

THE DEVELOPMENT OF KARYES LAKONIA

1920-2020

PART III

(1990-2020)

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INTRODUCTION

The decade 1990 marks the beginning of the **Karyes' modern era**. All the basic infrastructure, as well as the monuments and the chapels were almost complete. The major change occurred in **1992**, when the **new Corinth-Tripolis highway** was delivered. Karyes as all the central Peloponnese region was now easily accessible by car, as anyone could spend only 2.5 hours to drive from Athens to the village while by the old road the trip took 4.5 hours. At the same time, the new road to Parnon Mountain that had been constructed in the 1960s was now widening and asphalted along with the road that connects Karyes to Aghios Petros.

This works had multiple benefits for the village's life and economy. The Karyates who lived in Athens could now visit the village easily and quickly even for a weekend brake. Meanwhile, grace at the continuous improvement of the economic situation of the country, the houses were are being refurbished and gradually transformed into modern holiday homes. In many of them a central heating system was installed in order to make them comfortable enough for a winter visit. In addition to the old houses' renovation many new ones were also being built. As a result a whole new neighborhood in Vergatsoula has being created.

Grace at the cost reduction of the air tickets, many Karyates who lived in America and Australia could now regularly visit the village with their families. Their children visited the village, enjoyed the Greek way of life and made friendships with the rest of the young Karyates. During the summer the village was full of life and the **"Arachonitika Panighiria" (traditional festivals) became famous throughout the region of Lakonia and Arcadia.**



Over the next 20 years, the beautiful Karyes have been transformed into a **tourist destination** and the relocation of the residents' activities to tourism is almost inevitable. At the same time, within **15 years (1990-2005)**, around **150 kilometers of forest and provincial roads were asphalted throughout Parnon Mountain** enhancing mountain tourism. Hotels and traditional hostels were being built, restaurants and cafes were being modernized and grocery stores, traditional shops, along with a pharmacy opened.

I. 1990-2000: The completion of the infrastructures

At the end of the 20th century, thanks to the donations of Karyates from all over the world, the latest infrastructure projects of the village have been completed.

In 1994, the **Karyes's priest's residence** was inaugurated on a property owned by the Dimitroula brothers and specifically, in a house where **Nikolaos Dimitroulas** lived with his wife **Paraskevi**. Having no children, they decided to donate the house to the Karyes Community so that it could be used as the home of the Karyes' priest.



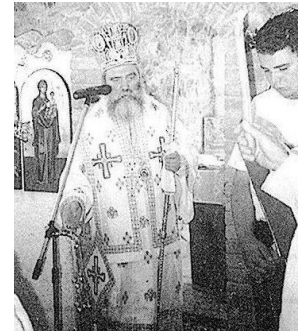
In 1995, grace at the donation of **Efstratios Kostalas children** and with money provided by a European Union's Fund, the "**Karyatis**" **Sport Club** completed the construction of the basketball-volleyball-tennis court above the football stadium along with its stands of 200 spectators capacity.



The Taxiarches Chapel

In 1997 the chapel of the "**Panmegisti Taxiarches**" had been constructed at the entrance of the village.

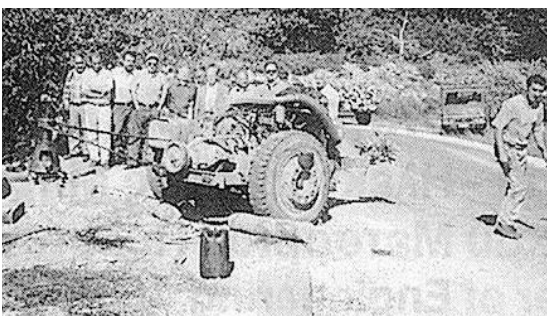
Grace at the expense of **Epaminondas Kastanas** it was built within a year and its opening took place with the presence of the Metropolitan Sparta and Monemvasia on **July 25, 1998**.



The opening

However the most important work of this period was the **new drilling**, the successful result of which solved the **problem of the water scarcity**. As we have mentioned earlier, although Karyes are a mountainous village, there was always a shortage of drinking water capable of serving its residents and holidaymakers during the summer. There had been countless attempts to find a solution to the problem without success.

Finally, in **1999** with the help of the compatriot **Panagiotis Ioannis Copsiaftis**, who made a donor of 100,000 US\$ a drilling was carried out at the site of "*Monachugurna*" with a great success. As it was reported in the "*KARYES*" Journal "*For more than 50 hours, night and day, the Community Council and many Karyates/Arachovites were anxious to measure the amount of water and the level of the tank.*"



After the success



Paraskevi and Panagiotis Copsiaftis



The benefactor with Annita and Vassilis Prekezes

At the same time, with state funds, the external water pipes were replaced and the irrigation tank was sealed to prevent water loss. Also, in the same decade, a central sewer system was gradually developed in the village.

Throughout this period, **Annita Gleka-Prequeze**, President of the Karyates Association, had been publishing the newspaper "**Karyes, Arachova of Lakonia and the villages of Oinountas Municipality**" (1986-2010), which served as a bridge among all the Karyates worldwide recording all the village's life for a period of 25 years. As reported in the newspaper, in the **winter of 1999** the houses with residents were **102**, so the permanent residents had to be **at least 300**.

II. 2000-2010: The Karyes second "golden" era

In 2000 Karyes were now fully integrated with its own water infrastructure. The Greek State was now able to provide enough money grace at the European Union's financial Projects concerning the mountainous villages. Along with the continuous donations from individuals Karyates and their Clubs, the efforts were focused on the **maintenance** and **landscaping** of the Karyes' infrastructure and monuments.

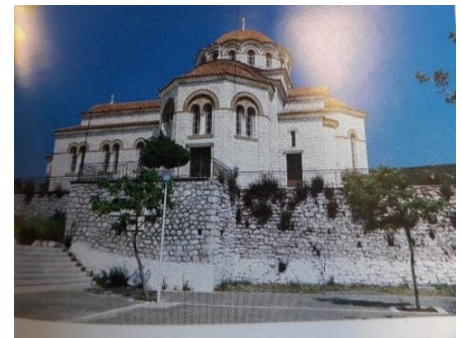
On **August 11, 2000** the inauguration of the renovated of the **St. John chapel** took place. The chapel were completely renovated externally and internally with money contributions mainly from the Gastonia-Charlotte Brotherhood among with donations of local residents.



Photos taken at the opening ceremony

At the same time, in the spring of **2000**, the great work of the **Central Square's landscaping and renovation** began, with money provided by the Greece-E.U. fund.

As we had recorded in the previous part of our tribute, the new square built in the 1950s and 1960s was a real gem. However, the years had passed and there was an aesthetic necessity for cement reduction. Indeed, with respect to the original design, the square was dressed in stone and since then it has become an ornament for the village. The project was completed next year with the renovation of the Community Hall's roof and the installation of central heating in the building thanks to a donation by **George J. Koutsogiorgas**.



Above the square before and during the works and below the outcome



At the next year (2001) another great project took place at the low settlement (**Rachi**): the **renovation of the St. Paraskevi's Church and the refurbishment of its courtyard**. Specifically, the lime of the Church's exterior was removed and the old stonework was revealed while at the same time, the entire courtyard was paved and new railings were placed thanks to a donation made by **Panaghiotis Od. Skiouris**.

Thanks to a donation made by the **Matalas Foundation** the statue of the Karyes' benefactor, Athanasios Matalas, was preserved and moved to a more central location. Finally the school's toilets had been rebuilt, and the old library building was also been refurbished to be used as a teacher's residence that eventually didn't served as one.



Before, during and after the works

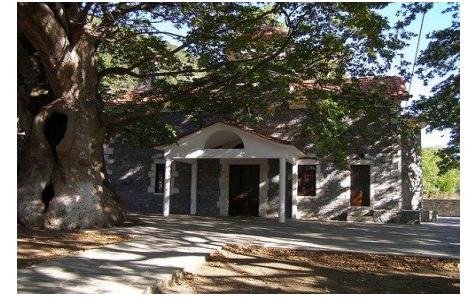


At the same time a similar **renovation** of **Virgin Mary's Assumption (Panaghia) Chapel** took place. Also at that Chapel there was a removal of the limes at the exterior in order to reveal the stonework.



Before

Grace at that work many pieces of carved marble that apparently belonged to the ancient temple of Artemis were also revealed. These pieces were used as building material in the erection of the Christian temple. Furthermore all the surrounding area, the courtyard with the Menelaus planes was also paved, the walls were coated with stone and the plane trees and the water spring were lit.



After

During the same period all the village's streets, which as we have mentioned had been cemented 20 years ago, were now **asphalted**, while thanks to a donation provided by **Stavros Mermighas** in memory of his parents Nikolaos and Georgia, a new wall was being built at **Agios Nikolaos Cemetery** which is also cemented.

For the protection of the village and its forest from bush fires, especially after the devastating fire at the "springs" region (09.04.2000), a collective effort was launched by the local residents. Many compatriots living in Athens and abroad support that initiative. Thus it was purchased by **Panagiotis Dimitroulas** a forest fire extinguisher was transferred to the Community.

As a result in **2007**, when the devastating fire in Parnonas occurred, the village people participated actively and decisively with the **extinguisher, agricultural vehicles and guard teams** with great success.

This great effort for environmental and firefighting protection of the village and the wider area was universally recognized, and in **2008** MARFIN EGNATIA BANK provided **equipment**, uniforms, chainsaws, lamps, masks and masks for the volunteer team. At the same time, in 2009, **Panagiotis Odysseas Skiouris** donated three (3) complete fire extinguishers properly designed to be mounted on 4X4 agricultural machinery, which are flexible and can intervene directly in any incident. Based on this equipment, the residents of the village proceeded in 2010 with the establishment of the "**Association of Karyes Fire Safety**".

At the same time, the central garbage collection begins thanks to a special vehicle donated to the Karyes Community by **Charalambos G. Kontalonis**.

The year 2010 found the settlement in a very good condition. The economy of the village was now mainly based on Tourism. There are **four (4) cafes, four (4) restaurants, two (2) pastry-bakeries, two (2) hotels and four (4) guesthouses**, along with **two (2) blacksmiths, a carpenter and a Post Office** and a local doctor in a **Community's clinic**. Furthermore at the first administration local Communities Reform of the Greek State (2000), Karyes Local Community avoids merging with the other villages of North Laconic Parnon and remains an independent Community.

However, we should mention that during that period, the modernization of agricultural and livestock production as well as beekeeping still did not take an organized form beyond some individual private efforts. There were some new flocks, some old ones were modernized, and a modern apiary was built. The only organized effort was the creation of a cooperative concerning the chestnut production, which operated in the 2000s but eventually ceased operating after a few years.

This lack of an organized agricultural and livestock business cooperation was the main cause of the inability of many local residents to face the results of the world's financial crisis which occurred at the following years.

III. 2010-2020: The economic crisis and the reaction

Although the global financial crisis of 2009 arrived in Greece with a little delay, its consequences were severe. Therefore Karyes could not have been unaffected by it. It is also true that until the mid-2010s there was no direct impact on the village's economic life comparing to the great large urban centers. However, during the period 2015-2020 the impacts became more pronounced.

The most significant impact was the restriction of state funds, which in combination with the **abolition of the Karyes Community in 2011** and the creation of the **new Wider Sparta Municipality** had as a result the lack of money source even for the maintenance of existing infrastructure.



The www.karyes.gr



The Association News Bulletin



The digitized archive of Ms Prekezes newspaper

Facing this situation, the Karyates did what they had always done: they began to organize themselves. Thus the **Karyates Worldwide Association** decided to move on three axes:

- 1) to reorganize itself in order to really become what its title says, "worldwide" and therefore to represent the whole village where needed by assisting the local council which was no longer an independent Community.
- 2) to organize fundraisers for small infrastructure maintenance projects, small interventions, and
- 3) to support the **Karyes Primary School** whenever needed.

Meanwhile, using the new technologies, he immediately took over at its own expense the **site of Karyes**, which is constantly transformed into a **modern tourist portal** with rich cultural, historical and folklore elements in four languages (Greek, English, French and German), while also **digitized the archive of Ms Prekeze's newspaper "Karyes"**.



In **2014**, the **Quarterly Bulletin of the Association (newspaper)** launched in two languages (Greek, English), and since then it is mailed to approximately **500** compatriots in Greece and around the world.

Finally, the Association is in constant and direct contact with all village's clubs and Brotherhoods (Sports Club, Cultural Club, Church Council, Brotherhoods overseas), carrying out small landscaping projects (such as placing information signs) and organizing or co-organizing cultural events and meetings in order to keep the village alive during the year and strengthen the relations among the Karyates.



The information signposts

Furthermore the Association by organizing a fundraising, organized and successfully completed the great task of the **renovation of the Caryatides Monument.**



The works and the outcome

More specific in **2015** the base and the ceiling of the Monument were repaired, while in **2018** the statues of the Karyatids are also has been repaired by a special group of renovators, which also repaired the statues of **Demeter** and **Hestia**.

The project will be completed in **2021** when, following systematic efforts, Sparta Municipality has approved the funding of the Association's study of the construction and lighting of the path from the main road to the Monument.

At the same time the "**KARYATIS**" Sports Club, in collaboration with the "**Skiouris Foundation**" and sponsoring compatriots, completed a series of projects. In **2013**, the National Lottery renovated the existing locker room of the stadium (€ 10,000), after the actions of our compatriot **Nicholas G. Trakas** and in **2015** acquired the former Karyes' Agricultural Cooperative warehouse with money from its treasury and many Karyates overseas. Within 3 years the space was refurbished and the installation of gym equipment began.



In **2018**, the electrification of the changing rooms, the basketball court and the football field in front of the stands was completed, with headlamps installed.

Finally, the Sports Club, in collaboration with the **Karyes Cultural Club**, renovated the house of the great benefactor G. Skiouris in order to house the offices of the two clubs and the costumes of the Dance Group.

Adding to all these initiatives, in 2017 yet another movement took place in Karyes: the **voluntary support team of the Church Council in order to restore the village's Chapels.** Their members recorded the state of all the 13 Churches and Chapels and then proceeded to establish a fund so by organizing either lotteries at every religious holiday or fundraisers in just three years (2017-2020) they presented an impressive outcome: The radical renovation of two Churches that were on the verge of collapse (St. Kyriaki and St. Anargyri) and the reconstruction of many others along with their econostasis.



IV. TO THE FUTURE

The new big project: Lakonia Memory and Culture Center



At the beginning of 2000, the **Karyates Association (S.A.K.)**, with money raised from many contributions, purchased a block of three buildings on Karyes Central Square in order to create a space of Culture.

Therefore, in **2016** the building conversion study of the complex into "**LAKONIA MEMORY AND CULTURE CENTER**" was completed.

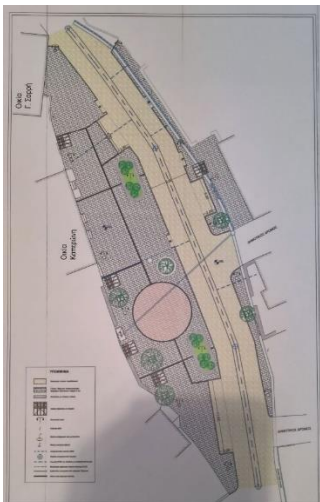
The exhibition space that will be housed in the building of the Association is intended to serve as a **symbol of memory and connection for the Karyates who have fled their country of origin and live abroad**, as well as a **discovery for the new generations growing up in America, Canada or the Australia** and for which Karyes is a tale of their parents or grandparents.



The Members of the Association that the village of Karyes will continue to be known through this Cultural Centre throughout Greece and beyond, for the only thing that resists the leveling of time and that is **memory and culture**.

In **2019**, after systematic efforts by the Association's Board of Directors, the project was finally incorporated into a European Union-funded program and the work will begin in 2020, hoping to give Karyes another ornament.

The new Rachi Square and the lighting of the Monuments



Two new projects are being launched alongside the Cultural Center.

The first concerns the **redevelopment of the Rachi square**, whose was approved and incorporated into the European Financing Program on a proposal of the Sparta Municipal Authority. According to the plans of the study, only the east branch of the square will remain open to vehicle traffic and the rest will be turned into a nice paved square with flowers and trees.

Also, the study of **illumination of the religious and cultural monuments** of Karyes is completed in order to change the night image of the settlement.

The exploitation of the money of the Testament of Kerchoulas

Assembly of the village's inhabitants in 2019 a "**Trust Management Association**" was established. So far it has been decided that the Trust should move in three directions:

- setting up a **program to support local producers**, especially the young people, in order to inform them for the new opportunities concerning the agricultural and Livestock sector and to encourage them to organized in group,
- preparing an **exploratory study of the exploitation of the Karyes water resources** and
- developing an **integrated tourism development plan** through the creation of a network of paths that will meet modern European and international standards and the distribution of printed and electronic material highlighting the beauty of the place.

We wish that the money that our compatriot gave in his beloved village to contribute decisively at the effort made to help the new families to stay and thrive in the village.

EPILOGUE

With reference to the future, this journey into the history of the Karyes of the last 150 years concludes.

It was an enjoyable voyage designed to pay tribute to the generations that were worked, suffered and forced to emigrate. To the people of these past generations who loved their village so much that transformed with their initiatives the poor village of Arachova to the beautiful and most populated settlement of the Lakonian Parnon: the modern Karyes.

With the hope that the young men and women Karyates will be exemplified by previous generations and inspired by their efforts, let us envision a new 100 years of collective progress and vitality for our beloved village.

The Information of that Special Edition was provided

A) by the books:

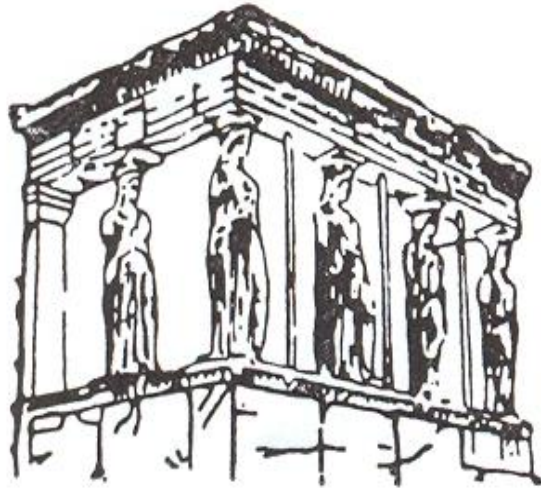
- "**BYBLOS**" (BOOK), Brotherhood of the Arachovites "AI KARYAI", Gastonia N.C. U.S.A. (1929), editorial Paraskevas John Meidanis,
- "**KARYAI**", writer Constantine Michael Pitsius (1948),
- "**KARYATIKA**", Paraskevas John Meidanis and his son Dr. John Paraskevas Meidanis, Washington D.C.. A work consisting of two volumes (1950 and 1972), edited by the Brotherhood of the Arachovites "AI KARYAI" Gastonia, N.C. U.S.A. which has been awarded by the Athens Academy
- "**THE CONTEMPORARY KARYES LAKONIA**" Panagiotis Stylianos Macheras (1987), and

B) by the newspapers:

- "**AI KARYAI**", Karyates Association of Athens and Suburbs "ARACHOVA LAKEDEMONOS" (1950s) and
- "**KARYES, ARACHOVA LAKEDEMONOS AND VILLAGES OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF OINOUDOS**", Annita GlekaPrekezes president of the "KARYATES ASSOCIATION" (1986-2010).

The Karyates Association Athens,

February 2020



ΣΥΝΔΕΣΜΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΑΝΤΑΧΟΥ ΚΑΡΥΑΤΩΝ

Harris Konstantopoulos