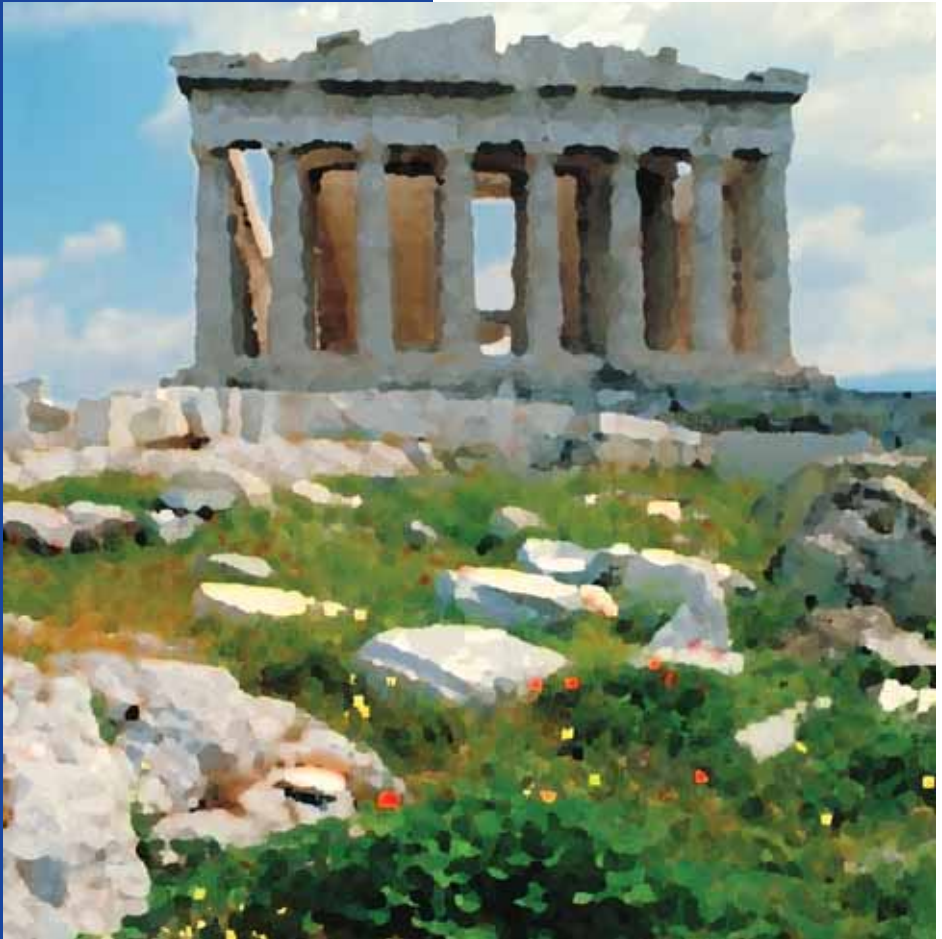


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**A HISTORY OF
ANCIENT GREECE**
COURSE GUIDE



Professor Eric H. Cline
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY

A History of Ancient Greece

Professor Eric H. Cline

The George Washington University



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A History of Ancient Greece

Professor Eric H. Cline



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About Your Professor

Eric H. Cline

Dr. Eric H. Cline, a former Fulbright scholar, is chair of the Department of Classical and Semitic Languages and Literatures at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where he holds a joint appointment as an associate professor in both the Classics/Semitics Department and the Anthropology Department.

A prolific researcher, Dr. Cline is the author or editor of seven books and has more than seventy articles and book reviews to his credit. His books include *The Battles of Armageddon: Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley from the Bronze Age to the Nuclear Age*, which received the 2001 Biblical Archaeology Society (BAS) Publication Award for Best Popular Book on Archaeology; *Jerusalem Besieged: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel*; *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean*; *Amenhotep III: Perspectives on His Reign* (coeditor); *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium BC*; *Thutmose III: A New Biography*; and a book for young adults entitled *The Ancient Egyptian World* (coauthored with Jill Rubalcaba).

Professor Cline received the Morton Bender Award for Teaching at The George Washington University in 2004 and the Archaeological Institute of America's National Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award for 2005. He currently teaches a wide variety of courses, including Troy and the Trojan War, History of Ancient Greece, History of Rome, and Art and Archaeology of the Aegean Bronze Age.

Professor Cline has lectured at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Skirball Museum in Los Angeles. His research has been featured in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *US News & World Report*, the *London Daily Telegraph*, the *London Mirror*, and many other publications around the world.

In addition, Professor Cline has been featured on numerous radio and television broadcasts, such as the BBC World Services, National Public Radio, the Discovery Channel, the National Geographic Channel, and the History Channel.

Dr. Cline is married, with two children, two cats, and varying numbers of fish.



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Introduction


In this intriguing series of lectures, prolific researcher, author, and George Washington University professor Eric H. Cline delves into the history of ancient Greece, frequently considered to be the founding nation of democracy in Western civilization. From the Minoans to the Mycenaeans to the Trojan War and the first Olympics, the history of this remarkable civilization abounds with momentous events and cultural landmarks that resonate through the millennia.

Ancient Greece, indeed, lives on in modern culture, evidenced by an ever-present fascination with the tales of Homer, Greek drama, and the spectacular stories associated with Greek mythology. In the rise of Sparta and Athens, and the origins of democracy in Greek society, people today find a wealth of relevant material for understanding not only ancient Greece, but the modern world. And there is no greater fount of learning than that supplied by the immortal philosophers of Greece: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

In the following lectures, Professor Cline touches on the most compelling and informative aspects of Greek history and accomplishment, providing revealing insights along the way and lending a fresh perspective throughout this entertaining and evocative course.

Lecture 1: The Minoans and Crete

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 4: "The Greeks Before History") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 1: "Early Greece and the Bronze Age").

reece is frequently considered to be the cornerstone or the founding nation of democracy in Western civilization. Indeed, Greece gave us all sorts of things, not least of which is the concept of democracy. A lot of what Greece gave us actually came originally from Egypt and the ancient Near East, but Greece and its inhabitants twisted these ideas and made them uniquely Greek and therefore uniquely part of Western civilization.

In previous decades, Greek history was considered to begin in 776 BCE for two reasons. First, this is the date of the first Olympics. Second, this is approximately the date that Homer and Hesiod began writing—in the eighth century—and with the beginning of writing came the beginning of history.

However, in the last couple of decades, archaeologists and ancient historians have realized that the history of Greece actually begins earlier. The Greek gods, for instance, are already being worshiped back in the second millennium BCE, during the Bronze Age—by the Mycenaeans and the Minoans. They also realized that if one wants to understand some of the later Greek mythology—stories like Theseus and the Minotaur or the Myth of Atlantis that Plato talks about—one actually has to go back to the Bronze Age, because that's when the events happened that later became the kernel of truth at the base of these legends.

So we will begin this course by looking at the island of Crete and at the Minoans in the second millennium BCE and how this relates, among other things, to the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. We will also look briefly at Crete's international connections with Egypt and the rest of the civilized world at that time. We will then continue by looking at the Mycenaeans of the Greek mainland and then proceed to the time of the Trojan War and into the Dark Ages that follow the collapse of the Bronze Age in the Aegean region, with a brief look at the first Olympics that were ever held.

We will then begin our second section of the course, when we look at the Greek Renaissance, at Homer and Hesiod, and the other writers of the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. This will bring us up to the beginning of Greece in the historical period as we know it, and we can look then at the rise of Athens and Sparta and the origins of democracy.

In our third section, we will look at the Persian wars—in which Greece fought and defeated the mighty power of Persia—and discuss how this led directly to the development of the Delian League and then to the golden age of

Athens and the subsequent flowering of Greek culture, followed by a devastating civil war fought between Athens and Sparta, known as the Peloponnesian War.

Then, in the final section, we'll take a quick look at Socrates, Plato, and Greek philosophy, before turning to the rise in Macedonia of Phillip II and his son Alexander the Great, a look at Alexander's conquests, and then his legacy of the civilized Hellenistic world.

So, to begin, let's turn first to the island of Crete and to Sir Arthur Evans and his discovery of the Minoans.

Sir Arthur Evans and the Minoans

Evans began excavating on the island of Crete, determined to find the legendary kingdom of Minos, just as Heinrich Schliemann before him had discovered both Troy and Mycenae and ascertained the veracity of the Trojan War. Schliemann had, in fact, attempted to buy the land around the site of Knossos on Crete as well, but had been prevented from purchasing it. Evans arrived a few years later, at the end of the nineteenth century, and began his excavations almost immediately. What he found astounded the world.

At Knossos, Evans uncovered the remains of a large palace. It would turn out to be one of seven or eight such palaces, all built to the same basic plan, which would eventually be discovered across the island of Crete. This one at Knossos was the largest of them all. Evans believed it to be the capital city of a previously unknown civilization, which he called the Minoans, after the legendary king Minos for whom he had been searching.

Phases of the Palace

The palace at Knossos was inhabited for approximately a thousand years, from before 2000 BCE until after 1200 BCE. There were apparently three major habitation phases to the palace: the first palace, which lasted from approximately 2000 to 1700 BCE; the second palace, which lasted from approximately 1700 to 1450 BCE; and the third palace, which lasted from approximately 1450 to 1200 BCE.

The first palace was destroyed by an earthquake about 1700 BCE and was simply rebuilt on the same plan. It appears that the inhabitants and their material culture remained the same, but the second palace was even more spectacular than the first. It even featured running water and a sewer system, and possibly "his" and "her" throne rooms. This second palace, however, was destroyed by invaders—probably Mycenaean from the Greek Mainland—in about the year 1450 BCE. The decoration of the third palace, therefore, including the wall paintings, and the material culture, including the pottery, changed dramatically. So did the burials—now we find burials of warriors, complete with their bronze swords and other weapons. The third palace came to an end at about 1200 BCE, possibly at the hands of another set of invaders, this time coming across the sea from the west. These new invaders, known as the Sea Peoples, brought the Bronze Age to an end in the Aegean, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. They also brought an end to the Minoan civilization for good, and launched Crete into a Dark Age that lasted for several hundred years.

Theseus and the Minotaur

Even after it was destroyed, however, the ruins of Knossos continued to amaze the later inhabitants of the island, and may have given rise to the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur.

The palace at Knossos had been a redistribution center, taking in food and raw materials from the villages surrounding it, and handing goods back out to those who needed them. As such, it had numerous corridors and large jars for storage, in order to hold all of these goods and supplies.

When the palace was destroyed, the ruins of these storage areas looked like a maze or a labyrinth to the inhabitants of later Crete. Coupled together with memories of a strange set of rituals or games involving bulls, it may be no wonder that the later peoples on Crete and elsewhere in the Aegean area dreamed up the story of Theseus and the Minotaur—in which a young prince from Athens defeats a bull-headed monster deep in the heart of a labyrinth located underneath King Minos's palace.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What are some of the suggestions that have been made to explain why there were no fortification walls around the palace at Knossos?
2. What is wrong with some of the reconstructions at Knossos by Sir Arthur Evans?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

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Lecture 2: The Mycenaeans and the Greek Mainland

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 4: "The Greeks Before History") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 1: "Early Greece and the Bronze Age").

The Mycenaeans were present and flourishing on the mainland of Greece from approximately 1700 BCE until 1200 BCE. They are named, by modern archaeologists, after the major site of Mycenae, which is located in the Argolid region of central/southern Greece. We do not necessarily know from whence they came, but they may well be the earliest ancestors of modern-day Greeks.

The Site of Mycenae

It was Heinrich Schliemann who officially discovered the site of Mycenae, as well as the site of Tiryns located just three kilometers away. It wasn't difficult to find the ancient site; he simply had to ask the modern inhabitants living in the village with the same name. They, in turn, pointed to the Lion Gate, still standing and buried half-way up its magnificent walls. This Lion Gate is so named because of the lions that adorn its top, although they are more likely to be lionesses rather than lions; it is difficult to tell because they are missing their heads.

The Shaft Graves

Schliemann began digging just inside the Lion Gate, searching for the bodies of Agamemnon and his men, who were killed upon returning from the Trojan War, and were said to have been buried just inside the city gate. Indeed, within just a few days of beginning to excavate in the 1870s, Schliemann found a number of bodies buried in so-called Shaft Graves, and announced that he had "gazed upon the face of Agamemnon." In fact, he had not discovered Agamemnon, but rather the graves of much earlier warriors, probably dating to the seventeenth century BCE—five hundred years before Agamemnon. These were probably the first rulers of the city of Mycenae.

They were buried with so much gold and other valuable objects that these are still today the richest graves that have ever been discovered on the Greek mainland. Among the most spectacular objects found in the graves are bronze daggers inlaid with small gold and silver figures along the blade, including one depicting a lion hunt.

The Citadel

The palace at Mycenae is located on the top of a low hill, which was an excellent defensive position from which point one can see for miles in virtually all directions. Along with the palace, one finds storerooms, religious shrines,

and living quarters—presumably for the king and his extended family. There is also a stone-lined tunnel leading down to the water source for the palace, which was built at a late date during the history of the city, probably at a time about 1250 BCE when the inhabitants were beginning to fear for their lives and their very civilization.

Other Sites

Archaeologists have found numerous other Mycenaean sites on the Greek mainland, including several other palaces. These are located as nearby as Tiryns, three kilometers or so from Mycenae, and as far away as Nestor's palace at Pylos, far to the south on the mainland. Many of the palatial sites have similar designs, with huge fortification walls surrounding the site and a dark enclosed series of rooms making up the palace itself, complete with a large throne room with a smoky hearth in the middle of the room. They were quite unlike the large, open, and airy Minoan palaces found on Crete at the same time. However, they were painted in stunning colors, on the walls, ceiling, and even the floor—one might even call them rather garish in their decoration.

Mycenaean Writing and Society

The Mycenaeans had a writing system, which we call Linear B and which, when deciphered by Michael Ventris in 1952, turned out to be an early form of Greek. Thanks to hard and patient work by numerous archaeologists over the past several decades, we now know a lot about the Mycenaeans and their society. Even though the clay tablets on which they wrote were more concerned with inventories and accounting of items such as chariots and copper ingots, we can learn many things, almost circumstantially, including the fact that the Mycenaeans were already worshiping gods and goddesses who would become much more famous during the later Greek periods: Zeus and Hera, Apollo and Aphrodite, and even Poseidon. We can also reconstruct some of their social classes. For example, we know the titles held by some of their leaders, including terms such as “basileus” and “wanax,” which were apparently references to their kings and other war leaders. Some of the terms will find their way into later Greek society as well, including during the period of Classical Greece.

Overseas Contacts

The Mycenaeans were in contact with both the western and eastern Mediterranean for much of their history, but especially during the period from 1400 to 1200 BCE. Mycenaean pottery (and probably various perishable commodities that were contained within such closed vessels) has been found in areas as far abroad as Egypt, Israel, Italy, and Sardinia. In return, imported goods from these overseas areas have been found on Mainland Greece in some quantity. One question that archaeologists are asking today is whether any ideas came with the imported goods—that is, were the Mycenaeans influenced by the Egyptians or could the Canaanites have been influenced by the Mycenaeans?

Of particular interest is the shipwreck found at Uluburun, off the coast of modern Turkey. This ship may have had several Mycenaeans on board, as

well as Canaanites and perhaps sailors of other ethnicities as well. It was carrying a rich cargo with objects from seven different cultures, including Canaan, Cyprus, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Italy. The cargo was probably destined for mainland Greece, but where exactly the ship was headed when it sank is unknown. The ship went down at about 1300 BCE and is an excellent example of the international trade and contacts that were ongoing across the Mediterranean at that time.

Renovations

Toward the end of the life of the citadel and palace at Mycenae, not only is the above-mentioned water tunnel built, but the entire fortification system of walls is rebuilt. This is the time when the Lion Gate is built. There are also a number of new tombs built down the hill from the citadel. These are huge standing tombs, known as tholos tombs, which look a bit like beehives with a long runway leading up to them. All of these renovations date to about 1250 BCE. Some archaeologists have speculated that, if Agamemnon and his men ever existed, they may have been buried in these tholos tombs. Indeed, one is still called today the “Tomb of Agamemnon” by the locals.

End of the Mycenaeans

The end of the Mycenaean civilization came in about the year 1200 BCE, but it is still not exactly clear what caused it. Clay tablets from the Mycenaean palatial site of Pylos talk about “watching the sea,” and indeed it is at approximately this time period that the so-called Sea Peoples came from the western Mediterranean and created havoc across the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean regions. However, there is also evidence of a drought at this time and even of earthquakes destroying, or causing, massive damage at numerous Mycenaean sites during a fifty-year period from 1225 to 1175 BCE. In the end, it was probably a “systems collapse”—in which many factors weigh in and combine to bring down a flourishing society—that did in the Mycenaeans.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. Who might have been on board the Uluburun ship that sank off the coast of Turkey?
2. Who built the Cyclopean walls at Mycenae? How were they built?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

Pomeroy, Sarah B., Stanley M. Burstein, Walter Donlan, and Jennifer Tolbert Roberts. *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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Lecture 3: Homer and the Trojan War

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 6: "Homer") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 2: "The 'Dark Age' of Greece and the Eighth-Century 'Renaissance'").



omer, one of the earliest and greatest of the Greek poets, lived about the year 750 BCE, or perhaps even a bit later. We know next to nothing about him, starting with his birthplace, for at least seven different places in antiquity claimed him as their own. He was, by most accounts, blind, but even that is disputed. He may have been a single person, he may have been several different people working together or separately, or he may have been an occupation rather than a person—a "homer" may have been what one called a traveling bard who sang for his supper, rather than a specific individual.

Homer is said to be the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the marvelous stories about the Trojan War, but even this is disputed. Some computer programs have indicated that the two books were written by two different people. Recently, it has even been suggested that Homer may have been a woman.

Whoever or whatever Homer was, it is clear that the events described in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* happened some five hundred years before they were finally written down, taking place at the end of the Late Bronze Age in approximately 1250 BCE, and that the stories had been handed down by word of mouth for those five centuries. This immediately leads us to an additional series of questions regarding the accuracy of the stories, for it is unlikely that they were transferred from one generation to another without any changes for five hundred years. Thus, how much in the stories reflects the real events of the Late Bronze Age and how much reflects the period of the eighth century BCE, when the stories were finally begun to be written down? These are questions that are still being discussed today by scholars.

The Story of the Trojan War

As it stands, the story of the Trojan War is familiar to many people in the Western world today, not least because of the recent movie entitled *Troy*, which starred Brad Pitt as Achilles.

The story is told to us, not just in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but also in a fragmentary series of lesser epics, known collectively as the *Epic Cycle*. In all, we are informed that the war began when Paris (also known as Alexander), the son of King Priam of Troy, sailed across the Aegean sea from the northwest coast of what is now modern Turkey to one of the southernmost points of the Greek mainland, where the city of Sparta would later be

located. He had come to visit the Mycenaean king Menelaus and his lovely wife Helen.

However, during his visit, Menelaus and Helen fell in love (or so they claimed) and eventually hurried back to Troy. The Mycenaeans disputed this account and claimed that Helen had been kidnapped against her will. Menelaus approached his brother Agamemnon, who was king of Mycenae and the “King of Kings” in Mycenaean Greece at the time. Agamemnon sent out the order and more than one thousand ships sailed together on a mission to retrieve Helen (who may or may not have wanted to be rescued).

The war itself lasted ten long years and was only brought to an end by a trick—the famous Trojan Horse, in which the Mycenaeans hid, only to emerge late at night and inside the walls of Troy. The inhabitants of Troy were slaughtered; only a few, such as the hero Aeneas, were able to escape. Helen returned home with Menelaus, while the rest of the Greeks found their own way home. Some of these returnees had an easier time than did others; the tale of Odysseus is told in Homer’s *Odyssey*.

Schliemann’s Excavations

How much of the above tale is true? That is a question that archaeologists and ancient historians have been attempting to answer for the past century and a half or more.

Back in the mid 1800s, the current consensus among scholars was that the Trojan War had never happened, that it was an elaborate tale made up by Homer and other Greek writers. But one man, an amateur archaeologist and retired millionaire named Heinrich Schliemann, was convinced that it was a true story.

By 1870, having wandered around northwest Turkey for some time, Schliemann met up with a man named Frank Calvert, who persuaded him that Troy lay on land that he owned, in the very region where Schliemann had been searching. The site was known as Hissarlik and Schliemann began excavating, using hundreds of workmen at a time.

He dug quickly, convinced that Priam’s Troy lay deep beneath the surface. The problem was that there were nine cities within the mound, lying one on top of the other. Soon Schliemann announced to the world that he had found the very city that Agamemnon and the Mycenaeans had besieged for ten long years. The world was astonished, particularly when Schliemann produced a magnificent golden treasure that he identified as belonging to Priam.

However, it soon became clear that in his haste Schliemann had dug too quickly and too deeply. “Priam’s Treasure” was not Priam’s at all, but dated to a period over a thousand years earlier, during the Early Bronze Age in approximately 2300 BCE. Schliemann’s architect, Wilhelm Dörpfeld, showed him that he had dug right through what should have been Priam’s Troy, near the modern-day surface of the mound.

Modern Excavations

Since Schliemann, no fewer than three additional archaeological expeditions have sunk their tools into the mound of Hissarlik. First was Dörpfeld,

who picked up where Schliemann had left off, when Schliemann died in 1890. He was convinced that Priam's Troy was the sixth city from the bottom. Unfortunately, although this city matched Homer's description in every other way, it appeared to have been destroyed by an earthquake rather than by warfare.

Next came Carl Blegen and the University of Cincinnati in the 1930s. They were convinced that Priam's Troy had been the seventh city from the bottom. This city had indeed been destroyed by warfare, but it didn't match Homer's description very closely—although it did look like a city under siege.

And finally, Manfred Korfmann and the University of Tübingen began their excavations in the late 1980s. After more than a decade and a half of digging with the most recent scientific equipment, they announced that they had located an entire lower city, belonging to both the sixth and seventh cities at Troy, and that the previous excavators had only been excavating the citadel, or highest part of the city.

Final Conclusions

However, the jury is still out on whether the Trojan War took place or not. And even if it did, was it at all like Homer describes? And what was the Trojan Horse? There are fierce debates still ongoing today among academics concerning all of these questions and more. The one thing that is clear is that the later Greeks, whether they personally thought the Trojan War had taken place or not, made it a central part of their literature and culture, thus enabling the stories, myths, and legends to live on and reach us today.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What might the Trojan Horse have really been, if anything?
2. What is the full debate concerning the nature of “Priam’s Treasure”?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

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Lecture 4: The Greek Dark Ages

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 5: "The Dark Age") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 2: "The 'Dark Age' of Greece and the Eighth-Century 'Renaissance'").



Some time around the year 1200 BCE, the entire world of Bronze Age Greece came crashing down, from the Greek Mainland to Crete and the Cycladic Islands, and civilization in the Aegean ground to a halt. By 1100 BCE, after a brief period during which squatters inhabited some of the Mycenaean palaces, living where the kings had previously, Greece was plunged into a Dark Age—a Dark Age that may have lasted as long as three centuries, but which could have been as short as 150 years. The problem is our lack of knowledge of this era, due in large part to a shortage of archaeological sites dating to this period that are available to be excavated.

Reasons for the Collapse

As mentioned in the previous lectures, there is some evidence that there was a drought toward the end of the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean. There is also evidence of a series of earthquakes over a fifty-year period—an “earthquake storm” as it is called—which affected many sites on the Greek mainland. Finally, there is additional evidence for movements of entire populations from one area of the mainland to another as well as for the cutting of the international trade routes that connected Greece to both the eastern and western Mediterranean and upon which they may have been overdependent.

Whether the collapse of the Mycenaean and the Minoan was at the hands of the Sea Peoples or was the result of a drought or earthquakes or some combination of other factors is still much debated. What is not at question, however, is the fact that the brilliant civilizations of the Bronze Age came to a sudden and dramatic end.

The Dark Ages

Greece would not definitely come up again into the light until the beginning of the eighth century BCE. During these Dark Ages, the Greeks lost nearly all of the attributes of an advanced civilization—they no longer possess the art of writing, they cease to construct large buildings, and they do not participate extensively in international trade. Entire cities are abandoned, the pottery becomes much less elegant, and burials do not contain elaborate grave goods any more—gone are such things as the magnificent Shaft Graves found at Mycenae that dated to the Bronze Age. Making such dramatic and blunt statements may seem to be putting things rather harshly, but in general, the inhabitants of Greece during the Dark Ages ceased to exhibit the characteristics of a civilized society.

However, they do not forget how to do absolutely everything—they still know how to farm, they still know how to weave, they still know how to survive on a day-to-day basis. However, that is all that it was—simple survival. It was an illiterate period and a period during which they no longer had communicative art—no more frescoes or wall paintings. And they disappear from the records of the Egyptians and other Near Eastern peoples—it is as if they had dropped off the face of the earth.

Migrations of New Peoples

The Greek historian Thucydides, who lived and wrote in Athens during the fifth century BCE, described the belief that a series of migrations had taken place during the Dark Ages. He wrote as follows: “It appears that the country now called Hellas had no settled population in ancient times; instead there was a series of migrations, as the various tribes, being under the constant pressure of invaders who were stronger than they were, were always prepared to abandon their own territory. . . . Sixty years after the Fall of Troy, the modern Boeotians were driven out of Arne by the Thessalians. . . . Twenty years later the Dorians with the descendants of Heracles made themselves master of the Peloponnese.”

Thucydides was referring to the arrival of the Dorians—one of two groups, the Ionians and the Dorians, who were believed to have entered Greece, probably from the north, after the end of the Bronze Age. It was said that the Ionians settled in Athens and the surrounding territory of Attica, as well as on the western coast of what is now Turkey (in a region that subsequently became known as Ionia). The Dorians were said to have settled in the southern Peloponnese, in the region of what would later become the city-state of Sparta.

There is no good archaeological evidence for what is now called the Dorian Invasion, but it is a myth—or perhaps better, a tradition—that persisted throughout Greek history. It would become most important during the fifth century BCE, during Thucydides’ own lifetime, when the Ionians of Athens fought a bitter civil war against the Dorians of Sparta, but we shall leave that topic for a future lecture, when we discuss the Peloponnesian War.

Dorian Inventions

The Dorians are credited with a number of different inventions and new ideas that they brought with them into Greece. These include the use of iron in both tools and weapons instead of bronze, as well as the use of cremation burials rather than inhumation burials, as had been the practice previously. It is not, in fact, clear whether the Dorians did in fact invent or bring these new ideas—especially if the Dorians themselves never existed in the first place. A number of these new ideas are actually known from the Near East and could have been introduced into Greece during the Dark Ages by intrepid voyagers such as the Phoenicians, sailing across the Mediterranean from what is now modern Lebanon.

Lefkandi

Self-sufficient farming communities are the hallmark of this period for the most part, although there are some large sites that have been found. Among the most important and most interesting is the site of Lefkandi, in Euboea. Here there is evidence that there may have been some contact with the Near East, even during the darkest days of the Dark Age, and there may have still been some vestiges of a class—or ranked—society.

Light at the End of the Tunnel

By the eighth century BCE, the Greeks were beginning to rise up out of the ashes of the Dark Ages. One of the first indications of their renaissance was the adoption of a new writing form. This is the alphabet, brought to Greece by the Phoenicians, perhaps along with the purple dye for which these maritime traders were famous. This new system of writing, very different from the writing systems of Linear A and Linear B from Bronze Age Greece, helped to catapult Greece back into the ranks of civilized society.

Olympic Games

At approximately the same time as they emerged from the Dark Ages, the Greeks initiated a set of athletic games in honor of the god Zeus. These were held once every four years, beginning in the year 776 BCE. Held at the site of Olympia, they were known as the Olympics and took place without substantial break every fourth year for more than a thousand years, until the 390s CE. There were other athletic festivals as well, held at Delphi, Nemea, and Isthmia, but the Olympics were the most famous and the most important.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. According to Herodotus, how many different groups entered Greece during the Dark Ages?
2. What events took place during the original Olympic Games in Greece?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006.

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Lecture 5: Archaic Greece and the Greek Renaissance

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 8: "Archaic Greece" and chapter 9: "The Archaic Cultural Revolution") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 3: "Archaic Greece").

During the period of the Greek Renaissance, from approximately the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE, mainland Greece came back up out of the depths of the Dark Ages and set out once again on the road to progress, complete with a new type of alphabet and writing, large building programs, and other hallmarks of civilization.

Development of the Polis

Perhaps the greatest development in Greece during this period was the growth of city-states, individual cities and the surrounding territories that they governed. Each was known as a *polis* (plural *poleis*), with the highest place in the city known as the *acropolis* (*acro-* meaning "high"). Examples include most of the famous cities of Greece: Athens, Sparta, Delphi, and Corinth.

Each *polis* was more than just the physical territory that it covered; it was also composed of the people who lived within that region. These include women, children, slaves, foreigners, and most especially the citizens—who were the free, native-born men over the age of eighteen or so. Only the citizens of each *polis* had the right to vote, meaning that it was a male-dominated society in each case.

These exclusionary divisions between the population, based in large part on gender, age, and birthplace, can occasionally result in different census counts for the population of each city-state, for it depends if one is counting just citizens or the entire population. For example, during the heyday of Athens in the fifth century BCE, the number of citizens hovered around forty thousand. But if one figures that each citizen had a wife, and each couple had two children and one slave, then the population of Athens was two hundred thousand people, plus whatever foreigners were also present.

It is these *poleis* that would form the backbone of Greece for the remainder of its prestigious history, for the history of Greece can be seen through the eyes of each of the city-states—from Athens to Thebes to Sparta to Delphi—as each rose and fell over the decades and centuries. Indeed, the greatest civil war ever fought in Greece would be between the *poleis* of Athens and Sparta, but the other *poleis* also could be bitter rivals as well as the best of friends, depending upon their needs, wants, and desires.

Rise of Tyrants

In the seventh century BCE, some of these city-states came under the sway of tyrants. In Greek, the word tyrant (*tyrannos*) did not have the same dubious connotations that it has today. It simply meant an aristocrat who had seized sole power, even though he had no legal right to do so. It did not weigh in on whether he was good or bad. In many cases, in fact, rather than being a bloodthirsty dictator, a Greek tyrant was more like what we would consider a benevolent dictator today.

Examples of such tyrants include Cypselus and his son Periander of Corinth, who came to power in the mid seventh century BCE, Phidon of Argos, who came to power even a bit earlier, and Polycrates of Samos, who only came to power in the later sixth century BCE, but then undertook massive building and engineering projects, including the construction of a huge harbor complex and tunnel.

Greek Colonization

During this period, in particular during the years from 750 to 600 BCE, there was also a massive colonizing movement on the part of the Greeks, fostered in part by an apparent population explosion. Many of the larger Greek city-states sent out colonists, in part to get rid of their excess population, in part because they needed raw materials, and in part because they needed to give the younger sons of the aristocrats something to do (since the eldest son generally inherited everything).

The majority of the colonists were young males, who were instructed to set up a colony in an area where they could easily overpower the local men, marry the native women, and raise crops or otherwise exploit the natural resources of the land. In most, if not all, cases, the colonists were not allowed to trade with anyone except their “mother city”—the city-state that had sponsored them in the first place. In this way, each mother city was able to procure necessary raw materials at the same time it eased population pressure back home.

The Oracle at Delphi

One of the biggest questions that each mother city faced was where to send its colonists. Here the Oracle at Delphi came into play. Each city-state sent messengers bearing both gifts and a question for the Oracle. The Oracle, whose words were interpreted by a priestess reportedly sitting over a chasm in the rock and inhaling its vapors deep beneath the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, while chewing on narcotic leaves, would answer the questions posed to it. During these years, the question most frequently asked by the city-states was where they should send their budding colonists. The Oracle must have had quite a few people on its payroll with good information, for in response to its answers, the Greek city-states sent out their colonists all over the Mediterranean area and beyond—from southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain to the Black Sea, the coast of Turkey, and even the shores of the Levant and Egypt.

Early Greek Poets and Writers

Also during this period, we find the first Greek poets and writers. Homer, Hesiod, and Sappho are just three of the biggest names that come to mind from the period between the eighth and sixth centuries BCE. Homer is already a name familiar to us, from our earlier discussions of the Trojan War.

Hesiod is a farmer who lived in the region of Boeotia, near Delphi, during the seventh century BCE. In addition to a long poem about the gods, entitled the *Theogony*, Hesiod also wrote a manuscript full of advice for his brother. Called *Works and Days*, it was essentially a farmer's almanac, with advice on when to plant, sow, and reap; how to treat one's neighbors; when to participate in sailing and shipping ventures; and how to dress warmly during winter.

Sappho, who lived from approximately 612 to 550 BCE, was the Greeks' first female poet. Head of a finishing school for girls on the island of Lesbos, off the coast of Turkey, Sappho wrote poems in a unique meter, now known as Sapphic meter. Many of the poems were dedicated to her students, especially after they had graduated and gone on to other things.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What were the major characteristics of the *polis*?
2. What was one of the major roles of the Oracle at Delphi?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

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Lecture 6: The Rise of Sparta and Athens

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 10: "A Tale of Two Archaic Cities: Sparta and Athens") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 4: "Sparta" and chapter 5: "The Growth of Athens and the Persian Wars").



In this lecture, we will look at the rise of Sparta and Athens, two city-states that became preeminent in Greece and will be rivals for much of Greek history. Size is not always everything, as these two city-states showed, for they were very different in size and yet equally powerful in many ways. These two city-states epitomized the potential differences between individual Greek city-states.

Sparta

The Greek historian Thucydides explains that appearances can be deceiving, stating that if one were to look at the ruins of Sparta sometime in the future, one would never believe that Sparta and the Spartans had ever been as powerful as they indeed were.

The Spartans were both feared and admired by the citizens of the other Greek city-states. Their state was a military society, forgoing all types of luxuries and even banning most imported goods. It was governed by two kings, who ruled over three groups of peoples: the Spartiates, who were the citizens of Sparta; the *periokoi*, or literally those who dwelled around and who were the farmers and craftsmen of the surrounding territory; and the *helots*, or the slaves/serfs who worked the land for the Spartans.

Spartan society has been described in many ways, but one thing that it wasn't was democratic. It was more like a constitutional monarchy. The two kings were advised by five Ephors, who served as overseers and as an executive committee, as well as by a council of elders, twenty-eight men, all of whom were over the age of sixty. Below them was the assembly, which was every male citizen over the age of thirty, both of whose parents were also native Spartans. Tradition held that an early, and perhaps mythical, lawgiver named Lycurgus had created the earliest constitution that was used in Sparta. We do not know whether Lycurgus ever actually existed, but it is clear that Sparta did have a constitution, in addition to its kings and other administrators.

Spartan male children moved away from their parents and into military barracks by about the age of five. They were mentored by an older boy, probably in his late teens. The two were linked together for about a dozen years, eating, sleeping, fighting, and training together until the older boy got married as he neared the age of thirty; at that time the younger boy became a mentor in his own right, and the cycle began again.

Spartan women, perhaps surprisingly given the nature of the society, had more rights than women usually had in Greek city-states. In part this was

because of the militaristic nature of Spartan society—for example, with the men frequently going off to war, it made sense for the family's property to be in the woman's name.

Athens

Thucydides also states that if one were to look at the ruins of Athens some time in the future, one would believe that Athens and the Athenians had been twice as powerful as they indeed were. We will see, in a future lecture, that it was the Athenian statesman Pericles who was responsible for bringing Athens to this height in the fifth century BCE, but it was more than just a façade. Athens was truly one of the bright lights of the ancient world, but that would not become apparent until the sixth century BCE and the time of Solon.

In contrast to the Spartans, the Athenians considered themselves to be Ionians, related to others living elsewhere in the surrounding territory of Attica as well as on the distant western coast of what is now modern-day Turkey.

Early Athens was ruled by kings, according to tradition, but by the eighth or seventh centuries, the kings were replaced by oligarchs—the rule by a few families. These men held the title of “archon” and by the time we get to the sixth century BCE, there were nine archons appointed or elected each year. One of these archons was the man who gave his name to that year, the so-called eponymous archon. Another of the archons was known as the *strategos*, or war leader, and a third was known as the “*basileus*,” which was a term left over from the Bronze Age, when it had referred to a king or a leader. The other six archons were seen as a group, who basically sat in judgment on court cases. Each of these archons was elected and served for a year at a time, although apparently one could serve as an archon more than once (as Pericles later demonstrated in the fifth century BCE, as he was reelected year after year after year).

There was also a council, which fluctuated in number over time—at one point it was a council of four hundred; later it became a council of five hundred. There was also a much larger general assembly in which every male citizen over eighteen was expected to serve.

Kylon

In the year 632 BCE, an Athenian aristocrat and Olympic victor named Kylon attempted to seize power in Athens and make himself tyrant. He and his followers took the Acropolis in Athens, only to be surrounded and asked to surrender. Kylon and his brother escaped, but some of his followers were killed despite assurances by Megacles, a member of one of the leading families of Athens, that they would be allowed to leave the city unharmed. As a result, Megacles and his family, the Alcmaeonids, were forced into exile.

Draco

In the year 621 BCE, according to tradition, a shadowy Athenian lawgiver named Draco established the first law code known in Athens. His penalties for crimes were severe, with the death penalty being given for most offenses. In fact, they were so severe that later people said his laws were written in

blood rather than in stone. His name lives on today, when we make statements about things being “draconian.”

Solon

In one of the first steps on the journey to democracy, an Athenian aristocrat and archon named Solon initiated a number of startling reforms in the early sixth century BCE. He was given permission to completely revise Draco's law code, which he did, including changing many of the penalties, except those for murder, which still merited the death penalty in his opinion. He also reformed the constitution, created new classes of citizens, abolished debt, freed people from slavery who had been enslaved because of debt, created standard weights and measures, as well as the first official coins in Athens, and forbade the export of any goods except for olives and olive oil.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What were the characteristics of Spartan society?
2. Who were the “archons”?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

Pomeroy, Sarah B., Stanley M. Burstein, Walter Donlan, and Jennifer Tolbert Roberts. *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Other Books of Interest

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Lecture 7: The Origins of Democracy

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 10: "A Tale of Two Archaic Cities: Sparta and Athens") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 5: "The Growth of Athens and the Persian Wars").



In this lecture we will look at the origins of democracy. The invention of democracy is usually dated to the year 508 BCE, when the reforms of Cleisthenes were implemented in Athens. Thus, democracy as we know it is just over twenty-five hundred years old. It is rarely pointed out that the word "democracy" literally means "people power," for it is made up of two Greek words: *demos* (people) and *kratia* (power). A second principle that is equally important to the concept of democracy is that of "isonomia," or equality under the law, which also comes from two Greek words: *iso* (equal, as in an isosceles triangle) and *nomia* (laws, the plural form; singular is *nomos*). This stated that all inhabitants, regardless of their wealth, birth, or standing in the community, were equal in terms of needing to obey the laws of the *polis* and in terms of being punished if they did not obey those laws.

Pisistratus

Following the reforms of Solon in the early sixth century BCE, one would think that Greece was firmly on the track to democracy. However, between the time of Solon in 594 BCE and the time of Cleisthenes in 508 BCE, democracy was sidetracked by a man named Pisistratus and his two sons, Hippias and Hipparchus.

Pisistratus was an aristocrat of Athens who wished to rule as tyrant. It took him three tries, but he was finally successful. The first time was in 561 BCE, when he pretended to have been beaten up, asked for a protective body-guard from the citizens of Athens, and then proceeded to try to seize the Acropolis, just as Kylon had tried to do seventy years earlier. He was no more successful than Kylon had been and was ordered out of the city.

Six years later, in 555 BCE, Pisistratus came back to the city of Athens, riding on a chariot being driven by a six-foot-tall woman named Phyle, who was dressed up as the goddess Athena. Heralds ran in front of the chariot, announcing to all who would listen that Athena herself was bringing Pisistratus back to the city to become their ruler. After a certain period of credulity, the Athenians decided that Phyle was not Athena and kicked Pisistratus out again.

Nine years after that, in 546 BCE, Pisistratus came back yet again. This time he was accompanied by an army and succeeded in taking over Athens and ruling as a tyrant. Surprisingly, he turned out to be an actual benevolent tyrant and his rule was quite peaceful and, on the whole, beneficial for Athens. He ruled until his death in 528 BCE.

Harmodius and Aristageiton

Upon Pisistratus's death, his two sons—Hippias and Hipparchus—took over and ruled Athens jointly as tyrants, continuing what is known as the Pisistratid dynasty. They were not nearly as benevolent as their father had been and eventually lost favor with the citizens of Athens. Matters came to a head when Hipparchus became involved in a love triangle and was eventually assassinated by two young men named Harmodius and Aristogeiton (who were promptly put to death themselves but were revered by later Athenians for their deed). Hippias fled the city and anarchy reigned for a brief while, until Cleisthenes took matters into his own hands.

Reforms of Cleisthenes

When Cleisthenes instituted his reforms in Athens, he was probably doing so at the request of the citizens of the city. It is these reforms that we consider to be the true beginnings of democracy. They involved revising the entire tribal structure of the citizen body.

Previously, the citizens had been divided into four traditional tribes, each tracing themselves back to a famous ancestor. Cleisthenes now created ten artificial tribes (and created a fictitious ancestor for each). He did so by splitting all of Athens and its surrounding territory in Attica into three geographical parts—the shore, the plain, and the hills.

Small local neighborhoods known as “demes” were marked out in each of these areas and then several of these were combined into a larger “trittys,” much like we have local neighborhoods and larger counties within each of our states in the United States today. Cleisthenes created thirty of these “trittys”: ten located in the area of the shore, ten located in the region of the plain, and ten located up in the hills.

He then took three of these “trittys”—one from the shore, one from the plain, and one from the hills—and announced that they formed one “tribe.” By doing this ten times, he created ten artificial tribes; within each tribe he had a geographical representation of the entire area of Athens and Attica, for in each tribe there were men from the shore, the plain, and the hills.

Each of these ten tribes shared the responsibility of ruling Athens; each sent fifty men to a ruling council, which was known as the Council of Five Hundred after the number of men who belonged, and each spent a certain number of weeks in charge of governing the city. Other duties, such as jury duty, could also be split up and divided along these artificial tribal lines. Notices relevant to each tribe were posted in specific places within the Agora, in downtown Athens.

This was true democracy, in its rawest and most primitive form. Each citizen was expected to take part in the governing of the city, regardless of his birth, wealth, or social class. This is not a type of democracy that is commonly in place today, for it also meant that each citizen could end up with a heavy burden of responsibility, regardless of his training, natural ability, or factors that one might usually want to take into consideration. However, with some modifications over time, the system worked and Athens became the world's first democracy.

Ostracism

One other political invention attributed to Cleisthenes was the concept of ostracism. Here, the entire citizen body of Athens was invited to submit the name of a man whom they thought might be growing too politically powerful, who might be a potential tyrant in the making, and whom they thought should be exiled for ten years.

They each scratched a name into the surface of a broken pot sherd (called an “ostrakon” in the singular and “ostraca” in the plural, which is where the name “ostracism” comes from) and put the sherd into a voting box. If enough people submitted names—generally at least five or six thousand ostraca had to be submitted for an ostracism to take place—then the person whose name was scratched onto the most pot sherds was exiled for ten years.

The idea was to lessen the political importance of such men, before they could begin to think about seizing power and ruling as tyrants. Although this was usually attributed to Cleisthenes and said to have been introduced in 508 BCE, the first ostracism was not put into effect until 488 BCE, some twenty years later. As a result, we are not completely sure that it was actually Cleisthenes who invented the concept.

Today the concept of ostracism lives on, but only in terms of giving the “cold shoulder” to someone whom we don’t like for some reason.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. Why did Harmodius and Aristogeiton kill only Hipparchus and not Hippias as well? What happened to them?
2. What other reforms did Cleisthenes institute in 508 BCE?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

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Raaflaub, Kurt, et al. *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Lecture 8: The Rise of Persia and the Origins of the Ionian Revolt

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 11: "Persia and the Greeks") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 5: "The Growth of Athens and the Persian Wars").

The rise of Persia and its attack upon both Greece and the western coast of Turkey during the years between 499 and 479 BCE led directly to the Golden Age of Athens in the mid fifth century BCE. However, there would be some hard years and much fighting before the dawning of that golden age. In the next few lectures we will review the history of those turbulent years, during which the Greeks were forced to fight for the very existence of their fledgling democracy.

Herodotus

Much of our information about this period comes from Herodotus, the first true historian of Greece. In Greek the word "historia" means an inquiry, and it is from this that we get our modern word "history." It was this title that Herodotus used for his study of the Persian Wars and the reasons behind them. However, Herodotus frequently simply repeated stories that were told to him, without verifying their historical accuracy, and therefore he is sometimes referred to as the "Father of Lies" rather than the "Father of History."

The Rise of Persia

It was under Cyrus the Great that Persia began its run toward greatness. Cyrus is perhaps best known for capturing the city of Babylon in 539 BCE and bringing to an end the Babylonian Exile of the Jews (by allowing them to return home to Jerusalem and Judah).

Cyrus was probably not supposed to be king over the Persians, because he was half-Persian and half-Median. Herodotus spins a wild tale of how Cyrus came to be king, but it sounds suspiciously like a "foundation tale"—a story concocted to explain how someone came to be king, or in a position of authority, who wasn't supposed to have risen to that position, much like the story of Romulus and Remus in later Italy, and the tale of Moses in earlier Egypt. In the case of Cyrus, it was said that he was raised by a shepherd and his wife. It is quite a tale and worth reading, if a bit unbelievable.

Cyrus and Croesus

Several years before he captured Babylon in 539 BCE, Cyrus and his army had been in western Turkey, attacking the city of Sardis and extending Persian domination across this whole region. Herodotus tells us that Croesus was the king of Lydia, with his capital at Sardis, at this time and that he sent a messenger with gifts to the Oracle at Delphi to ask whether he should go to

war against the Persians. The Oracle replied that if he went to war, he would destroy a great empire. So Croesus went out to fight Cyrus the Great, but lost. Not only did he lose the battle but he lost the army and his empire as well. And in this way, the Oracle's prophecy came true, but not in the manner that Croesus had expected.

After Croesus was captured, and bound in chains by Cyrus, he was set free when Cyrus took pity upon him—seeing in him a fellow king who had simply lost the war through no fault of his own. When granted anything he wanted, Croesus requested that his chains be sent to Delphi with an admonition to the Oracle for having misled him. Having done so, he eventually received an answer from the Oracle, admonishing him in turn for having misinterpreted the Oracle's answer. Hearing this, Croesus gracefully accepted the blame for his own actions.

Croesus and Solon

Indeed, much about the end of Croesus's life was unexpected to him. Earlier in his career, he had been convinced that he was the happiest man on the face of the earth. When Solon, the Athenian lawgiver who was considered one of the seven wise men of the ancient world, came through on his travels after reforming the constitution of Athens in the early sixth century BCE, Croesus had asked him who was the happiest man that he knew.

Croesus expected Solon to say that Croesus was, but Solon named instead several other people, all of whom were dead. When asked why, Solon told Croesus that one cannot judge a person's life until that person has died. Only then can one look back and see whether that person had been truly happy throughout his or her life. If one makes the call part-way through that life, there is always the possibility that something will happen to upend everything.

When Croesus lost his empire, and very nearly his life, to Cyrus, he realized that Solon had been correct.

The Origins of the Ionian Revolt

After the Persians captured Croesus and the kingdom of Lydia, they proceeded onward and captured the entire western coast of Turkey. This was the region that had been settled by Ionian colonists during the Dark Ages, just as had been Athens and the region of Attica in Greece, and was known to the Greeks as "Ionia."

As the Athenians proceeded toward democracy in the last part of the sixth century BCE, the inhabitants of Ionia found themselves under the thumb of the Persians, who had no interest in democracy or in the concept of "isonomia"—equality under the laws.

The inhabitants of Ionia decided to try to overthrow the Persians and escape out from under Persian domination. The leaders of the rebellion were located in the city of Miletus on the western coast. They were named Histiaeus and Aristagoras, the tyrant of the city and his son-in-law. However, the Persians were well aware of the potential for revolt and took Histiaeus away to their capital city of Susa, located in the heart of Persia hundreds, if not thousands, of miles away from Miletus.

Histiaeus had to find a way to get a message to his son-in-law with the information regarding the date and time to begin the revolt. Herodotus tells us that he found a novel way to do it, by shaving the head of his most trusted slave, tattooing the information onto the slave's scalp, allowing the hair time to grow back, and then sending the slave on the long journey with only a message of three words: "Shave my head."

The slave made it back to Miletus safely, delivered the message to Aristagoras, and the Ionian Revolt began on schedule, with dire results, as we shall see in the next lecture.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. Why is Herodotus sometimes called the “Father of Lies” rather than the “Father of History”?
2. What did Solon teach Croesus about happiness?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

Pomeroy, Sarah B., Stanley M. Burstein, Walter Donlan, and Jennifer Tolbert Roberts. *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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Lecture 9: The Persian Wars

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 12: "The Great War") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 5: "The Growth of Athens and the Persian Wars").

The Persian wars against the Greeks began with the Ionian Revolt, which broke out in 499 BCE on the western coast of Turkey. Headed by Aristagoras, the current tyrant of the city of Miletus, the revolt quickly spread up and down the entire coastline. The insurgents attempted to enlist the aid of all the other Greeks as well, but only Athens sent any substantial amount of aid. The Athenians sent some twenty ships, in part because they considered the Ionians to be their cousins and in part because they saw that they would be next on the list if the Ionians lost and their fledgling democracy would be threatened.

The Ionian Revolt

Unfortunately for the Ionians, although their revolt had some initial successes when it first began in 499 BCE, they quickly ran into problems. By 497 BCE, the Athenians had to withdraw the ships that they had loaned to the rebellion. Soon thereafter, the end was in sight. By 494 BCE, the rebellion was over. Miletus was served up as an example by the Persians—most of the men were killed, the women and children were enslaved, and the city was burned.

The Invasion of 490 BCE

The Persians now turned their attention to mainland Greece. They would have invaded Greece no matter what anyway, for it was the only region that they had not yet conquered on their westward march, but the Ionian Revolt had provided the Persians with the excuse that they needed.

After some preliminary forays, the Persians set sail from the western coast of Turkey across the Aegean Sea toward the Greek mainland. Hopscoching from island to island, leaving small garrisons of Persian soldiers in the wake on each island, the Persian army and navy eventually reached the Greek coastline and made land at the Bay of Marathon.

The Battle of Marathon

There were some twenty-five thousand men in the Persian army, with approximately six hundred ships accompanying them. They were led by the Persian king Darius and accompanied by the former Greek tyrant of Athens, Hippias—whose brother Hipparchus had been assassinated in 511 BCE and who had fled to Persia.

Gathered hastily against them and standing strong at Marathon were approximately ten thousand Greek soldiers, of whom nine thousand were Athenians and one thousand were assorted others. The only Greek

city-state not represented by soldiers at Marathon was Sparta, for they claimed that they were observing a religious festival and could not leave until the moon was full, which was still six days away. The Greeks were led by Miltiades, who became renowned as a result of the ensuing actions at the Battle of Marathon.

The Greeks lured the Persians into committing their troops by leaving the center of their line weak and allowing the Persians to charge on through. The two sides of the Greek army then came around and encircled the Persian forces in a pincer movement. It was a complete success.

However, the Persians climbed aboard their ships and sailed for Athens, hoping to reach it before the Greek army could march back home. Pheidippides, the Greeks' best long-distance runner, who had only just returned from running to Sparta and back, was sent to warn those back in Athens. He ran the twenty-six miles back to the city and gasped out the warning that the Persians were coming, then collapsed and died on the spot. Our modern day marathons are named after his heroic run, for it allowed the Athenians time to prepare for the Persians, who turned around and went home when they saw that the city was still strongly defended.

When the Spartans arrived at the battlefield of Marathon a few days later, they and the others counted 192 dead Greeks and fully sixty-four hundred dead Persians. That is to say, for every dead Greek, there were thirty-two dead Persians. That is a rather amazing "kill ratio" and one that would certainly be acceptable to any modern army.

The Greek dead were all buried at Marathon, supposedly upon a huge mound of earth, and commemorations of their victory were erected at Marathon and elsewhere. The children of those who had been killed in battle were raised and educated for free and the victorious survivors of the battle were treated as heroes for the rest of their lives, for the Greeks saw this as one of the most important battles that had ever been fought. Indeed, it is usually cited as the first battle fought to preserve democracy.

The Invasion of 480 BCE

The Persians were not ones to take defeat lightly. They geared up to invade Greece yet again, but in the meantime, their king Darius died. His successor, Xerxes, took up the mantle and, after putting down several rebellions elsewhere in the Persian empire, he marched on Greece again in the year 480 BCE.

This time the Persians came with an army of five hundred thousand soldiers and noncombatants, plus an accompanying navy of three thousand ships, including as many as twelve hundred triremes—the biggest and most feared warships of their day. The army and navy were so large that the Persians could not sail directly across the Aegean Sea as they had done ten years earlier, but were now forced to travel up the western coast of Turkey, cross the Hellespont using a pontoon bridge (in which they tied their ships together and walked their men and horses across them), marched across Thrace, and down through northern Greece and into central Greece. Waiting for them at Thermopylae were the Greeks.

The Battle of Thermopylae

Thermopylae was, and is, a narrow mountain pass located in the area of central Greece known as Boeotia. The famous cities of Thebes and Delphi were nearby. Here at Thermopylae, the Greeks had decided to make a stand against the massive Persian army. There were only six or seven thousand Greeks, but they thought that they had a chance, for the mountain pass was so narrow that only a few men could make it through at a time. Moreover, the Greeks were emboldened by the presence of the Spartans, who had sent three hundred men under the leadership of Leonidas.

After days of battle, during which the Greeks stood successfully against the best of the Persian army, they were traitorously betrayed. A Greek shepherd showed the Persians how to use a mountain path to go around the pass of Thermopylae and emerge on the other side, behind the Greek forces. The Greeks were about to be caught in a trap, sandwiched between two sets of Persian troops.

The majority of the Greek troops were sent home, leaving only Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans to defend the pass. They bravely fought to the death, almost to a man. While they may not have survived, their legend lived on, and they managed to delay the Persian army long enough for the other Greek troops to return home and enact the second part of their plan.

The Battles of Salamis and Plataea

The second part of the Greeks' plan entailed evacuating the city of Athens, which they allowed the Persians to capture and burn to the ground, and fighting the Persians by sea rather than by land. This was the battle of Salamis, during which the Greeks employed the same sort of tactics as they had used at the earlier battle of Thermopylae.

Even though the Persians had a tremendously large navy, the Greeks had also been building up their navy during the ten years between 490 and 480 BCE, courtesy of a large vein of silver that had been fortuitously discovered at the Laurion mines outside of Athens. Moreover, the straits of Salamis, located between Athens on the mainland and the nearby island of Salamis, were narrow and only a few ships could enter and navigate the straits at one time.

The battle was long, hard-fought, and arduous. In the end, the Greeks were triumphant. The Persian navy was defeated, in part because of the Greeks' use of a new invention—a bronze battering ram attached to the front of their ships.

Several months later, at the land battle of Plataea, the Greek forces defeated the Persian army and forced the Persians to abandon any hope of conquering Greece. Xerxes and the Persians retreated, for perhaps the first time in the history of the Persian Empire. Certainly, it was the first time that they had failed to conquer an entire country.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What did the Greeks do between 490 BCE and 480 BCE to prepare for the Persian invasion of 480 BCE?
2. What strategies did the Greeks use at the battles of Thermopylae and Salamis, even though one was a land battle that the Greeks lost and the other was a naval battle that the Greeks won?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

Pomeroy, Sarah B., Stanley M. Burstein, Walter Donlan, and Jennifer Tolbert Roberts. *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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Green, Peter. *The Greco-Persian Wars*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Strauss, Barry. *The Battle of Salamis: The Naval Encounter That Saved Greece—and Western Civilization*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.

Lecture 10: The Golden Age of Athens

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 13: "Democracy and Empire: Athens and Syracuse") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 6: "The Rivalries of the Greek City-States and the Growth of Athenian Democracy" and chapter 7: "Greece on the Eve of the Peloponnesian War").

The Greeks had a very real fear that the Persians would come back and attempt to invade yet again, even after all of the battles fought in 480 BCE. After all, the Persians had attacked Greece in 490 BCE and again in 480 BCE. Who knew if they would come back again in 470 BCE? So the Greeks banded together and formed the Delian League, which had two primary purposes. And from the Delian League came directly the Athenian Empire, courtesy of a man named Pericles. During these years, Athens dominated much of Greek life, politically as well as commercially. These years, between 478 BCE and 431 BCE, are known to Greek historians as the *Pentecontaetia*, literally the "fifty year period."

The Delian League

The Delian League began operations in 478 BCE, immediately after the main Persian forces had withdrawn from the Aegean. It was formed with two purposes in mind. First, the Greeks wished to mop up and clean out the small garrisons of Persian troops that had been left on various Greek islands during the first Persian invasion in 490 BCE. Second, they wished to ensure that they would be prepared if the Persians ever invaded again.

To this end, they drew up a plan and requested that as many Greek city-states as possible join the league—and approximately 150 did so, although this number fluctuated over time. Each of the members were required to give an annual tribute in the form of either ships, men, or money. The headquarters of the league, and the place where they kept the Treasury, was in the Temple of Apollo and Artemis on the island of Delos (hence the name of the league), located in the center of the Cycladic Islands.

Since some of the city-states were larger than the others, an Athenian named Aristides (later nicknamed "the Just") was appointed to determine how much each city-state should give annually. Each city-state had a vote in the league, and each was supposedly equal to the others, but it seems that Athens was a bit more equal than the others.

We should note that the only major Greek city-state that refused to join the Delian League was Sparta, which formed its own league of allied city-states, known as the Peloponnesian League. The two leagues would eventually come into furious contact, in what would become known as the Peloponnesian Wars, but that would not take place for nearly fifty years.

Revolts of Naxos and Thasos

The Delian League was extremely successful, but as the years went by and the Persians showed no indication of returning and attempting to invade again, some of the city-states attempted to withdraw from the league.

However, the Athenians, led by the aristocratic Pericles, who was legally appointed year after year to a position of authority within the city, refused to allow the city-states to leave the league. In particular, the islands of Naxos and Thasos, each of which began a rebellion in an attempt to withdraw from the Delian League, were put down forcibly. For the first time, the military might of the league was used against its own members and allies. In so doing, Athens and Pericles began, slowly but surely, to take over the league for their own purposes.

The Delian Treasury

In 454 BCE, the Athenians declared that it was no longer safe to keep the Treasury of the Delian League all the way out on the island of Delos. Stating the potential of having ships carrying money back and forth being attacked by pirates and brigands, they proposed moving the Treasury to Athens. The suggestion was greeted with dismay by the other members of the league, but Pericles swore that he would safeguard the Treasury and not use it for his own purposes.

And so the Treasury was moved to Athens that year. Soon thereafter, Pericles and the Athenians began to use the money for their own purposes—primarily to beautify Athens. Reasoning that Athens was the center of the known universe at that time, at least from their point of view, they felt that Athens should look the part.

The Periclean Building Program

As part of the effort to beautify Athens, Pericles and the Athenians spent vast sums of money to rebuild the Acropolis. The previous buildings on the Acropolis had all been burnt and destroyed by the Persians when they sacked the city in 480/479 BCE.

And so, all of the buildings that are swarmed by modern tourists on top of the Acropolis today were built. First and foremost was the Parthenon, sacred to the goddess Athena and used to hold the dedications made to her by rich and poor, famous and nonentity alike. Built over the course of fifteen or more years, from 447 to 432 BCE, the Parthenon was a wonder of architecture and, as such, is still studied today by architects and art historians.

A huge gold-and-ivory statue of Athena stood inside the front part of the Parthenon, while the gold, silver, and other offerings were kept in the back room under lock and key. Inscriptions posted on the steps of the Acropolis listed the inventory of what was inside the building each year. If the Athenians needed to borrow any of these precious goods during times of trouble, they could do so, but were required to pay the goddess back, with interest.

Other major buildings constructed on top of the Acropolis in this second half of the fifth century BCE included the small but beautifully proportioned

Temple of Athena Nike (Athena of Victory) and the Erechtheion, a very strange building that housed the cults of no fewer than seven different gods and goddesses, including Athena and Poseidon. The Porch of the Caryatid Maidens is today perhaps the most famous part of the Erechtheion.

Pericles' Circle

Pericles also surrounded himself with some of the greatest artists, sculptors, writers, and philosophers of his age. Among the men who lived in or visited Athens and interacted in some way with Pericles during these years were probably the historians Herodotus and Thucydides, the sculptor Pheidias, the philosopher Socrates, and the dramatist Sophocles. This, in part, is what contributed to these years becoming the Golden Age of Athens, as it is now called.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What are some of the features of the Parthenon that are still studied by architects and art historians today?
2. What treaties did Pericles sign that allowed him to maintain an era of peace for much of the time between 478 and 431 BCE?
3. Was Pericles a hero or a tyrant? Would your perception of him have varied depending upon whether you lived in Athens or elsewhere in the Greek world?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

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Meier, Christian. *Athens: A Portrait of the City in Its Golden Age*. Trans. Robert Kimber. New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998.

Thucydides. *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Rex Warner. New York: Penguin, 1954.

Lecture 11: The Peloponnesian War

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 16: "The Peloponnesian War and Its Aftermath") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 6: "The Rivalries of the Greek City-States and the Growth of Athenian Democracy" and chapter 8: "The Peloponnesian War").



When the Athenians and the Spartans fought the Peloponnesian War, many thought of it—both then and now—as the second war fought to preserve democracy (the first being the Persian Wars). Others considered it to be a civil war, pitting Greek against Greek. Still others considered it to be an ethnic war, pitting Ionians against Dorians. Whatever one may consider it, the Peloponnesian War decimated Greece during the last part of the fifth century BCE, from 431 to 404 BCE. It happened in two phases, from 431 to 421 BCE and again from 414 to 404 BCE, with a long period of cold war in between the two phases.

Thucydides

We know many of the details of the Peloponnesian War courtesy of Thucydides, an Athenian historian who lived through much of the war and apparently took notes throughout, convinced that it needed to be written down. His book begins with the words:

Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war in which the Peloponnesians and the Athenians fought against one another. He began to write when they first took up arms, believing that it would be great and memorable above any previous war. For he argued that both states were then at the full height of their military power, and he saw the rest of the Hellenes either siding or intending to side with one or other of them. No movement ever stirred Hellas more deeply than this; it was shared by many of the Barbarians, and might be said even to affect the world at large.

Thucydides was a better historian than was Herodotus, although he sometimes puts words into the mouths of his speakers, even when he himself was not present and could not have known the exact words that had been spoken. He says:

With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said.

Prelude to the War

It appears that the war was instigated in large part because of Pericles' actions, although some historians would argue with this premise. Certainly, in the years leading up to the war, a series of events took place that riled up the Spartans and their allies, and most of these can be traced back to the Athenians and Pericles. A prime example was the Megarian Decree, which was passed by the Athenian Assembly in 433/432 BCE. The decree, which had been proposed by Pericles, banned the inhabitants of Megara, a city-state located near Athens, from using any of the Athenian markets—including those of any members of the Delian League. This decree spelled immediate economic doom for Megara. It is widely considered that one of the principal reasons that Sparta went to war with Athens was because Athens refused to revoke the decree.

The Archidamian War

The war began in 431 BCE and is split into two parts. The first half is referred to as the Archidamian War; it lasted until 421 BCE. After the first year or so, Pericles delivered a funeral oration over the bodies of the Athenian soldiers who had been killed to date. It is the first, and one of the most famous, of all the speeches that have been given arguing why democracy is worth fighting for. He began by saying:

Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the institutions of others. We do not copy our neighbours, but are an example to them. It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognised; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever be the obscurity of his condition.

The Plague

Within a year or two of the beginning of the war, a massive plague broke out in Athens. In large part, this was due to the crowded conditions in the city, although at first it was suspected that the Spartans had poisoned the water system, which was not true.

Thucydides gives us a firsthand description of the plague—firsthand, because he had the plague and managed to survive it:

I shall describe its actual course, and the symptoms by which any one who knows them beforehand may recognise the disorder should it ever reappear. For I was myself attacked, and witnessed the sufferings of others.

Thucydides' description of the symptoms of the plague is extremely detailed, but modern specialists have never been able to satisfactorily identify the actual disease. In recent years, suggestions have included bubonic plague, typhoid, cholera, AIDS, Ebola, and pneumonia, but the jury is still out.

In 429 BCE, Pericles died from the plague. It was a major blow to Athens, but the war went on despite the fact that the Athenians had lost their long-time leader.

The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition

The first half of the war finally ended in 421 BCE, with a peace negotiated by a diplomat named Nicias. As a result, the ensuing six years of relative peace are called “The Peace of Nicias.” It is generally believed that Athens essentially won this first half of the war.

However, in 415 BCE, Athens undertook a military expedition to Sicily that ended in absolute disaster. It also resulted in starting up the Peloponnesian War again; it would last for another ten years.

The Deceleian War

The second half of the Peloponnesian War is called the Deceleian War; it lasted from 414 to 404 BCE. In the end, Athens lost the war and was forced to sue for peace. The victorious Spartans ordered Athens to disband her army and navy and to dismantle the Long Walls that connected Athens to her port city of Piraeus.

The Rise and Fall of Athens

If one looks at the overall picture, the Athenian empire essentially rose and fell in seventy-five years, if one counts from the founding of the Delian League until the end of the Peloponnesian War, from 479 to 404 BCE. This span of time is approximately equivalent to the rise and fall of the Soviet Union in our times (1917–1989).

After the end of the Peloponnesian War, Athens was never truly the same. In many ways, it became a university town after this date, with Aristotle’s Lyceum and Plato’s Academy flourishing for several centuries. Many of Rome’s elite and leading citizens were educated here. In Julius Caesar’s day, Greek was reportedly spoken more frequently in the Roman Senate than was Latin.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. Given the details of the plague that swept through Athens, as recorded by Thucydides, what is the most likely identification for this illness?
2. What did the loss of Pericles, their longtime leader, mean to the Athenians?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

Pomeroy, Sarah B., Stanley M. Burstein, Walter Donlan, and Jennifer Tolbert Roberts. *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Other Books of Interest

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Lecture 12: Socrates, Plato, and the Origins of Greek Philosophy

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 14: "Art and Thought in the Fifth Century B.C." and chapter 18: "Greek Culture in the Fourth Century B.C.") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 8: "The Peloponnesian War").



Socrates and Plato, the most famous of the Greek philosophers, were primarily concerned with the nature of mankind. However, in the years before Socrates, Greek philosophers were more concerned with the nature of the universe.

Pre-Socratic Philosophers

The earliest of the Greek philosophers, known as the Pre-Socratic Philosophers, worked and theorized during the sixth and early fifth centuries BCE. Among them were a number of philosophers who were based in Miletus, on the western coast of Turkey. These were known collectively as the Milesian School.

Thales, who lived around 546 BCE, when Cyrus the Great and Croesus were fighting in Lydia in western Turkey, was considered to be one of the seven wise men of the ancient world. It is said that he accurately predicted an eclipse and that he successfully diverted, or perhaps split in two, a broad river so that Croesus's army could easily cross. However, he was probably best known for his ideas about the makeup of the universe. He theorized that all matter was made up of water—that everything that we see is made up of water. He also thought that the earth was flat and that it was floating in a sea of water. All of this may sound a bit ludicrous today, but remember that back in the sixth century BCE nobody had any idea about the nature of the universe.

Thales had several students, among whom was a philosopher named Anaximander. He also had ideas about the makeup of the universe. Rejecting Thales's ideas, he believed that everything in the universe came out of four elements: hot, cold, moist, and dry. He also hypothesized that fire, rather than water, underlay everything. Rather than the earth being flat, he thought that it was shaped like a cylinder—resembling a modern-day Coke can—and that we were walking around on its flat top, while it was floating free in space, equidistant from all other things.

Another student of Thales, who also belonged to the Milesian school, was a philosopher named Anaximenes. He rejected both Thales's and Anaximander's ideas and suggested instead that everything in the universe was made up of "aer." He said that this "aer" was a fine mist that could change and condense into dense objects such as chairs and tables, or which

could be more ephemeral like wind and clouds. He was seen as the culmination of the Milesian School.

Other Philosophers

There were numerous other pre-Socratic philosophers, of whom perhaps the most well known was Pythagoras of Samos (ca. 569–475 BCE). He is the first person, as far as we know, to actually call himself a philosopher—meaning a “lover of wisdom”—from the Greek words *philo* (love) and *sophos* (wisdom). Pythagoras is now primarily remembered for his contribution to mathematics, namely the Pythagorean theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$) for a right triangle, but this theorem came about because Pythagoras was convinced that numbers were the key to understanding the universe. He also believed that there was an intimate relationship between numbers and music; of course, he was correct in that belief.

Closest to us today, perhaps, are the theories espoused by several other pre-Socratic philosophers, including Leucippus (ca. 450 BCE), and his student Democritus (ca. 460–370 BCE), who said that the universe was composed of tiny particles that were both indivisible and uncuttable—in other words, they could not be made any smaller. In Greek they are called *atomoi*. If this looks vaguely familiar, it is because our modern-day atomic theory (of the nature of the universe) is based upon similar thinking.

Socrates

Socrates, who lived and taught in Athens during the fifth century BCE (470–399 BCE), is probably most famous for his teaching style, which was named after him and is known as the “Socratic Method.” When using this teaching method, the teacher continually asks the student questions. If the student asks the teacher a question in return, the teacher simply responds with another question, forcing the student to attempt to answer the question themselves.

Teaching in this manner can be annoying to the student, although it is also fairly effective, and Socrates made a number of enemies in Athens during his lifetime. Matters were not helped by the fact that he also made it part of his business to question the leaders of the city and to show that they were neither as knowledgeable nor as capable as they thought they were or had made themselves out to be.

Eventually, after the end of the Peloponnesian War, when there was a different political climate in Athens, Socrates was brought up on charges of not believing in the gods and unduly influencing the young men of the city. Both were trumped-up charges, but Socrates succeeded in alienating the jury enough that they first found him guilty and then subsequently sentenced him to death.

The story of Socrates’ submitting to the jury’s decision and drinking poisonous hemlock in the year 399 BCE, when he was almost seventy years old, is one of the most touching stories from antiquity; we read about it in Plato’s *Apology*. With Socrates’ death, Greece—and the world—lost one of their most interesting and intriguing philosophers ever to walk the land.

Plato

Socrates did not leave anything behind in the way of writings. Everything that we know about him and that is attributed to him comes to us courtesy of his most famous student, Plato (ca. 428–348 BCE). Plato was still a fairly young man when Socrates was put to death; the death of his mentor influenced him greatly.

Plato left a tremendous number of manuscripts, ranging from short philosophical treatises to the multichapter book entitled *The Republic*. As well as accidentally-on-purpose giving us the story of Atlantis as an example of the perfect city-state, Plato's investigations into the nature of humankind have left us with all sorts of intriguing insights into what it means, and what it takes, to be good and just. His allegories live on, particularly in "The Cave," in which he leads us to question whether what we think is real is in fact reality or whether it is simply a shadow of the truth—and, if we learn the truth, are we brave enough to try to enlighten others rather than simply keep it to ourselves?

The questions that Plato asked and attempted to answer, frequently using the character of Socrates as his foil, are universal. They are questions that students and philosophers alike are still asking and attempting to answer today. Plato asked these questions in the school in Athens that he founded, called the Academy, which lasted until the late fourth century CE.

Aristotle

Aristotle, who lived from 384 to 322 BCE, was essentially a combination of all the philosophers who had come before him, although in the end one might say that he was a bit more of a scientist, reverting back to studying the universe and basic science. He founded another school in Athens, called the Lyceum, which was a rival to Plato's Academy and which also lasted until the late fourth century CE.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What famous saying is attributed to the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus?
2. Do you think that Socrates was guilty of the charges on which he was tried and convicted?

Suggested Reading

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Lecture 13: Phillip II and Alexander the Great

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 19: "The Warrior-Kings of Macedon") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 10: "Phillip II and the Rise of Macedon" and chapter 11: "Alexander the Great").



With the power of Athens broken by Sparta at the end of the fifth century BCE, the way was opened for other Greek city-states, and even foreigners from outside the area, to seize control. The fourth century was a time of conflict, involving numerous Greek city-states. However, in the middle of the century, a new power arose to the north and swept down over all of Greece. These were the Macedonians, led first by Phillip II and then by his son Alexander—known to us now as Alexander the Great.

Phillip II

As a young man, Phillip was sent from Macedonia to live in the Greek city-state of Thebes, as a royal hostage. This was not uncommon in that period, but Phillip made unique use of his situation. While in Thebes, he was able to study the military tactics of the military genius Epaminondas and the activities of Thebes's famous military unit, the Sacred Band. Upon returning home to Macedonia, Phillip set about establishing his rule and then expanding it.

The Greeks were not unaware of Phillip's activities to the north of them. Demosthenes, one of the most famous of the Greek orators, sounded a constant note of warning in his speeches that he wrote as tirades against Phillip. These are known as the "Phillipics"—a term that we still use today when someone goes on an oral tirade against another person or topic. Unfortunately for them, the Greeks ignored Demosthenes, and Phillip, until it was too late.

Alexander the Great

Alexander was the son of Phillip II and a woman named Olympias, who was said to have practiced some strange religious rituals and to sleep with snakes. She always said that a god had visited her in her sleep and that he, not Phillip, was Alexander's father. It was also said that on the night of Alexander's birth in 356 BCE, the famous Temple of Artemis at Ephesus—one of the Seven Wonders of the World—burned down, because Artemis was too busy overseeing Alexander's birth to mind the well-being of her own temple.

As a young boy, Alexander was tutored by the famous Greek philosopher and scientist Aristotle. He and a number of close childhood friends went with Aristotle and were schooled some distance from the capital city where Phillip was ruling, so as not to be exposed to the antics that went on at the royal

court. These childhood friends were to serve Alexander well for much of his short life.

Battle of Chaeronea

By 338 BCE, when Alexander was eighteen years old, his father had decided to invade and capture Greece. Riding hard from their homelands in Macedonia, directly to the north of Greece, Phillip and his army swept over the Greek city-states one by one. At Chaeronea, located near Delphi and Thermopylae in central Boeotia, the Greeks decided to make a stand. They very nearly defeated Phillip, until Alexander and the Macedonian cavalry came charging out to win the day. With Alexander's help, the Macedonians defeated the Greeks. It was Alexander's first victory; it would not be his last.

Phillip went on to conquer the rest of the Greek city-states. He formed a new cooperative league, known as the League of Corinth, and savored the moment as the first man to conquer all of Greece in a very long time, if ever. He then proceeded to make plans to march east and take on the Persians, who were still the most formidable force in the known world at that time.

Assassination

However, in 336 BCE, before he could undertake this new campaign, Phillip was assassinated. It was rumored that his own wife, Olympias, was behind the assassination, but as the assassin himself had been killed on the spot, there was no way to find out for certain. Phillip had recently taken another wife (he had several), who had subsequently given birth to a baby boy. This young baby was a natural rival to Alexander, as the only other male offspring that Phillip had produced. It would be no surprise to learn that Olympias had engineered the assassination of Phillip, especially when one learns that the young mother and her new baby were also murdered immediately afterward.

In any event, the way was now clear for Alexander to assume the throne; he was only twenty years old.

Alexander's First Years

Many of the Greek city-states rose up in revolt at the news of Phillip's death. Alexander had to spend the first few months of his rule quelling these rebellions. He used Thebes as an example—setting fire to the town after capturing it, killing most of the men, and enslaving the women and children. The rest of the Greek city-states capitulated and agreed to his rule without further ado.

Alexander then began making plans to take up his father's goal of attacking the Persian empire. It took him two years to gather a sufficient army composed of both Macedonians and Greeks, but then he was ready.

War against the Persians

In 334 BCE, Alexander crossed the Hellespont into Turkey and began the campaign of his life. Almost immediately he fought a battle against a combined force of Persians and local tribesmen, at the Granicus (or Granikos) River. He then marched down the western coast of Turkey, recapturing the Greek cities of Ionia, which had been under Persian domination since the failed Ionian Revolt from 499 to 494 BCE.

Moving inland, Alexander went out of his way to visit the city of Gordion (or Gordium). Here was the famous Gordion Knot, of which it was said whomever could undo the tangled knot would rule over all of Asia. Tradition says that Alexander simply pulled out his sword and cut the knot in half, and then went on to conquer and rule over most of Asia, thus fulfilling the prophecy.

In 333 BCE, Alexander fought his second major battle against the Persians at the Issus (or Issos) River near where the borders of modern Turkey and northern Syria meet today. Here he came up against the forces of Darius III, king of all Persia. Alexander vanquished these forces and Darius himself fled, leaving behind his golden bathtub and members of his family, including his wife and daughters. Alexander treated them well, with respect and dignity, but was amazed at the golden bathtub. The later Greek and Roman world remembered this battle well; in later Pompeii, one houseowner rendered the battle in a mosaic, showing both Alexander and Darius in detail during the midst of the fighting.

Marching down the coast of the Levant—modern-day Syria, Lebanon, and Israel—Alexander next conquered Egypt, and was crowned Pharaoh. He also visited the Oracle at Siwah, deep in the desert, and founded the city of Alexandria, which still exists today.

The final major battle against the Persians came in 331 BCE, at Gaugamela, in what is now modern Iraq. Here he defeated the Persian king Darius III once again, and once again Darius himself fled, only to be ignominiously slain by a local tribesman hoping for a reward from Alexander. With the defeat of the Persian forces at Gaugamela, the rest of the Persian empire lay open to Alexander and his men.

The Final Years

After campaigning through what is now Iran, Afghanistan, and parts of India, Alexander's men finally rebelled and forced him to begin the long trek back home. They had been gone for eleven long years. Alexander himself had become increasingly strange and foreign to them, prone to violent mood swings. Still, he harbored plans to continue conquering the world; he intended to march through Saudi Arabia and then to sail over to the strange land of Italy, where a group called the Romans had attracted his interest.

All his future plans came to naught, however, as Alexander died suddenly of a fever in the famous city of Babylon. The year was 332 BCE and Alexander was only thirty-three years old. He died without naming an heir, even though his new wife Roxane had just given birth to a baby boy.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What do we think happened at the Oracle of Siwah in Egypt during Alexander's visit?
2. How many cities named Alexandria were founded by Alexander across his empire?

Suggested Reading

Morris, Ian, and Barry B. Powell. *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

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Lecture 14: Alexander's Legacies and His Successors

The **Suggested Readings** for this lecture are Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell's *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (chapter 20: "The Hellenistic Century" and chapter 21: "Hellenistic Culture") and Sarah B. Pomeroy et al.'s *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (chapter 12: "Alexander's Successors and the Cosmopolis").



On the final trek back to Babylon, before he died, Alexander presided over a marriage of thousands of his soldiers to local women. It has long been wondered, even by the ancient Greeks and Romans themselves, whether this was part of a larger plan hatched by Alexander to unify East and West. Plutarch went so far as to state that Alexander "conducted himself as he did out of a desire to subject all the races in the world to one rule and one form of government, making all mankind a single people." However, Alexander's premature death stopped any such plans in their tracks. Or did it?

The Hellenistic World

Alexander's campaigns succeeded in spreading Greek (known as Hellenic or Hellenistic) culture across the known world. Greek practices, architecture, philosophy, medicine, and other arts were brought to the eastern lands. In return, eastern architecture, philosophy, medicine, and other arts were brought back to Greece. The resulting fusion became known as the Hellenistic world; it was truly a cosmopolitan world, which lasted for nearly three hundred years, from 332 BCE until 30 BCE.

During this period, for example, medicine flourished, practiced by the followers of Hippocrates, who had lived from 460 to 377 BCE. The Hippocratic Oath, still uttered by physicians today, was created, and medical techniques advanced.

Philosophy, too, continued to move forward. New figures who emerged during the Hellenistic Period included Epicurus (341–270 BCE) and Zeno (335–263 BCE).

The sciences continued apace as well. Eratosthenes of Cyrene (276–194 BCE) created a map of the world, while Archimedes of Syracuse (287–212 BCE) invented and discovered many wonderful things. Two of his most famous discoveries and inventions included the principle of the lever (reportedly he said, "Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth") and the principle of specific gravity (reportedly made when he dropped a bar of soap into his bathtub; he then jumped out and ran down the streets of the city naked, shouting "Eureka!").

Alexander's Successors

Unfortunately, because Alexander had not named an heir before he died, it was not clear who was meant to succeed him. His top generals therefore proceeded to divide his empire among themselves, leading to a great deal of bloodshed over the next few decades and even centuries.

The most famous divisions resulted in the country of Egypt going to Alexander's general Ptolemy and the area of modern-day Syria, Lebanon, and Israel (plus much of what had once been Mesopotamia) going to his general Seleucus. These two family groups, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, would fight over control of the general region for the next two centuries or more.

The Seleucids

The dynasty descended from Alexander's general Seleucus was known as the Seleucids and the male rulers were usually named either Seleucus or Antiochus. The most infamous of these rulers was named Antiochus IV. He ruled during the second century BCE and was responsible for igniting the Maccabean Rebellion in 167 BCE, which resulted in the Jews overthrowing their Greek overlords and establishing the independent Hasmonean kingdom in the land of Israel.

The rebellion was touched off by Antiochus's proclamations forbidding the Jews from observing the Sabbath and circumcising their male children, as well as his sacrifice of a pig on an altar that had been set up on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. When the rebellion—led by Judah “the Hammer” Maccabee—was successful, the sacred oil in the Temple was relit and lasted for eight days before it had to be replenished, which gave rise to the festival of Hanukkah that is still celebrated today.

The Ptolemies

The dynasty descended from Alexander's general Ptolemy was known as the Ptolemies and the male rulers were usually named Ptolemy—all of which makes a certain amount of sense. The most famous of the Ptolemies include Ptolemy II, who lived from 309 to 246 BCE and who built the famous Library of Alexandria in Egypt, which contained the largest collection of manuscripts and writings in the ancient world. He also built the famous Pharos, or Lighthouse, of Alexandria, which became one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Cleopatra

More famous even than Ptolemy II was the female ruler Cleopatra VII, better known to us today as simply Cleopatra. A direct descendant of the original Ptolemy, Alexander's general, she was born in approximately 70 BCE and came to the throne of Egypt when she was about twenty years old. She is said to have been rather plain in appearance—contrary to her depictions by Hollywood actresses such as Elizabeth Taylor—but spoke many different languages and was a strong and attractive ruler in her own way. It is even said that she was the first, of all the Ptolemaic rulers, to actually learn to speak the Egyptian language.

She spent much of her rule interacting with Rome and the Romans. Principal among these was Julius Caesar, with whom she had a son named Ptolemy Caesar. After Caesar was assassinated, she became involved with Mark Antony and had three children with him, including twins named Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene (the Sun and the Moon).

The End of the Hellenistic Period

With the death of Cleopatra in 30 BCE, the Hellenistic Period came to an end. With its end came also the end of Alexander's influence and even the end of ancient Greek history proper. The Romans now took over Greece and all of the territory that had been captured by Alexander the Great. At this point, the history of this region becomes Roman history rather than Greek history. More specifically, it becomes the history of the Roman Empire, for the earlier period of the Roman Republic had also come to an end in 30 BCE, marked by the suicide of Mark Antony, who died in Cleopatra's arms in the city of Alexandria in Egypt. It is both an interesting coincidence and an interesting side-note to history that the history of Greece and Rome became intertwined in such a way during the lifetime of Cleopatra. But to learn about how that history continued in the people and events of the Roman Empire is to move into new topics, and a new course, altogether.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What do the ancient sources tell us about the Pharos (Lighthouse) of Alexandria?
2. How does Plutarch describe Cleopatra?

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