

A photograph of two men working on a stone archway. One man, wearing a blue shirt and overalls, is standing and reaching up to work on the arch. The other man, wearing a dark shirt, is standing to the left, looking on. The archway is made of stone and is set into a wall of rough-hewn stone. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the left.

A RESOURCE BOOKLET

TRAINED WOOD AND STONE CRAFTSMEN OF GJIROKASTRA

PUBLISHED BY THE GJIROKASTRA CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Introduction

Gjirokastra has been inscribed in the World Heritage List as a rare example of a well-preserved Ottoman town. It features more than 1,200 historic buildings, among them over 600 monumental family houses built of solid stone, with an uppermost floor which is a wooden construction with plastered walls. The roofs again are covered with stone slates supported by wooden beams, giving the city its unique and unmistakable appearance.

It was the stone and wood craftsmen of the town who have created this extraordinary built heritage. In the early 20th century Gjirokastra was an important crafts centre in southern Albania, with a bazaar of about 410 workshops. After having been declared a “Museum City” in 1961, 100 skilled craftsmen were employed for the continuing restoration and maintenance works needed to preserve the historic buildings.

After 1991, many craftsmen left for nearby Greece. The owners did not have the resources to maintain their houses, and built new concrete houses instead. As a result, the city lost the incentive and skills to maintain its historic buildings, and both the once bustling bazaar and most of the monumental houses were abandoned. Gjirokastra’s built heritage now faces its most serious threat in its 600-year life time.

Since inscription in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2005, tourist numbers have tripled, but much needs to be done to make this development sustainable. Primarily the historic buildings – Gjirokastra’s chief touristic resource - must be restored.

In contrast to its history and the urgent need for the restoration of hundreds of historic buildings, however, Gjirokastra has a serious lack of skilled stone and wood craftsmen. Today, only five workshops are left in the bazaar. Most restoration assignments are given to outside companies who produce only mediocre results. Such assignments should increasingly go to Gjirokastra companies in the future.

This booklet introduces ten craftsmen from Gjirokastra – the first ones who have received a professional training specialised on traditional restoration skills. They shall pilot a revitalization of the once flourishing craftsmen sector of Gjirokastra. Trainings were provided in the newly-opened Artisan Center, which sent a highly-visible message that both the historic buildings and the crafts sector have a future in Gjirokastra.

A trend for the revitalization of the historic city has recently become apparent. Owners of monumental houses are interested in putting them again to use. The obligation of the government to maintain the World Heritage amounts almost to a job guarantee for skilled stone and wood craftsmen.

We hope that this booklet will help employers and house owners find the skilled restoration craftsmen now available, thereby helping Gjirokastra, Albania and indeed the world to maintain one of its most valuable treasures.

Stephan Doempke, Project Manager

WOOD CARVERS/ CARPENTERS

The course for carpentry and wood carving included both theoretical classes (1 day/week) and practical trainings (4 days/week), as well as a one day of excursion to a wood processing plant.

The following skills were taught in the carpentry curriculum:

- How to prepare, treat, store and maintain different types of wood, and what types of wood should be used for which purposes.
- Different tools and how to use them, including work safety measures and first aid.
- How to build a window frame and shutters, a door, a wooden floor, a cupboard in an interior wall, a broken interior gallery or fence, a wooden staircase, an interior balcony resting on poles or a wooden construction (tataposh), and a traditional wood ceiling of a Gjirokastra house, including decorative frames and fillets.
- How to carve a relief (including a rosette), a broken decorative arch, and a broken gallery.
- Design of floral and geometric decorations, traditional ornaments, and the creation of models from clay.
- Basic drawing, including geometry, perspective, proportion, etc.

Theoretical classes included the following subjects:

- The built heritage of Gjirokastra and the use of wood in Gjirokastra houses (floors, windows, doors, ornaments, ceilings, roof structure, outer sustainers, etc.)
- Structure of the Gjirokastra roof (wooden support structure).
- Types of trees and wood, their qualities and usages.



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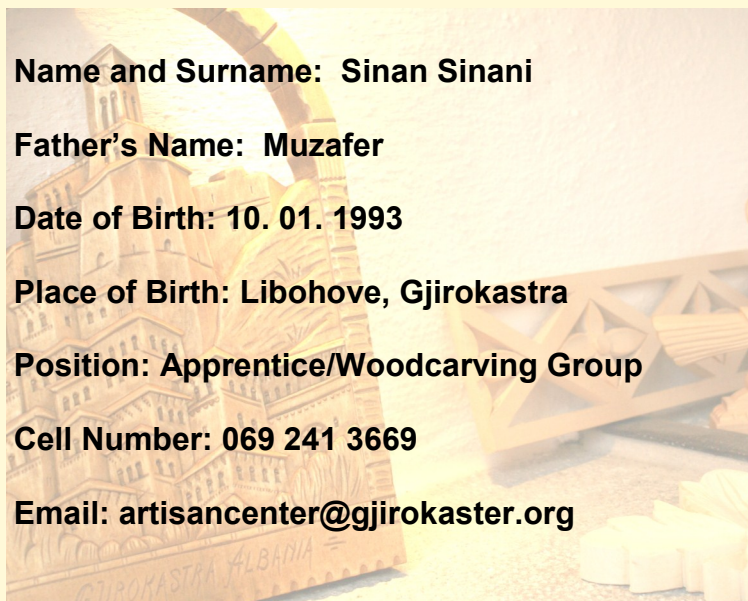
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STONE CARVERS/ MASONS

The course for masonry and stone carving has included both theoretical classes (1 day/week) and practical trainings (4 days/week), as well as one day of excursion to a stone processing plant.

In the stone masonry curriculum the following skills were taught:

- Different tools and how to use them, including work safety measures and first aid.
- How to build a wall, an arch and arched roof, a traditional stone floor, a slate roof, a stone staircase, a chimney, a cobblestone street, and how to prepare mortar and plaster for traditional houses.

The stone carving curriculum included the following learning modules:

- What type of stone to use and for which purpose.
- Different tools and how to use them, including work safety measures and first aid.
- How to carve a relief, a figure and an ornament in stucco/ gypsum.

Theoretical classes included the following subjects:

- The built heritage of Gjirokastra and the use of stone in Gjirokastra houses (foundation, walls, cisterns, floors, staircases, ornaments, roof slates, etc.)
- The Gjirokastra slate roof.
- Types of stone, their qualities and their usage.
- Ways to break and cut stone.
- Traditional Gjirokastra stone ornaments.
- Basic drawing, including geometry, perspective, proportion, etc.



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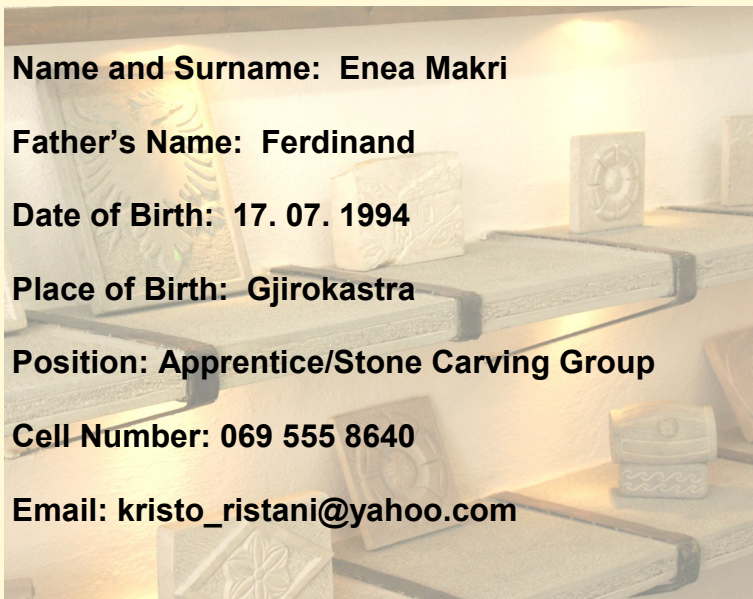
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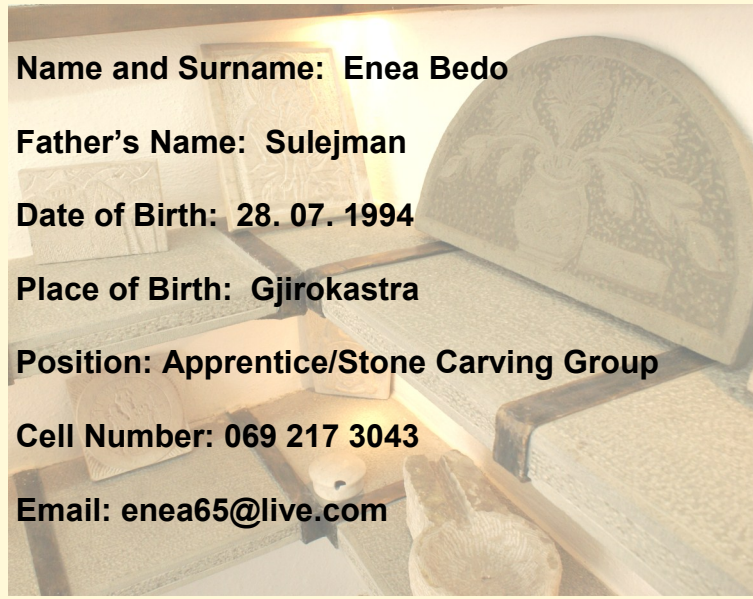
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GCDO ARTISAN CENTER



Since 2010, GCDO has operated a Training Center for artisans which occupies the second floor of the Omarate building in the historic bazaar of Gjirokastra. The training room, with its charming atmosphere of a historic Gjirokastra building, extends over an area of 64m and is equipped with tables and stone and wood carving tools for 5 persons. In addition the center offers an oda, kitchenette and toilet. Heating is available for use of the room in winter.

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THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING BUILDING



A vocational training building is now available on the grounds of the Regional Directorate for Vocational Education and Training. It has a large and light room of about 13 x 6m, with a height between 2.8m and 4.4m, where all kinds of trainings can be held. Bulky objects can be brought into it through a ramp and wide gate. The room is equipped with a water tap and sink for cleaning. In addition there are a cloakroom, two toilets and a storage locker.

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The background of the entire page is a photograph of a traditional stone building. It features a thick, rough-hewn stone wall with a tiled roof. Below the roofline, there are three large, semi-circular arched openings. The arches are constructed with a different pattern of stones, possibly indicating a specific architectural style or a later addition. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day, and the overall tone is warm and historical.

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**Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization
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