



# **Mytilene**

**The capital city of Lesbos**

# Brief history



Mytilene is the capital city of Lesbos. According to Homer, it acquired its name from Mytilene, one of the daughters of the first settler and legendary king of the island Makara, son of Helios, the god of sun.

It lies on southeast coast of the island and faces the coast of Asia Minor with which it had direct contact through trade and culture until 1922.



# Time chart

## Serious Events

**10th century BC:** The establishment of Mytilene as a city-state

The center of the city was located on the peninsula of the castle, at that time an island separated from the land by a channel.

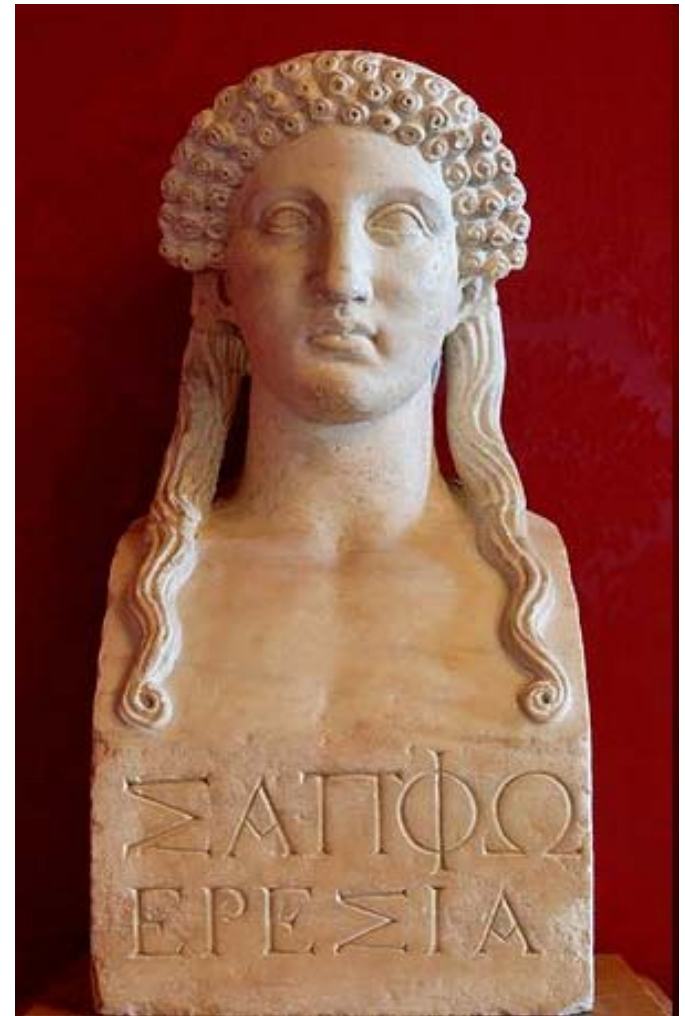




**7<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> cen BC:** Important people are born in the town

- The great ruler Pittakos.
- The famous lyrical poets Sappho and Alkaios

**424 BC.** During the great war between Athens and Sparta , Mytilene defected from the Athenians alliance and was punished severely by Athenians.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> century BC:

Lesvos and Mytilene enjoyed great prosperity.

A great monument of this period, is the ancient theater with seats of 15000 spectators. Pompey, the Roman emperor ordered a similar one to be built in Rome.



## **Medieval years (330 A.D- 1462 A.D):**

The island is part of the Byzantine empire.

Repeated invasions from Vandals, Arabs, Ottomans and the Crusaders.

**1355:** The island was given by the Byzantine emperor as a dowry to Francisco Gatelusi an aristocrat from Genoa.

**1373:** He rebuilds extensively the castle of Mytilene which is considered to be the largest defense work in the East Mediterranean.

**1462:** Capture of Mytilene by the Ottomans.

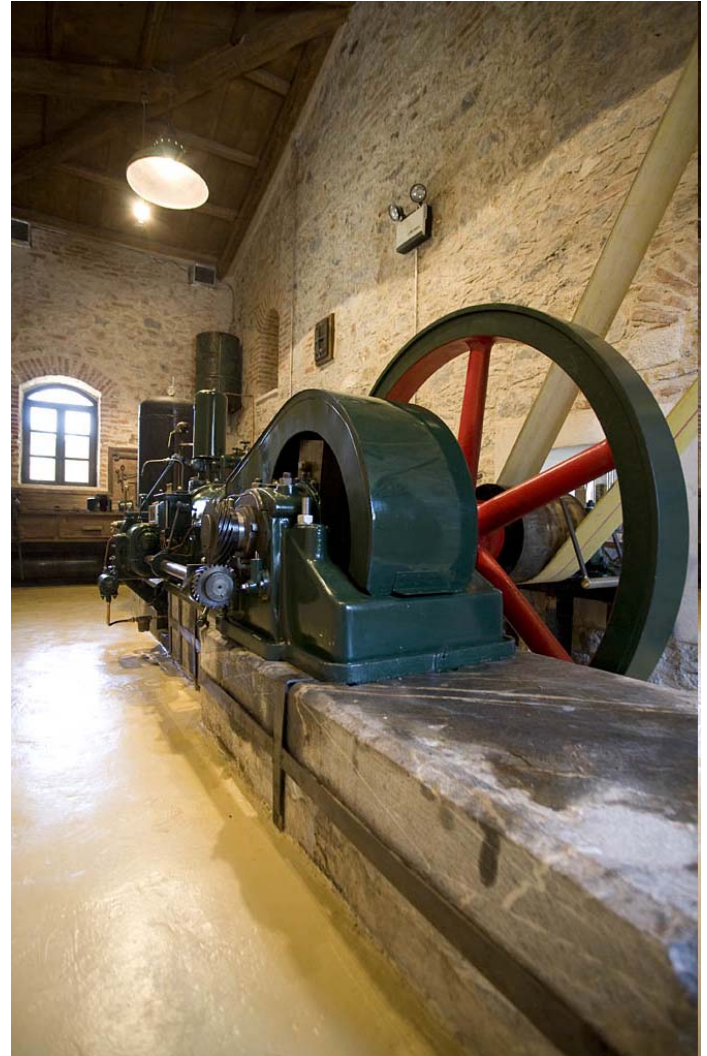




## **Late 18th-19th centuries:**

Due to the gradually social and religious rights given by the Ottomans, economic development began to take place:

- Olive oil trade was permitted to markets abroad
- Many people are involved in maritime transportation (new steam technology) and make fortunes.
- The city was on the trade routes of the time.



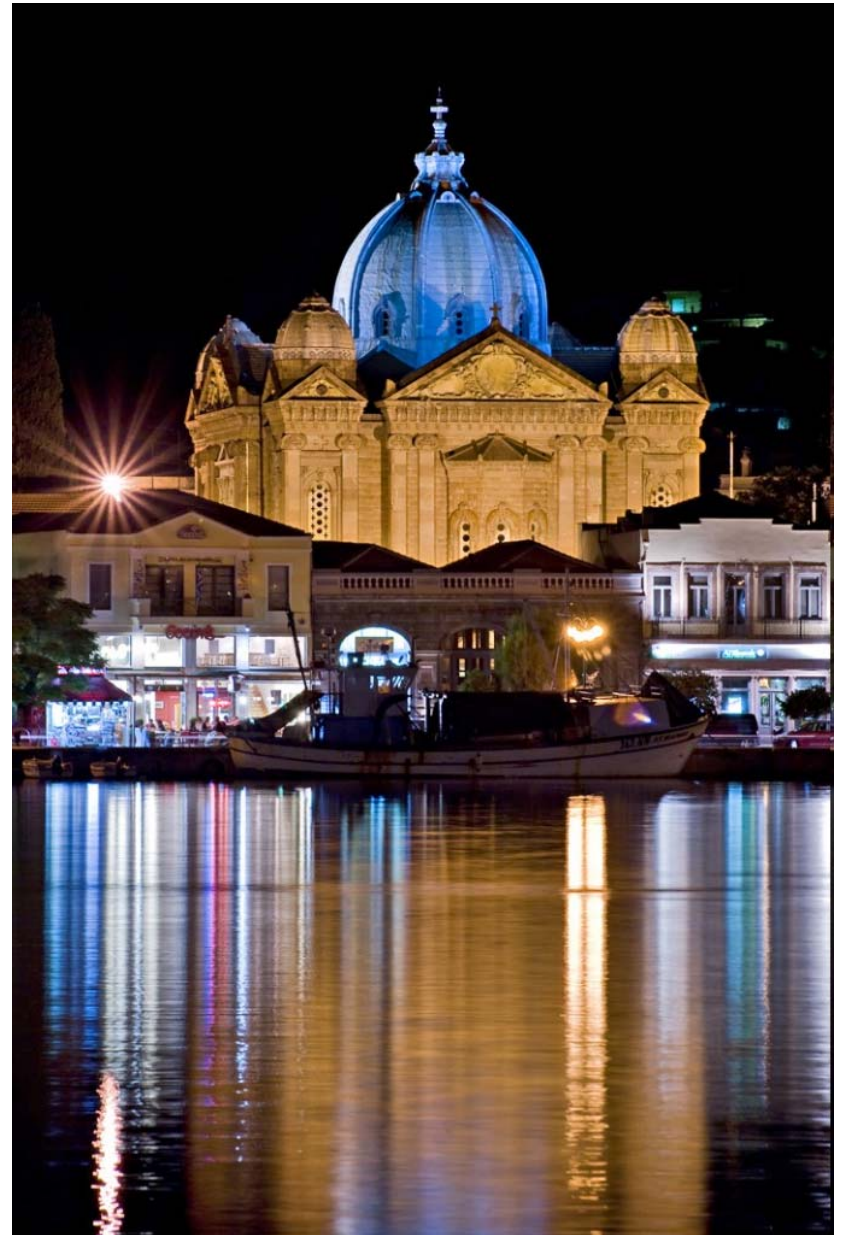
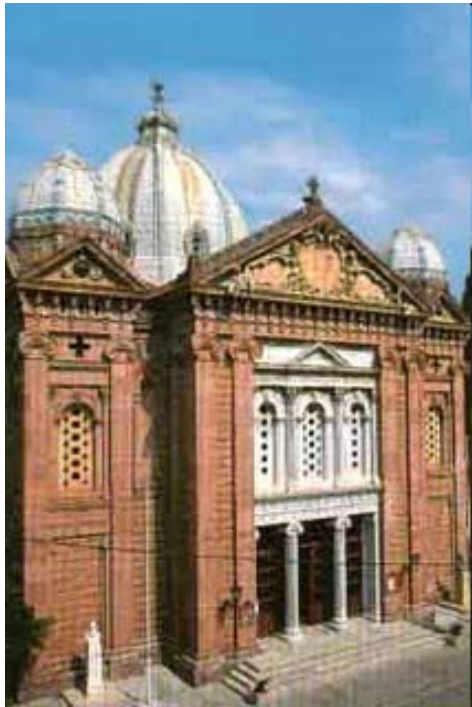


Evidences of this growth are:



The residences of the rich families  
(mansions)

Magnificent churches  
(St. Therapon)





## Magnificent schools



The Experimental High School of Mytilini  
of the University of the Aegean



**Nov 8<sup>th</sup> 1912:** Greek military and naval forces conquered the town of Mytilene.

The island incorporates into Greece officially in 1923.

### **Contemporary times**

As a result of the Greek -Turkish War for Asia Minor (1920-22)

Lesvos as well as the other Aegean islands had to cope with the arrival and settlement of thousands of refugees.

Moreover the traditional trade market

that absorbed the island's olive oil (Istanbul and Ismir) were closed to it.



The suffering which burdened the island during the German occupation and the Greek Civil War was really huge.

In the 50's a large part of the population left the island to seek better luck abroad due to economical and social conditions.



Despite this difficult times arts and letters kept flourishing on the island to mention only two prose poets S. Mirivilis and H. Venezis, the renewed art critic and publisher Str. Eleftheriadis-Teriade, the folk painter Theofilos (1873-1934) and the great Nobel prize winner Odysseas Elytis (1911-1996).





From the 60's onwards due to the rise in land value and tourism a financial recovery began to become apparent.

Nowadays people from Lesvos face a very serious challenge:  
To keep the balance between  
the future tourist development  
and the negative consequences  
to the natural environment.

