

## Περίληψη :

### Γενικές Πληροφορίες

**Area:** 1.636 km<sup>2</sup>

**Coastline length:** 382 km

**Population:** 90.643

**Island capital and its population:** Mytilene (27.247)

**Administrative structure:** Region of North Aegean, Prefecture of Lesbos, Municipality of Mytilene (Capital: Mytilene, 27.247), Municipality of Agia Paraskevi (Capital: Agia Paraskevi, 2.268), Municipality of Agiasos (Capital: Agiasos, 2.498), Municipality of Gera (Capital: Pappados, 1510), Municipality of Eresos-Antissa (Capital: Eresos, 1.097), Municipality of Evergetoula (Capital: Sykounta, 346), Municipality of Kalloni (Capital: Kalloni, 1.732), Municipality of Loutropoli-Thermi (Capital: Loutropoli-Thermi, 912), Municipality of Mantamados (Capital: Mantamados, 1156), Municipality of Methymna (Capital: Methymna, 1.497), Municipality of Petra (Capital: Petra, 1.246), Municipality of Plomari (Capital: Plomari, 3.377), Municipality of Polichnitos (Capital: Polichnitos, 2.763)

**Local newspapers:** "Embros", "Politika", "Kyriakatika Aiolika", "Aiolika Nea", "Dimokratis Mytilinis", "Nea Poreia", "Kyriakatiki Lesbos", "Neo Embros", "Foni tis Lesvou", "Rhegma", "To Vima dialogou tis Geras"

**Local radio stations:** Archipelagos (87.6), Sky FM (88.2 and 107.7), Best FM (98.1), Aegean E.R.A. (99.4, 103.0 and 104.4), Kiss FM (101.3), Radio City (102.5), Radio Kalloni (106.2), Radio Gera (102.5, 91.4 and 105.9)

**Local TV stations:** Lesbos Television, TV Mytilene, TVA

**Museums:** Archaeological Museum of Mytilene, Modern Archaeological Museum of Mytilene, Museum of Works by Theofilos, TERIADE Museum, Mytilene's Public Art Gallery, Mytilene's Folklore Museum, Ecclesiastical and Byzantine Museum of Mytilene, Natural History Museum of the Lesbos Fossilized Forest at Sigri, Eresos Archaeological Collection, Methymna Archaeological Collection, Nape Archaeological Collection, Old Lesbian House, Vryssa Collection of Natural History, Vrana oil press - Museum of of the non-profit Archipelagos Society at Pappados

**Archaeological sites and monuments:** Fortress of Mytilene, Fortress of Sigri, Agios Fokas, Ancient acropolis of Eresos, Methymna, Fortress of Methymna, Ancient Theatre of Mytilene, Sanctuaries at Klopodi, Sanctuary at Mesa, Roman aqueduct at Moria, Early Christian Basilicas of St Andreas and Afendelli, Monastery of Panagia Myrsiniotissa, Monastery of Leimon (Moni Leimonos), Monastery of Panagia at Agiasos, Monastery of Taxiarches at Mantamados, Monastery of Perivoli, Monastery of Ypsilos, Pithariou Monastery, Yeni Tzami (Mosque), Market Bath (Çarşı hamam), Mansions at Mytilene, Archaeological site of Manna, Church of St. Ermolaos at Palaiokipos, Church of St. Vlasios at Plakados

**Traditional settlements:** Agiasos, Asomatos, Vatousa, Eresos, Mantamados, Methymna, Petra, Plomari, Polichnitos, Sigri, Sykamia

**Natural monuments:** Fossilized Forest of Lesbos. Many island's regions have been included in the European network "NATURA 2000". The south-east part of the island, Lepetymnos mountain, Geras bay, Elli Ntipi, Haramida, Olympos mountain and Kalloni bay have been declared Important Bird Areas of Greece

**Cultural clubs:** Anagnostirio of Agiasos "Anaptiksi", Cultural Association "Anagennisis" at Pigi, Cultural Association "Arion", Cultural and Sport Association "Association of Filia", Cultural Association of Skala Loutron "Delfini", Society for the Study of Aeolia, Cultural Club "Association of Skoutaros", Lesbian Group of Amnesty International, Aegean Pedagogic Group "Miltos Koundouras", Association of Women of Lesbos, Philatelic Society of Lesbos, Photographic Society of Mytilene, Lesbos Cine-Club, Association of "Kafelgioi of Mytilene", Association of Friends of Art of Mytilene, Theatre Group "Bourini", Theatre Group "Astegi", Environmental-Cultural Association of Mytilene "Environment and Life Quality", Mantamados Anagnostirio "Proodos", Mytilene Anagnostirio "Pittakos", Plomari Anagnostirio "Veniamin Lesvios", Asia Minor Association at Skala Loutron "Delfini", Cultural Association of Gera's people, Mytilini's Cultural Association of Gera's people, "EIRINI" Cultural Association of Messagros, Cultural Association of Palaiokipos, Cultural Association of Perama, "MILTOS KOUNTOURAS" Cultural Association of Skopelos, Cultural and Sport Club of Taxiarches

**Events:** Equestrian Games at Plomari in July, Cultural events at Methymna in July, Ouzo Festival at Mytilene in August, Octopus Feast at Nees Kydonies (August 2), Cultural events at Eresos during the first two weeks of August, Reunion Day at Kalloni (August 16th), "Fourneli" at Polichnitos in August, Sardine Feast at Skala Kallonis in August, Cultural events at Sykamia in August, Cultural events at Methymna in August, Cultural events at Mytilene in the summer, Cultural events at Moria in the summer, Fishing nights at Plomari in the summer, Cine nights at Mytilene, Agrotourism feast at the Natural History Museum of the Lesbos Fossilized Forest, Gera's Summer Festival

**Festivals:** Kalloni Festival in August, "Veniaminia" at Plomari in August

**Religious feasts:** On St Barbara's day at Pamphila (December 4th), On St Savva's day at Pamphila (December 5th), On St Nicola's day at Petra, at Pamphila, at Papiana, at Plomari and at Eresos (December 6th), Feast of Purification at Plagia (February 2d), On St Charalambos' day at Keramia, at Pigi, at Mantamando, at Nape and at Komi (February 10th), On St Spyridon's day at Eresos (February 12th), On St Theodore's day at Mytilene (February 17th), Annunciation at Palaiochori (March 25th), On St Rahpael's day at Thermi on Easter's Tuesday, Zoodochos Pege at Agia Paraskevi on Easter's Friday, On St George's day at Eresos, at Polichnitos, at Vrissa, at Mesotopos, at Kapi, at Pigi, at Keramia, at Skoutaros, at Loutra, at Sigri, at Filia, at Thermi (April 23d), Panagias Kriftis at Palaiochori, On St Akindinon's day at Mistegna (4th Sunday after Easter), On St John's day at the Monastery of Ypsilos and at Nape (May 8th), On St Fotini's day at Sykamia and at Sykounda (May 9th), On St Constantine's day at Vrissa, at Thermi, at Mesotopos, at Skopelos, at Sykounta (St Helen's) and at Neochori (May 21st), Feast at the Monastery of Taxiarches at Mantamandos on second Sunday after Easter, St Charalambos' or "Tavros" feast at Agia Paraskevi (June 1st), On St Vartholomeos' day at Taxiarches (June 11th), On St John "Kledon"'s day at Sigri (June 24th), On St Apostle's day at Akراسi (June 30th), On St Anargiri's day at Arisvi and at Asomatos (July 1st), On St Andreas' day at Eresos (July 4th), On St Prokopios' day at Ippio (July 8th), On St Khryka's day at Skala Sykamias and at Kleiou (July 15th), On St Marina's day at Arisvi, at Chidira, at Mesotopos, at Ypsilometopo, at Kato Triton and at Pappados (July 17th), On Prophet Elias' day at Agiasos, at Eresos, at Plomari, at Mantamado, at Vrissa, at Pelope and at Lafiona (July 21st), At St Magdalene's day at Skopelos (July 22d), On St Anna's day at Skala Kallonis (July 25th), On St Hermolaos' day at Paliokipos (July 26th), On St Paraskevi's day at Plomari, at Vrissa, at Hidera, at Pigi and at Akراسi (July 26th), On St Panteleimon's day at Eresos, at Gavatha, at Perama, at Skoutaros and at Plomari (July 27th), On St Stefanos' day at Mantamado (August 2d), Transfiguration of the Saviour at Eresos, at Kleious and at Anemotia (August 6th), Annunciation at Antissa (August 6th), Dormition of Virgin Mary at Agiasos, at Eresos, at Petra, at Vatousa, at Kape, at Lepetimnos, at Megalochori, at Skala Sykamias, at Hidera, at Skoutaros and at Akراسi (August 15th), On St Eustathios' day at Ampeliko (August 20th), Feast on the 9th day from Virgin Mary's ascension at Agia Paraskevi, at Stypsi and at Antissa (August 23d), On the eve of the Decapitation of St John at Molyvos, at Palaiochori and at Lisvori (August 29th), On St Ignatius' day at the Monastery of Leimon (October 14th), On St Demetrius' day at Agiasos, at Mesotopos, at Mychou and at Moria (October 26th), On Taxiarches' day at Asomatos, at Papados, at Sykamia, at Taxiarches and at Vatousa (November 8th), Feast of the Presentation at Antissa, at Vasilika, at Mesotopos and at Thermi (November 21st), On St Isidoros' day at Akراسi

**Sport clubs:** A.E.P.S. "Aeolikos", A.S.A. of Mytilene, Eresos Sport Club, Kontias Sport Union "Philoktetes", Sport-Cultural Club "Niki Mytilinis", Sport-Cultural Club "Agras o Makareas", Sport-Cultural Club "Olympionikis Lesvou", Polichnitos Sport Club "Alkaios", Antissa Sport-Educational Club "Orpheas", Sport-Educational Club "Apollo", Sport-Educational Club "Thanos Lesvou", Sport Club "Arisvaivos", Sport Club "Diagoras", Sport Club "Ethnikos Thermis", Sport Club "Anagennisi Geras", "Arion" of Palaiokipos, "Poseidon" of Perama, "Papados Geras", "Olympionikis Geras", "Football Academy" of Gera, Sport Club "Theseus", Sport Club "Kaspakas Lesvou", Mytilene Sport Club, Sport Club "Papanikolis Eresou Lesvou", Plomari Sport Club, Sport Club "Polichnitos Lesvou", Sport Club "Propontis", Plomari Sport-Cultural Club "Beniamin", Sport Club of Mantamados Schools "O Aiolos", Sport Club "Poseidon", "Arion" of Mytilene, "Arisvaivos", Sport Club "Olympiada Polichnitou", Sport Club of Lesvos, Mythimna Sport Club "Olympias Lesvou", Sport-Football and Cultural Club of Pamphila "O Ephevos", Sport-Football Club "Byron Lesvou", Sport-Football Club "Aetos Loutron Lesvou", Sport Club "Iris Mytilinis", Bridge Club of Lesvos, Nautical-Sport Club of Amateur Fishermen "O Triton", Panagiouda Nautical-Sport Club "O Aiolos", Sport-Cultural Club "Aegeus Plomariou", Sport-Football Club "Pallesviakos", Mytilene Chess Club.

## 1. Settings and environment

Lesvos is one of the largest islands of the Aegean, and the third largest in Greece, with an area of 1,614 km<sup>2</sup>. It is 120 nautical miles away from the Hellespont channel, 105 miles from [Smyrna](#), and just a few miles from [Kydonies](#). It is a mountainous island with many forests and a variety of natural goods and [geological](#) formations. Its coasts have many coves and capes, forming Kalloni and Gera, two large gulfs rich in fish-catch. Valleys cover a significant part of the island. Those of Kalloni, Ippii and Gera are the most important ones. Olympos and Lepetymnos are the highest peaks.

Olive tree cultivation is attested since ancient times and still continues to define the kind and extent of agricultural activities, co-determining social structures and lifestyle.

Historical sources and excursionists' texts dating from the Ottoman Rule period mention vine cultivation on Lesvos and the production of fine wine, mostly in the valley of Kalloni, at Petra and Mithymna. Also mentioned is the production of breadstuffs, salt, figs, gum resin and oaks used for puering and processing agricultural products, which are abundant at Eressos and Mantamados.

Caves are part of the island's geomorphology. The most significant ones, with attestations of human presence, are those of Aghios

Vartholomeos at the mountainous area of Taxiarches, at Magara of Alyfantas and at Fousa, near the agricultural settlement of Kato Tritos.

Thermal springs with therapeutic water are connected with Lesvos's geological state. They bubble up from the gulf of Gera, Aghios Ioannis of Lisvorio, Eftalou of Mithymna, the beach of Argenou, Krifi Panagia of Plomari, Gavathas, Thermelia of Moria and Thermi, known from ancient times from findings of the Sanctuary of Artemis Thermia. The hottest spring, with a temperature of 81oC, is at Polichnitos.

The environment of Lesvos was gifted with rich vegetation varying from place to place. The treeless mountains of agricultural areas of Sigrio and Eresos are adorned with the Petrified Forest of Lesvos, developed 12 million years ago. Forest vegetation corresponds with the periods when there was no [volcanic activity](#) in this area. Fossilization was a result of the hydrothermal phase released as post-volcanic energy. There are fossilized trees also in the agricultural area of Antisa, Gavathas, Chydira, Mesotopos and Mithymna. Interesting are also some fossilized logs at shores or in the sea, increasing geologist and paleontologists' interest for the sea world.

## 2. History

The oldest remains of the [Neolithic Period](#) on Lesvos come from the cave of Aghios Vartholomeos; those of the Early and Middle Bronze Age come from the settlement of Thermi and the coast of the Kalloni gulf. Remnants dating from Mycenaean times have also been found at the same locations and the Gera gulf.

### 2. 1. Antiquity

From the early 10th century B.C. up to the 8th century –the time of [colonization](#) and social whirl in mainland Greece and the Aegean Sea– Achaeans and Aeolians settled on the island and founded the “Lesbian hexapolis” (“six cities”). Mytilene, Antissa, Pyrra, Arisvi, Mithymna and Eresos were chief cities founded –according to tradition– by descendants of the Atreides (“those of Atreus”).

Despite the arrogant oppressive rule of the Penthilidae family, the 7th and 6th century were a period of climax for Lesvos. Significant personalities managed to stand out in times of harsh political conditions and social whirl: [aesymnetes](#), [Pittacus](#) –one of the Seven Sages of Antiquity– who led a popular revolt, and chief lyric poets [Sappho](#), [Alcaeus](#) and Terpander. They played a significant part in politics and the history of government system.

From the late 6th century on, Persians predated Lesvos. The island was not self-governed ever since and underwent a series of successive incursions and battles. After the Persian Wars were over and the Greeks won, Lesbian cities joined the Athenian Confederacy. Their apostasy from it in 428 B.C., resulted to their men being slaughtered by the Athenians and the enslavement of civilians. At that time appeared historiographer Hellanicus and “father” of botany Theophrastus.

During Hellenistic times, Lesvos was under the influence of Macedonians and the Ptolemies.

The most powerful cities during the Antiquity were Mithymna and Mytilene. Arisvi had already been destroyed since the Classic era, Pyrra since Hellenistic times and Antissa was destroyed in 168 B.C. by the Romans, who conquered it along with the rest of the Aegean islands.

#### 2. 1. 1. Lyric poetry

The 7th and the 6th centuries B.C. were a period of cultural heyday reflected in all kinds of art. Through political ferment and whirl, important personalities stood out playing a significant role in the archaic world. It was the time when Lyric poetry was born. Namely, verses recited with the accompaniment of a lyre.

Terpander from Lesvos (around 630 B.C.) was a significant lyric poet; according to sources, he introduced this new kind of poetry. He is considered to have invented the seven-stringed lyre, whereas he also improved four-stringed pyctis of Lydian origin. He also gave the “Nomos” its final structure; it was a kind of song dedicated to Apollo. His reputation as a citharoedus had spread all over

Greek cities of the ancient world, such as Sparta, where he managed to pour oil on troubled water of politics with his harmonious melodies. He also founded there the music festival of Karneia during the 16th Olympiad of 675/4 B.C.

Two generations later, chief lyric poets from Lesbos Sappho and Alcaeus thought of Terpander as the founder of Lyric poetry, whereas they themselves brought out the power of poetry also in the field of politics. Regarding politics, Alcaeus's verses clearly demonstrate he was in favor of democracy. He reported the political ferment and the people's feelings, which led him to exile in Lydia and Egypt. Distinctive is one of his poems where he compares a city governed by a tyrant with a ship in a storm. Of course Alcaeus didn't compose only political poetry. The Alexandrians included him in the "Canon" of lyric poets, underlining the power and sweetness of his poetry.

Sappho belongs to that fruitful art period (around 630 B.C.) too. She was called the "tenth muse" and a "mousopolos" because of the grace and kindness of her verses. Her interfering in the political life of Mytilene cost her her exile at Pyrra and Sicily. Both she and her life are the best source for historians regarding women's position in the Lesbian society. From extracts preserved, we know her verses were about transitory joys and sorrows of the small society of girls that studied at her school. There, she taught poetry, singing and dancing. Save the epithalamia songs, sung during wedding ceremonies, all other poems were intended for private use and pleasure. Her verses have an explicit love-related content. They express jealousy, physical attraction or sorrow for a girl that is about to marry, as well as admiration for nature. All of this was freely expressed, with no signs of restriction characterizing restrained expression. Later times' critique praises Sappho's poetic value mostly based on the poem "Ode to Aphrodite", where the poet calls on the goddess for help with the new love tormenting her. Ceramists of the 5th century B.C., depicted Sappho and Alcaeus, acknowledging their tribute to civilization.

Another lyric poet of the island is Arion, a major citharoedus of Lesbos, who continued Terpander's tradition. He exalted the dithyramb from its primordial stage to a complex kind of art, contributing vitally to the development of "ancient drama".

Myth also connects the island of music and poetry with Orpheus, a religious poet and priest that charmed with music and divination. According to sources, after the Maenads dismembered him on the mountains of Pieria, waves carried his head at Antissa and his lyre at Mytilene. He was able thus to go on reciting and vaticinate on Lesbos.

## 2. 1. 2. Ancient city of Mytilene

Mytilene was named –according to myth– after the homonym daughter of Lesbos's first king Makar, the grandson of Zeus and son of Rhodes and Helios or Crinacus.

The oldest proof of human presence around the city of Mytilene dates from the Final Neolithic Period, while the oldest house remains have been found at Nisi, with the bulge crowning the Castle.

Mytilene was the greatest of the six Lesbian cities, which existed already since the 8th century B.C. The opposite Asia Minor coast from Sigeio up to Smyrna influenced it. The "Sea shore of Mytilenians", known from the ancient Greek and Latin literature, played a significant part in the social, political and economic developments of the northeastern Aegean. According to [myth](#), Orestes had founded Mytilene. At the time of colonization and migration, populations from the Aeolian area of the Greek peninsula, namely Thessaly and the northeastern Peloponnese, went to the city. The customs of the Aeolians dominated, but the city was governed by the Achaeans, represented mostly by the Pentilidae, who ruled with cruelty for many years. Political disputes, which shook Mytilene at the time of political changes, ended when aesymnetes Pittacus assumed command. At the same period appeared poets Sappho and Alcaeus in Lesbos's political life. After the Lydian state came apart, Mytilene and all Lesbian cities, Asia Minor and the eastern Aegean islands were dominated by the Persians and followed Xerxes in his campaign against Greece. After the Persian Wars, Mytilene, which was democratic by then, connected itself with Athens by joining the First and Second Athenian League, from which it tried to apostatize at the time of the Peloponnesian War. This incident has become known as the "apostasy of Mytilenians", fully described by Thucydides. Their apostasy was directly connected with the expansion of the city beyond Nisi ("Island"), which was separated by Euripus, to the other side, on the land. Euripus, namely the 780m long and 30 m wide channel that connected the two

significant natural ports of the city, the South (or Maloeis) and the Great (or Commercial) port, was divided by straits and was adorned with bridges of white hewn stone.

According to literary sources, the city of Mytilene was considered beautiful and grand, like Ephesus and Rhodes. The opposite banks of Euripus were connected by marble bridges. The most important monuments and sanctuaries of the city were gathered at these banks, where the trade activities of Mytilene went on for centuries. At its north end, around the commercial port, there were magnificent stoaes of the Agora, uncovered recently. Approximately up to 1350 A.D., the channel was gradually filled with earth fillings and was the main arterial road ever since, as well as the most important commercial street of the city, Ermou Street (“Street of Hermes”).

After the final expansion of the city to the hill of Aghia Kyriaki, which was fortified with a castle above the port, wealthier social classes used to build their spacious luxurious residences on the hill slopes with rooms around a central, usually stone-paved yard with impluvium. The main rooms were usually decorated with frescoes and high quality mosaics.

The most significant monument of Mytilene was the theater, built in the natural cavity of the south incline, near the top of the hill, in the 3rd century B.C.. Another significant technical work was the aqueduct of the Roman period. It carried water to a distance of approximately 30 km to the city of Mytilene.

Excavations in Mytilene uncovered stone-paved streets that led outside the city through the rich cemeteries by the roads. Inside the walls of the later Hellenistic city, the water supply system with its clay ducts and the sewage system with its built drains were uncovered. The windward sea walls of the ports, namely the archaic and later wall, built according to the opus testaeum technique with poros, surrounded the oldest part of the city along Euripus. From the 3rd century on, it surrounded the later part of the city, ending up at the large sea walls of the ports, where large jars have been preserved.

The necropolises of Mytilene were rich. The archaic necropolis was near the banks of Euripus on the part of the land, around the north commercial port. For the burials of this time, cist-graves or large jars were used. From the 5th century B.C. up to the end of the Roman Rule, cemeteries were built along stone-paved roads starting from the north, western and south exits of the city, in a distance of up to 2 km from the city walls. Sarcophagi, cist-graves and small cinerary urns were used for burials. Almost all burials, even those outside cemeteries, had rich funeral gifts, in order to certify the affluence of the residents of ancient Mytilene, which had glory, wealth and power almost throughout its historical course.

Mytilene is directly connected with lyric poetry and philosophy. According to literary sources, inscriptions and excavation data, there was a sanctuary of Demetra and Kore at the Castle, a sanctuary of Cybele near the north commercial port, a sanctuary of Apollo Maloeis near the north port outside the archaic city walls and a sanctuary of Zeus near the ancient theater. The worships of Asclepius, Dionysus and Hera are also attested.

## 2. 2. Byzantine and medieval period

Throughout [Byzantine Times](#), thanks to the monasteries (e.g. Myrsiniotissa Monastery), Lesvos’s development regarding trade and culture was considerable. Nevertheless, [pirate](#) and Arab predations strained the island damaging its economy. Population decreased significantly. Soon after the Franks conquered Constantinople, Lesvos had the same luck with the rest of the northeastern Aegean islands becoming a part of the [Latin Empire](#) of Constantinople. The Byzantines recovered it in 1247, but emperor John Palaiologos granted it to the Genoese as dowry for Maria Palaiologos under the government of the Gatluzzi.

## 2. 3. Ottoman and Modern period

In 1462, it was taken over by the Ottomans. During the first centuries of integration into the [Ottoman Empire](#), Lesvos’s economy declined. Nevertheless, cultural life had not vanished. Within the first half of the 16th century, the Limonos Monastery flourished, turning into a cultural center of the island. Things got a lot better after Russia defeated the Ottomans during the Russo-Turkish War (1768-1774). The Christian Orthodox took over almost all production and trade activities of the island, leading to a rapid urban

development. Economic growth was followed by cultural development. Literature developed considerably during the 18th century. A prominent man of intellect of that time was Veniamin the Lesbian, a chief personality of the Neohellenic Enlightenment. In the 19th and early 20th century, economic and urban growth on Lesbos was at its heyday. It depended on the single-crop cultivation of olive trees, the growth of industry and its close trade relations with the Asia Minor coastline. Neoclassical manors we see now at Mytilene date from that time. Lesbos was liberated in 1912 and was [incorporated in Greece](#). This was confirmed by the Lausanne Treaty in 1923.

In 1922, after the Asia Minor Catastrophe, Lesbos was one of the refugees' settlements. Refugees coming massively rearranged social structures and population distribution. There were also conflicts among locals and refugees, regarding mostly the enjoyment of Ottoman land. Despite adverse historical circumstances, culture developed on Lesbos. Amongst Lesbos's most important artists are writers Stratis Myrivilis, Elias Venezis, Argyris Eftaliotis and [Odysseas Elytis](#), and painters [Theofilos](#) and Fotis Kontoglou (also a writer).

### 2. 3. 1 Agiasos

The picturesque town of Agiasos was built in Mediaeval Times at the central part of the island, 26 km west of Mytilene, at the northeastern roots of mount Olympos. Nature there has a unique vegetation and fertility, with a variety of fruit trees, such as pine trees, olive trees, chestnuts and walnuts. Combined with the cool springs, they provide residents the ability to cultivate anything.

The steep declivitous slope of Olympos made it necessary for the houses to be amphitheatrically constructed and support each other statically. Residences have narrow façades, two or three storeys, large colorful windows and a sun lounge, the sachnisi, for the sun. Balconies are wooden, supported with corbels. They are adorned with flowerpots, according to the residents' Mediterranean habit. All houses have elaborate chimneys and tile roofs. Streets connecting residences with the shops are all narrow, stone-paved, with a cobblestone pavement so that animals can ascend easier.

Regarding education, Agiasos very soon left its mark. A School was founded in 1773, where Akindynos Iviritis seems to have taught supporting people's inclination for learning. Study I Anaptyxis ("the Development") was later founded, with a theater of its own and a large library.

The traditional settlement is characterized by the folk art (pottery in particular). Floral and rarely linear motifs painted with vivid colors and meticulous lines adorn decorative everyday use vessels. Pottery of Agiasos was developed mostly by the five generations of ceramist families Kourtzidis and Chatziannis. Fretwork, weaving and music developed as well. Visitors walking down the narrow alleys of the settlement will probably run into women wearing breeches, who chat while knitting or weaving with the loom. In the past, they would meet "Kakourgos" ("villain") the musician, who had been playing a melancholic tune with his dulcimer over the past 40 years.

The folk spontaneity though is expressed through satire with the use of the Lesbian idiom. The dialect of Lesbos itself is parodied and giped through the variation of Agiasos. On the occasion of the Halloween, people present the articulation of different characters of society, underlining freely the differences and social injustice.

Save its folk culture, Agiasos also owes its reputation throughout Greece mostly to the monastery of the Virgin Mary, located at the center of the settlement. According to folk tradition, Evangelist Luke made the icon of the Virgin Mary. Priest of the Emperor Agathon from Ephesus took it there from Jerusalem in 803 A.D.. The icon is inscribed "Holy Zion, Mother of God", one of the names of Jerusalem.

The settlement's name "Agiasos" comes from an alteration of "Agia Sion" (Holy Zion). The icon was destined for Hagia Sophia or the palace of Constantinople. The domination of iconoclasm though hindered Agathon. Therefore, the icon along with tree more relics (a silver cross with Holy rood, a 5th century A.D. handwritten gospel and the Relics of St. Dionysius the Areopagite), went to Agiasos. In 1170, Constantine Valerios gave permission for the construction of the church of the Virgin Mary. The current church

was built on the old foundation in 1814.

Lesbian scholars have given us the most vivid descriptions of the top fair and the night hiking of those that had made a vow to the Panagia i Agiasiotissa (“Virgin Mary from Agiasos”) on August 15th. Caesarius Daponte describes the procession of worshipers demonstrating the appeal this celebration had to Christians of the East too: “Smyrna and the East and Ephesus and Chios all stream annually to celebrate this feast”.

(Anna-Magdalini Argyri)

### **2. 3. 2. Industry**

The connection between the Lesbian economy and the coastline of Asia Minor opposite the island had been indissoluble for decades, since the Ottomans had dominated the island until 1912 (when it was finally integrated into the Hellenic State), but also because of the island’s closeness to it.

The construction of oil-presses, soap-factories, flour mills, etc. led to a great industrial boom in Lesvos since the mid 19th century until the first decades of the 20th century. The island’s economic prosperity depended greatly on the olive monocropping. Manufacturing units and industries processing olive products and by-products were organized, along with the formation of significant trade networks transferring local products to the Balkans, Europe, Asia Minor, etc.

In 1912, Lesvos had 110 steam-driven oil-presses, 6 seed oil-presses, 42 soap factories and 25 tanneries. Since the 1930s, magnesite mines have also been found in some areas of the island, where deserted facilities, trolleys, galleries, excavations and reserves from old extractive activities (area of Basilica) are extant still.

From the Liberation (1912) until the Asia Minor Catastrophe, the island’s economy gradually turned its attention from Asia Minor to Greece. Since 1960 and thereafter, the unstable olive production led to a dramatic decline of the island’s population. Nowadays, its economy revolves around agricultural product processing (olive oil, cheese products, salted preserves, ouzo, wine) and tourism.

(Maria Mavroeiði)

### **2. 3. 3. Oil industry**

Up to now, the Lesbian scenery has been greatly defined by the cultivation of olive trees ever since the antiquity. Sources from archives and excursionists’ texts present the island to be full of olive trees during the antiquity, whereas archaeological evidence, such as depictions of olive branches on extravagant Hellenistic vessels, corroborate that olive trees grew on the island.

Residents from all social classes were bound with the oil production. The endurance of olives and olive oil allowed its secure storage, as well as its multiple uses as lighting and heating fuel or a food supplement and replacement. Olive trees themselves provided food with their leaves to animals and fuel with their wood and olive-cake.

Extended olive tree cultivation, initially on Lesvos and later on (16th century) to the south and eastern regions of Greece, defines agricultural activities, social structures and therefore supports the Lesbian economy up to now. The Lesbian society consists of wealthy landowners, many of whom own oil presses or other related factories, merchants and farmers, men and women who thwack the branches and collect the fruit.

In autumn and winter, men thwack ripe fruits using the tembla, while women collect the olives falling one by one with their hands using the kalathides (“panniers”). Olive collection is time consuming, and residents frequently occupy themselves with it throughout the entire year; we should also take into consideration that they have to trim the trees and take care of their fields in order to ensure what they call maxouli, a good harvest during winter.

The crushing of the olive fruit, as well as the production and storage of olive oil, take place in the oil-presses. Oil-presses of Lesvos

were built according to the British factory type with tall chimneys made of brick, or follow the plain typology of oblong basilicas. We usually find them at the end of a settlement or anchorages of towns, where relevant oil byproducts' industries, or soap factories, tanneries and seed oil factories "help" each other. Regarding the modernization of olive presses, we must say that primitive presses were substituted for steam-driven and later on diesel-driven presses on the initiation of both communities and civilians. Modernization equals increasing demand for oil.

As historical evidence, demonstrating the rapid development of olive trees' cultivation, we have to mention the registrations of 1888 (18 steam-driven oil presses) and 1912 (110 steam-driven oil presses). The abundant oil production equaled and brought noteworthy trade activities. According to sources, oil was in high demand mostly in the north European countries. The entire 18th century is characterized by the sales of this product to France and Marseilles in particular. In 1881, exports from the island's ports were estimated to 18-20 million franks.

Nevertheless, depending on monocropping frequently caused problems. In January 1850, many of the olive trees were "burnt" because the temperature fell dramatically, destroying thus a year's production, bringing a major economic crisis to the entire Lesbian society. Residents' diligence though helped surpass problems. Even now, olives define the island's economy.

(Anna-Magdalini Argyri)

### **2. 3. 4. Oil-presses: from the "stones" to the "machines"**

Lesvos is a typical example of the oil technology development and the transition from the pre-industrial to the industrial stage. In fact, there are still many signs evident of this transition (buildings, machinery).

Pre-industrial oil-presses (locals called them "stones") comprised of a manually operated or animal-driven mill with millstones, where olives were being milled, and the manually-operated presses (or "baskia"), which were wooden at first and used for the oil extraction from the olive pulp.

After a heavy frost in 1950 devastated the island's olive trees, the olive monocropping was expanded even at places most inaccessible. Thus, the oil production, combined with the inefficiency of manually-operated mills, led to oil-presses being automatized.

The operation of the first steam-driven oil-presses (the "machines") on the island began approximately in 1879. Added to these factories were one or two pairs of millstones, 2-4 hydraulic presses with the corresponding number of pumps, so they would be set into motion, as well as a motion transition system, connected with a steam-engine. Having a communal character is a local feature for many industrial units of the Lesbian oil-industry.

Since the mid 20th century, steam-engines were substituted with oil-engines, and centrifugal oil-separators were placed near the presses to make sure the oil was perfectly separated from water.

Electricity put mills and presses out of use. Nowadays, oil-presses comprise of crushers and centrifugal decanters that speed up the process.

### **2. 3. 5. Soap making**

Since the late 19th century, Lesvos had specialized in oil-soap production according to modern techniques and sold its products in the markets of Constantinople, the Asia Minor coastline and the cities of the Dead Sea. Soap production flourished on the island since 1875 to 1895; it was restrained since 1912 (Liberation).

In order to make white and green soap, soap-factories of Lesvos used olive oil and seed-oil respectively, which were in abundance on the island.

Typical soap-factory equipment, as we can also see nowadays in those extant in Perama, Plomari, etc., comprises of a soap-boiler (a

cylindrical or conical boiler of thick sheet-irons) used for preparing the soap, a stirrer for blending soap with aromatic essences or powder and, finally, hand-presses that stamped it with the manufacturer's trade name. The automatization of soap-factories in Lesvos began in the mid 1920s.

The 1960s marked the great fall of soap sales worldwide, since detergents and liquid soap have prevailed ever since.

(Maria Mavroiedi)

### **3. Archaeological sites and monuments**

#### **3. 1. Antiquity**

The oldest attestations of humans on Lesvos, dating from the Final Neolithic Period, have been found in the cave of Aghios Vartholomeos. From the 4th pre-Christian millennium on, Lesvos played a significant part. During Early and Middle Bronze Age, the organized settlement of Thermi was one of the chief locations of what we call "Trojan Civilization".

The settlement is significant for several reasons: the six building phases of early urban character, the connecting town planning, and the amount and quality of findings.

Information taken from literary sources and archaeological data found all over the island attest Lesvos's economic and social flourish during the Archaic Period. From the 8th century B.C. on, the polygonal technique of the "Lesbian building construction" dominates on all buildings.

Amongst ruins preserved, the most important ones are the arched temples of Mytilene, Mithymna, Pyrra and Antissa, the houses of Mithymna and Apothika, and the monumental retaining walls of an agricultural character at Eresos, Apothika and Mithymna. Lesvos is also scattered with towers and forts with similar masonry. Tradition goes on up to the late 4th century B.C., as demonstrated by the contemporaneous walls of Mytilene, where the use of the polygonal technique is more of a reminder and expression of the archaic style.

Literary attestations and excavation data have determined the worship of Apollo the Napeos at the two Aeolian temples found at Klopedi. On Archaic Lesvos, the use of the Aeolian order seems to dominate, at least regarding temples and public buildings of this order uncovered at the broader region of Aghia Paraskevi, Eresos and Mytilene.

Within the territory of ancient Pyrra, there is the "temple of Mesa". Ancient sources refer to it as a "center of pan-Lesbian worship and contact". During Hellenistic Times it was the headquarter of the "Lesbian commonwealth". During events that took place in the precinct, Lesbians prayed for eugenism for Aeolian families, and Lesbian girls danced at a beauty contest.

The temple was the center of the Sanctuary. An Ionian 4th century pseudo-dipteral temple was founded on older remains –probable an altar– dating from Archaic Times. During later antiquity, the cella was turned into a paleochristianic cemeterial basilica, on the remnants of which a post-Byzantine church was built. Cult continues up to now with the worship of Taxiarchis.

There are few remains of the Classical era due to later habitation. The most important findings come from the Sanctuary of Demetra, the north necropolis of Mytilene and the cemeteries of Pyrra and Eresos. Building remnants are found in the ancient city of Arisvi and occasionally at Mytilene, Mithymna and Eresos.

The ancient theater was built during Hellenistic Times on the hill of Aghia Kyriaki in the city of Mytilene. Archaeological data demonstrates it played a significant role in the life of the city. All major events of the political and social life took place there. After defeating king of Pontus Mithridates, Roman general Pompeius celebrated his triumph at this theater in 66 B.C.

The theater's importance lies in its influence on the history of architecture. Pompeius admired it for its architecture and built a similar one in Rome in 55 B.C. That one influenced theater architecture on the Italian peninsula significantly.

When revamping cities of the Roman Empire, Romans built the aqueduct of Mytilene. Its best-preserved part can be found in the agricultural region of the settlement of Moria. Its monumental arcade is 27 m high and 170 m long. It bridges the picturesque valley, making water transportation from mount Olympos's springs to Mytilene easier.

After Mytilene's expansion in the 2nd century B.C., the area's economy flourished, as demonstrated by numerous findings and manors with marble mosaics and frescoes. A cistern with meticulous masonry dating from the Roman Period was uncovered near the south port of Mytilene. It's the only monument of that category in the north Aegean.

### **3. 1. 1. Aeolic order**

Aeolic order is the architectural type that was followed mostly in the area of what we call "culture of Aeolis". In particular, it was used in the Asia Minor coastline from Troy to Smyrna, and on the island of Lesbos. The most important of the Aeolic order monuments, as well as most of them, were uncovered there.

Two Aeolic temples dating from the Archaic Times have been explored at mountainous Klopedi of Lesbos. They have been identified with the sanctuary of Apollo Napaïos. Lesbos was scattered with Aeolic structures. Their large number is certified by the Aeolic capitals found at Mytilene, Eresos and the rural area of the traditional settlement of Napi. Nevertheless, there are also remains of Aeolic order temples dating from Archaic Times at the Aeolis area of Asia Minor. At Smyrna, Larisa of Ermos and Neandria, south of Troy, excavations have unearthed Aeolic order architectural remains. The Museum of Constantinople houses a capital of a large Aeolic structure from the [Castle](#) of Mytilene.

The Aeolic order was a unique expression of the Greek civilization in the East. Regarding typology, it is a variation of the Ionic order. It is characterized mostly by the capital, an inseparable part of ancient temples, which was organically connected with the other parts as well, mostly the column and the base. Thin Aeolic columns gave Archaic Times' worshipers the impression of a robust tree trunk.

Columns had a simple base with a crude astragal above a thick volute that seemed to grow from the stylobate. Aeolic capitals, also characterized "proto-Ionic" by some researchers, stood on an echinus that had the same shape as the base. They were the continuation of the column, which was torn in half, forming two volutes to the right and left with a palmette between them. This shape creates an impression of vividness and underlines the power with which the capital supported the architrave and the roof; a power coming from the column's base and the deeply "rooted" crepidoma. At the occuli of the volutes, there were inlaid stone or metal jewels, probably rosettes that have not been preserved. The way Aeolic capitals were formed –with the two volutes growing almost vertically and the schematic triangular palmette between them– originates from Late Bronze Age monuments, whereas some of its variations were used up to Roman Times.

Aeolic columns give the impression of a schematic palm tree, a lily or a scroll. Namely, it is a schematic floral pattern of Eastern origin, probably symbolizing the "tree of life", connected with the cult of Adonis. These Orientalist influences were received at Aeolis of Asia Minor and Lesbos, an island on a passage and also a transitional station from east to west and vice versa. The Aeolic order influenced both the neighboring and broader region of Asia Minor and mainland Greece. Towards this, point capitals found at the peninsula of Alikarnassos of Asia Minor, Cyprus (impost from a pilaster), [Delos](#), Thasos, [Paros](#), Sykaminos of Oropos, the Acropolis, the Agora and the Keramikos cemetery of Athens. However, Aeolic incised or painted capitals became the dominant ridge pattern on archaic funerary stelai. Great 6th century pottery painters used Aeolic capitals as decorative patterns in black-figured scenes, mostly to adorn architectural parts and furniture. The abundance of Aeolic monuments on Lesbos highlight the place where this order was mostly used, underlining the island's significance in its broader area of influence as the center of the culture of Aeolis during the Archaic Times.

### **3. 2. Early Christian, Byzantine and Medieval Period**

The Paleochristianic, Byzantine and Mediaeval Periods were very important for Lesbos. Plenty of buildings of a monastic character and basilicas all over Lesbos attest the establishment of Christianity. The most significant monuments of that period are the Panagia

Myrsiniotissa Monastery (13th century) and the Limonos Monastery (16th century). Their collections include important treasures, such as imperial codices, icons and other relics. Contemporaneous frescoes and noteworthy icons have been preserved at the katholicon of the Perivoli Monastery. Monasteries of Ypsilou and Pithariou are located in the regions of Antissa and Eresos. On Lesvos, there is a remarkable number of **basilicas**. The best-known ones are those of Aghios Andreas (5th century) and Afenteli at Skala of Eresos.

Panagia of Agiasos (8th century) and the Taxiarchis of Mantamados are the best-known monastic clusters of Lesvos.

“Agiasos” comes from the Monastery of “Agia Sion” (“Holy Zion”). According to folk tradition, the icon of the Virgin Mary was acheiropoietos (not made by human hands) made by Evangelist Luke. Agathon from [Ephesus](#) took it there from Jerusalem. Researchers have dated the monastery of Taxiarches at Mantamados in the 18th century. It’s notable for its rare for the Orthodox world carved icon of Archangel Michael. The fair of Tavros, dating from the antiquity, takes place on Renewal Sunday.

Lesvos’s monasteries were predated or desolated during Saracen and later Ottoman attacks. The effort that revived many monasteries in the 16th century continues up to now.

The castles of the island survived destruction and desertion caused by pirate predations. The ones standing out are those of Mytilene and Mithymna, which later on were integrated into the island’s defensive network along with later castle of Sigrio. Mytilene’s castle, one of the largest ones in the eastern Mediterranean, is located at the eastern part of the city and was founded at Justinian’s time (482-565) on the remains of the ancient fortification. Architectural parts of ancient buildings were used.

The castle of Mithymna, the second largest and most imposing on Lesvos, was built on ancient remnants of the fortification on the top of the hill, dominating over the traditional amphitheater-like built settlement of Molyvos. In 1373, Francesco Gateluzzo restored it.

### 3. 2. 1. Early Christian churches

The proximity of Lesvos to the eastern world, and therefore their close contact and trade relations, made the island a medium for the spread of the new religion from the great Christian centers of the East towards mainland Greece. Moreover, tradition connects the island with Apostle Paul’s short stay at Mytilene in 58 A.D., during his third tour.

Like in so many other cases of an ancient temple turning into a Christian church, the same thing happened with the pseudo-dipteral temple of Messos on Lesvos. It was turned into a Christian basilica, and after it was destroyed, a small church was built at the same location.

All over the island, more than 100 Early Christian monuments and churches mostly have become known. Their remains illustrate the economic growth of Lesvos during this period as well. Early Christian religious structures follow the typology of the established church architecture.

Namely, they followed the Syrian type of the dromic three-aisled basilica with a wooden roof. At the western side, there is an oblong narthex vertical to the nave. A semicircular apse developed in the interior of the eastern side, sometimes preserving its semicircular shape from the outside or forming a polyhedron. It was frequently inscribed into the eastern side of the church. Noteworthy mosaics with floral, geometrical and animal motifs adorned the nave. The design and chromatic composition, and the whole structure in general, are characterized by simplicity and the absence of emphatic elements and the good quality of execution.

Some of the most important Early Christian churches of Lesvos are those of Argala, along with the structures added to it, of Kratigos, near the airport of the modern city, and of Messos and Achladeri, at the gulf of Kalloni. The mosaics of the St. Andrew basilica at the anchorage of Eresos are quite impressive. According to a dedicatory inscription on the mosaic, bishop of Mytilene Ioannis was the patron. He had participated in the 3rd Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.. Also notable are the basilicas of Afendeli and the one at Skala of Eresos, of Aghios Dimitrios at Ypsilometopo, of Aghios Georgios at Chalinado near the settlement of Aghia Paraskevi, and that of Aghia Anastasia at Kliou. A part of an Early Christian basilica was uncovered in the city of Mytilene on

Pergamou Street, while close to it, in the Ladadika area, a church built on the foundations of 3rd century Roman baths had been excavated.

According to researches, the fact that Early Christian basilicas were used up to the 17th century justifies the absence of Byzantine churches. After these churches were destroyed, small churches or priories were built on their remnants. Visitors can see them now at villages.

### **3. 2. 2. Castle of Mithymna**

The Castle crowns this beautiful amphitheatrically built town. It is one of the best-preserved ones on the island and the second largest and most imposing on Lesvos.

It was built during Byzantine Times on the remnants of the ancient fortification, mostly that of the south side. According to some, it was founded in the 6th century, the time of emperor Justinian, known for his building activity. In 1128, it was taken over by the Venetians, and from 1204 up to 1287 it was under the dominion of Baldwin from Flanders. According to others, it had been built after the mid-13th century to combat Turk and Frank invaders. In the late 13th century though, it came under Catalan dominion. In 1373, Francesco I Gattelusio repaired and reinforced the castle. Its current image is a result of 14th century works and Ottoman additions after 1462.

It has the shape of an irregular trapezium with 70 m long sides. For the most part, it had been built according to the pseudo-isodomic masonry system. Large ashlar and basalt rock had been used. The northeastern side's ground is more even making the construction of higher ramparts easier in order to have better protection. Around the fort, ten high towers with a square or circular floor plan had been built to make fortifications better. At the southwestern part, there is an external rampart, whereas the fortress is accessed gradually through three successive gates. The first gate opened at the southernmost end of the external enceinte. According to a built-in inscription, the Ottomans had built it. Its upper part is covered with a pointed arch. Between the external and the internal enceinte, there is space like a moat.

Sources from archives and excursionists' texts shed some light to the history of the fortress. Bernard Randolph refers to its good condition and confirms that a moat had already been created in 1678 and was given its modern shape. Among others he says: "It is well fortified in the ancient way, with very high walls and a strong garrison. It has towers, a moat with no water surrounded by a low wall, and a drawbridge, which is the only way in to the fortress". The second gate is accessed through a slightly uphill domed road, the diavatiko, built according to the Ottoman defensive architecture, leading to an oblong outdoor space. This yard is protected on either side with the internal walls and the curtains. The third gate dating from the 14th century follows. It is the main monumental gate. It has been made of thick wood covered with metal plates. In the space created on either side of the stone arch are the gun-loops, where defendants threw heavy balls, molten tar or hot oil to besiegers from.

The interior of the castle is divided in several levels. A large cistern with an arched roof has been preserved since the Byzantine Times. This way, defendants had drinking water. A trilateral vaulted structure preserved at the south part of the entrance dates from the Ottoman period. It had been used as a prison, or a powder magazine. At the eastern part of the main entrance there is a structure also dating from the Ottoman period, consisting of four spaces. At the northern part of the fortress, two more structures were probably used as lodgings for the garrison. A drain also attests the existence of a hygiene room. At several points of the walls, visitors will see built-in plates with inscriptions or other distinguishing marks.

### **3. 3. 17th-20th century**

The church of Panagia Glykophilousa was built on the highest rocky hill of the traditional settlement of Petra in 1609 and was restored in 1747. From the top of the rock, it calls worshipers to climb the 114 stairs and enjoy the captivating view of the sea up to the Asia Minor coast.

Later church of Panagia i Gorgona (“Mermaid Madonna”) was built on the rocky cape of traditional settlement Sykamnea and was connected with the literary tradition of Lesvos – in particular with Stratis Myrivilis. Myrivilis drew inspiration from this church and the tragedy of the 1922 refugees to write his Mermaid Madonna, where he combined the colorful description of the Lesbian scenery with current history and ethnography.

The Yeni Cami, located in the Epano Skala area, was built in 1823-1828 and is a fine example of Ottoman architecture.

Manors and residences of rich people of Lesvos “adorning” Mytilene and many other settlements are the symbols of economic flourish and social esteem of the ruling class of the early 20th century. That class managed the community, church and educational affairs of the island.

Eclectic characteristics of those buildings demonstrate how contacts with central Europe influenced the island. High maintenance cost contributed to the change of use. Few are still residences now. Most of them are used as hotels and cultural centers or house Services. The Mansion of Vareltzidena at Petra is significant for its interior structure and frescoes. Now it is a museum.

(Anna-Magdalini Argyri)  
(Transl. Onoufrios Dovletis)

### 3. 3. 1. The Ottoman Baths

The baths were built as soon as the Ottomans captured a town. Their operation was directly connected with Islam, for the Koran claims that the Muslims should bathe twice a week to purify their souls from sins. The ‘hamam’ (public baths) was much more than simple baths. It was a place directly connected with the town’s everyday life, visited by both men and women of all social strata, origins and religions. Public baths had a monumental character and were oblations from officers. Beyond their absolutely functional importance, the baths were places of social associations, education, communication and entertainment for both sexes. Men arranged their business deals there. For women, it was their main social event, giving them the opportunity to escape home environment and arrange matches.

The place is divided into three basic spaces: the changing room, the warm room so that visitors could adapt to warm temperatures and, finally, the hot room. These three spaces were completed with auxiliary rooms for the separate body care procedures. Typical architectural features of the hamam were the roof domes, which kept the temperature of the place steady and were decorated with skylights in various shapes to lighten the rooms.

In the town of Mytilini there were three baths, built in the northwest part of Epano Skala: the great bath of the Agora (çarşı hamam), dating back to the early 1900s, the bath at the junction of Irakleias and Karavaggeli Streets, from the 19th century, as well as a third bath from the 17th century, inside the Castle.

Among the above baths, particularly interesting are the monumental baths of the Agora, in present Ermou Street, the old commercial road of Mytilini, next to Yeni Cami, the greatest mosque of the town. It is a large Ottoman hamam from the mid-19th century with several domes. The numerous skylights on the domes, the decorative motifs on the internal niches as well as the marble benches and the fountain contribute to the formation of a highly impressive picture.

The particular feature of the baths at the junction of Irakleias and Karavaggeli Streets is the area of the entrance and the changing rooms, which must have had two floors and a peripheral loft. The baths of the Castle are housed in a conventional building, possibly rebuilt at the site of former baths. Its restoration is placed within the general maintenance works in the Castle, which are on their way already since 1970.

The baths inside the castle of Mythimna in Molyvos are among the most interesting baths preserved all over the island due to their considerable dimensions and elaborate decoration. They are in the centre of the present settlement, near çarşı mosque, or Great Mosque, and access is through stairs in a narrow bystreet of Kastrou Street. There is no information about the building date. There is no refernece as to the construction date. The building is made of stone and has undergone a restauration in the 1960s.

Dilapidated small baths have been found in the deserted village of Klappados, while a deserted and quite unknown small baths complex with remarkable morphological and decorative features exist in the settlement of Parakoila.

(Eleni Bazini)  
(Georgios Velentzas)

#### **4. Architecture**

The island of Lesvos boasts a built environment of high aesthetic quality, which is architecturally akin to that developed in the neighboring Turkish coast and is in fact part of the larger cultural zone of Asia Minor and the Balkan Peninsula.

A big and rich island, Lesvos, consisted of more than 100 settlements, organized in 8 units, in each of which a larger settlement centre predominated. These centres were Mytilini, Molyvos, Plomari, Agiasos, Polichnitos, Eresos, Kalloni and Skammia. The characteristic element of the settlement architecture of Lesvos is its urban character, which was due to the growth, during the early years, of a powerful social middle class. The individual architectural diversities of each group of settlements were related to the landscape morphology, the building materials, the economy and the distinct cultural features of each area.

The depopulation following the Ottoman conquest in 1462 led to the dissolution of the earlier settlement network and the only traces that survived from Byzantine Lesvos were only to be found in the castles of Mytilini, Molyvos and Kalloni. There isn't enough evidence about the form of house architecture in Lesvos before the 18th century, yet it seems that the one-floor oblong building style, which predominated in the rest of the Aegean was also adopted. When piracy ended, and shipping and trade started to develop, the conditions were created for the transition to architecture of higher technological level, that of the tile roof, which originates from the building traditions of the Balkans and Asia Minor. These influences were boosted by the significant presence of a Muslim population in the island, the import of building materials and the exchange of craftsmen with the neighboring coast.

Until the end of the 19th century, the type of two-storeyed narrow-fronted building with hipped roof and the entrance on the long axis prevailed. The main feature that characterizes this type of building is the projections of part of the storey often called sachnisinia or kremases. The sachnisinia have wooden frame and thin walls made of tsatma or bagdati and are supported by wooden or iron struts. They correspond to the more "noble" rooms of the house, namely the reception rooms and the bedrooms, and their interior decoration depends on the financial standing of their owner. It is during the same period that the big stately houses with a linear or a central or cruciform chagiati (balcony) were built. Their oriental architecture reveals the interaction between the conqueror and the island's upper classes, while at the same time it was influenced by western architectural currents of classicism and baroque. The towers, located in the rural areas near the town of Mytilini, constitute a distinct category of Lesbian architecture. They were used as a second home by well-to-do Greeks or Turks and were constructed according to the widespread model of the medieval defensive tower. They develop in height to three storeys with square plan; the last storey is structured freely, with its space stretching outwards in the form of sachnisinia.

The reforms of the 19th century assisted the creation of a powerful middle class, based on land cultivation, trade and industry organization. The industrial development of Lesvos, mainly on the sector of olive processing, affected significantly the physiognomy of the built environment. Numerous architecturally eminent industrial buildings were created and the houses' urban character was reinforced. The development of communal institutions provided to the local Greek society the necessary resources for the erection of a series of public utility buildings, schools and the construction of an impressive grid of paved streets in the settlements, a large part of which has survived until this day. Furthermore, through the commercial relations with Constantinople and Smyrna, a cosmopolitan mentality has been established.

During the 19th century, two large earthquakes and a series of fires led to the renovation of the building stock. The Lesbians, wanting to distinguish themselves from anything oriental, turned to a "scholarly" architecture, influenced by western architectural currents. The new urban houses assumed internal and external symmetry. An open balcony gradually replaced the sachnisini. The ground floor was raised to allow the creation of a semi-basement and thus the facade was structured in the classical form of base, main building and

pediment. This basic building type, with small variations, was predominant in Lesvos. The morphological choice of houses presents great variety. Neoclassical elements from the west were coupled with the daring eclecticism of Smyrna, revealing a society open to influences, while at the same time pursuing show-off. Sometimes, the houses were designed by architects from Asia Minor; in Mytilini, buildings were erected for the upper bourgeoisie, constituting an exact transposition of the models of suburban houses in Vienna, Berlin and Paris.

In the aftermath of the Asia Minor Disaster in 1922, Lesvos lost its “natural hinterland” in Asia Minor and the local economy was dealt a heavy blow. The pressing need for accommodation of a large number of refugees in areas formerly inhabited by the Turkish population altered its features considerably. The large Turkish stately houses were demolished, the Turkish fountains were ruined. Even until this day, the Ottoman aspect of Lesbian architecture, including mosques, baths, public fountains, unfortunately remains inactive and untapped. The large internal migration and the political conditions of post-war decades caused stagnancy in Lesvos’ building sector. Due to the fact that tourism was slow in developing, this picture remained unchanged until the end of the 1980s. Due to these circumstances, the architectural heritage of Lesvos has been highly preserved to this day.

(Efi Sarantakou)  
(Transl. Eirini Papadaki)

## **5. Museums**

The island’s cultural heritage is preserved and represented by exhibits housed in museum Collections of Lesvos initiated by civilians or the state.

Nowadays, there are five Collections on Lesvos representing the ancient civilization on Lesvos. In Mytilene, the Archaeological Museum is housed in two buildings, and its collection includes findings dating from the Late Neolithic Period up to Roman Times, revealing the island’s significance in the ancient world. Findings are housed both in the old buildings of Vournazos –an excellent example of 19th century mansions, with a homestead and a large yard– and the later 1955 building. Teaching aids, maps and wax models enhance the collections, whereas educational programs make children’s visits pleasant. Seasonal exhibitions of Lesbian artists are hosted at the foyer of the new building, connecting the new view of museum architecture with ancient history, promoting thus the museum as a center of culture.

Small Collections at Eresos and Napi, with findings from rescue excavations and folkloric material, complete our view of the ancient and later heritage.

The cultural wealth of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine times is represented by exhibits of the Ecclesiastical-Byzantine Museum of Mytilene, housed in the building of the Philanthropic Foundation. The museum includes 13th-15th century icons, ornaments, canonicals, antimensia, parts of fine quality carven chancel screens, codices, gospels and church relics. Among those, there is also an icon painted by folk painter Theofilos.

The Museum of Folk Art houses some of Theofilos’s works, as well as local garments, examples of pottery, wooden utensils of usage and guns of historical significance, amongst which the sword of Veniamin the Lesbian. The folklorist collection is housed in the building of the old harbormaster’s office of Mytilene.

Collections of private initiative are quite interesting. The 19th century Lesbian household is presented in the “Lesbian House”, organized on the initiative of President of the Lesvos Women Association [το έχω βρει έτσι], Marika Vlachou-Molynou. The same Association organized the exhibition of “Lesbian garments and embroideries” on Komninaki Street. It includes 19th century garments, embroidery and textiles.

Great art critic Stratis Eleftheriadis-Teriade founded two significant museums at Varia in 1965: the Theofilos and Teriade Museums. History and myth inspired folk painter Theofilos, who had a “primitive” painting style, creating disproportional faces and bodies with vivid colors of organic substances.

The Museum of Modern Art, named after Teriade, houses 29 rare books illustrated by great 20th century artists, such as Picasso, Matisse, Miro, Le Corbusier, Chagall, etc., with scenes from the Bible and the Greek mythology.

## 6. Folk Culture – Folk Art

Products of folk inspiration and production reveal Lesbians’ aesthetic views. Pottery is a great part of folk art. The Ceramics tradition still goes on. Lesbians used to cook pulse in the “gragouda” and use clay “koumaria” covered with a pinecone in order to keep water cool. Floral –rarely linear– motifs, sometimes with vivid colors, cover the whole body or belly of the koumaria, the gragouda, jugs or plates. There are illustrations of landscapes of the island, the sea and the forest with inspired design and combinations of colors.

The most important modern pottery workshops are at Agiasos, Mantamados, Akrotiri and Aghios Stefanos. The craft of pottery was developed mostly by the five generations of ceramists’ Kourtzidis family. The Chatzigiannis family from Asia Minor was added later in 1926. The Stamatis family represents Mantamados, the An Aga family represents Akrotiri and the Kouvdís family represents Aghios Stefanos.

Fretwork developed on Lesbos with just as much artistic zest. On the occasion of working for the church, artists developed fretwork significantly during the 17th century. What we call a “stroto” (“smooth”) chancel screen was initially a bas-relief screen of an austere character. From the 18th century on, it became a high-relief, almost detached from its ground, depicting floral decorative motifs or scenes from the Old or New Testament, creating thus what we call “embroidered” or “carven on air” screen. Cathedrae, alms chests, priedieus and tabernacles also have wood-carven decoration.

Chests used for storing clothes represent secular fretwork. Geometrical and floral champlevé motifs combined with painting characteristics adorn chests, seats or bed headboards demonstrating the quality of the bourgeois’ lives. Nowadays, tradition continues at workshops of Agiasos and Mytilene with the use of olive tree wood.

From the mid-18th century up to the early 20th century, embroidery fulfilled all clothing and house decoration needs. It also was hard-working women’s day-to-day entertainment. Horizontal and vertical lines setting the decoration space with geometrical and floral motifs characterize textiles.

Lesbian attire is a reliable sign of Lesbians’ taste of color and sewing dexterity. Seasons defined the material used: felts and wool in winter, and silk or linen in the summer. Men’s attire comprised of breeches, belted with the “zounari”, and the “yileki” or a long jacket, called “patatouka” (“winter-weight overcoat”). Necessary to cover the head was the “katsoula” or the “fesi” (“fez”). The proestoi wore the “salvari”.

In winter, it was made of dark-fired felts and in the summer it was made of white linen-silk fabric. The attire was completed with footwear: socks made of fur, wool or linen, and the “scarpinia” (shoes). Women used to wear long voluminous accordion pleat skirts and an embroidered under skirt. For the upper part of the body, they used a bright-colored flamboyant “fibante” or the “kamizori”. At some parts of the island, they wore a lace shirt called “salvari” or “rousiko”. To cover their heads, they used head-dresses, fezzes and the tissued round-shaped “tepe”.

Nevertheless, folk culture was mainly expressed through painting. Within church limitations, hagiography followed Byzantine standards, being productively influenced at the same time from the western and neo-Russian style, indicating thus the island’s international contacts and capability of eclectic assimilation. Nevertheless, folk painting was mostly expressed by Theofilos Hadjimichail, who used colors in his work to illustrate the naïve views on scholar national tradition, depicting things “as he saw them and not as they were in his mind”.

Nevertheless, in the period following the 1922 Catastrophe, after the grief over Asia Minor had “piped down”, as writer M. Kamitsos said, significant painters stood out: Antonis Protopatsis, Orestis Kanellis, Fivos Anatoleas, Stratis Gavalas, Miltis Paraskevaidis and Stratis Axiotis. They drew inspiration from olive groves, village neighborhoods, the gulfs of Kalloni and Gera, and tormented farmers.

What linked folk art with agricultural culture though was satire. Idiom was the medium to do that. The distinctive characteristic of the Lesbian satire is exploiting the Lesbian idiom at its main variations: those of Agiasos, Plomari and Mantamados. Save each area's dialect, what is parodied and giped is its use by the members of a small community. On the occasion of folk fairs, people act out the articulation of the mayor, the teacher, the housewife, the "cocky" big bourgeois woman and the farmer, underlining the differences and social injustice. Satire flourished during the creative period following 1922. Artistic theater groups of Lesbos still prefer it.

## 7. Petrified Forest

The "petrified forest" adorns the bare mountains of western Lesbos. The scenery changes in that area, and the rich vegetation, typical of the rest of the island, gives its place to the barren nature with its sharp geological formations hosting riverine and genista ecosystems where the burnet and certain genera of calm oak dominate. However, a 37,500-acre area scattered with petrified trunks with a full grown root system, branches and leaves compose a perfect fossilised ecosystem; a unique monument of nature.

The site, called apolithomeni ("fossilised"), is part of the rural region enclosed by the imaginary triangle set by villages Antissa - Sigrí - Eresos, while plant fossils can be scarcely found at other places of the island, e.g. Gavatha, Chydira, Mesotopos and beyond the gulf of Kalloni. There is also a large number of trees on the islet of Sigrí, in the valley called Chamandroula between mount Lesvas and the sea, and on roads Limena and Sarakina leading to mount Skoulikas. Furthermore, there are abundant petrified trunks in the sea, near the shore, increasing geologists and palaeontologists' interest for the sea world too.

The forestal vegetation corresponds to the phases of volcanic calm that prevailed in the region approximately 20 millions years ago. The activity of the explosive and extrusive phases of volcanic paroxysm was intense causing fossilisation. The volcanic lava, ash and similar pyroclastic materials were swept away by intense rainfalls, a form of post-volcanic activity, which created extended volcanic mudflows. The rapid movement of mudflows covered the rich and –at that time– dense forest of western Lesbos. It isolated trunks, leaves and seeds from atmospheric conditions, and in combination with the hydrothermal phase allowed fossilisation under favourable conditions. The molecules of organic vegetable matter were replaced by inorganic silicon dioxide contained in hydrothermal fluids. This fossilisation allowed the excellent preservation of the morphological characteristics of the entire fossilised ecosystem, such as the internal structure of wood, the plant tissue and the annual rings of trunks.

The chromatic impression of fossilised trees stirs up the interest of researchers and visitors. One can distinguish the innumerable shades of different colours (black, yellowish, blue, brown, red), as well as their natural mixture, even in a small piece of a square decimetre, demonstrating the chromatic composition of the monument. As a result of the siliceous fossilisation, opal (the amorphous silicon dioxide), as well as some other varieties of semi-precious stones, (e.g. agate, onyx, or jasper) dominate in the trunks. The texture of the fossils is also impressive; their lustre reflecting sunlight is characteristic. This vitreous lustre of the fossils is also the result of pure silicon dioxide that impregnated plant tissues.

Since [morphological](#) elements of the Petrified Forest have been well-preserved, we can come to valuable conclusions on the flora, the [climate](#) and geological history of western Lesbos at that distant period. The species and genera of the fossilised flora were determined after the monument had been systematically studied.

Coniferous trees (e.g. species of pine trees and cypress, Protopinaceae (ancestral form of modern pine trees that flourished for the first time on Lesbos) and Taxodiaceae represent forestal vegetation. Researchers say that "Taxodiaceae were gigantic trees, ancestral forms of the modern species "Sequoia sempervirens", adding that "this species is the largest plant organism on Earth ever and flourishes on the western coasts of the U.S.A.". Sequoia flourished in Europe during the Tertiary geological era and then disappeared. This species, known as Redwood, still exists in California, Arizona and Utah of the U.S.A., reaching a height of 100 metres and a perimeter of 13 metres. Nevertheless, its reproduction is impossible. Moreover, species of palm trees have been found, as well as laurels, platans, oaks, beeches and poplars.

These species of plant organisms, composing the palaeoflora of the forest, lead us to some general conclusions on the climatic

conditions during the forest’s development. The climate was subtropical, changing suddenly to continental hot, resembling that of southeastern Asia and southwestern America. However, in their effort to explain the tropical character of Lesvos’s climate, scientists don’t exclude the displacement of the Earth’s axis. The same argument is used to explain the appearance of lignite deposits in the Antarctica and plants of the temperate zone discovered beneath the ice of Greenland.

Regarding the trees’ age, annual rings –often distinguishable– can help, testifying the age of the trees before their fossilisation. However, it is possible to determine the fossils’ age through the traces of carbon isotope (C14) they contain.

In 1985, recognising the geological, environmental and historical value of the Petrified Forest, the state decided to declare it a Protected Natural Monument (Presidential Decree. 443/85) and its areas regions of absolute conservation. During the same year, highlighting the monument began under the aegis of the Administration of Forests of Lesvos and with the co-financing of the Ministry of Agriculture and the European Union. The 71.5-acre area at Bali Alonia, also known as “Kiria Apolithomeni” (“Mainly fossilised area”), was declared a “Park of the Petrified Forest”. Visitors can wander around in the fossilised forest using the treks provided, teaching aids or the required labelling.

The Natural History Museum of the Lesvos Petrified Forest, housing a rich collection, was founded in 1994 at the picturesque settlement of Sigrí under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture in order to ensure the uniqueness of the monument.

The Geopark of the Petrified Forest of Sigrí is located near the museum, covering a 7.5-acre area. One can see there the root system of many fossilised trees, as well as some erect fossilised trunks.

Therefore, visitors are given the chance to observe, study and enjoy the great natural beauty of a unique worldwide known monument nature endowed the western end of Lesvos with.








(Anna-Magdalini Argyri)  
(Transl. Onoufrios Dovletis)

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Γλωσσάριο :

aesymnetes

Officer in the ancient Greek cities, mainly during the Archaic period, charged with archival responsibilities, but in some cases with enlarged legislative, judicial and administrative power (governor possessing supreme power for a limited time).

Συγγραφή : *Αργύρη Άννα-Μαγδαληνή , Αργύρη Άννα-Μαγδαληνή , Αργύρη Άννα-Μαγδαληνή , Αργύρη Άννα-Μαγδαληνή , Αργύρη Άννα-Μαγδαληνή , Σαραντάκου Έφη , Μαυροειδή Μαρία , Μπαζίνη Ελένη , Αργύρη Άννα-Μαγδαληνή , Μπαζίνη Ελένη , Αργύρη Άννα-Μαγδαληνή , Αργύρη Άννα-*



basilica

In ancient Roman architecture a large oblong type building used as hall of justice and public meeting place. The roman basilica served as a model for early Christian churches.