LAPITHOS MUNICIPALITY

Lapithos news

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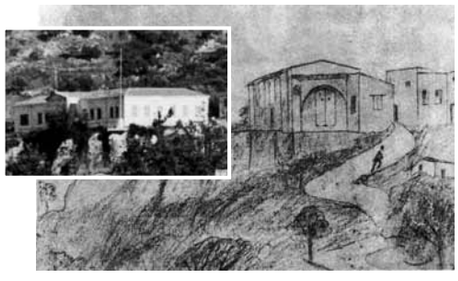
Education & Educational Institutions in Lapithos

Up to now it has been impossible to document a comprehensive review of the Lapithos' education system and educational institutions through time. The works of the Ieronymos, K. Peristanis, Loizos Filippou as well as those of the historian Ioannis Theocharidis have been the only source of information for anyone interested in the subject. Unfortunately, there is no detailed research; however there is significant information in the records of Orthodox churches and Dioceses, as well as in the historical archives in Ankara, Sofia and Venice which are still be being studied.



A better picture of the post-Ottoman education in Cyprus emerged during the English Rule despite the fact that the colonial authorities were trying to hinder and limit Cypriots education.

However, in early 20th century Lapithos managed to depend on its own intellectuals and forward-looking people and on the broad-minded Church committees of its six parishes with full support by the then Metropolitan of Kyrenia Myriantheas. As a result, outstanding primary schools were established and run along with the Hellenic Gymnasium of Lapithos, established in 1917, the first of its kind in rural Cyprus.

The first education system in Lapithos emerges around mid-19th century before the island came under English Rule. Small schools operated in almost all Lapithos parishes. All operational costs were covered mainly by the students' fees as well as Church committees' grants. There is record of such schools in Aghios Theodoros parish in 1850, in Aghia Paraskevi and Aghia Anastasia in 1855 and Aghios Loukas in 1870. In 1880 there was only one school for the whole of Lapithos, a fact which speaks for the poverty and the hardship of the local community as well as for the mentality of the people at the time.

In early 20th century Lapithos population was 2,361 of which 1,947 were Christians and 414 were Muslims. According to the relevant report by the British Education Commissioner A. Spencer, education in Lapithos was inadequate and simply unacceptable. Around the same time it became clear that the community was ready and willing to ensure that going forward education should be better organised and appropriately equipped in order to support a stronger future. In 21 August 1926 there was a decision for two new schools to be built immediately on the hills of Aghia Anastasia and Kastro.

The positive climate in the relations between the Lapithos authorities and the colonial education commission allowed for a 2,000 pounds loan from the central education fund for the building of the two school buildings. The loan was ratified on 10 October 1926 and at the same time the operation of three pre-school units was decided in the parishes of Aghios Loukas, Aghios Theodoros and Aghia Paraskevi. To note that almost 25 years earlier the Lapithos education commission had built the southwest wing of the Aghia Anastasia Girls School.

Finally, the construction of the two schools was completed in 1927 and the official opening took place on 17 March 1929 in the presence of the people of Lapithos and a number of high-profile guests including the Metropolitan of Kyrenia Myriantheas, later Archbishop Makarios B'.

The Mayor of Lapithos Mr. Neoptolemos Kotsapas,
the Members of the Lapithos City Council and the Municipality Personnel,
together with the Presidents and the Members of Organized Bodies of our town wish you all:
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024.
Wish you also full of Health, Happiness, Peace and Freedom to our country Cyprus

The two primary school buildings as well as the High School and the Town Hall are neoclassical with columns and a pediment on the façade, elements derived from the Ionic and Doric order. They were designed by the leading architect Theodoros Photiadis, father of neoclassical architecture who had also designed the bell tower of the Agios Loukas Church in Lapithos.

1940 was a milestone for the first phase of the construction of a building that would permanently house the Hellenic Highschool. Up to then it was housed in different locations, i.e. at the Aghios Loukas primary school building next to Aghios Loukas church in the centre of Lapithos.

It was then housed in private residence in Kamares, south of the 'Aristophanes' pottery and later the Higher Hellenic School of Lapithos was housed in the residences of Maria Eliadou and Maria Zografou, east and west of the Aghia Mavri small church.

1949-1959 marks the second phase of the construction of the Highschool. The single-storey, six-grade Highschool was recognised as equivalent to Greek six-grade highschools as per the Number 113 Royal Decree of the Greek State. On 9 March 1950 it's named "Hellenic Highschool of Lapithos" and since then it served as centre of excellence in the wider region of Lapithos-Karavas and the West part of Kyrenia. The Hellenic Highschool of Lapithos became a hub for cultural events and other activities and a springboard for exceptional individuals whose creativity was reflected on beautiful Lapithos.

In 1961 the Hellenic Highschool of Lapithos entered its third phase which proved to be the most creative one.

The second floor was completed in 1963 and in 1965-66 new annexes were added to house Science, Chemistry, Home Economics, Carpentry classes, to name just a few.

The completion of the Highschool was made possible through the tireless effort and great sacrifice of both resident and diaspora community. The whole project from designing to construction was completed pro bono by the Lapithos architech Odysseas Tsangarides.

The glorious history, the culture, the library, the Band, the Folklore Art Museum, the infrastructure and the equipment of the Hellenic

Highschool of Lapithos and other primary schools, suffered a heavy blow in August 1974. In 1973-74, the final year of its operation, the Highschool had 563 students in 18 classes and 20-30 teachers.

A year after the invasion and up until now the occupation forces have been operating the Highschool as Turkish Cypriot institution. In no way, shape or form can the Turks ever carry on the glorious legacy of the school; they can only encroach what they can only understand as a spoil of war. They will never be able to emotionally connect with it regardless of the time passing by.

As of 1 October 1943 the English Rule authorities had run The Reform School of Lapithos, a unique and rather pioneering institution, located along the seafront, between Kanari Coast and west of Virgin Mary Acheiropoieta Church. The young students of the School at the time were male minors serving time and in need of special care and protection; the School provided education instead of punishment, a correct method that was implemented and fully achieved its objectives.

The Aghia Anastastasia and Kastro primary schools continued their operation until 1974. A third school was needed to cover the large and remote parish of Agios Theodoros to the west of the town. Another education institution, the Agios Theodoros Urban School, was set up in 1959; initially housed in the Nicolas Metaxas building, it was later housed in purpose-built premises. In 1971 another school, that of Urban Area 2 was built in the western area of the Aghios Theodoros parish, at the "Alonia" location.

Since 1974 both schools have been operating as the two main Turkish-Cypriot schools of the occupied Lapithos.

Up until the late 1950s there was one school for the whole of the Lapithos' muslim minority, housed in the Seyit Mehmet Aga Mosque, in the area now known as Upper Tziamis. Around that time, late 1950s, and under the Colonian Rule a bigger purpose-built school was set right opposite the north side of the mosque. This purely muslim, Turkish Cypriot school operated only briefly since the Lapithos Turkish Cypriot community was forced to move to the Templos Turkish Cypriot cell.