Lesvos through the ages

Excavations on Lesvos reveal that the island was already inhabited around 5,000 years before present. Between 1,200 and 1,100 BC, Aeolian Greeks came to the island from Thessaly. They founded the mighty city states (poleis) Mythilini, Mythimma (now; Molyvos), Antissa and Eressos. Trade, mostly overseas, and agriculture were the sources of income. It was also the period of the first start of intensive olive oil production of the island.

In the 8th century BC, during the high time of the trade, opposite parts of the coast of Asia Minor were colonised and became a kind of second Aeolian home land. Between the 7th and the 6th century BC, the island witnessed its first cultural flourishing period. This was mainly thanks to the statesman Pittakos. He was included in the row of the ‘Seven Wise’ on the ground of his legislation. During this period, the poet Sappho wrote her poems. She started a school to educate high class girls; later, in modern times this became the basis for the word lesbian, after Sappho’s island and inspired by her, often erotic poems addressed to these girls.

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