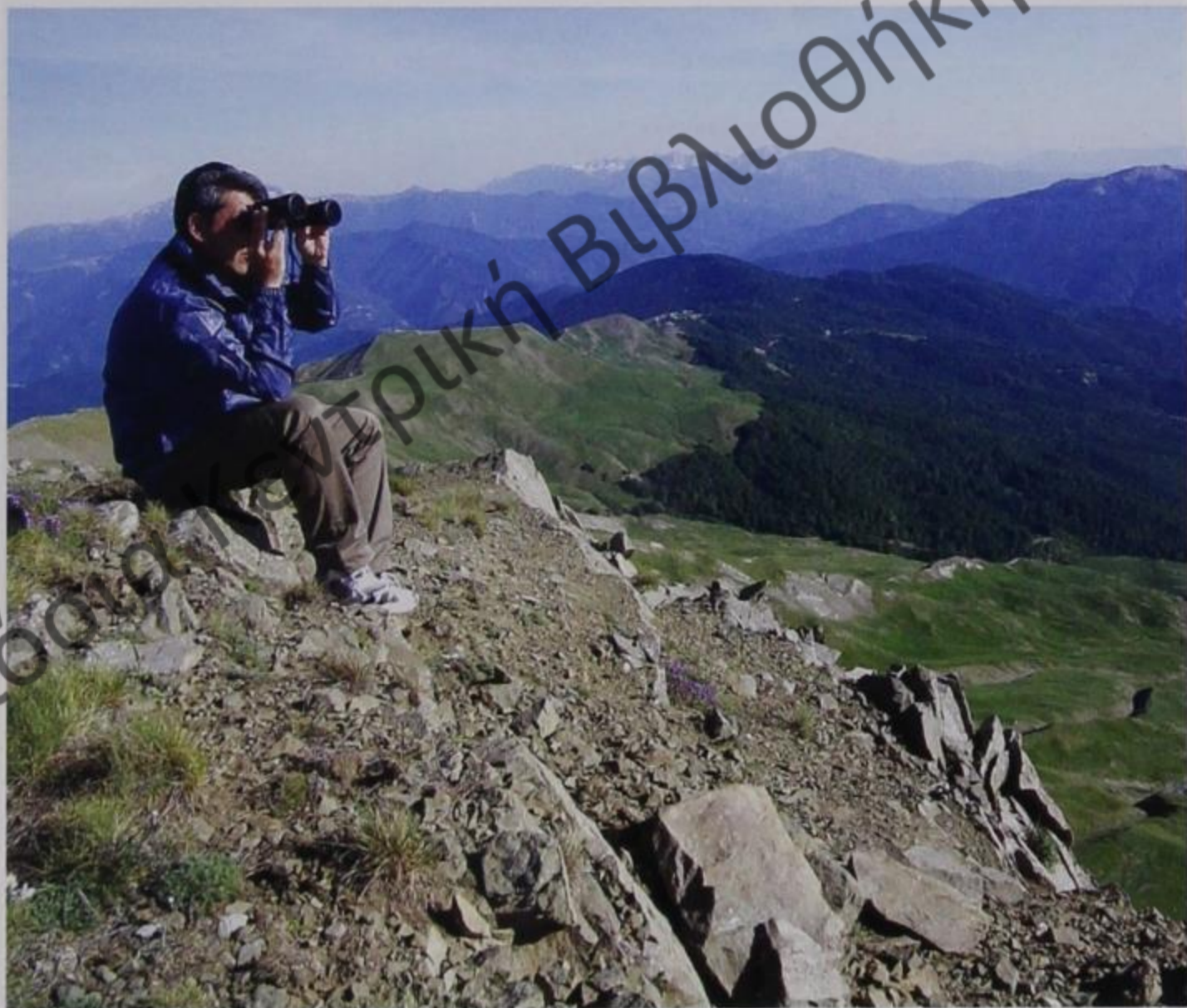
(Kerasovo), passes by Mt. Tabouri and Drossopigi village and then continues northwest to Kato and Epano Arena peaks on Mt. Grammos. Apart from O3, there are several other trails in the Konitsa region and the most popular of them are properly marked. Still, several other trails are also very manageable, once hikers consult a little bit with the locals.

the mountain marathon race, kayaking, mountain biking, rock climbing, paragliding etc.

Rafting and kayaking

Aaos and Voidomatis rivers are suitable for rafting and kayaking. There are several routes, of various levels of difficulty, up to 27 km long. The most preferable route in Aaos starts from the bridge of Palioseli/ Vrisochori and

7. Outdoor activities



of the area are suitable for biking, thanks to the rather gentle elevation –compared to the surrounding steep slope- and the picturesque view. Some of these routes are the following: Konitsa-Molivoskepasti monastery, Pysogianni- Gorgopotamos on Mt. Grammos and Elefthero - Armata on Mt. Smolikas.

Paragliding

The paragliding take-off area is located on Profitis Elias (Prophet Elijah) peak (alt. 1071m), close to Konitsa. International paragliding competitions have been staged here. You can reach this area, which offers a spectacular view of the surrounding region (Konitsa plain, Mts. Tymfi, Trapezitsa, Smolikas, Kleftis, Grammos and Nemertsika) via a paved 2.5 km road, which starts from the main road from Konitsa to Elefthero village (close to St. Athanassios chapel).

Rock climbing

Among Konitsa's mountains, only the limestone rocks of Tymfi are suitable for rock climbing. These cliffs, however, constitute one of Greece's best and most demanding rock climbing sites. Since 1955, several climbing routes of varying grades of difficulty have been established, especially on the spectacular Astraka (2436m) and Gamila (2497m) peaks.



Hiking and Trekking

The Konitsa mountains are considered a hiker's and trekker's paradise due to their diverse relief and extensive size, in combination with the fact that each mountain is a natural continuation of the other. Thus all Konitsa mountains form a unity with a mosaic of shapes and habitats. In addition, there are several old trails and extensive areas as well, which have not been disturbed by man; neither roads



ends at the arched bridge of Konitsa. It is a very demanding route, with high grades of difficulty (V and VI) all along the way. It's 15kms long and takes 4-8 hours, depending on the season and on the level of the water. The descent can be made by kayak, monoraft or hot dog. Some parts of the route, with a lower grade of

difficulty, are easier.

On Voidomatis, the classic route begins at the bridge of Aristi-Papingo, follows a scenic passage down along Voidomatis gorge and ends at the gorge's exit, at the bridge of Kleidonia. The descent can be made by raft, kayak, monoraft or hot dog; it takes 1-2 hours and the grade of difficulty is II.

Early in the spring, kayaking enthusiasts may also attempt the descent of Kerasovitikos, a tributary of Sarandaporos river.

Mountain biking

There are several dirt roads on Mts Smolikas and Grammos suitable for mountain biking, as well as motorized off road vehicles. Parts of the paved roads



Mt. Smolikas (2637m)

1. Agia Paraskevi (Kerasovo) – Drakolimni – Smolikas’ peak (2637m)

Difficulty: medium.

Duration: 6.30 hours.

Signage: O3 and red signs within yellow borders.

Altitude scale: 1000m – 2637m

Description: The trail has a southerly course and passes by Profitis Elias, Koutsouras ravine, Pefkofyta and Koutsouro locations. It goes through forests of black pine, fir and higher up Balkan pine, until it reaches Drakolimni (Dragon lake, 2150m) 5 hours later. Then it climbs eastwards for another 1.30 hours, through the sub-alpine landscape, to the highest peak. The route is clearly marked with O3 signage from Agia



The hiking trail from Agia Paraskevi to Drakolimni

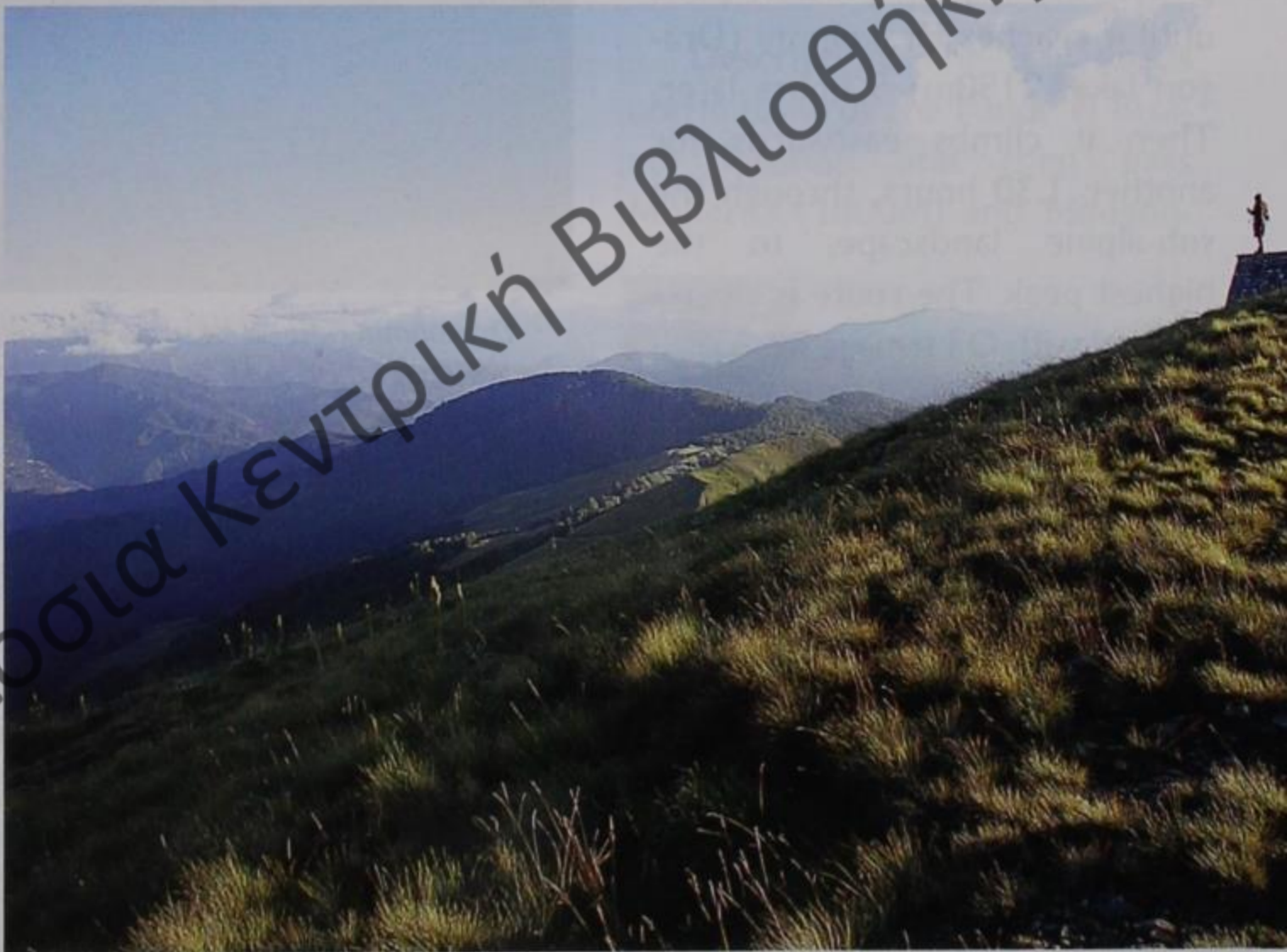


Drakolimni (Dragonlake) on Mt. Smolikas



nor other construction that could have compromised the beauty of the landscape or threaten rare species of fauna and flora exist there. Many trails lead to the high peaks of the area or connect settlements at the lower altitude zone. Up to recent times, an extensive network of trails linked together the area's villages as well as the locations of the inhabitants' daily activities. A considerable part of this network is still in good condition today, especially those trails that lead to locations of

interest to visitors and tourists, and, of course, also those that still serve the needs of the few inhabitants left in the surrounding villages and sheep-folds (stock raising, farming, wood cutting, hunting, recreation, etc). The rest of the trails, especially in low altitudes, fell out of use and deteriorated, or were replaced by paved roads, so they have lost their charm. Following, you may find the descriptions, by mountain, of the region's most interesting hiking paths.



Mt. Grammos, Gesos peak (2163m)

rida locations. Then it's another 1.30 hours to Missorachi (2200m) and a short trek eastwards to Drakolimni (2150m). Another 1.30 hours eastwards takes you to the peak. The path goes through excellent black pine, beech and Balkan pine forests. In general, the path is not so properly marked. You can also reach Mougrila following a dirt road, which starts from the entrance of Pades village.

Mountain refuges

In the Nane location (alt. 1620m) the wooden refuge can accommodate 15 persons. Facili-



The opening day of the Smolikas mountain refuge



ties include a wood stove and beds. A fountain is outside the refuge. A short way further up, at 1680m., is the new, modern, stone-walled mountain refuge, which can accommodate 25 persons. There is a fireplace, a wood stove, beds and an organized kitchen, which serves proper meals. This refuge operates during the summer and early autumn, whereas during the rest of the year you have to make arrangements with the superintendent.

Mt. Grammos (2520m)

4. Plikati- Grammos' peak (2520m)

Difficulty: high.

Duration: 6,15 hours.

Signage: Red marks.

Altitude scale: 1240m– 2520m

Description: The path starts from Plikati village (alt.1240m) in a north-northeast direction. Go directly to Xiropotamos stream, cross it laterally and then go on to Messopotamos stream. Having crossed the stream bed, continue to the northeast and climb up until the stream crosses another smaller one (1.30 hour). Then follow the pathway between Meloura and Skala locations, walk up a rather steep slope until the col between the two higher peaks of this mountain: Perifano (2442m) and Tsouka Petsik (2520m) (3 hours). It is one more hour towards the west to reach the peak. The last

2. Palioseli – Drakolimni – Smolika's peak (2637m)

Difficulty: medium.

Duration: 6 hours. Signage: O3.

Altitude scale: 1100m– 2637m

Description: The trail heads off to the north towards the spring of the Turk, at the chapel of Agia Paraskevi. Then, again to the north, it passes from the Nane location, where there is a water fountain and the wooden refuge of Palioseli (1620m). A little further up it meets the new, stone-wall, refuge (1680m). Having the new refuge as a starting point, go up to Mougourida mountainside and then pass from Missorachi (2200m). Turn slightly eastwards and Drakolimni is in front of you at 2150m. If you want to go farther up, take an easterly direction and you will be at the highest peak of the mountain in 1.30 hour. The path is clearly marked except for the last part from Drakolimni to the peak.

A significant part of the route takes you through dense black pine and beech forests and past the refuges you walk under 5

centuries old Balkan pines. At the high altitude zone, from Missorachi onwards, the trail crosses sub-alpine plateaus, thus the tree vegetation is very poor and the landscape is more or less totally bare. The refuges can also be reached by a passable dirt road that starts from the main road close to Palioseli village.

3. Pades – Drakolimni - Smolika's peak (2637m)

Difficulty: medium.

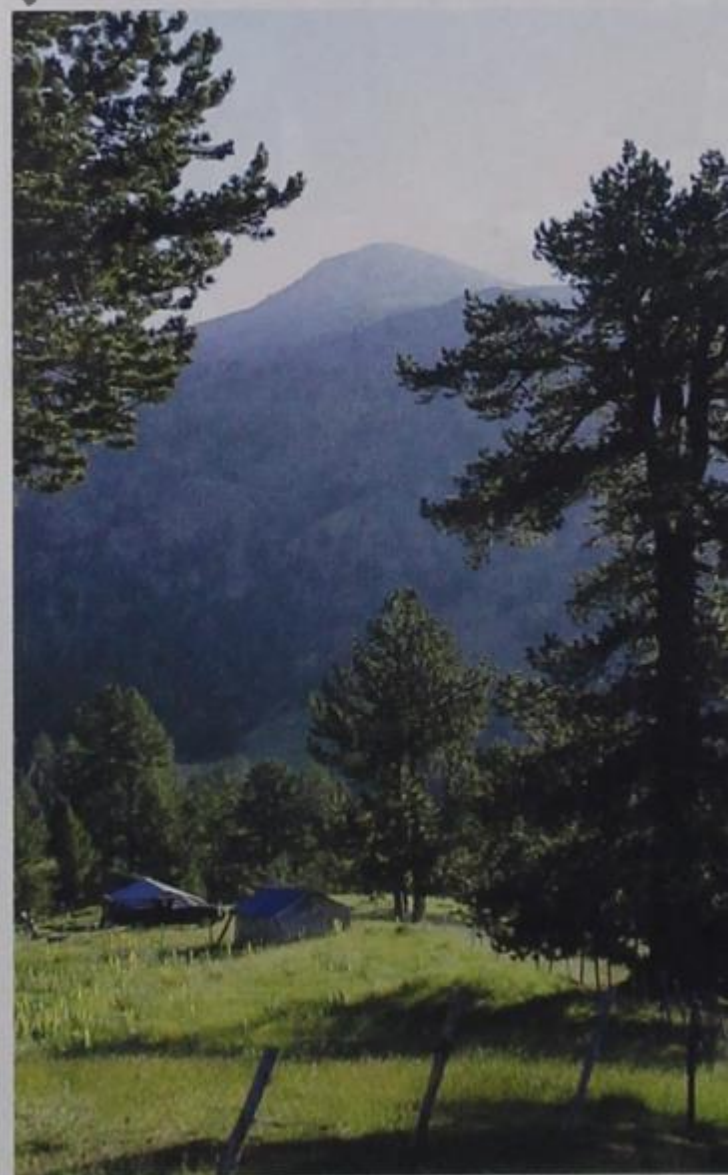
Duration: 6 hours.

Altitude scale: 1100m– 2637m

Description: The trail heads north, towards the Pande el Bizano location and then pass Mougriila (1800m) and Mougou-



The hiking trail from Pades to Drakolimni



Sheepfold on Mt. Smolikas



Mt. Grammos, Perifano (or Skirtsis) peak (2444m)

borderline. Walk for about 20 minutes along the dirt road at the northern side of the village, and then turn into a path that goes northwest towards Rossdoli peak (1975m). From there, having turned north, leave the main path which heads into Albania and walk along the mountain ridge, passing by several peaks, such as 2256 and Mavri Petra, all the way to 2520. Parts of this route pass through beech forest but the main part crosses a more or less barren landscape. As it is a difficult 6 hours route, it should not be chosen by inexperienced hikers.



Mt. Grammos, Landscape at the area of Plikati village

5. Aetomilitsa – Grammos peak (2520m)

Difficulty: medium.

Duration: 5 hours.

Signage: Red signs on white background.

Altitude scale: 1500m– 2520m

Description: The route starts from Aetomilitsa village, where there is a mountain refuge. Follow the dirt road to the west for about 1 hour until “Aspro potami” stream. Then follow the path on the left and you will reach Gessos peak (2163m) in 1.40 hours. Turn westwards and you will be at Perifano peak (2444m) after 1 hour. Here the trail follows a westward direction and after 1.20 hour you will be at the highest peak of Mt. Grammos (2520).

Apart from a few nice beech pockets, this path crosses mainly sub alpine plateaus. You can also take a shorter route to the peak, following the dirt road that goes



part of the route is steep and at the peak you will see the ruins of the little chapel dedicated to Virgin Mary, a reminder of the tragic Greek Civil War. The view from the summit is breathtaking. You can gaze at Mt. Tymfi, Mt. Smolikas, the Albanian mountains and the rest of Mt. Grammos. This route is not well marked; you will occasionally see red dots and piles of stones. The visibility, though, towards the peaks is very

good and this helps the hiker find the way. At first the route passes through the abandoned fields, which have nowadays mostly turned into oak forests. On the way up there are nice beech pockets and then pastures and bare rocks dominate the landscape.

Alternatively, you can make your way from Plikati to the highest peak via another route, which follows the Greek-Albanian



The highest peak of Mt. Grammos (2520m)

Mt. Trapezitsa 2022 m

7. Konitsa – Trapezitsa peak (2022m)

Difficulty: medium. **Duration:** 4.30 hours. **Signage:** Yellow signs. **Altitude scale:** 900m– 2022m

Description: The starting point is the chapel of St. Athanassios on the road from Konitsa to the villages of the Aaos valley (Lakka Aouu). Go uphill to the right, following the signs, and then, through old fields, enter the forest and head southeast. Having passed the locations “Asprochomata” and “Goni”, where there is a tiny spring, turn left at the first crossroad. This path will direct you to the highest summit of the mountain. On the way back, you can follow the mountain crest towards the second peak of Mt. Trapezitsa (Roidovounti) and soon go down to “Karoutia” location (1750m), where you will find an excellent spring with plenty of

water all year round. From there it's only a short trek westwards to the ridge and a clear path will take you back to the original trail you followed on the way up. This route goes through beautiful forests of fir, black pine, beech and fascinating 5 to 8 centuries old Balkan pines.

Other routes on Trapezitsa:

The previous trail, which starts from the chapel of St. Athanassios offers a couple of alternative routes. At “Asprochomata” crossroad (about 40 minutes from the starting point) follow the path to the right and within 1.30 hours you will reach the main ridge at “Aimnadia” (1665m) location. A majestic view to the Aaos valley and the opposite forests of Mt. Tymfi is on offer. Regarding the second alternative route, leave the main trail a little after “Goni”, turn right, cross the ridge which comes from the main peak (2022 m) and go down to “Karoutia” (1750m).





Mt. Grammos, Kiafa peak (2395m)

from Aetomilitsa or Plikati to Gessos peak (2163 m).

An additional route starting from “Aspro potami” goes up to a characteristic col and then, having turned eastwards, ends at Kiafa peak (2395m).

6. Aetomilitsa – Epano Arena (2192m)

Difficulty: medium.

Duration: 3 hours.

Altitude scale: 1500m– 2192m

Description: The path follows an eastern direction, across dense black pine and beech forests, until the sub-alpine plateau at the high altitude zone, where there are two small alpine ponds (2.10 hours). Then turn southeast, continue uphill and you are at the peak in 50 minutes. This route is not marked, but the main summit is easily visible.



Mt. Grammos, Epano (2192m) and Kato (2075m) Arena

Alternatively, if you prefer to follow the old trail, don't forget to look for a small path on the right, after about 30 minutes from the dam. The old path offers a livelier sense of the wild beauty of the landscape and the special flora of the gorge.

9. Aaos gorge trail: Konitsa – Kalogeriko – Siadi Myga (1650m)

Difficulty: medium.

Duration: 5 hours.

Signage: insufficient marking with yellow-black signs.

Altitude scale: 450 m– 1550m

Description: The route starts from the old arched bridge of Konitsa. Two hours are needed till the Stomio monastery. Then follow a narrow dirt road, which brings you, after 35 minutes, to a small ravine, called “Desi”. Cross it and follow a clear twisting path, which will lead you in 1.30 hours to Kalogeriko col (1350m). Move

eastward on this path, for about 45 minutes till you reach the imposing basin “Siadi Myga”, over which towers the majestic north rock face of Gamila summit (2497m). The entire route passes through dense forests of black pine, beech and fir.

Several other paths go further up in the gorge. Following a south-southeast direction, you can stay hiking into dense beech forest and amazing clusters of Balkan pines up to the steep Karteros passage (2300m), until you reach the sub-alpine plateau of Mt. Tymfi. Turn right and after having followed the main ridge you will be at “Gamila” (2497m), the highest and more spectacular peak of this massif. On the other hand, from “siadi Myga”, having followed an east-southeast direction -again through beech and Balkan pines- you can reach a distinctive col between “Avalos” and “Limeria Klefton” peaks (1800m). Go down to the “Gousteria” pond (1650m) and you have two choices: either to



The “Myga” basin (1550m) at the northern part of Mt. Tymfi

Head southeast, staying at the same altitude until the main col between Trapezitsa and Roidovouni peaks (Davelis' col". Then after a smooth climb up to the southern slope of Roidovouni, you will be at the peak (1985 m). There is a majestic view of the whole Aaos valley, including Mt. Smolikas, Mt Tymfi and several other mountains up to Valia Calda at the east, where the main springs of Aaos river are. Dense forests of oak, black pine, fir, beech and Balkan pine -at the higher altitude zone- cover the whole of Mt. Trapezitsa. In addition, impressive cliffs, coming out from the dense forests, give to the landscape a unique form.

Mt. Tymfi (2497m)

8. Aaos gorge trail: Konitsa – Stomio monastery

Difficulty: low

Duration: 2 hours.

Signage: No clear signs.

Altitude scale: 450m– 650m



Several remote locations in the Aaos gorge still have the name of Captain Davelis, who used to have his hideout there during the last period of the Ottoman domination

Description: Follow the dirt road along the right bank of Aaos river at the old arched bridge of Konitsa. A small concrete dam on the riverbed, after 2 km distance, indicates the end of the dirt road. A wide path, occasionally alternated with a narrow dirt road, continues for about 40 minutes or so, parallel to the right bank of the river and then goes uphill to Stomio monastery through a beautiful forest of hornbeams (50 minutes).



Roidovouni peak (1985m) of Mt. Trapezitsa and Mt. Smolikas (2637m) at the background, as seen from Mt. Tymfi



Drakolimni of Mt. Tymfi



Remains from an one thousand years old Balkan pine on Mt. Tymfi

(beech, fir, maple e.a.) and very often cross steep gullies that stretch down from the high mountain ridges. The snow here often does not melt until mid June. It takes an additional half hour to approach the only passage, which will direct you to the sub-alpine plateau. The "Davalista" Narrows is the only dangerous point along this trail. Rocks may fall during heavy rains. Go inside the Narrows on the left side and then follow the steep path on the right. You need 1.30 hours to reach the western edge of the Lake' plateau (alt. 1700-1800m). Cross the pastures southwards for 40 minutes. Then you have three

choices. If you turn left, you can go uphill to Drakolimni (Dragon lake) (alt.2050m) in 1.20 hour. If you go right, you'll come soon (0.40 hour) at Astraka col (alt.1950m), where the Astraka refuge is located (alt.1950m). In case you wish to visit the nearby village of Papingo in Zagori area, you have to go downhill for 2.30 hours. Finally, having followed a straight direction, go uphill between the rocky slopes



Lazaros (or Lapatos) peak (2254m)

continue towards the sub-alpine plateau to the “Tsouka Rossa” passage (2300m) and end up at the villages of Skamneli and Tsepelovo in Zagori area, or to go down to Vrysochori village, passing through impressive beech and black pine forests.

10. Aaos gorge trail: Konitsa – Stomio monastery – Drakolimni – Gamila peak (2497m)

Difficulty: high.
Duration: 9.30 hours (to Drakolimni).
Signage: insufficient marking with yellow-black signs.
Altitude scale: 450m– 2497m

Description: Starting from the stone arched bridge, follow the dirt road to Stomio monastery (2 hours). Stay walking on the old dirt road in front of the monastery yard for half an hour and then don't miss



Davalista pass connects the sub alpine plateau of Mt. Tymfi with the Aaos gorge

a small path at the right side, which goes uphill through a dense forest with hornbeam, black-pine, fir and beech. Two hours later, at the end of the long ascend, you come to an opening with marvelous view. Turn right and follow a more or less horizontal trail westwards for 1.30 hours, until you reach a characteristic open ridge, called “Davalista”. This part of the route is under the shadow of ancient trees



location. Most of the shallow caves (rock shelters) located around, were inhabited by humans in the Paleolithic age (15.000 to 10.000 years ago). Another hour hiking and the trail comes to the end, at the Aristi/Papingo bridge. As you approach the bridge, you can see on the opposite side the Panagia Spiliotissa monastery, built on a characteristic steep rock.

12. Kleidonia – Ano Kleidonia- Papingo

Difficulty: low.

Duration: 3 hours.

Signage: Occasional red markings.

Altitude scale: 450m– 900m- 1000m

Description: Cross the village of Kleidonia and follow the old uphill trail. Soon you will come across the Byzantine church of “Metamorfofi tou Sotira” (Transfiguration of Christ), which used to be the nave of a monastery. After having walked for 1.45 hours in a dense kermes oak bush, the uphill climb is over and you face the chapel of St. Athanassios. It takes only 5 minutes to come to the square of Ano Kleidonia. It is worth your time to take a southerly trail for 20 minutes to St. Apostles monastery, with an excellent view of the whole Voldomatis valley. The spectacular calcareous towers of Astraka



of Ploskos and the cliffs of Astraka summit for about 1 hour. Then turn east and after another 1.30 hours you will have reached the Gamila peak (2497m). The route is marked with yellow-black square signs until the Lake plateau. Afterwards you must follow O3 marks (red/white) until Rombozi plateau and then red dots and scattered stone piles to the peak.

Other routes:

An additional path on Mt. Tymfi starts at the army training ground close to the town of Konitsa. Follow the path which goes directly inside the left ravine and then climb the left ridge. You need 4.30 hours walk to reach "Svisti" basin (alt.1450m) at the base of Lapatos rock face. In another 2.30 hours the path comes to the Lakes' plateau where it joins the trail described above. The total duration of this steep trail is at least 7 hours and there is no water spring along the way. The trail, however, passes through

beautiful forests of black pine, fir, beech and occasionally clusters of maple trees, mountain hazel and higher up, Balkan pines. Screes, cliffs, rocks and pastures dominate the landscape above the treeline (1650m).

11.Voidomatis gorge trail: Kleidonia—Aristi/ Papingo bridge

Difficulty: low.

Duration: 2.30 hours.

Signage: Occasional red markings.

Altitude scale: 470 m. — 550 m.

Description: This route starts at the old arched bridge of Voiomatis, at Kleidonia. The trail follows the left bank of the riverbed, passing through a gorgeous riverside forest with age-old plane trees. After 1.30 hours you come to an opening with sparse trees, where a little higher up in the dense bush lies the picturesque chapel of Agioi Anargyri. Keep walking towards the river's springs and in 20 minutes the trail comes to the narrow pass of Kleidi



Voidomatis river

uphill to the Bara pass (1750m), from where inhabitants came into contact with the neighboring Albanian villages (2 hours).

From Lykorachi, a trails goes through beautiful black pine and beech forests to Epano Arena in 3 hours and Kato Arena, in 2.30 hours.

From Fourka, a trail goes to Bogdani peak (2239m) following a route which passes the historic crossing of Romios and ends up at the peak, after a 3 hour trek. Other trails from Fourka lead to Kerasovo in 2 hours, to Drosopigi via Profitis Elias in 3 hours and to the Kladormi Virgin Mary monastery in 1.30 hours. All these paths go through beautiful, dense forests.

From Kerasovo (Agia Paraskevi) a historic trail, with a majestic view to Mt. Smolikas, takes you after 3 hours hiking to Tabouri

(1878m), a site of fierce battles during the Greek-Italian war in 1940.

From Kastaniani, trails lead to Giftissa peak (1752m) after 2.30 hours, as well as to the historic Boliana (1296m) in about 2 hours.

From Pournia a trail takes you up to Daliopoli peak (2217m), between Smolikas and Kleftis, in about 5 hours.

From Molista, a trail goes to Pournia village, via Agios Charalambos, after 2.30 hours, and also to Nikanoras from Krevatia peak (1280m) after 3.30 hours. From Molista you can follow a trail to historic Kleftis peak (1846m) in a 3 hour trek.

From Ganadio a trail goes to Pournia in 1 hour.

From Nikanoras a trail goes to Pigi village, after 1 hour hiking through a beautiful oak forest.



Kastaniani village at the slopes of Mt. Gyftissa (1752m)



Ano Kleidonia

summit (Papingo towers) dominate the amazing landscape. If you want to go closer to them, you have to keep hiking for another 1.30 hours, until you reach the traditional settlement of Megalo Papingo.

Mountain refuge

There is only one refuge on Mt Tymfi. It is located at the Astraka col, a 3 hours trek from the settlement of Mikro Papingo. You can reach the refuge from Konitsa as well, but this trek takes over 7

hours. The refuge has 50 beds, blankets, a kitchen etc. It is open daily from May until the end of October. During the rest of the year you must contact the superintendent.

Additional trekking – hiking trails

From Amarandos, a trail leads, via St. Nicholas and Agia Triada, to the southernmost high peaks of Mt. Grammos, Kamenik (2043m), after a 3.50 hours trek.

From Vourbiani, trails cross beautiful black pine and beech forests and lead to Grammos' peaks: Steno (1957m), Kardari (1850m) and Golio (1934m), after a 5 hour trek.

From Asimochori a trail goes up to Golio (1934m) and Kamenik (2043m) and then, through Tziotziou pastures, to Pysogianni, an 8 hours trek.

From Hioniades a trail leads



Astraka mountain refuge on Mt. Tymfi



Sheep flock at the foothills of Mt. Trapezitsa



*Mt. Smolikas, one thousand years old
Balkan pine on Tsouma Kalioro peak*

From Exochi, there are trails through nice oak forests that go to Trapeza or Kavassila; both routes take about 1 hour.

From Elefthero, a trail goes up to the beautiful Kleftis peak (1846m), in 3.50 hours through black pine and beech forests.

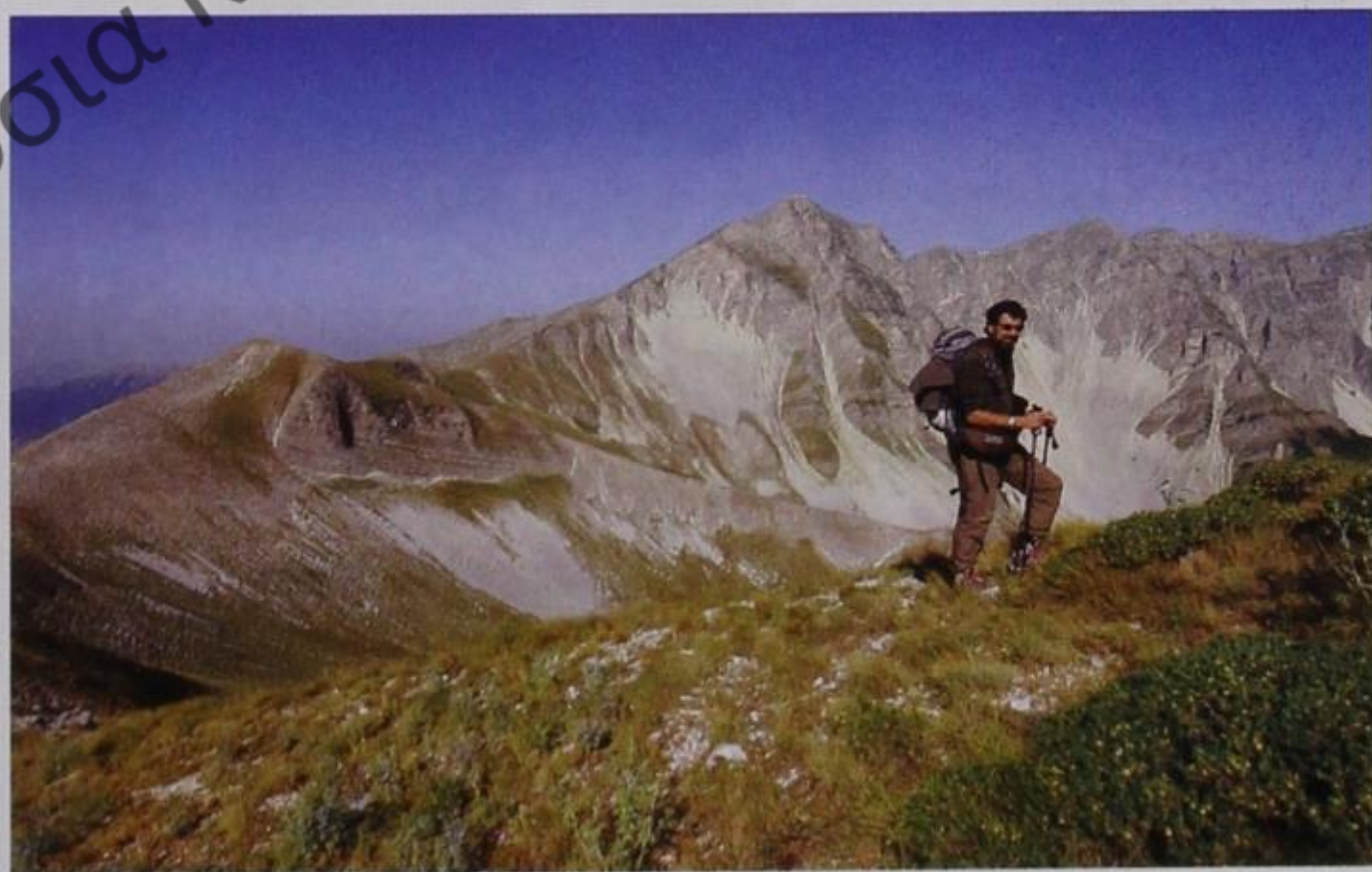
From Armata, a trail goes up to

Mossia peak (2610m) in about 6.30 hours. This route passes through black pine and beech forests as well as Balkan pine clusters at the higher altitude zone.

From Ano Kleidonia a trail goes to Koula peak (1526m) in 2.30 hours, or to Lapatos peak (2252m) in about 4 hours. The first part of this trail is the same, but it splits for the two peaks after 1.45 hours going through sparse shrubs of hornbeams, oaks, junipers and fir forest later.

From Aidonochori trails lead through beautiful oak forests to Vasiliko in the nearby area of Pogoni in 3 hours and to Bourazani in 1 hour.

A special old trail, rarely used today and in part replaced by a paved road, goes from Goura monastery of Aidonochori to Grika gorge and Molyvdoskepastos village.



Hiking on Mt. Nemertsika

INFORMATION

REGIONAL BUS AGENCY (KTEL) OF IOANNINA

Athens	23005929865
Thessalonica	233005600111
Ioannina	26590028211, 27442, 26886
Konitsa	2656022214

REGIONAL BUS AGENCY (KTEL) OF KOZANI

Kozani	23460034454
Thessalonica	23300599884

AIR LINES

ODYMPIC

Ioannina	26590023220
Athens	23009866666
Thessalonica	23300280200

AEGEAN

Ioannina	26590069200, 66900168444
Athens	23009988800

TAXI

Konitsa	26560228002, 22471
Kéfalloori	26560882244
Ioannina (Redictaxi)	26590046777
Kálpaki	26580412285

GREEK NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION (EOT)

Ioannina	26590046682
Thessalonica	23300286574
Athens	23003223111

HOSPITALS

Academic Hospital of Ioannina (Ioannina)	265900999111
Hatzikosta Hospital (Ioannina)	2651080111, 33461
Health Centre of Konitsa	2655023111, 2222

POLICE

Konitsa	2655022202
Pyrsgianni	2655031216, 31222
Kéfalloori	26560882244

FRONTIER POLICE

Konitsa	265606828368321
Pyrsgianni	26560331000

FIRE BRIGADE

Fire station of Konitsa	2655024001, 22199
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FORESTAL SERVICE

Forestry office of Konitsa	2655022996, 22090
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NORTHERN PINDOS NATIONAL PARK

Management body of Northern Pindos NP Park	2656022241, 22245
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MOUNTAINEERING REFUGES

Smodikas Refuge (or Mt. Smodikas)	6946670565
Pliossiti Refuge (or Mt. Smodikas)	2656024686, 6972333366
Astaka Refuge (or Mt. Tymfi)	6973223000

ACCESS & TRANSPORT

In order to visit the wider region of Konitsa you have to follow the national road Ioannina- Kozani. From Ioannina in roughly 43km after passing the location Vigla, you come across the region of Konitsa. At first you see the south-western slopes of Mt Tymfi and the plain of Konitsa where the two main rivers, Aous and Voidomatis, are joined. From that point, and after having passed the village of Kleidonia, you need other 20km to arrive to the town of Konitsa (63km from Ioannina). Alternatively, from the Vigla location you can continue straight to the Greek - Albanian borders at the south-western part of the region of Konitsa, where the settlements around Molyvdoskepasti monastery (Molyvdoskepastos, Aidonohori, Bourazani, Melissopetra, Kalovrysi) exist. In addition, you can reach the wider area of Konitsa through the villages Aristi and Kleidonia, which belong to Western Zagori.

Following the opposite direction of the national road (Kozani- Ioannina) you enter the area of Konitsa at the 120th km from Kozani, after crossing the Mt Voio pass and the villages Pentalofos and Eptahori. Driving on the main road across the Sarandaporos valley, you cross the famous Mastorohoria (the craftsmen villages) until you reach the city of Konitsa. There is an additional road leading from Western Macedonia to the area of Konitsa. This road starts from Kastoria and, having passed the villages of Nestorio and Nea Kotili on Mt Grammos, joins the main road from Kozani to Ioannina.

From Ioannina to Konitsa there are several buses every day, but it is not

the same for the rest of the area. There are few buses to certain villages of the area of Konitsa and the town is the destination point.

The route Konitsa - Pysogianni - Plikati (45km) is run every Monday and Friday, while the route Konitsa - Pysogianni - Oxia - Hioniades (40km) every Wednesday. At the same time, other buses follow every Monday and Friday the route Konitsa - Kefalohori - Plagia - Drosopigi (45km) and every Monday and Friday the route Konitsa - Kastanea (25km) - Langada (20km). Regarding the villages of Lakka Aou and having the village Distrato as our final destination (55km) one can choose among the four itineraries that exist four times a week. In addition, every Tuesday there are itineraries to Agia Paraskevi and Fourka, to Amarantos and the villages Exohi and Agia Barbara, as well as to Molista and the nearby villages. Finally, there is regular public transportation (four times a week) to Molyvdoskepastos and to all the villages between this village and Konitsa.

Finally, from Ioannina to Kozani and vice and versa, two itineraries are run daily, which cross a large part of the area of Konitsa through Sarantaporos valley. During the whole trip (220 km) there are few intermedia stations as: at Konitsa (157 km from Kozani and 63 km from Ioannina), at the crossroad to Pysogianni (130 km from Kozani and 90 km from Ioannina), at Theotokos and at Kefalohori villages. Finally, there are several itineraries with regional buses from Ioannina to Athens and Thessaloniki and vice versa on daily basis.

KLEIDONIA

VOIDOMATIS (Sourloukas P.):	26550 22925
SPYRIDOYLA (Kaltsouni Sp.): (www.hspiridoula.com)	26550 25050, 6977929682
HANI (Mihalaki Christina): (www.xanihotel.gr)	26550 24567, 24568
FARANGI (Kaltsounis K.): (www.faraggihotel.com)	26550 22054, 23608
PHILIPPOS (Kougoulis F.):	26550 23605

MELISSOPETRA

VILLA REA:	26550 61110
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MOLISTA

TO ARHONTIKO TOU SHERIFI (Sherifis E.):	26550 24090, 6945691216
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BOURAZANI

KIOSI Evangelia:	26550 61376
BOURAZANI HOTEL: (www.bourazani.gr)	26550 61283, 61320, 61321
FTERI (Natsi P.): (www.bourazani-fteri.gr)	26550 61447, 6946783110

PADES

ARENAGOGIO:	26550 24687, 6974359513
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POURNIA

PERISTERO (Mousios F.): (www.hotelperistero.gr)	26550 24147
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RESTAURANTS-TAVERNS**KONITSA**

ADIEXODO (Zidros V.):	26550 23184
AMPAZ:	26550 22731
AOOS (Blithikiotis K.):	26550 22079, 23079
VARNAS Christos:	26550 22359
GEFYRI:	26550 23780
I MAGIKI AVLI:	26550 22243
KAPNISMENO TSOUKMLI:	26550 24722
CELLARI (Sakkas):	26550 24523
MILIONIS Pizzeria:	26550 23349
BAKOULAS:	26550 22125, 22636
MILOS (Kyrtzoglou P.):	26550 22111
PANORAMA:	26550 23135
PETRINO (Kitsios):	26550 23065
TORIS Konstantinos:	26550 22915
TA PLATANAKIA (Tsaliamanis V.):	26550 22115
TO SPITIKO (Antoniou Antonis):	26550 23697
TO DENDRO (Mourehidis Ioannis):	26550 22055
TO CASTRO (Tsinolis V.):	26550 22519
TO STEKI:	26550 25025

AGIA PARASKEVI

VATSIKA Stella:	26550 24215
DAKOUVANOU Vassiliki:	26550 24203

AMARANTOU LOUTRA

VELLI Eleni:	26550 23486, 6972509910
ZIAKOPOULOU Viktoria:	26550 22696
ZIAKOS Nikolaos:	26550 23446
ZIAKOS Spiridon:	26550 23482, 6972898113
KOUGOULIS Konstantinos:	26550 23487, 6972318810
PANAGIOTIDIS Georgios:	26550 22124

MUNICIPALITY OF KONITSA

Town Hall:	26553 60300, 60327, 26550 22191, 23383
Citizen Service Centre (KEP):	26550 23900, 23903

ACCOMODATION

KONITSA

ARHONTIKO:	26550 23780
AVALOS (Kyrtzoglou St.): (www.avalos.gr)	26550 22853, 6947408650
ARTEMIS (Evagelou St.): (www.artemiskonitsa.gr)	26550 24774, 6977668390
AOOS Hotel (Blithikiotis K.):	26550 22079
GERAKOFOLIA (Ntafli K.): (www.gerakofolia.eu)	26550 22168
GALINI (Hatziroumpis G.):	26550 23800, 22367
GEFYRI Hotel (Kyrtzoglou Ef.): (www.gefyri.gr)	26550 23780
GRAND HOTEL DENDRO (Mourehidi K.): (www.grandhoteldentro.gr)	26550 29365
DENDRO (Mourehidis I.):	26550 22055, 22050, 29365
EPAVLI (Gaitanidis A.): (www.epavli-antonis.gr)	26550 23618, 6944225347
CASTRO (Tsinolis G.):	26550 22519
KATAFILI STOMIOU: (www.katafilistomiou.gr)	26550 24959
KONITSA MOUNTAIN RESORT (Exarhou H.): (www.konitsahotel.gr)	26550 29390
KOUGIAS HOTEL (Kougias Ch.): (www.kougias.gr)	26550 23830
MISSIOU Aristeas:	26550 22446
NITSAS Thomas:	26550 22065
PANORAMA Hotel (Mourehidis P.): (www.konitsapanorama.gr)	26550 23135
POTAMOLITHOS (Fates): (www.potamolithos.gr)	26550 22663
STOMIO:	26553 00997, 6947408702, 26550 22434
TO TZAKI (Demertzidi E.): (www.tofzaki.gr)	26550 22867, 6979621216
FILOXENIA (Exarhou H.):	26550 23330
HOUSOS Konstantinos:	26550 23288
HAMKO (Mantzios V.): (www.hotelhamko.gr)	26550 23107
VILA RUSTICA (Nikolopoulos Ch.): (www.villarustica.gr)	26550 24910

AGIA PARASKEVI

KERASSOVO:	26550 24215, 6971540937
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AMARANTOS

MARIA (Katis G.):	26550 23775
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AMARANTOU LOUTRA

VELLI Eleni:	26550 23486, 6972 509910
ZIAKOPOULOU Viktoria:	26550 22696
ZIAKOS Nikolaos:	26550 23446
ZIAKOS Spiridon:	26550 23482, 6972 898113
ZIAKOS Hristos:	26550 23482
ZIAKOU Marianthi:	26550 23486
KOUGOULIS Konstantinos:	26550 23487, 6972 318810
PANAGIOTIDIS Georgios:	26550 22124

ANO KLEIDONIA

FILOXENONAS ZAGORI:	26550 24532
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KAVASILA

KAVASILA (Georgiou V.):	26550 23464
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MUNICIPALITY OF MASTOROCHORIA

Town Hall (Pyrsoyianni):	26550 31269, 31111
Citizen Service Centre (KEP):	26550 31208
First Aid Station, Pyrsogianni:	26550 31201
First Aid Station, Vourbiani :	26550 31330
First Aid Station, Drosopigi:	26550 81250

ACCOMODATION**VOURBIANI**

SKOUFIAS Georgios:	26550 31340
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THEOTOKOS

PETRINO (Ntinis Panagiotis):	26550 81261
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KASTANEA

KASTANIANI (Tsoumanis S.):	26550 31700, 6943472684
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KEFALOHORI

FASOULIS Dimitris:	26550 81481
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LANGADA

KATSOTAS Theofanis:	26550 31354
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PLIKATI

NATSIS Prokopis:	26550 31423
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PYRSOGLIANI

ARMOLOI:	26550 31297
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RESTAURANTS-TAVERNS**VOYRBIANI**

Skoufias Georgios:	26550 31340
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THEOTOKOS

MELINDRA (Karanikas G.):	26550 81280
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ZOUNIS Panagiotis:	26550 81290
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FASOULIS Anastasios:	26550 81383
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KASTANEA

KASTANIANI (Tsoumanis S.):	26550 31700, 6943472684
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KEFALOHORI

NAFSIKA (Fasoulis D.):	26550 81481
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TO SPITIKO (Fasoulis A.):	26550 81451
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LAGADA

KATSOTAS Theofanis:	26550 31354
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PYRSOGLIANI

ARMOLOI:	26550 31297
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ANO KLEIDONIA

FILOXENONAS ZAGORI:

26550 24532

ARMATA

PAPANIKOLAOU Ioannis:

26550 24875

KLEIDONIA

VOIDOMATIS:

26550 22925

MEZEDOKIPOS:

26550 23885

FARAGI:

26550 22054, 23608

MAZI

LAPPAS Kostas:

26550 61282

PAPAHARISIS:

26550 61291

STRATOS Lampros:

26550 61270

MELISSOPETRA

VILLA REA:

26550 61110

MOLISTA

SHERIFIS:

26550 24090

BOURAZANI

BOURAZANI:

26550 61320, 61283

PANOREA:

26550 61376, 6944 614626

PADES

STOU ANASA TON ONTA:

26550 24791, 6973792371

ARENAGOGIO:

26550 24687, 6974359513

POURNIA

PERISTERO (Mousios F.):

26550 24147

ENVIROMENTAL/ EDUCATION CENTRES EXHIBITIONS

Environmental Education Centre of Konitsa:

26550 23825, 23903

Photographic Exhibition of the History of Konitsa:

26550 24964

Bourazani Environmental Park- Natural History Museum:

26550 61283

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES

Amarantos Baths:

26550 23775, 23890, 23486, 6972509910

Kavasila Baths:

26550 23464, 22047

Mountaineering Club of Konitsa:

26550 22464

NO LIMITS (Trekking, hiking, rafting etc): (www.nolimits.com.gr)

26550 23777

TREKKING Hellas (Trekking, hiking, rafting etc): (www.trekking.gr)

26510 71703

COMMUNITY OF AETOMILITSA

Community Office: 26550 31063
 Citizen Service Centre (KEP): 26550 31063

ACCOMODATION

LOUSIOS Hotel & REFUGE: (www.grammos.gr) 26550 31345, 6974 389788

RESTAURANTS-TAVERNS

LOUSIOS: 26550 31345, 6974 389788

COMMUNITY OF DISTRATO

Community Office: (www.distrato.gr) 26550 24811, fax: 26550 24540,
 Citizen Service Centre (KEP): 26550 24540

ACCOMODATION

MAIPAS Nikolaos: 26550 24816, 6974 362088
 MAIPAS Nikolaos: 26550 51329
 ROUSIAKIS Athanasios: 26550 51203
 ROUSIAKIS Dimitrios: 26550 24803
 SVARNAS Ioannis: 26550 24841

RESTAURANTS-TAVERNS

GOGOS Ioannis: 26550 24810, 6974303076
 ZISSIS Ioannis: 26550 24845
 MAIPAS Nikolaos: 26550 24949, 6974861752
 BRIAZA (Pafili El.): 26550 24919, 6974789309
 ROUSIAKIS Dimitrios: 26550 24803, 6932298144
 KARAGATSIA (Tozoulou Ir.): 6970099941
 CHALET DISTRATO (at the ski centre): 26550 24811
 BARBAS Konstantinos (at the ski centre): 26550 24850, 6974639321

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES

National Ski Resort of Vassilitsa: 24620 84100, 26100, 84850
 Alpine Zone (hiking, rafting, ski etc): 26510 23222, 26550 24822, fax: 26510 22145

COMMUNITY OF FOURKA

Community Office: 26550 24180
 Citizen Service Centre (KEP): 26550 24946

ACCOMODATION

PAPARIS Vassilios: 26550 24301

RESTAURANTS-TAVERNS

KAKOU Aleka: 26550 24248

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- "Epirotiki Estia"*
- "Konitsa"*
- "Epirotika Chronika"*

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 Ziogas Nikolaos: p. 224 down
 Zografou Konstantina: p. 56 down
 Dimou Apostolos: p. 226
 Kalyvas Evangelos: p. 35 down, 260 top
 Karanikas Thomas: p. 36 down, 107 down right, 234, 235, 241 down, 243 down, 244 top left
 Kougoulis Konstantinos: p. 165
 Loukas Dimitrios: p. 192
 Bozovitis Stauros: p. 107 down left, 154 down
 Bounas Anastassios: p. 55 top
 Oikonomou Ioannis: p. 143, 144 down left
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 Paganias Konstantinos: p. 153 down left
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 Sheriffis Evangelos: p. 175
 Florou - Papaioannou Myrto: p. 40 top, 88
 Municipality of Ioannina: p. 219 down

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- Nitsiakos V. [Ed.] "Konitsa and the surrounding villages. A cultural geography". Prefecture of Ioannina - Epirus S.A. Ioannina 2008: p. 106
- Exarhou Christos. Fourka of Epirus. Ioannina 2007: p. 200 top
- Underwood and Underwood. Greece 1896-1906. Images from stereoscopic photographs. Rizarion Foundation: p. 263 top
- Annual Calendar of Elefthero 2008: p. 144 down right

Ελλάδα Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσα

Εθνική Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσα



Exploring the area

1st Trail: Konitsa and the surrounding villages (Pigi, Kallithea, Kleidonia, Iliorachi, Kavasila, Mazi, Aetopetra).
Pages 85-124

2nd Trail: The settlements at the confluence of the rivers Aeos and Sarandaporos (Bourazani – Aidonohori – Molyvdoskepastos – Melissopetra – Kalovryta).
Pages 125-140

3rd Trail: The villages in Aeos valley (Lakka of Aeos) (Elefthero, Palioseli, Pades, Armata, Distrato).
Pages 141-156

4th Trail: The villages around Sarandaporos Narrows at the southernmost slope of Mt. Grammos (Exohi, Agia Barbara, Pyxaria, Amarandos). *Pages 157-166*

5th Trail: The villages at the southern slopes of Mt. Kleftis and Pyrgos (Triantafylli – Nikanoras – Pyrgos – Molista – Gaidaro – Monastiri). *Pages 167-186*

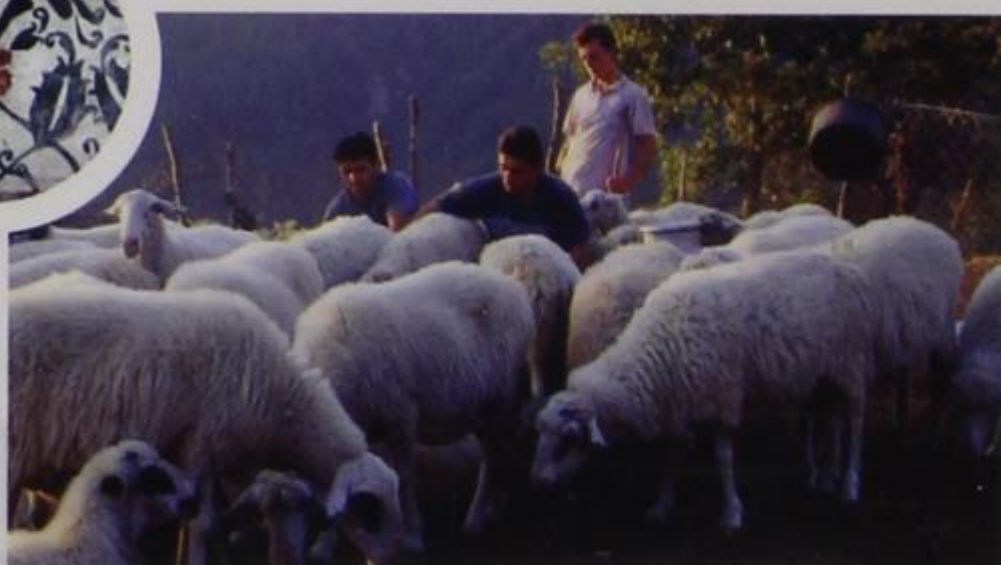
6th Trail: The villages in Vourkopoti valley on Mt. Smolikas (Pournia – Agia Paraskevi – Fourka).
Pages 187-202

7th Trail: The villages in Gorgopotamos valley on Mt. Grammos (Pyrsoyian, Vourbiani, Oxia, Asimochori, Hionochori, Gorgopotamos, Plikati).
Pages 203-226

8th Trail: The villages in Sarandaporos valley and on the high altitude zone of Mt. Grammos (Kastaniani, Langadika, Theotokos, Kefalochori, Lykorachi, Drosopigi, Plagia, Aetomilitsa).
Pages 227-250



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΚΕΝΤΡΙΚΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΘΗΚΗ ΚΟΝΙΤΣΑΣ



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