

# Archaeologists discover Byzantine-era church in Jerusalem hills

A church that dates back to the Byzantine period was recently unearthed during construction work at Nes Harim in the Jerusalem hills.

The church is paved with mosaics and decorated with an inscription. It was exposed in an archaeological excavation by the Israel Antiquities Authority, after local residents reported unearthing a site that was covered in pine trees and agricultural terraces.

In November, during the first excavation in the site, archaeologists exposed the church's narthex - the broad entrance at the front of the church's nave. It was filled with a carpet of polychrome mosaics that was adorned with geometric patterns of intertwined rhomboids separated by flower bud

motifs. Unfortunately, at the conclusion of that excavation, the mosaic was defaced and almost completely destroyed by unknown vandals.

During that same excavation a complex wine press was partly exposed that consists of at least two upper treading floors and elongated, well-plastered arched cells below them that were probably meant to facilitate the preliminary fermentation of the must.

According to archaeologist Daniel Ein Mor, "We know of other Byzantine churches and sites that are believed to be Byzantine monasteries, which are located in the surrounding region. The excavation at Nes Harim supplements our knowledge about the nature of the Christian-Byzantine settle-



ment in the rural areas between the main cities in this part of the country during the Byzantine period, among them Bet Guvrin, Emmaus and Jerusalem."

## TV still eclipsing Internet for news

A growing proportion of Greeks are using the Internet as their preferred source of news and information but the World Wide Web still has a long way to go before it can match TV, according to a nationwide survey carried out by the University of the Aegean.

In results made public yesterday, just over one-third (35.4 percent) of respondents said that they turn to the Net for information, which is slightly higher than the radio (32.2 percent). But the Web is a little lower in terms of popularity than newspapers (41.4 percent) and is still substantially lower than the 78.1 percent that view television as their main source of news.

"The Internet is becoming a more popular source of information because it is interactive," Efstratios Papanis, the assistant sociology professor who oversaw the survey, told Kathimerini. "On the Internet, the user can choose the issues he or she wants to find out more about and can get involved in the news, commenting on the item and sending it to other people that may be interested."

However, Papanis believes the Internet will soon be the dominant medium. "The Internet is essentially a medium that will leave the others in its wake since we will soon be watching TV, listening to the radio and reading newspapers online."

Despite the popularity of TV as a source of news, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they do not trust the information they receive. According to the survey, 85.7 percent said that state TV channels are more reliable than private ones.

Six in 10 of those questioned said that they view the media as being capable of spreading propaganda. Papanis pointed out that such views have existed for some time.

Just over half (51.5 percent) said that they are disappointed with the standard of journalism and 60 percent hope that newcomers will join the profession.

# Greek-Albanian relations receive a cultural boost

## NEW CULTURE CENTER INAUGURATED IN TIRANA

**TIRANA – The conversation goes like this: "Thank you." "Parakalo." In 2009 Tirana, Greek is the new Esperanto. While it is habit for one to automatically try and establish communication in English, the minute an Albanian you address realizes that you are Greek, he or she will immediately get you out of any awkward situation.**

It was against this privileged background that the inauguration of a new center of the Hellenic Foundation for Culture took place in the Albanian capital on March 5. Early in the day, dozens of Albanian journalists attended a press conference, while hours later, and despite heavy rain, hundreds of people flooded the Arsakeio Greek-Albanian School – home to the foundation's new center – for the opening event, which was held in the presence of Neritan Ceka, deputy speaker of the Albanian parliament, and Archbishop Anastasios of Albania.

The official opening of yet another



Balkan center of the Hellenic Foundation for Culture – similar openings have also taken place in Bucharest and Sofia, with Belgrade next on the list – comes at a good time for both countries. Recent friction between the two countries appears to have de-escalated substantially, while the repatriation of a wave of first-generation immigrants who did well for themselves while in Greece and are now making a fresh start back home is challenging old stereotypes, the preservation of which had been undertaken by a small group of nationalists with poor results – just take a look at the way Albanians voted in last year's Eurovision song contest.

At the same time, thousands of Albanians are working for Greek banks and other Greek companies in



The Arsakeio School (above) was designed by Dimitris Isaïas and Tassis Papaioannou. Left: At the opening.

Albania. One way or another, the Greek language is very prominent in Albania and this is something the Hellenic Foundation for Culture's people and its president, Professor Georgios Babinotis, know only too well.

Tirana's Arsakeio School, which has turned into a vibrant source of philhellenism since it was established in 1998, is currently harvesting its first – for all to see – crop: the graduation of its first group of 18-year-old students, all of whom are fluent in Greek. Meanwhile, during the unofficial period of the center's operation, which began in September 2008, more than 200 adults have enrolled in a series of courses in Modern Greek.

The center's opening was accompanied by the "Traveling with C.P. Cavafy" exhibition, showcasing archive material along with a collection of publications of the Alexandrian poet's works translated into various languages – the latter in collaboration with the Center for Neo-Hellenic Studies / Cavafy Archive, the National Book Center of Greece and the Cavafy Museum in Alexandria.

The following day, the five-member Argo ensemble interpreted works by Ravel, Yannis Constantinidis and Albanian songs from the anthology of Lola Gjoka, accompanied by the Arsakeio School Choir at the Tirana Academy of Arts.

Coming up are three new exhibitions, one of which is aptly dedicated to the subject of immigration.

## Greek chopper fugitives receive more convictions

**ATHENS, - Two convicts who broke out of prison by helicopter for a second time last month have received additional convictions from a Greek court.**

Vassilis Paleokostas, 42, and Alket Rizaj, 34, are on the run after escaping from Athens' Korydallos prison on Feb. 22 – a repeat of their 2006 chopper breakout from the same jail. A court on Wednesday sentenced Rizaj to life in prison for a double contract killing in 2006, while Paleokostas received a 33-year sentence for armed robbery and other criminal offenses.

Before Wednesday's verdicts, Rizaj was already serving life for another murder, and Paleokostas had been sentenced to serve at least 25 years in prison.