



# Walking on the sacred woods of Pindos mountains with Oliver Rackham

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**23-24 April 2015 Sassari, Sardinia, Italy**



Department of  
Biological Applications  
and Technology



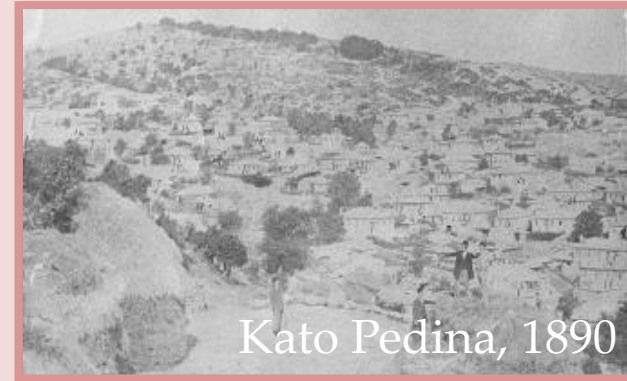
Co-financed by Greece and the European Union

# ECSLAND PROJECT

European Culture expressed in Sacred LANDscapes



2005: the beginning of the story



Kato Pedina, 1890



Kato Pedina, 2005



*Quercus cociferra*



*Quercus cociferra*



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*Thalis project-University of  
Ioannina: 2012-2015*

*“Conservation through religion.  
The sacred groves of Epirus”*



Vitsa, 2013



### *Understanding the biocultural value of Zagori and Konitsa sacred groves*

**TREES, FORESTS AND PEOPLE  
IN ANCIENT AND MODERN GREECE**

**ΔΕΝΤΡΑ, ΔΑΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΙ  
ΣΤΗΝ ΑΡΧΑΙΑ & ΣΥΓΧΡΟΝΗ ΕΛΛΑΔΑ**

Τετάρτη 13 Φεβρουαρίου 2013 | ώρα 18:30

Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο Ιωαννίνων (Πάρκο Λιβαρίτσιο)

Ομιλητής: **Oliver Rackham**

επίσης καθηγητής Ιστορικής Θεολογίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Κέιμπριτζ



Project Thalís kickoff meeting - Vitsa, 2013

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Konitsa, Aaos river 2014



Konitsa, Aaos river 2014

**KONITSA Summer School**

In Anthropology  
Ethnography and  
Comparative Folklore  
of the Balkans

Konitsa, Greece, 23/7 - 8/8 2014

# 9<sup>th</sup> International Summer School 2014

**LECTURES  
SEMINARS**

**FIELDWORK  
IN GREECE  
ALBANIA &  
F.Y. REPUBLIC  
OF MACEDONIA**

**VISITS &  
CULTURAL  
EVENTS**

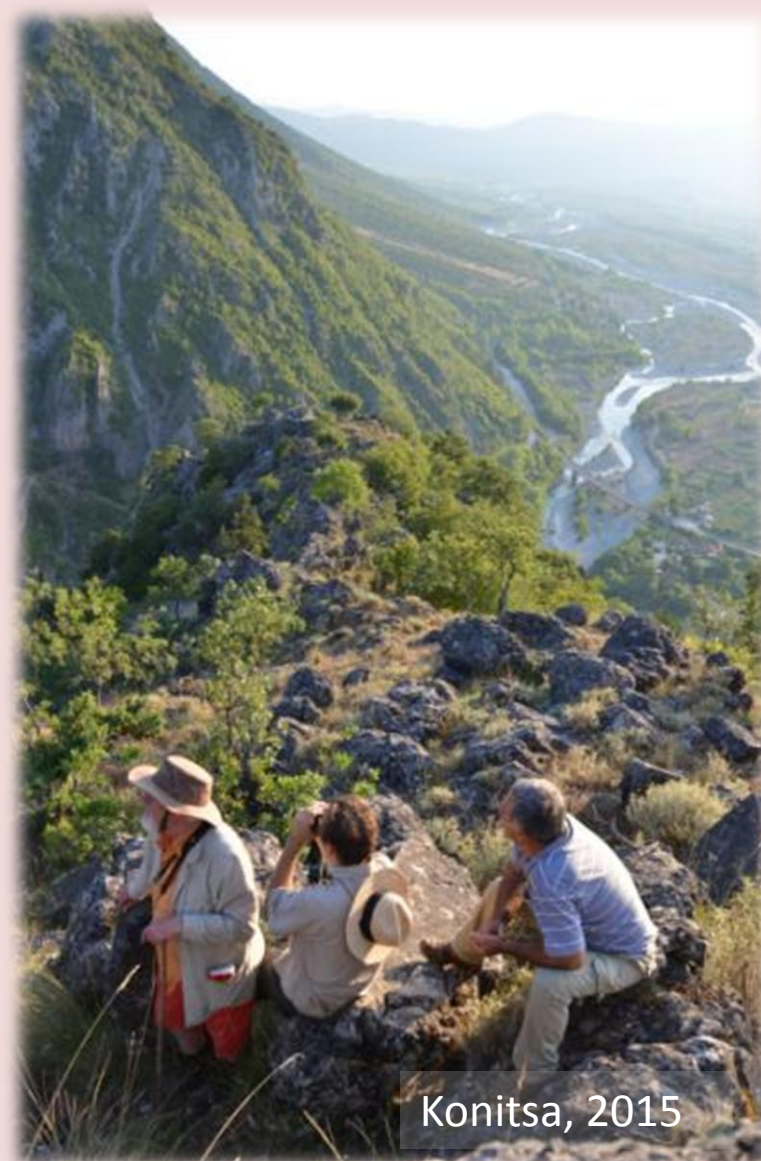
*Invited Speaker:*  
Professor  
Stathis Gourgouris

The Border Crossings Network  
[www.border-crossings.eu](http://www.border-crossings.eu)

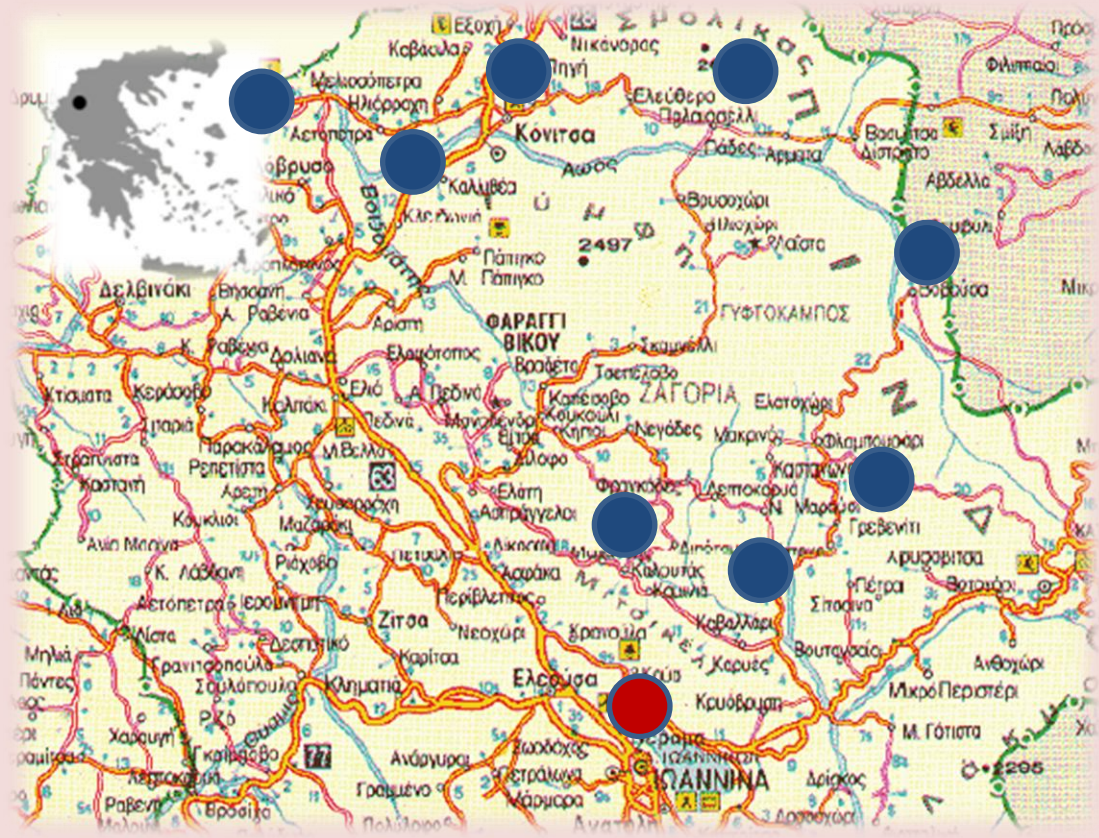
info: <http://www.border-crossings.eu/konitsa2014>  
email: [konitsa.summerschool@gmail.com](mailto:konitsa.summerschool@gmail.com)  
facebook: The Border Crossings Network

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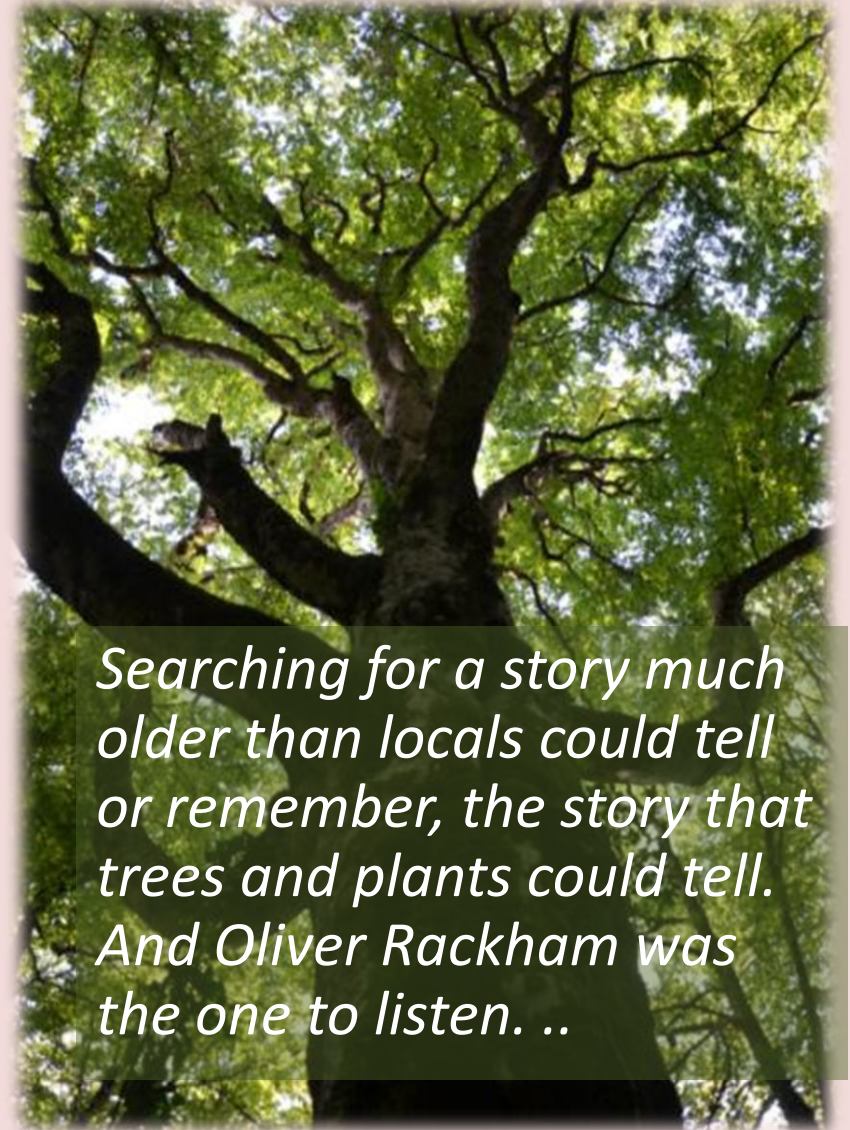


Konitsa, 2015



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*Searching for a story much older than locals could tell or remember, the story that trees and plants could tell. And Oliver Rackham was the one to listen. ..*



## The management of the commons

Sacred forests should not be thought of as 'wilderness' or 'virgin forests' untouched by human intervention

- Sacred forests were established by specific church ceremonies
- Banned activities normally included felling timber, woodcutting, and sometimes grazing, on pain of death or other temporal or spiritual penalty
- They were expected to protect the village from events happening above: badland erosion, breakaways, avalanches etc, or to protect the village water supply



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- Sacred forests are extremely varied in structure and composition, from forest to savanna and from nearly pure pine to pure oak or beech
- Sacred forests are now often inconspicuous in the landscape, hidden among vegetation regeneration because of land abandonment





## Reconstructing the ecological history of the sacred groves of Epirus

- The sacred forests of Epirus are especially significant for their large numbers of veteran trees
- The sacred forests of Epirus are among the world's oldest protected areas: some of them have been protected for nearly twice as long as Yellowstone National Park (United States) or Epping Forest (England)



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Sacred forests seem to be little known outside their immediate communities. Their prohibitions are still active, but gradually fade as communities decline and disperse.

For that reason we have proposed them to be included in the Intangible Cultural Heritage list (UNESCO, Greece) as successful exemplars of locally adapted conservation systems.



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## Acknowledgements

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