

**NEW ARCHEOLOGICAL FINDINGS IMPROVE TOURISM IN BUJANOVAC**



*The beginning of the excavation of the furthest northwest Greek fortified city in the Balkans*



*All mobile archeological material will be exhibited in the restored building of 'Amam' in Vranje*

BUJANOVAC: During the summer of 2003, in the course of the archeological excavations site in *Kale*, Klenike, a community near Bujanovac, extraordinary artifacts were discovered. The findings tell us that, on this place, in the Hellenic period (13-12 century B.C.) there was a rich, fortified town.

Goran Mitrovic, Technical Manager of the project from the National Museum in Vranje says that the town was very much alike the other rich towns from that period, situated deep into hostile territory. Unlike other fortified towns which were mostly situated at the sea coast, this one was placed at the most beautiful site of this area, at the top of the hill from where one can see Bujanovac and Vranje.

At the bottom of this beautiful town Mother nature had already started the "excavation" of the artifacts through erosion, which threatened to damage the artifacts which were already either unprotected or unpreserved. During the nineties, there was no money available for deep excavations. There were some attempts in 2001 to restart the works, but, since the funds were modest, these works lasted only for ten days. Thanks to financial support from USAID and CHF International through the CRDA program and The Republic of Serbia's Coordination Body for Southern Serbia, necessary funds for continuing the excavation were obtained.

"This was an open town where the residents were merchants or did any other work that would acquire them a lot of money. They were exchanging their luxury products for metal, probably silver, which belonged to local population. Everyone who was a benevolent merchant could have been the guest of this town. The town has probably disappeared in a huge Celtic invasion in 279 b.c." says Goran.

The CRDA Program financed one part of the cost of the archeological excavations (salaries of the workers on excavation sites and a laptop for the Museum in Vranje site works). Apart from very significant findings, 60 local residents had an opportunity to earn money for their families during the summer 2003.

During the excavations a significant number of imported Greek luxury ceramic potteries were discovered. Of an exceptional importance was a collection of 25 very rare coins from the periods of Phillip and Alexander Macedonian (the value of just one coin is approximately 50,000 €).

The Museum in Vranje will continue with the archeological excavations and will start the preservation procedure of the fixed, non-moveable excavations such as interior and exterior walls, in order to create conditions for tourist and expert visits to *Kale*. Further excavations would create conditions for opening of the continuous historical-archeological site, which could attract tourists. The Tourist Organization of Bujanovac will soon include *Kale* in its tourist offer.

Mr. Mitrovic says that all those important findings would not be possible without the Klenike Community Development Council's (CDC) support. He says that people from the CDC have proposed to CHF to fund this excavation through the CRDA program. "In this project they saw a chance for further development of their community area. Archeological excavation in *Kale* is very close to Corridor 10 that connects Central Europe with Greece. Proximity of this important highway will increase number of tourist visits and provide additional income to Klenike citizens. This will improve quality of life in this poor area of Serbia".