

THE FORMATION OF THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF THE CITY OF TRIPOLI - THE OPINION OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

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Abstract

The present paper refers to the physiognomy of the city of Tripoli and is a study carried out by the Department of Economics and Sustainable Development of Harokopio University. The aim is to investigate the factors that contribute to the formation of this physiognomy and the opinion of residents and visitors on the issues in question. As a case study, the city of Tripoli of the Region of Peloponnese is chosen.

In order to answer the main questions of the work and to investigate the main factors that shape the physiognomy of the city of Tripoli a survey was carried out aimed at the residents and visitors of the city. For the needs of the research, a questionnaire was created which included ten (10) closed-type structured response questions, was anonymous and distributed to 150 people. The research was carried out in the months of October and November 2024. The questionnaire was addressed exclusively to adults.

The paper concludes with interesting conclusions and proposals. An important conclusion is that in order to protect the special physiognomy of the city of Tripoli strategies related to the more general protection of all issues related to its sustainable development should be implemented. It is proposed that both the local government, as well as the businesses of all service and production branches, work towards the protection and highlighting of the special character of the city of Tripoli.

Key words: Physiognomy of the city, sustainable development, Tripoli

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyze the character of Tripoli, both from a historical and a cultural and social perspective. The study of the city's character seeks to highlight the unique identity of Tripoli by examining various parameters that shape its current image.

The paper includes several interrelated thematic sections that together construct a comprehensive portrait of Tripoli.

The first section focuses on the historical strategic importance and evolution of the city. It explores how Tripoli has developed through key historical periods, from antiquity and the Byzantine era to the Ottoman occupation and the Greek War of Independence. Each phase contributed to the city's identity and left distinct marks on its physical and cultural landscape.

The second section investigates architectural and cultural heritage. It delves into the city's buildings, monuments, and other architectural elements that reflect its cultural legacy. These structures serve as physical evidence of Tripoli's historical trajectory and symbolize its enduring connection to multiple time periods and influences.

The third section analyzes the social and economic structure of the city. It examines how the population has evolved socially and demographically over time and considers the city's economic transformations. This section provides insights into the interactions between social composition, labor patterns, and broader economic developments that have shaped Tripoli's growth.

Finally, the paper evaluates modern development and trends, offering an assessment of Tripoli's current character in the 21st century. It looks at contemporary cultural, economic, and social dynamics, highlighting the opportunities and challenges the city faces in an era of rapid change and regional integration.

In this way, the paper aims to examine Tripoli as a city with a rich history and tradition while also highlighting the modern dynamics that define it and establish its significance as a central hub in the Peloponnese.

Methodology

The methodology of this paper includes two main stages: a literature review and quantitative research using questionnaires.

In the first stage, an extensive literature review was conducted on the character of Tripoli. This included the study of books, academic articles, and other research works that refer to the historical, cultural, social, and economic development of the city. The purpose of this review was to understand Tripoli's historical trajectory as well as the factors that shaped its identity.

In the second stage, a quantitative survey was carried out through questionnaires designed to explore the opinions of residents and visitors regarding the city's character. The questionnaires were distributed to a broad group of individuals to gather data on the general image of the city and people's perceptions of its key characteristics. A total of 148 responses were collected and subsequently analyzed.

Geographical Position and Natural Environment of Tripoli

Tripoli is located in the heart of the Peloponnese, in the central and eastern part of Arcadia, at an altitude of 670 meters (Malikouti, 2005). This elevated geographical position gives the city a continental climate with cold winters, hot summers, and frequent snowfall in the winter months. These climatic conditions are more intense than in many other cities in the Peloponnese, shaping not only the natural environment but also the lifestyle of the inhabitants.

A dominant feature of the region is Mount Mainalo, which surrounds Tripoli and plays a decisive role in its natural and cultural landscape. The mountain is covered with dense forests of black pine and fir, making the area rich in biodiversity and ideal for outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing, and nature observation. It has been included in the Natura 2000 network, highlighting its ecological importance (Skintzis, 2013).

Historical Background of Tripoli

Tripoli's history is rich and closely tied to the broader history of Arcadia and the Peloponnese. The city first appears in historical records during the 15th century under the name Drobolitsa, which possibly originated from the Slavic languages due to earlier settlements in the area. Over time, it developed into a significant urban and administrative center, especially during the period of Ottoman rule.

In the early 18th century, it was renamed Tripolitsa, a name derived from the unification of three older cities of Arcadia (Tegea, Mantinea, and Pallantion). Its central location and strategic importance led to its designation as the capital of the Peloponnese during the Ottoman period (Skintzis, 2013).

Tripoli played a key role during the Greek War of Independence. The Fall of Tripolitsa in 1821, under the leadership of Theodoros Kolokotronis, was one of the most decisive victories of the revolutionaries and marked the collapse of Ottoman control in the Peloponnese. However, in 1828, the city was destroyed by Ibrahim Pasha during the Egyptian campaign.

In more recent history, Tripoli suffered damages during the German occupation in World War II and during the civil war that followed, but it recovered after the restoration of democracy and became the administrative capital of the Peloponnese Region in the 20th century.

Culture of Tripoli

Tripoli has a long tradition in the field of culture, which is expressed through the operation of cultural associations, museums, theaters, and local events. The city supports initiatives that promote the arts, literature, music, and tradition.

The Municipal Library of Tripoli, with thousands of titles, serves as a hub for education and research. The Malliaropouleio Municipal Theater, a neoclassical building in the city center, hosts theatrical performances, music concerts, and other cultural events. In recent years, Tripoli has developed artistic groups and workshops for painting, dance, and music, with the aim of encouraging the participation of young people and the promotion of local talent.

Cultural events of major importance include the Fall of Tripolitsa Celebrations in September, commemorating the city's liberation in 1821, the Easter celebrations, which attract visitors due to their deeply rooted traditions and the local festivals dedicated to Arcadian customs and gastronomy. These cultural activities reflect the city's effort to preserve its heritage while integrating modern creative expression (In Arcadia, n.d.).

Architectural Heritage of the City

The city of Tripoli is adorned with numerous neoclassical and preserved buildings that either serve as museums or simply embellish the urban landscape.

The most important buildings include the Metropolitan Church of Saint Basil, the Malliaropouleio Theater, the Karyotakis Residence, the Courthouse, the Tourkovasilis Villa, the Archaeological Museum of Tripoli, the Megalo Kafeneio (Grand Café), the Zacharopoulos Residence, the Pedagogical Academy, the Petropouleio Bequest, the War Museum of Tripoli, the old Town Hall, and the Matzouneio Foundation.

The Metropolitan Church of Saint Basil, located in the heart of the city, is its emblematic symbol. It was designed by an unknown architect and its foundation was laid in 1884. The church is an elaborate structure built from Doliana marble, and its iconostasis (temple screen) was designed by Ernst Ziller. A unique feature of the monument is the existence of fourteen special spaces on the ground floor, which function as shops, offices, and exhibition halls. These occupy only the section beneath the church's courtyard (Metropolitan Church of Saint Basil, 2014).

The Malliaropouleio Municipal Theater of Tripoli, a donation by Dr. Ioannis Malliaropoulos, was built in 1910 based on the plans of Anastasios Metaxas, with interior decoration by the French artist Joly. Today it is a designated monument and hosts various events.

The Karyotakis Residence was the family home of poet Kostas Karyotakis and is a state-protected monument.

Another house, representing a classic example of the aristocratic old Tripoli, is the Synadinos Residence, the birthplace of playwright Theodoros Synadinos (National Documentation Centre, n.d.).

The Courthouse of Tripoli stands out for its architecture, and on its ground floor, one can find engraved messages left by resistance fighters sentenced to death.

The Tourkovasilis Villa is an Art Nouveau building from the early 20th century, named after Theodoros Tourkovasilis, former Minister of Education and Justice. The villa was declared a preserved monument in 1994.

The Archaeological Museum of Tripoli is a neoclassical building designed by Ernst Ziller. It served as a hospital from 1913 to 1951 and was converted into a museum in 1986.

The Grand Café (Megalo Kafeneio) has been declared a preserved monument. It once served as a meeting point for the bourgeoisie of Tripoli. Its interior features wooden oval tables and red velvet sofas.

The Zacharopoulos Residence is also a significant neoclassical building, notable for its distinctive architectural elements.

The Pedagogical Academy operated from 1880 and has been designated as a preserved building.

The Petropouleio Bequest is a preserved neoclassical building that now functions as a digital museum.

The War Museum of Tripoli is housed in what was once the residence of Dr. Malliaropoulos. Today, it exhibits weapons and artifacts from the Greek War of Independence in 1821, as well as from other significant historical events.

The Old Town Hall of Tripoli formerly belonged to the pharmacist Grigoris Dareiotis. It holds considerable architectural and morphological significance.

The Matzouneio Foundation was built on the ruins of a Catholic church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The building has been declared preserved and has hosted the Public Library and the municipal philharmonic orchestra (Sini, 2019).

Notable Figures of the City

Theodoros Kolokotronis, known as the “Old Man of the Morea,” is the most prominent historical figure associated with the city. He was renowned for his strategic genius and played a leading role in key battles, such as the Battle of Valtetsi, the Fall of Tripolitsa, and the Battle of Dervenakia.

Nikitas Stamatelopoulos, known as Nikitaras, fought in the Battles of Valtetsi and Doliana, which boosted Greek morale and paved the way for the capture of Tripolitsa.

The Sekkeris brothers made significant contributions to the Filiki Eteria, played an active role in the Greek War of Independence, and devoted their entire fortune to the cause (Notable Figures of the Revolution – Arcadian Fighters, n.d.).

The Spetseropoulos brothers are also important personalities. They oversaw the iconography of the Metropolitan Church of Saint Basil and donated 100,000 Swiss francs for the purchase and installation of the church’s clock, which is still in operation today (Matoula Tomara-Sideri, 2024).

In modern times, Kostas Karyotakis, poet and prose writer, stands out as the leading voice of modern lyrical poetry in Greece.

In the field of visual arts, Dimitris Kouros left his mark in painting and sculpture, with dozens of exhibitions in Greece and abroad. He also created the Monument of Asia Minor Hellenism, located in the Refugees of Asia Minor Square in the Filikon neighborhood (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Another prominent figure from Tripoli is architect and artist Dimitrios Talaganis, who created many notable works, including the pastoral staff of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the commemorative items for the Athens 2004 Olympic Bid Committee, and the Olympic Truce Disc.

In sports, Nikolaos Georgantas distinguished himself as an Olympian in discus throw, winning medals at the 1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis, USA, and at the 1906 Intercalated Games in Athens.

In politics, Ioannis Malliaropoulos, a physician and politician who lived in Tripoli, is noteworthy for donating the Malliaropouleio Theater and the War Museum to the Municipality of Tripoli.

Identity Catalysts of the City

The identity catalysts of Tripoli have shaped—and continue to shape—the city’s character.

The local cuisine and traditional recipes always win over visitors. Regional specialties include rooster with *hilopites* (traditional pasta), salted pork with eggs (*kagianas*), wild boar, traditional pies, pork with celery, and *trahanas* (fermented grain soup) (*Kratimenou, 2019*).

Tripoli is also renowned for its PDO feta cheese, known for its unique combination of sweet flavor with spicy undertones—features that make it stand out and render it a true identity catalyst for the city.

Another PDO product of the region is the “Delicious Pilafa” apples of Tripoli, cultivated exclusively on the fertile plateaus surrounding the city and widely recognized for their quality.

The climate of the region plays a significant role in the production of these local products. It is itself considered an identity catalyst, as Tripoli ranks among the cities with the lowest temperatures in Greece during the winter months.

The statue of Kolokotronis, standing prominently in Areos Square, is deeply associated with Tripoli and is the city’s most iconic symbol. Kolokotronis’ recognizable figure, depicted in a heroic stance, remains etched in the memory of visitors.

One of the most characteristic associations with Tripoli is Asteras Tripolis, the city’s most prominent football club, with a rich history and numerous distinctions and titles.

Surrounding Area of the City

The city of Tripoli is the hub of commercial, economic, and administrative activities in the Arcadia region and plays a key role in both local and regional development.

A modern road network connects Tripoli with Athens as well as with the urban centers of neighboring municipalities and regional units (*Tzerefos, 2021*).

The Municipality of Tripoli consists of 8 Municipal Units, divided into 1 Municipal Community, 79 Local Communities, and 110 Settlements (*Municipality of Tripoli, 2010*).

Tripoli is located to the east of Mount Mainalo at an elevation of 665 meters above sea level.

A major contributor to the city's development is the Industrial Area of Tripoli (BI.IIE.), situated northeast and very close to the urban center. It is considered the closest industrial area to Athens and hosts industries and small manufacturing units from various and diverse sectors (*Arcadia Regional Development Fund, n.d.*).

Tripoli contains several peri-urban forests within its limits. The most important include the Epano Chrepa Forest, the Saint George Grove on the northern outskirts of the city, the Mai-Thanasis Hill woods, the Kartsova Grove, the area surrounding the chapel of Saint Elias, and the Panarkadian Hospital Forest.

The mountainous terrain and green spaces blend harmoniously with the Arcadian or Mantineian Plateau—a fertile, alluvial plain. The plateau is largely occupied by cultivated fields, pastures, vineyards, and more.

A short distance from Tripoli lies the Natura 2000 protected area of Lake Taka, one of the most significant inland wetlands in the Peloponnese.

Institutional Framework for the Protection of the City

Although Tripoli is not classified as a traditional or historical settlement and does not include any UNESCO monuments, it has a significant number of listed buildings protected by the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

According to Article 24 of the Greek Constitution, the cultural environment and the monuments of architectural heritage—such as listed buildings—are under special state

protection. This means that the state is obligated to adopt specific legislative measures to ensure their ongoing preservation.

Additionally, the city's surrounding area includes several NATURA 2000 zones.

The European Ecological Network NATURA 2000 is a network of protected natural areas across the European Union. Its aim is to ensure the long-term conservation of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats at a satisfactory level.

Within the Municipality of Tripoli, there are four NATURA 2000 protected areas, Mount Mainalo, Lake Taka, the Artemisio and Lyrkeio mountains and Mount Oligyrtos.

The City's Economy

Tripoli serves as the core of all commercial, economic, and administrative activities in the entire Peloponnese Region.

Within the Municipality of Tripoli, the tertiary sector dominates with a share of 67%, followed by the secondary sector at 20%, and the primary sector at 13%.

Tripoli's role and its corresponding functions make it a hub for various tertiary sector activities, such as services, commerce, education, and public administration.

In the secondary sector, key contributions come from investments, energy-related activities, and the construction industry.

A special mention should be made of the Tripoli Industrial Zone (VI.PE.), which is evolving into a pharmaceutical production hub. Two major pharmaceutical companies are investing in the area, with DEMO leading the way through an ambitious investment plan worth €356 million.

The new pharmaceutical units are expected to create more than 600 direct jobs and are projected to cover 30% of the EU's demand for penicillin-based drugs and 37% of the EU's demand for oncology medicines. (Sustainable Urban Development Strategy of Tripoli Municipality, 2024)

Despite Arcadia's regional orientation towards agriculture, the primary sector remains highly limited, due to critical issues such as water scarcity, lack of training for farmers, absence of modern cultivation methods, and more.

Finally, tourism plays an important role in the economic life of the Municipality of Tripoli. The region's main forms of tourism include religious, archaeological, nature-based/ecotourism, winter tourism, wine tourism, and conference tourism.

EU-Funded Projects in the City

In October 2024, the Municipality of Tripoli submitted its Sustainable Urban Development Strategy (SUDS) proposal, structured around three strategic pillars: the transition to improved, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, the support of the local economic environment, and the promotion of social inclusion and protection. (Tripoli SUDS, 2024)

This proposal is part of the "Peloponnese 2021–2027" Operational Programme, which aims at sustainable, endogenous, and outward-looking development, based on innovation and ensuring spatial and social cohesion.

The "Peloponnese 2021–2027" programme is co-financed by the European Union and the NSRF (ESPA) 2021–2027.

The Municipality of Tripoli has included several projects in the programme, such as the establishment and operation of a supported living facility, aiming to enhance the provision of social and educational support services for vulnerable social groups, particularly persons with disabilities. Continuation of the operation of the Community Center and Mobile Unit in Tripoli. This mechanism combines human resource support to offer a wide range of integrated services promoting social inclusion and employment for vulnerable population groups. A key urban project is the redevelopment of Agios Vasileios Square, with the inclusion of Phase B,

which contributes to sustainable mobility by improving pedestrian and disability access, while ensuring mild and safe vehicle transit. Another major initiative is the Open Commercial Center, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), ESPA 2014–2020, the EPAnEK programme, and the Ministry of Development and Investments. The project includes urban redevelopment actions aimed at creating an aesthetically pleasing network of streets and walkways that connect significant cultural assets and simultaneously promote commercial growth. A social welfare project included in ESPA 2021–2027 is the continuation of the Women’s Shelter for victims of violence, offering psychological support and assistance with integration into the labor market. In terms of sustainable mobility, an integrated electric bicycle rental system was installed in the city, aiming to reduce car traffic, support public transportation, decrease congestion, and lower environmental and noise pollution. This project was funded by the European Union’s Cohesion Fund. In the health sector, a natural gas network was installed at the Panarkadian Hospital, a project funded by ESPA 2014–2020 (Municipality of Tripoli, 2024).

Questionnaire

Which age group do you belong to?
148 απαντήσεις

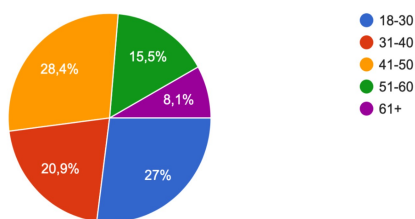


Chart 1. Age Group of Respondents

28.4% of the respondents belonged to the 41–50 age group.

Which is the most characteristic plant of the city?
148 απαντήσεις

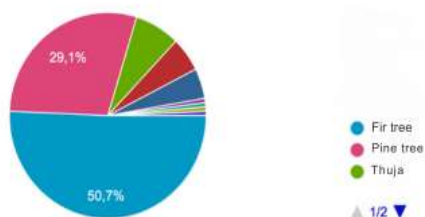


Chart 2. The Most Characteristic Plant of the City

50.7% of respondents answered that the fir tree is the most characteristic plant of the city.

Which is the most characteristic monument of the city?

148 απαντήσεις

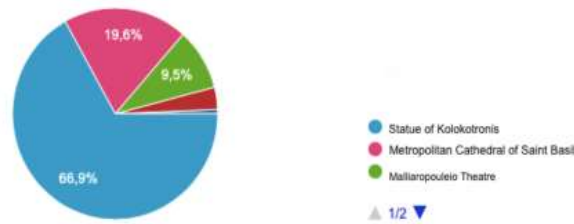


Chart 3. The Most Characteristic Monument of the City

66.9% of respondents answered that the most characteristic monument of the city is the Statue of Kolokotronis.

What is the characteristic dish of the city?

148 απαντήσεις

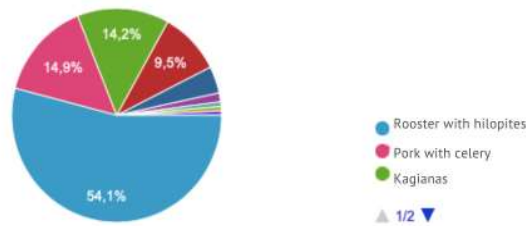


Chart 4. The Most Characteristic Dish of the City

54.1% of respondents answered that the most characteristic dish of the city is rooster with hilopites (traditional Greek pasta).

Which is the most characteristic event of the city? (festival, parade, celebration)

148 απαντήσεις

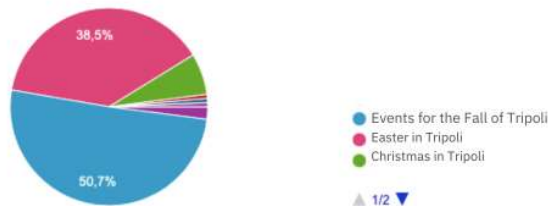


Chart 5. The Most Characteristic Event of the City

50.7% of respondents answered that the most characteristic event of the city is the celebrations of the Fall of Tripolitsa.

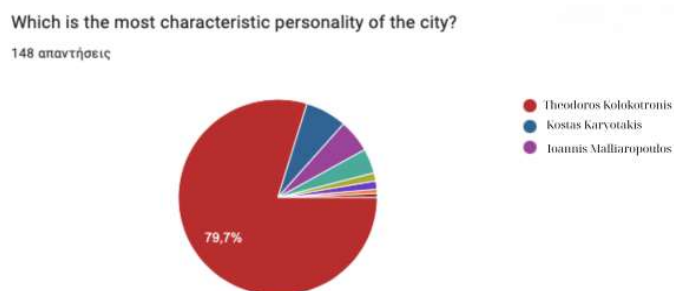


Chart 6. The most characteristic personality of the city.

79.7% of respondents answered that the most characteristic personality of the city is Theodoros Kolokotronis.

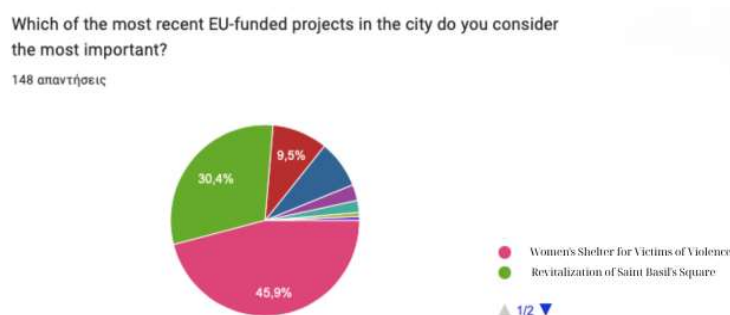


Chart 7. The most important EU-funded project in the city.

45.9% of respondents answered that the most important EU-funded project in the city is the shelter for women victims of violence.

Conclusions

According to the literature review, Tripoli is known for its strategic position during the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and the importance of its historical monuments. The results of the questionnaire indicate that residents and visitors perceive the city in a similar way—that is, they recognize its significance in the history of the Revolution and its strategic location.

The literature review highlights the importance of the city's cultural heritage and traditions. The results of the questionnaire confirm that respondents are aware of and appreciate the cultural heritage, such as traditional foods, local products, and cultural events.

The findings also show that both residents and visitors value the city's architecture and historical monuments, aligning with the literature review. They consider the statue of Kolokotronis as the most iconic landmark.

Overall, the results of the questionnaire appear to be broadly consistent with the assessments presented in the literature review, particularly regarding the historical and cultural significance of the city.

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