
The Greeks

Early Development of Greek Society

- Minoan Society
 - Island of Crete
 - Major city: Knossos
- C. 2200 BCE center of maritime trade
- Undeciphered syllabic alphabet (Linear A)

Decline of Minoan Society

- Series of natural disasters after 1700 BCE
 - Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tidal waves
- Foreign invasions
- Foreign domination by 1100 BCE

Mycenaean Society

- Indo-european invaders descend through Balkans into Peloponnesus, c. 2200 BCE
 - Influenced by Minoan culture
 - Major settlement: Mycenae
 - Military expansion throughout region
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Chaos in the Eastern Mediterranean

- Trojan war, c. 1200 BCE
 - Homer's *The Iliad*
 - Sequel: *The Odyssey*
- Political turmoil, chaos from 1100 to 800 BCE
- Mycenaean civilization disappears

The Polis

- City-state
 - Urban center, dominating surrounding rural areas
 - Highly independent character
 - Monarchies
 - “Tyrannies”, not necessarily oppressive
 - Early Democracies
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Sparta

- Highly militarized society
 - Subjugated peoples: *helots*
 - Serfs, tied to land
 - Outnumbered Spartans 10:1 by 6th c. BCE
 - Military society developed to control threat of rebellion
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Spartan Society

- Austerity the norm
 - Boys removed from families at age seven
 - Received military training in barracks
 - Active military service follows
 - Marriage, but no home life until age 30
 - Some relaxation of discipline by 4th c. CE
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Athens

- Development of early democracy
 - Free, adult males only
 - Women, slaves excluded
- Yet contrast Athenian style of government with Spartan militarism

Athenian Society

- Maritime trade brings increasing prosperity beginning 7th c. BCE
 - Aristocrats dominate smaller landholders
 - Increasing socio-economic tensions
 - Class conflict
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Solon and Athenian Democracy

- Aristocrat Solon mediates crisis
 - Aristocrats to keep large landholdings
 - But forgive debts, ban debt slavery
 - Removed family restrictions against participating in public life
 - Instituted paid civil service
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Pericles

- Ruled 461-429 BCE
 - High point of Athenian democracy
 - Aristocratic but popular
 - Massive public works
 - Encouraged cultural development
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Greek Colonization

- Population expansion drives colonization
 - Coastal Mediterranean, Black sea
 - Sicily (Naples: “nea polis,” new city)
 - Southern France (Massalia: Marseilles)
 - Anatolia
 - Southern Ukraine

Classical Greece and the Mediterranean basin, 800-500 B.C.E.



Effects of Greek Colonization

- Trade throughout region
- Communication of ideas
 - Language, culture
- Political and social effects

Persian Wars (500-479 BCE)

- Revolt against Persian Empire 500 BCE in Ionia
 - Athens supports with ships
 - Yet Greek rebellion crushed by Darius 493 BCE; routed in 490
 - Successor Xerxes burns Athens, but driven out as well
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The Delian League

- Poleis create Delian League to forestall more Persian attacks
- Led by Athens
 - Massive payments to Athens fuels Periclean expansion
 - Resented by other poleis

The Peloponnesian War

- Civil war in Greece, 431-404 BCE
 - Poleis allied with either Athens or Sparta
 - Athens forced to surrender
 - But conflict continued between Sparta and other poleis
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Kingdom of Macedon

- Frontier region to north of Peloponnesus
- King Philip II (r. 359-336 BCE) builds massive military
- 350 BCE encroaches on Greek poleis to the south, controls region by 338 BCE

Alexander of Macedon

- “the Great,” son of Philip II
 - Rapid expansion throughout Mediterranean basin
 - Invasion of Persia successful
 - Turned back in India when exhausted troops mutinied
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Alexander's empire, ca. 323 B.C.E.



The Hellenistic Empires



- After Alexander's death, competition for empire
- Divided by generals
 - Antigonus: Greece and Macedon
 - Ptolemy: Egypt
 - Seleucus: Persian Achaemenid Empire
- Economic integration, Intellectual cross-fertilization

The Antigonid Empire

- Smallest of Hellenistic Empires
- Local dissent
- Issue of land distribution
 - Heavy colonizing activity

The Ptolemaic Empire

- Wealthiest of the Hellenistic empires
 - Established state monopolies
 - Textiles
 - Salt
 - Beer
 - Capital: Alexandria
 - Important port city
 - Major museum, library
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The Seleucid Empire

- Massive colonization of Greeks
- Export of Greek culture, values as far east as India
 - Bactria
 - Ashoka legislates in Greek and Aramaic

Trade and Integration of the Mediterranean Basin

- Greece: little grain, but rich in olives and grapes
 - Colonies further trade
 - Commerce rather than agriculture as basis of much of economy
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Panhellenic Festivals

- Useful for integrating far-flung colonies
 - Olympic Games begin 776 BCE
 - Sense of collective identity
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Patriarchal Society

- ▣ Women as goddesses, wives, prostitutes
 - ▣ Limited exposure in public sphere
 - ▣ Sparta partial exception
 - ▣ Sappho
 - ▣ Role of infanticide in Greek society and culture
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Slavery

- Scythians (Ukraine)
 - Nubians (Africa)
 - Chattel
 - Sometimes used in business
 - Opportunity to buy freedom
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The Greek Language

- Borrowed Phoenician alphabet
 - Added vowels
 - Complex language
 - “middle” voice
 - Allowed for communication of abstract ideas
 - Philosophy
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Socrates (470-399 BCE)

- The Socratic Method
 - Student: Plato
 - Public gadfly, condemned on charges of immorality
 - Forced to drink hemlock
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Plato (430-347 BCE)

- Systematized Socratic thought
- *The Republic*
 - Parable of the Cave
 - Theory of Forms/Ideas

Aristotle (389-322 BCE)

- Student of Plato
 - Broke with Theory of Forms/Ideas
 - Emphasis on empirical findings, reason
 - Massive impact on western thought
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Greek Theology

- Polytheism
 - Zeus principal god
 - Religious cults
 - Eleusinian mysteries
 - *The Bacchae*
 - Rituals eventually domesticated
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Tragic Drama

- Evolution from public presentations of cultic rituals
 - Major playwrights (5th c. BCE)
 - Aeschylus
 - Sophocles
 - Euripides
 - Comedy: Aristophanes
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Hellenistic Philosophies

- Epicureans
 - Pleasure, distinct from Hedonists
 - Sceptics
 - Doubted possibility of certainty in anything
 - Stoics
 - Duty, virtue
 - Emphasis on inner peace
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