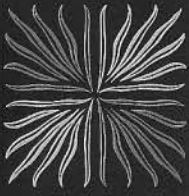


PART TWO



THE FORMATION OF NEW CULTURAL COMMUNITIES, 1000 B.C.E.—600 C.E.

CHAPTER 4

Greece and Iran, 1000–30 B.C.E.

CHAPTER 5

An Age of Empires: Rome and Han China, 753 B.C.E.—600 C.E.

CHAPTER 6

India and Southeast Asia, 1500 B.C.E.—600 C.E.

CHAPTER 7

Networks of Communication and Exchange, 300 B.C.E.—600 C.E.

From 1000 B.C.E. to 600 C.E. important changes in the ways of life established in the river-valley civilizations in the two previous millennia occurred, and the scale of human institutions and activities increased. On the shores of the Mediterranean and in Iran, India, and Southeast Asia, new centers arose in lands watered by rainfall and worked by a free peasantry. These societies developed new patterns of political and social organization and economic activity, and they moved in new intellectual, artistic, and spiritual directions.

The rulers of the empires of this era constructed extensive networks of roads and promoted urbanization. These measures brought more rapid communication, trade over greater distances, and the broad diffusion of religious ideas, artistic styles, and technologies. Large cultural zones unified by common traditions emerged—Iranian, Hellenistic, Roman, Hindu, and Chinese—and exercised substantial influence on subsequent ages.

The expansion of agriculture and trade and improvements in technology led to population increases, the spread of cities, and the growth of a comfortable middle class. In many places iron replaced bronze as the preferred metal

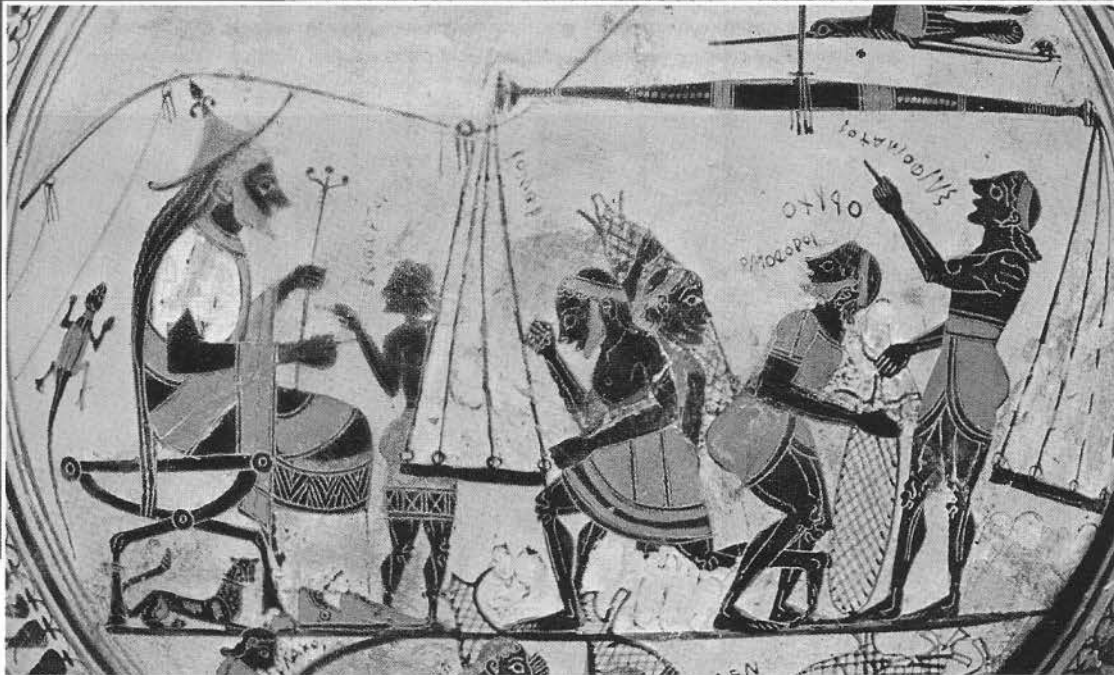
Map of the Roman World, ca. 250 c.e.

The Peutinger Table, drawn on a 22-foot-long manuscript of the twelfth century c.e., is ultimately derived from a map of the world as known to inhabitants of the Roman Empire ca. 100 c.e. This portion depicts (from top to bottom) southern Russia, Greece on the left, Anatolia on the right, the island of Crete, and the north coast of Africa. The main purpose appears to have been to show roads and distances, and sizes and geographical relationships of places are often distorted. (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek)



for weapons, tools, and utensils, and metals were available to more people than in the preceding age. People using iron tools cleared extensive forests around the Mediterranean, in India, and in eastern China. Iron weapons gave an advantage to the armies of Greece, Rome, and imperial China.

New systems of writing, more easily and rapidly learned, moved the preservation and transmission of knowledge out of the control of specialists and gave birth to new ways of thinking, new genres of literature, and new types of scientific endeavor.



Painted Cup of Arcesilas of Cyrene

The ruler of this Greek community in North Africa supervises the weighing and export of silphium, a valuable medicinal plant.
(Bibliothèque nationale de France)

- How did the Persian Empire rise from its Iranian homeland and spread to encompass diverse cultures?
- How did Greek civilization evolve and spread beyond its original territories?
- How did the Persian Wars and their aftermath affect the politics and culture of ancient Greece?
- How did a cultural synthesis develop during the Hellenistic Age?



4

GREECE AND IRAN, 1000–30 B.C.E.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Ancient Iran, 1000–500 B.C.E.

The Rise of the Greeks, 1000–500 B.C.E.

The Struggle of Persia and Greece, 546–323 B.C.E.

The Hellenistic Synthesis, 323–30 B.C.E.

Comparative Perspectives

DIVERSITY AND DOMINANCE: Persian and Greek Perceptions of Kingship

MATERIAL CULTURE: Wine and Beer in the Ancient World

ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY: Ancient Astronomy

The Greek historian Herodotus^o (ca. 485–425 B.C.E.) often inserts background information about a given people at the point in his narrative where he relates their conquest and incorporation into the superpower of his time, the vast Persian Empire. He describes a famine on the island of Thera in the Aegean Sea in the seventh century B.C.E. and relates that the desperate inhabitants responded by sending out a portion of the community's young men to found a new settlement on the coast of North Africa (modern Libya) called Cyrene. This is one of our best descriptions of the process by which Greeks spread from their homeland to many parts of the Mediterranean and Black Seas between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C.E., carrying their language, technology, and culture with them. Cyrene became a large



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Herodotus (heh-ROD-uh-tuhs)

and prosperous city-state, largely thanks to its exports of silphium—a plant valued for its medicinal properties—as seen in this image on a painted cup of Arcesilas, the ruler of Cyrene, supervising the weighing and transport of the product. When the second ruler of the Persian Empire, Cambyses^o, invaded Egypt in the 520s B.C.E., Cyrene sensibly sent a delegation to him and acknowledged Persian supremacy.

Herodotus's account of the submission of Cyrene portrays one of the more peaceful instances among the many encounters of the city-states of Greece with the Persian Empire in the sixth, fifth, and fourth centuries B.C.E., and it reminds us that the Persian Empire (and the Hellenistic Greek kingdoms that succeeded it) brought together, in eastern Europe, western Asia, and northwest Africa, peoples and cultural systems that previously had known little direct contact, thereby stimulating new and exciting cultural syntheses. In this chapter we look at the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia in the first millennium B.C.E., emphasizing the experiences of the Persians and Greeks. The rivalry and wars of Greeks and Persians from the sixth to fourth centuries B.C.E. are traditionally seen as the first act of a drama that has continued intermittently ever since: the clash of the civilizations of East and West, of two peoples and two ways of life that were fundamentally different and thus almost certain to come into conflict. Some see current tensions between the United States and Middle Eastern states such as Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan as the latest manifestation of this age-old conflict.

Ironically, Greeks and Persians had far more in common than they realized. Both spoke languages belonging to the same Indo-European family of languages found throughout Europe and western and southern Asia. Many scholars believe that all the ancient peoples who spoke languages belonging to this family inherited fundamental cultural traits, forms of social organization, and religious outlooks from their shared past.

Cambyses (kam-BIE-sees)

ANCIENT IRAN, 1000–500 B.C.E.

Iran, the “land of the Aryans,” links western Asia and southern and Central Asia, and its history has been marked by this mediating position (see Map 4.1). In the sixth century B.C.E. the vigorous Persians of southwest Iran created the largest empire the world had yet seen.

Relatively little written material from within the Persian Empire has survived, so we are forced to view it mostly through the eyes of the ancient Greeks—outsiders who were ignorant at best, usually hostile, and interested primarily in events that affected themselves. (Iranian groups and individuals are known in the Western world by Greek approximations of their names; thus these familiar forms are used here, with the original Iranian names given in parentheses.) This Greek perspective leaves us unaware of developments in the central and eastern portions of the Persian Empire. Nevertheless, recent archaeological discoveries and close analysis of the limited written material from within the empire can supplement and correct the perspective of the Greek sources.



Geography and Resources

Iran is bounded by the Zagros^o Mountains to the west, the Caucasus^o Mountains and Caspian Sea to the northwest and north,

the mountains of Afghanistan and the desert of Baluchistan^o to the east and southeast, and the Persian Gulf to the southwest. The northeast is less protected by natural boundaries, and from that direction Iran was open to attacks by the nomads of Central Asia.

The fundamental topographical features of Iran are high mountains at the edges, salt deserts in the interior depressions, and mountain streams crossing a sloping plateau and draining into seas or interior salt lakes and marshes. Humans trying to survive in these harsh lands had to find ways to exploit limited water resources. Unlike the valleys of the Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, Ganges, and Yellow Rivers, ancient Iran never had a dense population. The best-watered and most populous parts of the country lie to the north and west; aridity increases and population decreases as one moves south and east. The Great Salt Desert, which covers most of eastern Iran, and Baluchistan in the southeast corner were extremely inhospitable.

Zagros (ZUHG-roes) **Caucasus** (KAW-kuh-suhs)
Baluchistan (buh-loo-chi-STAN)

C H R O N O L O G Y		
	Greece and the Hellenistic World	Persian Empire
1000 B.C.E.	1150–800 B.C.E. Greece's "Dark Age"	ca. 1000 B.C.E. Persians settle in southwest Iran
800 B.C.E.	ca. 800 B.C.E. Resumption of Greek contact with eastern Mediterranean 800–480 B.C.E. Greece's Archaic Period ca. 750–550 B.C.E. Era of colonization ca. 700 B.C.E. Beginning of hoplite warfare ca. 650–500 B.C.E. Era of tyrants	
600 B.C.E.	594 B.C.E. Solon reforms laws at Athens 546–510 B.C.E. Pisistratus and sons hold tyranny at Athens	550 B.C.E. Cyrus overthrows Medes 550–530 B.C.E. Reign of Cyrus 546 B.C.E. Cyrus conquers Lydia 539 B.C.E. Cyrus takes control of Babylonia 530–522 B.C.E. Reign of Cambyses; Conquest of Egypt 522–486 B.C.E. Reign of Darius
500 B.C.E.	499–494 B.C.E. Ionian Greeks rebel against Persia 490 B.C.E. Athenians check Persian punitive expedition at Marathon 480–323 B.C.E. Greece's Classical Period 477 B.C.E. Athens becomes leader of Delian League 461–429 B.C.E. Pericles dominant at Athens; Athens completes evolution to democracy	480–479 B.C.E. Xerxes' invasion of Greece
400 B.C.E.	431–404 B.C.E. Peloponnesian War 399 B.C.E. Trial and execution of Socrates 359 B.C.E. Philip II becomes king of Macedonia 338 B.C.E. Philip takes control of Greece	387 B.C.E. King's Peace makes Persia arbiter of Greek affairs 334–323 B.C.E. Alexander the Great defeats Persia and creates huge empire 323–30 B.C.E. Hellenistic period
300 B.C.E.	317 B.C.E. End of democracy in Athens ca. 300 B.C.E. Foundation of the Museum in Alexandria	
100 B.C.E.	200 B.C.E. First Roman intervention in the Hellenistic East 30 B.C.E. Roman annexation of Egypt, the last Hellenistic kingdom	



Map 4.1 The Persian Empire Between 550 and 522 B.C.E., the Persians of southwest Iran, under their first two kings, Cyrus and Cambyses, conquered each of the major states of western Asia—Media, Babylonia, Lydia, and Egypt. The third king, Darius I, extended the boundaries as far as the Indus Valley to the east and the European shore of the Black Sea to the west. The first major setback came when the fourth king, Xerxes, failed in his invasion of Greece in 480 B.C.E. The Persian Empire was considerably larger than its recent predecessor, the Assyrian Empire. For their empire, the Persian rulers developed a system of provinces, governors, regular tribute, and communication by means of royal roads and couriers that allowed for efficient operations for almost two centuries.

Scattered settlements in the narrow plains beside the Persian Gulf were cut off from the interior plateau by mountain barriers.

In the first millennium B.C.E. irrigation enabled people to move down from the mountain valleys and open the plains to agriculture. To prevent evaporation in the hot, dry climate, they devised underground irrigation channels. Constructing and maintaining these subterranean channels and the vertical shafts that provided access to them was labor-intensive. Normally, local leaders oversaw the expansion of the network in each district. Activity accelerated when a strong central authority was able to organize large numbers of laborers. The connection between royal authority and prosperity is evident in the ideology of the first Persian Empire (discussed below). Even so, human survival depended on a delicate ecological balance, and a buildup of salt in the soil or a falling water table sometimes forced the abandonment of settlements.

Iran's mineral resources—copper, tin, iron, gold, and silver—were exploited on a limited scale in antiquity. Mountain slopes, more heavily wooded than they are now, provided fuel and materials for building and crafts. Because this austere land could not generate much of an agricultural surplus, objects of trade tended to be minerals and crafted goods.

The Rise of the Persian Empire

In antiquity many groups of people, whom historians refer to collectively as “Iranians” because they spoke related languages and shared certain cultural features, spread out across western and Central Asia. Several of these groups arrived in western Iran near the end of the second millennium B.C.E. The first to achieve a complex level of political organization were the Medes (Mada in Iranian).

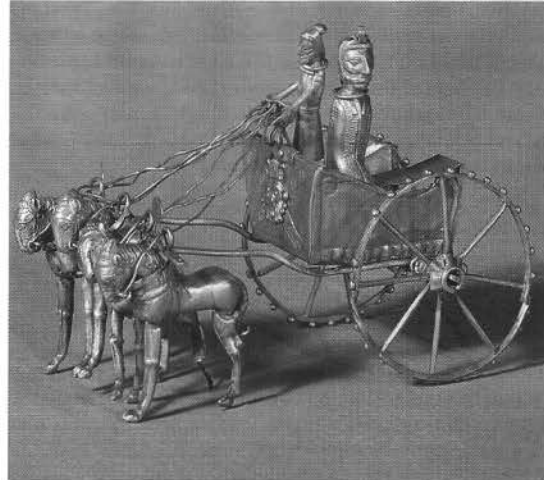
They settled in the northwest and came under the influence of the ancient centers in Mesopotamia and Urartu (modern Armenia and northeast Turkey). The Medes played a major role in the destruction of the Assyrian Empire in the late seventh century B.C.E. and extended their control westward across Assyria into Anatolia (modern Turkey). They also projected their power south-east toward the Persian Gulf, a region occupied by another Iranian people, the Persians (Parsa).

The Persian rulers—now called Achaemenids^o because they traced their lineage back to an ancestor named Achaemenes—cemented their relationship with the Median court through marriage. Cyrus (Kurush), the son of a Persian chieftain and a Median princess, united the various Persian tribes and overthrew the Median monarch sometime around 550 B.C.E. Cyrus placed both Medes and Persians in positions of responsibility and retained the framework of Median rule. The differences between these two Iranian peoples—principally differences in the dialects they spoke and the way they dressed—were not great. The Greeks could not readily tell the two apart.

Like most Indo-European peoples, the early inhabitants of western Iran had a patriarchal family organization: the male head of the household had nearly absolute authority over family members. Society was divided into three social and occupational classes: warriors, priests, and peasants. Warriors were the dominant element. A landowning aristocracy, they took pleasure in hunting, fighting, and gardening. The king was the most illustrious member of this group. The priests, or Magi (*magush*), were ritual specialists who supervised the proper performance of sacrifices. The common people—peasants—were primarily village-based farmers and shepherds.

Over the course of two decades the energetic Cyrus (r. 550–530 B.C.E.) redrew the map of western Asia. In 546 B.C.E. he prevailed in a cavalry battle outside the gates of Sardis, the capital of the kingdom of Lydia in western Anatolia, reportedly because the smell of his camels caused a panic among his opponents' horses. All Anatolia, including the Greek city-states on the western coast, came under Persian control. In 539 B.C.E. he swept into Mesopotamia, where the Neo-Babylonian dynasty had ruled since the collapse of Assyrian power (see Chapter 3). Cyrus made a deal with disaffected elements within Babylon, and when he and his army approached, the gates of the city were thrown open to him without a struggle. A skillful propagandist, Cyrus showed respect to the Babylonian priesthood and had his son crowned king in accordance with native traditions.

Achaemenid (a-KEY-muh-nid)



Model of Four-Horse Chariot from the Eastern Achaemenid Empire This model is part of the Oxus Treasure, a cache of gold and silver objects discovered in Tajikistan. Seated on a bench next to the chariot driver, the main figure wears a long robe, a hood, and a torque around his neck, the garb of a Persian noble. It is uncertain whether this model was a child's toy or a votive offering to a deity. (Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)

After Cyrus lost his life in 530 B.C.E. while campaigning against a coalition of nomadic Iranians in the northeast, his son Cambyses (Kambujiya, r. 530–522 B.C.E.) set his sights on Egypt, the last of the great ancient kingdoms of the Middle East. The Persians prevailed over the Egyptians in a series of bloody battles; then they sent exploratory expeditions south to Nubia and west to Libya. Greek sources depict Cambyses as a cruel and impious madman, but contemporary documents from Egypt show him operating in the same practical vein as his father, cultivating local priests and notables and respecting native traditions.

When Cambyses died in 522 B.C.E., Darius^o I (Darayavaush) seized the throne. His success in crushing many early challenges to his rule was a testimony to his skill, energy, and ruthlessness. From this reign forward, Medes played a lesser role, and the most important posts went to members of leading Persian families. Darius (r. 522–486 B.C.E.) extended Persian control eastward as far as the Indus Valley and westward into Europe, where he bridged the Danube River and chased the nomadic

Darius (duh-RIE-uhs)

Scythian^o peoples north of the Black Sea. The Persians erected a string of forts in Thrace (modern-day northeast Greece and Bulgaria) and by 500 B.C.E. were on the doorstep of Greece. Darius also promoted the development of maritime routes. He dispatched a fleet to explore the waters from the Indus Delta to the Red Sea, and he completed a canal linking the Red Sea with the Nile.

Imperial Organization and Ideology

The empire of Darius I was the largest the world had yet seen (see Map 4.1). Stretching from eastern Europe to Pakistan, from southern Russia to Sudan, it encompassed a multitude of ethnic groups and many forms of social and political organization, from nomadic kinship group to subordinate kingdom to city-state. Darius can rightly be considered a second founder of the Persian Empire, after Cyrus, because he created a new organizational structure that was maintained throughout the remaining two centuries of the empire's existence.

Darius divided the empire into twenty provinces. Each was under the supervision of a Persian satrap^o, or governor, who was likely to be related or connected by marriage to the royal family. The satrap's court was a miniature version of the royal court. The tendency for the position of satrap to become hereditary meant that satraps' families lived in the province governed by their head, acquired a fund of knowledge about local conditions, and formed connections with the local native elite. The farther a province was from the center of the empire, the more autonomy the satrap had, because slow communications made it impractical to refer most matters to the central administration. This system of administration brought significant numbers of Persians and other peoples from the center of the empire to the provinces, resulting in intermarriage and cultural and technological exchanges.

One of the satrap's most important duties was to collect and send tribute to the king. Darius prescribed how much precious metal each province was to contribute annually. This amount was forwarded to the central treasury. Some of it was disbursed for necessary expenditures, but most was hoarded. As more and more precious metal was taken out of circulation, the price of gold and silver rose, and provinces found it increasingly difficult to meet their quotas. Evidence from Babylonia indicates a gradual economic decline setting in by the fourth century B.C.E.

Well-maintained and patrolled royal roads connected the outlying provinces to the heart of the empire. Way stations were built at intervals to receive important travelers and couriers carrying official correspondence. At strategic points, such as mountain passes, river crossings, and important urban centers, garrisons controlled people's movements. The administrative center of the empire was Susa, the ancient capital of Elam, in southwest Iran near the present-day border with Iraq.

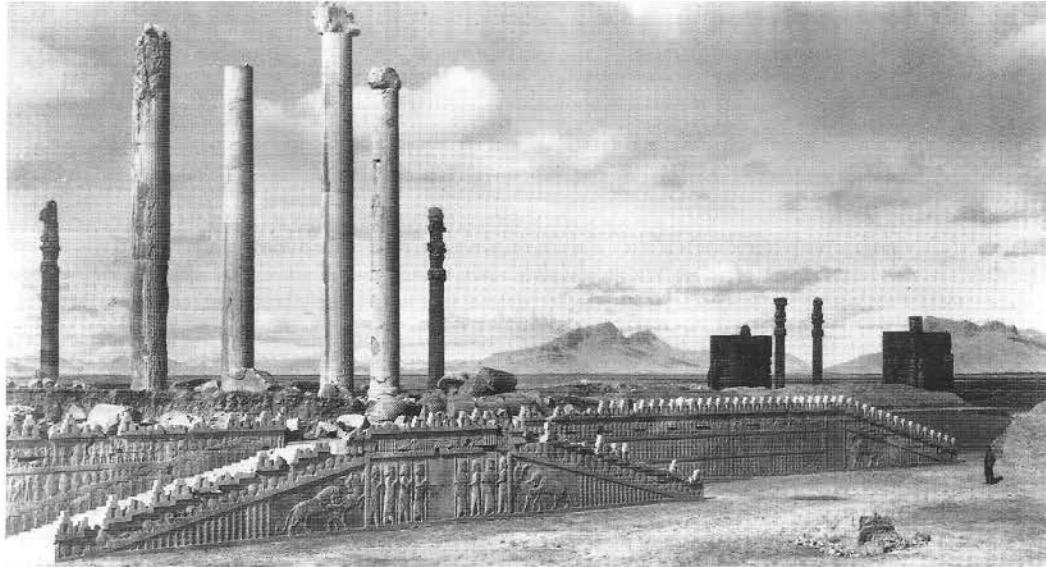
The king lived and traveled with his numerous wives and children. The little information that we have about the lives of Persian royal women comes from foreign sources and is thus suspect. The Book of Esther in the Hebrew Bible tells a romantic story of how King Ahasuerus^o (Xerxes^o to the Greeks) picked the beautiful Jewish woman Esther to be one of his wives and how the courageous and clever queen later saved the Jewish people from a plot to massacre them. Greek sources show women of the royal family being used as pawns in the struggle for power. Darius strengthened his claim to the throne by marrying a daughter of Cyrus, and later the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great married a daughter of the last Persian king. Greek sources portray Persian queens as vicious intriguers. However, a recent study suggests that the Greek stereotype misrepresents the important role played by Persian women in protecting family members and mediating conflicts. Both Greek sources and documents within the empire reveal that Persian elite women were politically influential, possessed substantial property, traveled, and were prominent on public occasions.

Besides the royal family, the king's large entourage included several other groups: (1) the sons of Persian aristocrats, who were educated at court and also served as hostages for their parents' good behavior; (2) many noblemen, who were expected to attend the king when they were not otherwise engaged; (3) the central administration, including officials and employees of the treasury, secretariat, and archives; (4) the royal bodyguard; and (5) countless courtiers and slaves. Long gone were the simple days when the king hunted and caroused with his warrior companions. Inspired by Mesopotamian conceptions of monarchy, the king of Persia had become an aloof figure of majesty and splendor: "The Great King, King of Kings, King in Persia, King of countries." He referred to everyone, even the Persian nobility, as "my slaves," and anyone who approached him had to bow down before him.

The king owned vast tracts of land throughout the empire. Some of it he gave to his supporters. Donations called

Scythian (SITH-ee-uhn) satrap (SAY-trap)

Ahasuerus (uh-HAZZ-yoo-ear-uhs) Xerxes (ZERK-sees)



View of the East Front of the Apadana (Audience Hall) at Persepolis, ca. 500 B.C.E. To the right lies the Gateway of Xerxes. Persepolis, in the Persian homeland, was built by Darius I and his son Xerxes, and it was used for ceremonies of special importance to the Persian king and people—coronations, royal weddings, funerals, and the New Year’s festival. The stone foundations, walls, and stairways of Persepolis are filled with sculpted images of members of the court and embassies bringing gifts, offering a vision of the grandeur and harmony of the Persian Empire. (Courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)

“bow land,” “horse land,” and “chariot land” in Babylonian documents obliged the recipient to provide military service. Scattered around the empire were gardens, orchards, and hunting preserves belonging to the king and the high nobility. The *paradayadam* (meaning “walled enclosure”—the term has come into English as *paradise*), a green oasis in an arid landscape, advertised the prosperity that the king could bring to those who loyally served him.

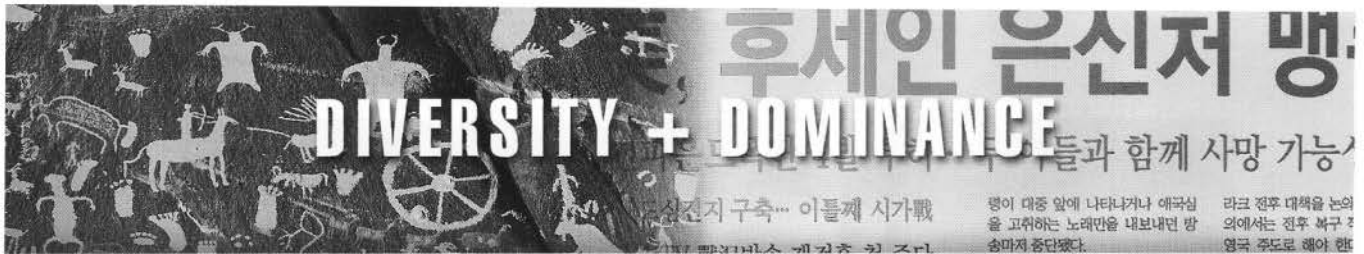
Surviving administrative records from the Persian homeland give us a glimpse of how the complex tasks of administration were managed. The Persepolis Treasury and Fortification Texts, inscribed in Elamite cuneiform on baked clay tablets, show that government officials distributed food and other essential commodities to large numbers of workers of many different nationalities. Some of these workers may have been prisoners of war brought to the center of the empire to work on construction projects, maintain and expand the irrigation network, and farm the royal estates. Workers were divided into groups of men, women, and children. Women received less than men of

equivalent status, but pregnant women and women with babies received more. Men and women performing skilled jobs received more than their unskilled counterparts.

Tradition remembered Darius as a lawgiver who created a body of “laws of the King” and a system of royal judges operating throughout the empire, as well as someone who encouraged the codification and publication of the laws of the various subject peoples. In a manner that typifies the decentralized character of the Persian Empire, he allowed each people to live in accordance with its own traditions and ordinances.

The central administration was based in Elam and Mesopotamia. This location allowed the kings to employ the trained administrators and scribes of those ancient civilizations. However, on certain occasions the kings returned to one special place back in the homeland. Darius began construction of a ceremonial capital at Persepolis (Parsa). An artificial platform was erected, and on it were built a series of palaces, audience halls, treasury buildings, and barracks. Here, too, Darius and his son Xerxes, who completed the project, were inspired by Mesopotamian traditions, for the great Assyrian kings had created new fortress-cities as advertisements of wealth and power.

Persepolis (Per-SEH-poe-lis)



Persian and Greek Perceptions of Kingship

Our most important internal source of information about the Persian Empire is a group of inscriptions commissioned by several kings. These texts provide valuable insights into how the kings conceived of the empire and their position as monarch, as well as the values they claimed to uphold. The most extensive and informative of these writings is the inscription that Darius had carved into a cliff face at Behistun (beh-HISS-toon), high above the road leading from Mesopotamia to northwest Iran through a pass in the Zagros mountain range. It is written in three versions—Old Persian, the language of the ruling people (quite possibly being put into written form for the first time); Elamite, the language native to the ancient kingdom lying between southern Mesopotamia and the Persian homeland and used in Persia for local administrative documents; and Akkadian, the language of Babylonia, widely used for administrative purposes throughout western Asia. The multilingual inscription accompanied a monumental relief representing Darius looming over a line of bound prisoners, the leaders of the many forces he had to defeat in order to secure the throne after the death of Cambyses in 522 B.C.E.

I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, the king of Persia, the king of countries, the son of Hystaspes, the grandson of Arsames, the Achaemenid . . . from antiquity we have been noble; from antiquity has our dynasty been royal. . . .

King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda am I king; Ahuramazda has granted me the kingdom.

King Darius says: These are the countries which are subject unto me, and by the grace of Ahuramazda I became king of them: Persia, Elam, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, the countries by the Sea, Lydia, the Greeks, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia and Maka; twenty-three lands in all.

King Darius says: These are the countries which are subject to me; by the grace of Ahuramazda they became subject to me; they brought tribute unto me. Whatsoever

commands have been laid on them by me, by night or by day, have been performed by them.

King Darius says: Within these lands, whosoever was a friend, him have I surely protected; whosoever was hostile, him have I utterly destroyed. . . . By the grace of Ahuramazda these lands have conformed to my decrees; as it was commanded unto them by me, so was it done.

King Darius says: Ahuramazda has granted unto me this empire. Ahuramazda brought me help, until I gained this empire; by the grace of Ahuramazda do I hold this empire.

King Darius says: The following is what was done by me after I became king.

A lengthy description of the many battles Darius and his supporters fought against a series of other claimants to power follows.

King Darius says: This is what I have done. By the grace of Ahuramazda have I always acted. After I became king, I fought nineteen battles in a single year and by the grace of Ahuramazda I overthrew nine kings and I made them captive. . . .

King Darius says: As to these provinces which revolted, lies made them revolt, so that they deceived the people. Then Ahuramazda delivered them into my hand; and I did unto them according to my will.

King Darius says: You who shall be king hereafter, protect yourself vigorously from lies; punish the liars well, if thus you shall think, "May my country be secure!" . . .

King Darius says: On this account Ahuramazda brought me help, and all the other gods, all that there are, because I was not wicked, nor was I a liar, nor was I a tyrant, neither I nor any of my family. I have ruled according to righteousness. Neither to the weak nor to the powerful did I do wrong. Whosoever helped my house, him I favored; he who was hostile, him I destroyed. . . .

King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda this is the inscription which I have made. Besides, it was in Aryan script, and it was composed on clay tablets and on parchment. Besides, a sculptured figure of myself I made. Besides, I made my lineage. And it was inscribed and was read off before me. Afterwards this inscription I sent off everywhere among the provinces. The people unitedly worked upon it.

This is an extremely important historical document. For all practical purposes, it is the only version we have of the circumstances by which Darius, who was not a member of the family of Cyrus, took over the Persian throne and established a new dynasty. The account of these events given by the Greek historian Herodotus, for all its additional (and often suspect) detail, is clearly based, however indirectly, on Darius's own account. While scholars have doubted the truthfulness of Darius's claims, the inscription is a resounding example of how the victors often get to impose their version of events on the historical record.

The Behistun inscription is certainly propaganda, but that does not mean that it lacks value. To be effective, propaganda must be predicated on the moral values, political principles, and religious beliefs that are familiar and acceptable in a society, and thus it can provide us with a window on those views. The Behistun inscription also allows us to glimpse something of the personality of Darius and how he wished to be perceived.

Another document, found at Persepolis, the magnificent ceremonial center built by Darius and his son Xerxes, expands on the qualities of an exemplary ruler. While it purports to be the words of Xerxes, it is almost an exact copy of an inscription of Darius from nearby Naqsh-e Rostam, where Darius and subsequent kings were buried in monumental tombs carved into the sheer cliff. This shows the continuity of concepts through several reigns.

A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this excellent thing which is seen, who created happiness for man, who set wisdom and capability down upon King Xerxes.

Proclaims Xerxes the King: By the will of Ahuramazda I am of such a sort, I am a friend of the right, of wrong I am not a friend. It is not my wish that the weak should have harm done him by the strong, nor is it my wish that the strong should have harm done him by the weak.

The right, that is my desire. To the man who is a follower of the lie I am no friend. I am not hot-tempered. Whatever befalls me in battle, I hold firmly. I am ruling firmly my own will.

The man who is cooperative, according to his cooperation thus I reward him. Who does harm, him according to the harm I punish. It is not my wish that a man should do harm; nor indeed is it my wish that if he does harm he should not be punished. . . .

What a man says against a man, that does not persuade me, until I hear the sworn statements of both.

What a man does or performs, according to his ability, by that I become satisfied with him, and it is much to my desire, and I am well pleased, and I give much to loyal men. . . .

Of such a sort are my understanding and my judgment: if what has been done by me you see or hear of, both in the palace and in the expeditionary camp, this is my capability over will and understanding.

This indeed my capability: that my body is strong. As a fighter of battles I am a good fighter of battles. Whenever with my judgment in a place I determine whether I behold or do not behold an enemy, both with understanding and with judgment, then I think prior to panic, when I see an enemy as when I do not see one.

I am skilled both in hands and in feet. A horseman, I am a good horseman. A bowman, I am a good bowman, both on foot and on horseback. A spearman, I am a good spearman, both on foot and on horseback.

These skills that Ahuramazda set down upon me, and which I am strong enough to bear, by the will of Ahuramazda, what was done by me, with these skills I did, which Ahuramazda set down upon me.

The Greek historian Herodotus creates a vivid portrait of Xerxes in his account of Xerxes' invasion of Greece in 480 B.C.E. He is drawing upon information derived from Greeks who served in the Persian army, as well as the proud popular traditions of the Greek states that successfully resisted the invasion.

In this city Pythius son of Atys, a Lydian, sat awaiting them; he entertained Xerxes himself and all the king's army with the greatest hospitality, and declared himself willing to provide money for the war. . . . Xerxes was pleased with what he said and replied: "My Lydian friend, since I came out of Persia I have so far met with no man who was willing to give hospitality to my army, nor who came into my presence unsummoned and offered to furnish money for the war, besides you. But you have entertained my army nobly and offer me great sums. In return for this I give you these privileges: I make you my friend, and out of my own wealth I give you the seven thousand staters which will complete your total of four million. . . . Remain in possession of what you now possess, and be mindful to be always such as you are; neither for the present nor in time will you regret what you now do." . . .

[some time later] As Xerxes led his army away, Pythius the Lydian, . . . encouraged by the gifts that he had received, came to Xerxes and said, "Master, I have a favor to ask that I desire of you, easy for you to grant and precious for me to receive." Xerxes supposed that Pythius would demand anything rather than what he did ask and answered that he would grant the request, bidding him declare what he desired. When Pythius heard this, he took courage and said: "Master, I have five sons, and all of

them are constrained to march with you against Hellas. I pray you, O king, take pity on me in my advanced age, and release one of my sons, the eldest, from service, so that he may take care of me and of my possessions; take the four others with you, and may you return back with all your plans accomplished." Xerxes became very angry and thus replied: "Villain, you see me marching against Hellas myself, and taking with me my sons and brothers and relations and friends; do you, my slave, who should have followed me with all your household and your very wife, speak to me of your son? Be well assured of this, that a man's spirit dwells in his ears; when it hears good words it fills the whole body with delight, but when it hears the opposite it swells with anger. When you did me good service and promised more, you will never boast that you outdid your king in the matter of benefits; and now that you have turned aside to the way of shamelessness, you will receive a lesser requital than you merit. You and four of your sons are saved by your hospitality; but you shall be punished by the life of that one you most desire to keep." With that reply, he immediately ordered those who were assigned to do these things to find the eldest of Pythius's sons and cut him in half, then to set one half of his body on the right side of the road and the other on the left, so that the army would pass between them.

Xerxes has ordered a bridge to be built to transport his troops over the Hellespont strait.

The men who had been given this assignment made bridges starting from Abydos across to that headland; the Phoenicians one of flaxen cables, and the Egyptians a papyrus one. From Abydos to the opposite shore it is a distance of seven stadia. But no sooner had the strait been bridged than a great storm swept down, breaking and scattering everything. When Xerxes heard of this, he was very angry and commanded that the Hellespont be whipped with three hundred lashes, and a pair of fetters be thrown into the sea. I have even heard that he sent branders with them to brand the Hellespont. He commanded them while they whipped to utter words outlandish and presumptuous, "Bitter water, our master thus punishes you, because you did him wrong though he had done you none. Xerxes the king will pass over you, whether you want it or not; in accordance with justice no one offers you sacrifice, for you are a turbid and briny river." He commanded that the sea receive these punishments and that the overseers of the bridge over the Hellespont be beheaded.

Xerxes then reviews his land and sea forces.

When they were at Abydos, Xerxes wanted to see the whole of his army. A lofty seat of white stone had been set up for him on a hill there for this very purpose, built by the people of Abydos at the king's command. There he sat and looked down on the seashore, viewing his army and his fleet; as he viewed them he desired to see the ships contend in a race. They did so, and the Phoenicians of Sidon won; Xerxes was pleased with the race and with his expedition. When he saw the whole Hellespont covered with ships, and all the shores and plains of Abydos full of men, Xerxes first declared himself blessed, and then wept. His uncle Artabanus perceived this. . . . Marking how Xerxes wept, he questioned him and said, "O king, what a distance there is between what you are doing now and a little while ago! After declaring yourself blessed you weep." Xerxes said, "I was moved to compassion when I considered the shortness of all human life, since of all this multitude of men not one will be alive a hundred years from now. May Ahuramazda protect me and what was done by me."

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS


1. How does Darius justify his assumption of power in the Behistun inscription? What is his relationship to Ahuramazda, the Zoroastrian god, and what role does divinity play in human affairs?
2. How does Darius conceptualize his empire (look at a map and follow the order in which he lists the provinces), and what are the expectations and obligations that he places on his subjects? What does his characterization of his opponents as "Lie-followers" tell us about his view of human nature?
3. Looking at the document of Xerxes from Persepolis, what qualities (physical, mental, and moral) are desirable in a ruler? What is the Persian concept of justice?
4. How do the stories in Herodotus accord with the Persian conceptions of empire, kingship, and justice seen in the royal inscriptions? Where do we see gleeful Greek subversions of those ideals?
5. To what audiences are Darius and Xerxes directing their messages, and in what media are they being disseminated? Given that Darius himself is, in all likelihood, illiterate, and that so are most of his subjects, what is the effect of the often repeated phrase: "Darius the King says"?

Sources: First selection from Behistun inscription translated by L. W. King and R. C. Thompson, *The Sculptures and Inscription of Darius the Great on the Rock of Behistun in Persia*, London, 1907 (<http://www.livius.org/be-bm/behistun03.html>); second selection from Persepolis Naqsh-e Rostam (http://www.livius.org/x/xerxes/xerxes_texts.htm#daeva); third selection reprinted by permission of the publishers and the trustees of the Loeb Classical Library from *Herodotus, Volume III*, Loeb Classical Library Volume 199, translated by A.D. Godley, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1922. The Loeb Classical Library® is a registered trademark of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Darius's approach to governing can be seen in the luxuriant relief sculpture that covers the foundations, walls, and stairwells of the buildings at Persepolis. Representatives of all the peoples of the empire—recognizable by their distinctive hair, beards, dress, hats, and footwear—are depicted in the act of bringing gifts to the king. Historians used to think that the sculpture represented a real event that transpired each year at Persepolis, but now they see it as an exercise in what today we would call public relations or propaganda. It is Darius's carefully crafted vision of an empire of vast extent and abundant resources in which all the subject peoples willingly cooperate.

What actually took place at Persepolis? This opulent retreat in the homeland probably was the scene of events of special significance for the king and his people: the New Year's Festival, coronation, marriage, death, and burial. The kings from Darius on were buried in elaborate tombs cut into the cliffs at nearby Naqsh-i Rostam°. Another perspective on what the Persian monarchy claimed to stand for is provided by the several dozen inscriptions that have survived (see *Diversity and Dominance: Persian and Greek Perceptions of Kingship*). These inscriptions make it clear that behind Darius and the empire stands the will of god. Ahuramazda° made Darius king and gave him a mandate to bring order to a world in turmoil, and, despite his reasonable and just disposition, the king will brook no opposition. Ahuramazda is the great god of a religion called Zoroastrianism°, and it is nearly certain that Darius and his successors were Zoroastrians.

The origins of this religion are shrouded in uncertainty. The Gathas, hymns in an archaic Iranian dialect, are said to be the work of Zoroaster° (Zarathustra). The dialect and physical setting of the hymns indicate that Zoroaster lived in eastern Iran. Scholarly guesses about when he lived range from 1700 to 500 B.C.E. He revealed that the world had been created by Ahuramazda, “the wise lord,” and was threatened by Angra Mainyu°, “the hostile spirit,” backed by a host of demons. In this dualistic universe, the struggle between good and evil plays out over twelve thousand years, after which good is destined to prevail, and the world will return to the pure state of creation. In the meantime, humanity is a participant in the cosmic struggle, and individuals are rewarded or punished in the afterlife for their actions.

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 Primary Source: Gathas

Naqsh-i Rostam (NUHK-shee ROOS-tuhm)
Ahuramazda (ah-HOOR-uh-MAZZ-duh)
Zoroastrianism (zo-roe-ASS-tree-uh-niz-uhm)
Zoroaster (zo-roe-ASS-ter) **Angra Mainyu** (ANG-ruh MINE-yoo)

In addition to Zoroastrianism, the Persians drew on moral and metaphysical conceptions with deep roots in the Iranian past. They were sensitive to the beauties of nature and venerated beneficent elements, such as water, which was not to be sullied, and fire, which was worshiped at fire altars. They were greatly concerned about the purity of the body. Corpses were exposed to wild beasts and the elements to prevent them from putrefying in the earth or tainting the sanctity of fire. The Persians still revered major deities from the polytheist past, such as Mithra, associated with the sun and defender of oaths and compacts. They were expected to keep promises and tell the truth. In his inscriptions at Persepolis, Darius castigated evildoers as followers of “the Lie.”

Zoroastrianism was one of the great religions of the ancient world. It preached belief in one supreme deity, held humans to a high ethical standard, and promised salvation. It traveled across western Asia with the advance of the Persian Empire, and it may have exerted a major influence on Judaism and thus, indirectly, on Christianity. God and the Devil, Heaven and Hell, reward and punishment, the Messiah and the End of Time all appear to be legacies of this profound belief system.

THE RISE OF THE GREEKS, 1000–500 B.C.E.

Because Greece was a relatively resource-poor region, the cultural features that emerged there in the first millennium B.C.E. came into being only because the Greeks had access to foreign sources of raw materials and to markets abroad. Greeks were in contact with other peoples, and Greek merchants and mercenaries brought home not only raw materials and crafted goods but also ideas. Under the pressure of population, poverty, war, or political crisis, Greeks moved to other parts of the Mediterranean and western Asia, bringing their language and culture and exerting a powerful influence on other societies. Encounters with the different practices and beliefs of other peoples stimulated the formation of a Greek identity and sparked interest in geography, ethnography, and history. A two-century-long rivalry with the Persian Empire also played a large part in shaping the destinies of the Greek city-states.

Geography and Resources

Greece is part of a large ecological zone that encompasses the Mediterranean Sea and the lands surrounding it (see Map 3.5). This zone is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the



Map 4.2 Ancient Greece By the early first millennium B.C.E. Greek-speaking peoples were dispersed throughout the Aegean region, occupying the Greek mainland, most of the islands, and the western coast of Anatolia. The rough landscape of central and southern Greece, with small plains separated by ranges of mountains, and the many islands in the Aegean favored the rise of hundreds of small, independent communities. The presence of adequate rainfall meant that agriculture was organized on the basis of self-sufficient family farms. As a result of the limited natural resources of this region, the Greeks had to resort to sea travel and trade with other lands in the Mediterranean to acquire metals and other vital raw materials.

west, the several ranges of the Alps to the north, the Syrian desert to the east, and the Sahara to the south. The lands lying within this zone have a roughly uniform climate, experience a similar sequence of seasons, and are home to similar plants and animals. In the summer a weather front stalls near the entrance of the Mediterranean, impeding the passage of storms from the Atlantic and allowing hot, dry air from the Sahara to creep up over the region. In winter the front dissolves and the ocean storms roll in, bringing waves, wind, and cold. It was relatively easy for people to migrate to new homes within this ecological zone without having to alter familiar cultural practices and means of livelihood.

Greek civilization arose in the lands bordering the Aegean Sea: the Greek mainland, the islands of the Aegean, and the western coast of Anatolia (see Map 4.2). The small islands dotting the Aegean were inhabited from early times. People could cross the water from Greece to Anatolia almost without losing sight of land. From about 1000 B.C.E. Greeks began to settle on the western edge of Anatolia. Rivers that formed broad and fertile plains near the coast made Ionia, as the ancient Greeks called this region, a comfortable place. The interior of Anatolia is rugged plateau, and the Greeks of the coast were in much closer contact with their fellows across the Aegean than with the native peoples of the interior. The sea was always a connector, not a barrier.

Without large rivers, Greek farmers on the mainland depended entirely on rainfall to water their crops. The limited arable land, thin topsoil, and sparse rainfall in the south could not sustain large populations. In the historical period farmers usually planted grain (mostly barley, which was hardier than wheat) in the flat plain, olive trees at the edge of the plain, and grapevines on the terraced lower slopes of the foothills. Sheep and goats grazed in the hills during the growing season. In northern Greece, where the rainfall is greater and the land opens out into broad plains, cattle and horses were more abundant. These Greek lands had few metal deposits and little timber, although both building stone, including some fine marble, and clay for the potter were abundant.

The difficulty of overland transport, the availability of good anchorages, and the need to import metals, timber, and grain drew the Greeks to the sea. They obtained timber from the northern Aegean, gold and iron from Anatolia, copper from Cyprus, tin from the western Mediterranean, and grain from the Black Sea, Egypt, and Sicily. Sea transport was much cheaper and faster than overland transport.

The Emergence of the Polis

The first flowering of Greek culture in the Mycenaean civilization was largely an adaptation of the imported institutions of Middle Eastern palace-dominated states to the Greek terrain. For several centuries after the destruction of the Mycenaean palace-states, Greece lapsed into a "Dark Age" (ca. 1150–800 B.C.E.), during which Greece and the whole Aegean region were largely isolated from the rest of the world.

Within Greece, regions that had little contact with one another developed distinctive local styles in pottery and other crafts. With fewer people to feed, the land was largely given over to grazing flocks of sheep, goats, and cattle. While there was continuity of language, religion, and other aspects of culture, there was a sharp break with the authoritarian Mycenaean political structure and centralized control of the economy.

The isolation of Greece ended around 800 B.C.E. when Phoenician ships began to visit the Aegean (see Chapter 3). By reestablishing contact between the Aegean and the Middle East, the Phoenicians gave Greek civilization an important push and inaugurated what scholars now term the "Archaic" period of Greek history (ca. 800–480 B.C.E.). Soon Greek ships were also plying the waters of the Mediterranean in search of raw materials, trade opportunities, and fertile farmland.

Various evidence reveals the influx of new ideas from the east, such as the appearance of naturalistic human and animal figures and imaginative mythical beasts on painted Greek pottery. The most auspicious gift of the Phoenicians was a writing system. The Phoenicians used a set of twenty-two symbols to represent the consonants in their language, leaving the vowel sounds to be inferred by the reader. To represent Greek vowel sounds, the Greeks utilized some of the Phoenician symbols for which there were no equivalent sounds in the Greek language. This was the first true alphabet, a system of writing that fully represents the sounds of spoken language. An alphabet offers tremendous advantages over systems of writing such as cuneiform and hieroglyphics, whose signs represent entire words or syllables. Because cuneiform and hieroglyphics required years of training and the memorization of several hundred signs, they remained the preserve of a scribal class whose elevated social position stemmed from their mastery of the technology. An alphabet opens the door for more widespread literacy because people can learn an alphabet in a relatively short period of time.

Some scholars maintain that the Greeks first used the alphabet for economic purposes. Others propose

that it originated as a vehicle for preserving the oral poetic epics so important to the Greeks. Whatever its first use, the Greeks soon came to employ the new technology to produce new forms of literature, law codes, religious dedications, and epitaphs on gravestones. This does not mean, however, that Greek society immediately became literate in the modern sense. For many centuries, Greece remained a primarily oral culture: people used storytelling, rituals, and performances to preserve and transmit information. Many of the distinctive intellectual and artistic creations of Greek civilization, such as theatrical drama, philosophical dialogues, and political and courtroom oratory, are products of the dynamic interaction of speaking and writing.

One indicator of the powerful new forces at work in the Archaic period was a veritable explosion of population. Studies of cemeteries in the vicinity of Athens show that there was a dramatic population increase (perhaps as much as fivefold or sevenfold) during the eighth century B.C.E. Its causes are not fully understood but probably include the more intensive use of land as farming replaced herding and independent farmers and their families began to work previously unused land on the margins of the plains. A second factor was increasing prosperity based on the importation of food and raw materials. Rising population density led villages to merge and become urban centers.

Greece at this time consisted of hundreds of independent political entities. The Greek polis^o (usually translated “city-state”) consisted of an urban center and the rural territory that it controlled. City-states came in various sizes, with populations as small as several thousand or as large as several hundred thousand in the case of Athens.

Most urban centers had certain characteristic features. A hilltop *acropolis*^o (“top of the city”) offered a place of refuge in an emergency. The town spread out around the base of this fortified high point. An *agora*^o (“gathering place”) was an open area where citizens came together to ratify the decisions of their leaders or to line up with their weapons before military ventures. Government buildings were located there, but the agora soon developed into a marketplace as well (vendors everywhere are eager to set out their wares wherever crowds gather). Fortified walls surrounded the urban center; but as the population expanded, new buildings went up beyond the perimeter.

Each polis was fiercely jealous of its independence and suspicious of its neighbors, and this state of mind

led to frequent conflict. By the early seventh century B.C.E. the Greeks had developed a new kind of warfare, waged by *hoplites*^o—heavily armored infantrymen who fought in close formation. Protected by a helmet, a breastplate, and leg guards, each hoplite held a round shield over his own left side and the right side of the man next to him and brandished a thrusting spear, keeping a sword in reserve. In this style of combat, the key to victory was maintaining the cohesion of one’s own formation while breaking open the enemy’s line. Most of the casualties were suffered by the defeated army in flight.

Recent studies have emphasized the close relationship of hoplite warfare to the agricultural basis of Greek society. Greek states were defended by armies of private citizens—mostly farmers—called up for brief periods of crisis, rather than by a professional class of soldiers. Although this kind of fighting called for strength to bear the weapons and armor, and courage to stand one’s ground in battle, no special training was needed by the citizen-soldiers. Campaigns took place when farmers were available, in the windows of time between major tasks in the agricultural cycle. When a hoplite army marched into the fields of another community, the enraged farmers of that community, who had expended a lot of hard labor on their land and buildings, could not fail to meet the challenge. Though brutal and terrifying, the clash of two hoplite lines did offer a quick decision. Battles rarely lasted more than a few hours, and the survivors could promptly return home to tend their farms.

The expanding population soon surpassed the capacity of the small plains, and many communities sent excess population abroad to establish independent “colonies” in distant lands. Not every colonist left willingly. Sources tell of people being chosen by lot and forbidden to return on pain of death. Others, seeing an opportunity to escape from poverty, avoid the constraints of family, or find adventure, voluntarily set out to seek their fortunes on the frontier. After obtaining the approval of the god Apollo from his sanctuary at Delphi, the colonists departed, carrying fire from the communal hearth of the “mother-city,” a symbol of the kinship and religious ties that would connect the two communities. They settled by the sea in the vicinity of a hill or other natural refuge. The “founder,” a prominent member of the mother-city, allotted parcels of land and drafted laws for the new community. In some cases the indigenous population was driven away or reduced to a semiservile status; in other cases there was intermarriage and mixing between colonists and natives.

polis (POE-lis) **acropolis** (uh-KRAW-poe-lis)
agora (ah-go-RAH)

hoplite (HAWP-lite)



The Acropolis at Athens This steep, defensible plateau jutting up from the Attic Plain served as a Mycenaean fortress in the second millennium B.C.E., and the site of Athens has been continuously occupied since that time. In the mid-sixth century B.C.E. the tyrant Pisistratus built a temple to Athena, the patron goddess of the community. It was destroyed by the Persians when they invaded Greece in 480 B.C.E. The Acropolis was left in ruins for three decades as a reminder of what the Athenians sacrificed in defense of Greek freedom, but in the 440s B.C.E. Pericles initiated a building program, using funds from the naval empire that Athens headed. These construction projects, including a new temple to Athena—the Parthenon—brought glory to the city and popularity to Pericles and to the new democracy that he championed. (Robert Harding World Imagery)

A wave of colonization from the mid-eighth through mid-sixth centuries B.C.E. spread Greek culture far beyond the land of its origins. New settlements sprang up in the northern Aegean area, around the Black Sea, and on the Libyan coast of North Africa. In southern Italy and on the island of Sicily (see Map 3.5) another Greek core area was established. Although the creation of new homes, farms, and communities undoubtedly posed many challenges for the Greek settlers, they were able to transplant their entire way of life, mostly because of the general similarity in climate and ecology in the Mediterranean lands.

Greeks began to use the term *Hellenes*^o (*Graeci* is what the Romans later called them) to distinguish themselves from *barbaroi* (the root of the English word *barbarian*). Interaction with new peoples and exposure to

their different practices made the Greeks aware of the factors that bound them together: their language, religion, and lifestyle. It also introduced them to new ideas and technologies.

Another significant development was the invention of coins in the early sixth century B.C.E., probably in Lydia (western Anatolia). They soon spread throughout the Greek world and beyond. In the ancient world a coin was a piece of metal whose weight and purity, and thus value, were guaranteed by the state. Silver, gold, bronze, and other metals were attractive choices for a medium of exchange: sufficiently rare to be valuable, relatively lightweight and portable (at least in the quantities available to most individuals), seemingly indestructible and therefore permanent, yet easily divided. Prior to the invention of coinage, people in the lands of the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia weighed out quantities of gold, silver, or bronze in exchange for the items they wanted to buy. Coinage allowed for more rapid exchanges

Hellenes (HELL-leans)

of goods as well as for more efficient recordkeeping and storage of wealth. It stimulated trade and increased the total wealth of the society. Even so, international commerce could still be confusing because different states used different weight standards that had to be reconciled, just as people have to exchange currencies when traveling today.

By reducing surplus population, colonization helped relieve pressures within the Archaic Greek world. Nevertheless, this was an era of political instability. Kings ruled the Dark Age societies depicted in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but at some point councils composed of the heads of noble families superseded the kings. This aristocracy derived its wealth and power from ownership of large tracts of land. Peasant families worked this land; they were allowed to occupy a plot and keep a portion of what they grew. Debt-slaves, too, worked the land. They were people who had borrowed money or seed from the lord and lost their freedom when they were unable to repay the loan. Also living in a typical community were free peasants, who owned small farms, and urban-based craftsmen and merchants, who began to constitute a "middle class."



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Primary Source: The Trojan Hero
Hector Prepares to Meet His
Destiny

In the mid-seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. in one city-state after another, an individual tyrant—a person who seized and held power in violation of the normal political institutions and traditions of the community—gained control. Greek tyrants were often disgruntled or ambitious members of the aristocracy, backed by the emerging middle class. New opportunities for economic advancement and the declining cost of metals meant that more and more men could acquire arms. These individuals, who already played an important role as hoplite soldiers in the local militias, must have demanded some political rights as the price of their support for their local tyrant.

Ultimately, the tyrants of this age were unwitting catalysts in an evolving political process. Some were able to pass their positions on to their sons, but eventually the tyrant-family was ejected. Authority in the community developed along one of two lines: toward oligarchy^o,

the exercise of political privilege by the wealthier members of society, or toward democracy, the exercise of political power by all free adult males. In any case, the absence of a professional military class in the early Greek states was essential to broadening the base of political participation.

Greek religion encompassed a wide range of cults and beliefs. The ancestors of the Greeks brought a collection of sky-gods with them when they entered the Greek peninsula at the end of the third millennium B.C.E. Some of the gods represented forces in nature: for example, Zeus sent storms and lightning, and Poseidon was master of the sea and earthquakes. The two great epic poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which Greek schoolboys memorized and professional performers recited, put a distinctive stamp on the personalities and characters of these deities. The gods that Homer portrayed were anthropomorphic^o—that is, conceived as humanlike in appearance (though they were taller, more beautiful, and more powerful than mere mortals and had a supernatural radiance) and humanlike in their displays of emotion.

The worship of the gods at state-sponsored festivals was as much an expression of civic identity as of personal piety. Sacrifice, the central ritual of Greek religion, was performed at altars in front of the temples that the Greeks built to be the gods' places of residence. Greeks gave their gods gifts, often as humble as a small cake or a cup of wine poured on the ground, in the hope that the gods would favor and protect them. In more spectacular forms of sacrifice, a group of people would kill one or more animals, spray the altar with the victim's blood, burn parts of its body so that the aroma would ascend to the gods on high, and enjoy a rare feast of meat. In this way the Greeks created a sense of community out of shared participation in the taking of life.

Greek individuals and communities sought information, advice, or predictions about the future from oracles—sacred sites where they believed the gods communicated with humans. Especially prestigious was the oracle of Apollo at Delphi in central Greece. Petitioners left gifts in the treasuries, and the god responded to their questions through his priestess, the Pythia^o, who gave forth obscure, ecstatic utterances. Because most Greeks were farmers, fertility cults, whose members worshiped and sought to enhance the productive forces in nature (usually conceived as female), were popular, though

oligarchy (OLL-ih-gahr-key)

anthropomorphic (an-thruh-puh-MORE-fik)
Pythia (PITH-ee-uh)



Vase Painting Depicting a Sacrifice to the God Apollo, ca. 440 B.C.E. For the Greeks, who believed in a multitude of gods who looked and behaved like humans, the central act of worship was the sacrifice, the ritualized offering of a gift. Sacrifice created a relationship between the human worshiper and the deity and raised expectations that the god would bestow favors in return. Here we see a number of male devotees, wearing their finest clothing and garlands in their hair, near a sacred outdoor altar and statue of Apollo. The god is shown at the far right, standing on a pedestal and holding his characteristic bow and laurel branch. The first worshiper offers the god bones wrapped in fat. All of the worshipers will feast on the meat carried by the boy. (Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY)

often hidden from modern view because of our dependence on literary texts expressing the values of an educated, urban elite.

New Intellectual Currents

One distinctive feature of the Archaic period was a growing emphasis on the individual. In early Greek communities the family enveloped the individual, and land belonged collectively to the family, including ancestors and descendants. Ripped out of this communal network and forced to establish new lives on a distant frontier, the colonist became a model of rugged individualism, as did the tyrant who seized power for himself alone. These new patterns led toward the concept of humanism—a valuing of the uniqueness, talents, and rights of the individual—which remains a central tenet of Western civilization.

We see clear signs of individualism in the new lyric poetry—short verses in which the subject matter is intensely personal, drawn from the experience of the poet and expressing his or her feelings and views. Archilochus⁹, a soldier and poet living in the first half of the seventh century B.C.E., made a surprising admission:

Some barbarian is waving my shield, since I was obliged to leave that perfectly good piece of equipment

Archilochus (ahr-KIL-uh-kuhs)

behind under a bush. But I got away, so what does it matter? Let the shield go; I can buy another one equally good.¹

Here Archilochus is poking fun at the heroic ideal that scorned a soldier who ran away from the enemy. In challenging traditional values and exploiting the medium to express personal feeling and opinion, lyric poets paved the way for the modern Western conception of poetry.

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Primary Source: A Lyric Poem
Laments an Absent Lover

There were also challenges to traditional religion from thinkers now known as pre-Socratic philosophers (the term *pre-Socratic* refers to philosophers before Socrates, who in the later fifth century B.C.E. shifted the focus of philosophy to ethical questions). In the sixth century B.C.E. Xenophanes¹⁰ called into question the kind of gods that Homer had popularized.

But if cattle and horses or lions had hands, or were able to draw with their hands and do the works that men can do, horses would draw the forms of the gods

Xenophanes (zeh-NOFF-uh-nees)

like horses, and cattle like cattle, and they would make their bodies such as they each had themselves.²

The pre-Socratic philosophers rejected traditional religious explanations of the origins and nature of the world and sought rational explanations. They were primarily concerned with learning how the world was created, what it is made of, and why changes occur. Some pre-Socratic thinkers postulated various combinations of earth, air, fire, and water as the primal elements that combine or dissolve to form the numerous substances found in nature. One advanced the theory that the world is composed of microscopic *atoms* (from a Greek word meaning “indivisible”) that move through the void of space, colliding randomly and combining in various ways to form the many substances of the natural world. In some respects startlingly similar to modern atomic theory, this model was essentially a lucky intuition, but it is a testament to the sophistication of these thinkers. It is probably no coincidence that most of them came from Ionia and southern Italy, two zones in which Greeks were in close contact with non-Greek peoples. The shock of encountering people with very different ideas may have stimulated new lines of inquiry.

Another important intellectual development also took place in Ionia in the sixth century B.C.E. A group of men later referred to as logographers (“writers of prose accounts”), taking full advantage of the nearly infinite capacity of writing to store information, began gathering data on a wide range of topics, including ethnography (description of a people’s physical characteristics and cultural practices), the geography of Mediterranean lands, the foundation stories of important cities, and the origins of famous Greek families. They were the first to write in prose—the language of everyday speech—rather than poetry, which had long facilitated the memorization essential to an oral society. *Historia*, “investigation/research,” was the name they gave to the method they used to collect, sort, and select information. In the mid-fifth century B.C.E. Herodotus (ca. 485–425 B.C.E.), from Halicarnassus in southwest Anatolia, published his *Histories*. Early parts of the work are filled with the geographic and ethnographic reports, legends, folktales, and marvels dear to the logographers, but in later sections Herodotus focuses on the great event of the previous generation: the wars between the Greeks and the Persian Empire.

Herodotus declared his new conception of his mission in the first lines of the book:

I, Herodotus of Halicarnassus, am here setting forth my history, that time may not draw the color from what man has brought into being, nor those great and wonderful deeds, manifested by both Greeks and barbarians, fail of their report, and, together with all this, the reason why they fought one another.³

In stating that he wants to find out *why* Greeks and Persians came to blows, he reveals that he has become a historian seeking the causes behind historical events. Herodotus directed the all-purpose techniques of *historia* to the service of *history* in the modern sense of the term, thereby narrowing the meaning of the word. For this achievement he is known as the “father of history.”

Athens and Sparta

The two preeminent Greek city-states of the late Archaic and Classical periods were Athens and Sparta. The different character of these two communities underscores the potential for diversity in the evolution of human societies, even those arising in similar environmental and cultural contexts.

The ancestors of the Spartans migrated into the Peloponnese^o, the southernmost part of the Greek mainland, around 1000 B.C.E. For a time Sparta followed a typical path of development, participating in trade and fostering the arts. Then in the seventh century B.C.E. something happened to alter the destiny of the Spartan state. Instead of sending out colonists when confronted by population pressure, the Spartans crossed their mountainous western frontier and invaded the fertile plain of Messenia (see Map 4.2). Hoplite tactics may have given the Spartans the edge they needed to prevail over fierce Messenian resistance. The result was the takeover of Messenia and the domination of the native population, who descended to the status of helots^o, the most abused and exploited population on the Greek mainland.

Fear of a helot uprising led to the evolution of the unique Spartan way of life. The Spartan state became a military camp in a permanent state of preparedness. Territory in Messenia and Laconia (the Spartan homeland) was divided into several thousand lots, which were assigned to Spartan citizens. Helots worked the land and turned over a portion of what they grew to their Spartan masters, who were thereby freed from food production

logographer (loe-GOG-ruff-er)

Peloponnese (PELL-uh-puh-neze) **helot** (HELL-ut)

and able to spend their lives in military training and service.

The professional Spartan soldier was the best in Greece, and the Spartan army was superior to all others, since the other Greek states relied on citizen militias called out only in time of crisis. The Spartans, however, paid a huge personal price for their military readiness. At age seven, boys were taken from their families and put into barracks, where they were toughened by a severe regimen of discipline, beatings, and deprivation. A Spartan male's whole life was subordinated to the demands of the state. Sparta essentially stopped the clock, declining to participate in the economic, political, and cultural renaissance taking place in the Archaic Greek world. There were no longer any poets or artists at Sparta. In an attempt to maintain equality among citizens, precious metals and coinage were banned, and Spartans were forbidden to engage in commerce. The fifth-century B.C.E. historian Thucydides⁶, a native of Athens, remarked that in his day Sparta appeared to be little more than a large village and that no future observer of the ruins of the site would be able to guess its power.

The Spartans rarely put their reputation to the test, practicing a foreign policy that was cautious and isolationist. Reluctant to march far from home for fear of a helot uprising, the Spartans sought to maintain peace in the Peloponnese through the Peloponnesian League, a system of alliances between Sparta and its neighbors.

Athens followed a different path. In comparison with other Greek city-states, it possessed an unusually large and populous territory: the entire region of Attica. Attica contained a number of moderately fertile plains and was ideally suited for cultivation of olive trees. In addition to the urban center of Athens, located some 5 miles (8 kilometers) from the sea where the sheer-sided Acropolis towered above the Attic Plain, the peninsula was dotted with villages and a few larger towns.

Attica's large land area provided a buffer against the initial stresses of the Archaic period, but by the early sixth century B.C.E. things had reached a critical point. In 594 B.C.E. Solon was appointed lawgiver and was granted extraordinary powers to avert a civil war. He divided Athenian citizens into four classes based on the annual yield of their farms. Those in the top three classes could hold state offices. Members of the lowest class, who had little or no property, could not hold office but were allowed to participate in meetings of the Assembly. This arrangement,

which made rights and privileges a function of wealth, was far from democratic. But it broke the absolute monopoly on power of a small circle of aristocratic families, and it allowed for social and political mobility. By abolishing the practice of enslaving individuals for failure to repay their debts, Solon guaranteed the freedom of Athenian citizens.

Despite Solon's efforts to defuse the crisis, political turmoil continued until 546 B.C.E., when an aristocrat named Pisistratus⁷ seized power. To strengthen his position and weaken the aristocracy, the tyrant Pisistratus tried to shift the allegiance of the still largely rural population to the urban center of Athens, where he was the dominant figure. He undertook a number of monumental building projects, including a Temple of Athena on the Acropolis. He also instituted or expanded several major festivals that drew people to Athens for religious processions, performances of plays, and athletic and poetic competitions.

Pisistratus passed the tyranny on to his sons, but with Spartan assistance the Athenians turned the tyrant-family out in the last decade of the sixth century B.C.E. In the 460s and 450s B.C.E. Pericles⁸ and his political allies took the last steps in the evolution of Athenian democracy, transferring all power to popular organs of government: the Assembly, Council of 500, and People's Courts. From that time on, men of moderate or little means could hold office and participate in the political process. Men were selected by lot to fill even the highest offices, and they were paid for public service so they could afford to take time off from their work. The focal point of Athenian political life became the Assembly of all citizens. Several times a month proposals were debated there; decisions were openly made, and any citizen could speak to the issues of the day.

THE STRUGGLE OF PERSIA AND GREECE, 546–323 B.C.E.

For the Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., Persia was the great enemy and the wars with Persia were the decisive historical event. The Persians probably were more concerned about developments farther east and did not regard the wars with the Greeks as so consequential. Nevertheless, the encounter with the Greeks over a period of two centuries was of profound importance for the history of the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia.

⁶Thucydides (thoo-SID-ih-dees)

⁷Pisistratus (pie-SIS-truh-tuhs) ⁸Pericles (PER-eh-kleez)

Early Encounters

Cyrus's conquest of Lydia in 546 B.C.E. led to the subjugation of the Greek cities on the Anatolian seacoast. In the years that followed, these cities were ruled by local groups or individuals who collaborated with the Persian government so as to maintain themselves in power and allow their cities to operate with minimal Persian interference. All this changed when the Ionian Revolt, a great uprising of Greeks and other subject peoples on the western frontier, broke out in 499 B.C.E. The Persians needed five years and a massive infusion of troops and resources to stamp out the insurrection.

The failed revolt led to the **Persian Wars**—two Persian attacks on Greece in the early fifth century B.C.E. In 490 B.C.E. Darius dispatched a naval fleet to punish Eretria^o and Athens, two states on the Greek mainland that had given assistance to the Ionian rebels, and to warn others about the foolhardiness of crossing the Persian king. Eretria was betrayed to the Persians by several of its own citizens, and the survivors were marched off to permanent exile in southwest Iran. Next on the Persians' list were the Athenians, who probably would have suffered a similar fate if their hoplites had not defeated the lighter-armed Persian troops in a short, sharp engagement at Marathon, 26 miles (42 kilometers) from Athens.

Xerxes (Khshayarsha, r. 486–465 B.C.E.) succeeded his father on the Persian throne and soon turned his attention to the troublesome Greeks. In 480 B.C.E. he set out with a huge invasionary force consisting of the Persian army, contingents summoned from all the peoples of the Persian Empire, and a large fleet of ships drawn from maritime subjects. Crossing the Hellespont (the narrow strait at the edge of the Aegean separating Europe and Asia), Persian forces descended into central and southern Greece (see Map 4.2). Xerxes sent messengers ahead to most of the Greek states, bidding them to offer up "earth and water"—tokens of submission.

Many Greek communities acknowledged Persian overlordship. But in southern Greece an alliance of states bent on resistance was formed under the leadership of the Spartans. This Hellenic League, as modern historians call it, initially failed to halt the Persian advance. At the pass of Thermopylae^o in central Greece, three hundred Spartans and their king gave their lives to buy time for their fellows to escape. However, after seizing and sacking the city of Athens in 480 B.C.E., the Persians allowed their navy to be lured into the narrow straits of nearby Salamis^o, where they lost their advantage in numbers and maneuverability

Eretria (er-EH-tree-uh) **Thermopylae** (thuhr-MOP-uh-lee)
Salamis (SAH-lah-miss)

and suffered a devastating defeat. The following spring (479 B.C.E.), the Persian land army was routed at Plataea^o, and the immediate threat to Greece receded.

The collapse of the threat to the Greek mainland did not mean an end to war. The Greeks went on the offensive. Athens's stubborn refusal to submit to the Persian king, even after the city was sacked twice in two successive years, and the vital role played by the Athenian navy, which made up fully half of the allied Greek fleet, earned the city a large measure of respect. The next phase of the war, designed to drive the Persians away from the Aegean and liberate Greek states still under Persian control, was naval. Thus Athens replaced land-based, isolationist Sparta as leader of the campaign against Persia.

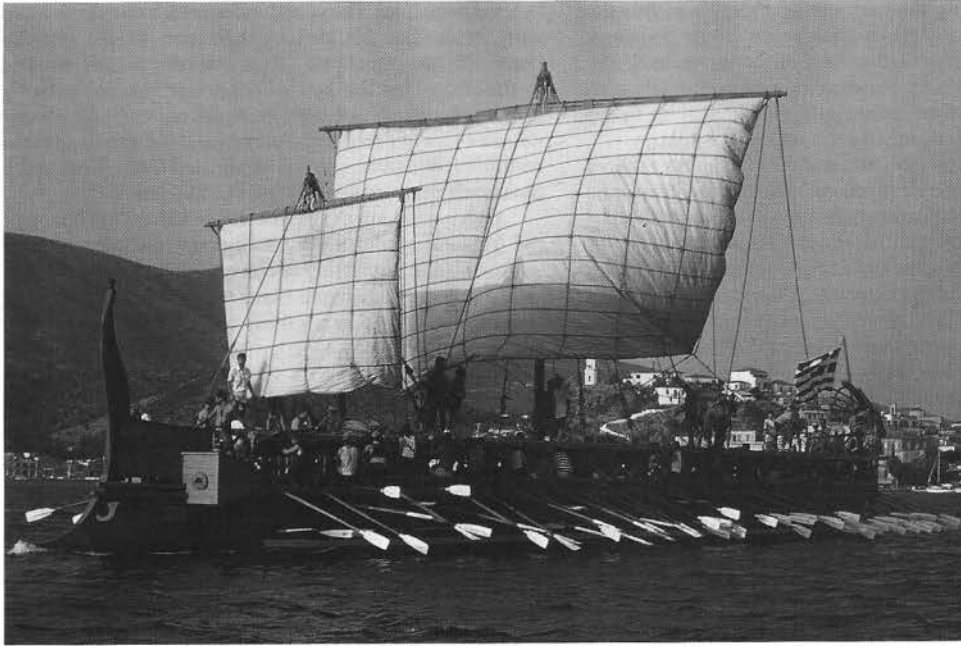
In 477 B.C.E. the Delian^o League was formed. It was initially a voluntary alliance of Greek states eager to prosecute the war against Persia. In less than twenty years, League forces led by Athenian generals swept the Persians from the waters of the eastern Mediterranean and freed all Greek communities except those in distant Cyprus (see Map 3.5).

The Height of Athenian Power

By scholarly convention, the Classical period of Greek history (480–323 B.C.E.) begins with the successful defense of the Greek homeland against the forces of the Persian Empire. Ironically, the Athenians, who had played such a crucial role, exploited these events to become an imperial power. A string of successful campaigns and the passage of time led many of their Greek allies to grow complacent and contribute money instead of military forces. The Athenians used the money to build up and staff their navy. Eventually they saw the other members of the Delian League as their subjects and demanded annual contributions and other signs of submission from them. States that tried to leave the League were brought back by force, stripped of their defenses, and rendered subordinate to Athens.

Athens's mastery of naval technology transformed Greek warfare and politics and brought power and wealth to Athens itself. Unlike commercial ships, whose stable, round-bodied hulls were propelled by a single square sail, military vessels could not risk depending on the wind. By the late sixth century B.C.E. the **trireme**^o, a sleek, fast vessel powered by 170 rowers, had become the premier warship. The design of the trireme has long been a puzzle, but the unearthing of the slips where these vessels were moored at Athens and recent experiments with a full-scale replica manned by international

Plataea (pluh-TEE-uh) **Delian** (DEE-lih-yuhn)
trireme (TRY-reem)



Replica of Ancient Greek Trireme Greek warships had a metal-tipped ram in front to pierce the hulls of enemy vessels and a pair of steering rudders in the rear. Though equipped with masts and sails, in battle these warships were propelled by 170 rowers. This modern, full-size replica represents one solution to the puzzle of how three tiers of oars could operate simultaneously without becoming entangled. Volunteer crews are helping scholars to determine attainable speeds and maneuvering techniques. (Courtesy, the Trireme Trust, Photo: John Illsley)

volunteers have revealed much about the trireme's design and the battle tactics it made possible. Rowers using oars of different lengths and carefully positioned on three levels so as not to run afoul of one another were able to achieve short bursts of speed of up to 7 knots. Athenian crews, by constant practice, became the best in the eastern Mediterranean.

The emergence at Athens of a democratic system in which each male citizen had, at least in principle, an equal voice is connected to the new primacy of the fleet. Hoplites were members of the middle and upper classes (they had to provide their own protective gear and weapons). Rowers, in contrast, came from the lower classes, but because they were providing the chief protection for the community and were the source of its power, they could insist on full rights.

Possession of a navy allowed Athens to project its power farther than it could have done with a citizen militia

(which could be kept in arms for only short periods of time). In previous Greek wars, the victorious state had little capability to occupy a defeated neighbor permanently (with the exception, as we have seen, of Sparta's takeover of Messenia). Usually the victor was satisfied with booty and, perhaps, minor adjustments to boundary lines. Athens was able to continually dominate and exploit other, weaker communities in an unprecedented way.

Athens did not hesitate to use military and political power to promote its commercial interests. Athens's port, Piraeus⁹, grew into the most important commercial center in the eastern Mediterranean. The money collected each year from the subject states helped subsidize the increasingly expensive Athenian democracy as well as underwrite the construction costs of the beautiful buildings on the

Piraeus (pih-RAY-uhs)

Acropolis, including the majestic new temple of Athena, the Parthenon. Many Athenians worked on the construction and decoration of these monuments. Indeed, the building program was a means by which the Athenian leader Pericles redistributed the profits of empire to the Athenian people and gained extraordinary popularity.


In other ways as well, Athens's cultural achievements were dependent on the profits of empire. The economic advantages that empire brought to Athens indirectly subsidized the festivals at which the great dramatic tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides and the comedies of Aristophanes⁹ were performed. Money is a prerequisite for support of the arts and sciences, and the brightest and most creative artists and thinkers in the Greek world were drawn to Athens. Traveling teachers called Sophists (“wise men”) provided instruction in logic and public speaking to pupils who could afford their fees. The new discipline of rhetoric—the construction of attractive and persuasive arguments—gave those with training and quick wits a great advantage in politics and the courts. The Greek masses became connoisseurs of oratory, eagerly listening for each innovation, yet so aware of the power of words that *sophist* came to mean one who uses cleverness to distort and manipulate reality.


These new intellectual currents came together in 399 B.C.E. when the philosopher Socrates (ca. 470–399 B.C.E.) was brought to trial. A sculptor by trade, Socrates spent most of his time in the company of young men who enjoyed conversing with him and observing him deflate the pretensions of those who thought themselves wise. He wryly commented that he knew one more thing than everyone else: that he knew nothing. At his trial, Socrates was easily able to dispose of the charges of corrupting the youth of Athens and not believing in the gods of the city. He argued that the real basis of the hostility he faced was twofold: (1) He was being held responsible for the actions of several of his aristocratic students who had tried to overthrow the Athenian democracy. (2) He was being blamed unfairly for the controversial teachings of the Sophists, which were widely believed to be contrary to traditional religious beliefs and to undermine morality. In Athenian trials, juries of hundreds of citizens decided guilt and punishment, often motivated more by emotion than

by legal principles. The vote that found Socrates guilty was fairly close. But his lack of contrition in the penalty phase—he proposed that he be rewarded for his services to the state—led the jury to condemn him to death by drinking hemlock. Socrates' disciples regarded his execution as a martyrdom, and smart young men such as Plato withdrew from public life and dedicated themselves to the philosophical pursuit of knowledge and truth.

This period encompasses the last stage in Greece of the transition from orality to literacy. Socrates himself wrote nothing, preferring to converse with people he met in the street. His disciple Plato (ca. 428–347 B.C.E.) may represent the first generation to be truly literate. He gained much of his knowledge from books and habitually wrote down his thoughts. On the outskirts of Athens, Plato founded the Academy, a school where young men could pursue a course of higher education. Yet even Plato retained traces of the orality of the world in which he had grown up. He wrote dialogues—an oral form—in which his protagonist, Socrates, uses the “Socratic method” of question and answer to reach a deeper understanding of the meaning of values such as justice, excellence, and wisdom. Plato refused to write down the most advanced stages of the philosophical and spiritual training that took place at his Academy. He believed that full apprehension of a higher reality, of which our own sensible world is but a pale reflection, could be entrusted only to “initiates” who had completed the earlier stages.

The third of the great classical philosophers, Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), came from Stagira, a community on the Thracian coast. After several decades of study at Plato's Academy in Athens, he was chosen by the king of Macedonia, Philip II, who had a high regard for Greek culture, to be the tutor of his son Alexander. Later, Aristotle returned to Athens to found his own school, the Lyceum. Of a very different temperament than Plato, who had been drawn to mysticism and metaphysical speculation, Aristotle sought to collect and categorize a vast array of knowledge. He lectured and wrote about politics, philosophy, ethics, logic, poetry, rhetoric, physics, astronomy, meteorology, zoology, and psychology, laying the foundations for many modern disciplines.

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 Aristotle on Politics

Athenian democracy, the inspiration for the concept of democracy in the Western tradition, was a democracy only for the relatively small percentage of the inhabitants of Attica who were truly citizens—free adult males

⁹**Aristophanes** (ah-ruh-STOFF-eh-neze)

of pure Athenian ancestry. Excluding women, children, slaves, and foreigners, this group amounted to 30,000 or 40,000 people out of a total population of approximately 300,000—only 10 or 15 percent.

Slaves, mostly of foreign origin, constituted perhaps one-third of the population of Attica in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., and the average Athenian family owned one or more. Slaves were needed to run the shop or work on the farm while the master was attending meetings of the Assembly or serving on one of the boards that oversaw the day-to-day activities of the state. The slave was a “living piece of property,” required to do any work, submit to any sexual acts, and receive any punishments that the owner ordained. In the absence of huge estates, there were no rural slave gangs, and most Greek slaves were domestic servants, often working on the same tasks as the master or mistress. Close daily contact between owners and slaves meant, in many cases, that a relationship developed, making it hard for Greek slave owners to deny the essential humanity of their slaves. Still, Greek thinkers rationalized the institution of slavery by arguing that barbaroi (non-Greeks) lacked the capacity to reason and thus were better off under the direction of rational Greek owners.

The position of women varied across Greek communities. The women of Sparta, who were expected to bear and raise strong children, were encouraged to exercise, and they enjoyed a level of public visibility and outspokenness that shocked other Greeks. Athens may have been at the opposite extreme as regards the confinement and suppression of women. Ironically, the exploitation of women in Athens, as of slaves, is linked to the high degree of freedom enjoyed by Athenian men in the democratic state.

Athenian marriages were unequal affairs. A new husband might be thirty, reasonably well educated, a veteran of war, and experienced in business and politics. Under law he had nearly absolute authority over the members of his household. He arranged his marriage with the parents of his prospective wife, who was likely to be a teenager brought up with no formal education and only minimal training in weaving, cooking, and household management. Coming into the home of a husband she hardly knew, she had no political rights and limited legal protection. Given the differences in age, social experience, and authority, the relationship between husband and wife was in many ways similar to that of father and daughter.

The primary function of marriage was to produce children, preferably male. It is impossible to prove the



Vase Painting Depicting Women at an Athenian Fountain House, ca. 520 B.C.E. Paintings on Greek vases provide the most vivid pictorial record of ancient Greek life. The subject matter usually reflects the interests of the aristocratic males who purchased the vases—warfare, athletics, mythology, drinking parties—but sometimes we are given glimpses into the lives of women and the working classes. These women are presumably domestic servants sent to fetch water for the household from the public fountain. The large water jars they are filling are like the one on which this scene is depicted. (William Francis Warden Fund, 61.195. Photograph © 2003, Museum of Fine Arts Boston)

extent of infanticide—the killing through exposure of unwanted children—because the ancients were sufficiently ashamed to say little about it. But it is likely that more girls than boys were abandoned.

Husbands and wives had limited daily contact. The man spent the day outdoors attending to work or political responsibilities; he dined with male friends at night; and

MATERIAL CULTURE

Wine and Beer in the Ancient World

The most prized beverages of ancient peoples were wine and beer. Sediments found in jars excavated at a site in northwest Iran prove that techniques for the manufacture of wine were known as early as the sixth millennium B.C.E. Beer dates back at least as far as the fourth millennium B.C.E. Archaeological excavations have brought to

light the equipment used in preparing, transporting, serving, and imbibing these beverages.

In Egypt and Mesopotamia, beer, which was made from wheat or barley by a rather elaborate process, was the staple drink of both the elite and the common people. Women prepared beer for the family in their homes, and breweries produced large quantities for sale. Because the production process left some chaff floating on the surface of the liquid, various means were employed to filter out this unwelcome byproduct. Sculptures on Mesopotamian stone reliefs and seals show a number of drinkers drawing on straws immersed in a single large bowl. Archaeologists have found examples

of the perforated metal cones that fit over the submerged ends of the straws and filtered the liquid beer drawn through them. It is likely that the sharing of beer from a common vessel by several people had social implications, creating a bond of friendship among the participants. Archaeologists have also found individual beer "mugs" resembling a modern watering can: closed bowls with a perforated spout to filter the chaff and a semicircular channel carrying the liquid into the drinker's mouth.

In Greece, Rome, and other Mediterranean lands, where the climate was suitable for cultivating grape vines, wine was the preferred beverage. Vines were prepared in February and periodically pinched and pruned. The full-grown grapes were picked in September, then crushed (with a winepress or by people trampling on them) to produce a liquid that was scalded in casks for fermentation. The new vintage was sampled the following February. Exuberant religious festivals marked the key moments in the cycle. Initially expensive and therefore confined to the wealthy and for religious ceremonies, in later antiquity wine became available to a wider spectrum of people. Unlike beer, which requires refrigeration,

wine can be stored for a long time in sealed containers and thus could be transported and traded across the ancient Mediterranean lands, continental Europe, and western Asia. The usual containers for wine were long, conical pottery jars, which the Greeks called *amphoras*.

The Greeks normally mixed wine with water, and they developed an elaborate array of vessels, made of pottery, metal, and glass, to facilitate mixing, serving, and drinking the precious liquid (see the photo on this page). *Kraters* were large mixing bowls into which the wine and water were poured. The *hydria* was used to carry water, and a heater could be used to warm the water when that was desired. Another special vessel could be used to chill the wine by immersion in cold water. Ladles (long-handled spoons) and elegantly narrow vessels with spouts were used to pour the concoction into the drinkers' cups. The most popular shapes for individual drinking



Silver and Bronze Wine Set These beautifully crafted vessels were found in northern Greece in a tomb believed to be that of King Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. They include an amphora for storing wine, a pitcher for pouring, and several two-handled bowls and cups for drinking. (Museum of Thessalonike)

vessels were a shallow bowl with two handles, called a *kylix*, and the *kantharos*, a large, deep, two-handled cup. Another popular implement in Greece and western Asia was the *rhyton*, a horn-shaped vessel that tapered into the head and forepaws of an animal with a small hole at the base. The drinker would fill the horn, holding his thumb over the hole until he was ready to drink or pour, then move his thumb and release a thin stream of wine that appeared to be coming out of the animal's mouth.

The drinking equipment belonging to wealthy Greeks was often decorated with representations of the god of wine, Dionysus, holding a *kantharos* and surrounded by a dense tangle of vines and grape clusters. His entourage included the half-human, half-horse Centaurs and the Maenads, literally "crazy women." These were female worshippers who drank wine and engaged in frenzied dancing until they achieved an ecstatic state and sensed the presence of the god.

Greeks, Romans, and other Mediterranean peoples used wine for more conventional religious ceremonies, pouring libations on the ground or on the altar as an offering to the gods. It was also used on occasion for medical purposes, as

a disinfectant and painkiller, or as an ingredient in various medicines. Above all, wine was featured at the banquets and drinking parties that forged and deepened social bonds. In the Greek world, the *symposion* (meaning "drinking together") was held after the meal. Someone, usually the host, presided over the affair, making the crucial decision about the proportion of water to wine, suggesting topics of conversation, and trying to keep some semblance of order. There might be entertainment in the form of musicians, dancers, and acrobats. In Shang China, magnificent bronze vessels whose surfaces were covered with abstract designs and representations of otherworldly animals were fashioned for use in elaborate ceremonies at ancestral shrines (see photo on page 43). The vessels contained offerings of wine and food for the spirits of the family's ancestors, who were imagined to still need sustenance in the afterlife. The treasured bronze vessels were often buried with their owners so that they could continue to employ them after death. In later periods, as the ancestral sacrifices became less important, beautiful bronze vessels, as well as their ceramic counterparts, became part of the equipment at the banquets of the well-to-do.

usually he slept alone in the men's quarters (see Material Culture: Wine and Beer in the Ancient World). The woman stayed home to cook, clean, raise the children, and supervise the servants. The closest relationship in the family was likely to be between the wife and her slave attendant. These women, often roughly the same age, spent enormous amounts of time together. The servant could be sent into town on errands. The wife stayed in the house, except to attend funerals and certain festivals and to make discreet visits to the houses of female relatives. Greek men justified the confinement of women by claiming that they were naturally promiscuous and likely to introduce other men's children into the household—an action that would threaten the family property and violate the strict regulation of citizenship rights.

Without any documents written by women in this period, we cannot tell the extent to which Athenian women resented their situation or accepted it because they knew little else. Women's festivals provided rare opportunities for women to get out. During the three-day Thesmophoria^o festival, the women of Athens lived together and managed their own affairs in a great encampment, carrying out mysterious rituals meant to enhance the fertility of the land.

The appearance of bold and self-assertive women on the Athenian stage is also suggestive: the defiant Antigone^o of Sophocles' play who buried her brother despite the prohibition of the king; and the wives in Aristophanes' comedy *Lysistrata*^o who refused to have sex with their husbands until the men ended a war. Although these plays were written by men and probably reflect a male fear of strong women, the playwrights must have had models in their mothers, sisters, and wives.

The inequality of men and women posed obstacles to creating a "meaningful" relationship between the sexes. To find his intellectual and emotional equal, a man often looked to other men. Bisexuality was common in ancient Greece, as much a product of the social structure as of biological inclinations. A common pattern was that of an older man serving as admirer, pursuer, and mentor of a youth. Bisexuality became part of a system by which young men were educated and initiated into the community of adult males. At least this was true of the elite intellectual groups that loom large in the written sources. It is hard to say how prevalent bisexuality and the confinement of women were among the Athenian masses.

Thesmophoria (thes-moe-FOE-ree-uh)

Antigone (an-TIG-uh-nee) **Lysistrata** (lis-uh-STRAH-tuh)

Failure of the City-State and Triumph of the Macedonians

The emergence of Athens as an imperial power in the half-century after the Persian invasion aroused the suspicions of other Greek states and led to open hostilities between former allies. In 431 B.C.E. the Peloponnesian War broke out. This nightmarish struggle for survival between the Athenian and Spartan alliance systems encompassed most of the Greek world. It was a war unlike any previous Greek war because the Athenians used their naval power to insulate themselves from the dangers of an attack by land. In midcentury they had built three long walls connecting the city with the port of Piraeus and the adjacent shoreline. At the start of the war, Pericles formulated an unprecedented strategy, refusing to engage the Spartan-led armies that invaded Attica each year. Pericles knew that, as long as Athens controlled the sea-lanes and was able to provision itself, the enemy hoplites must soon return to their farms and the city could not be starved into submission by a land-based siege. Thus, instead of culminating in a short, decisive battle like most Greek hoplite warfare, the Peloponnesian War dragged on for nearly three decades with great loss of life and squandering of resources. It sapped the morale of all of Greece and ended only with the defeat of Athens in a naval battle in 404 B.C.E. The Persian Empire had bankrolled the construction of ships by the Spartan alliance, so Sparta finally was able to take the conflict into Athens's own element, the sea.

The victorious Spartans, who had entered the war championing “the freedom of the Greeks,” took over Athens's overseas empire until their own increasingly highhanded behavior aroused the opposition of other city-states. Indeed, the fourth century B.C.E. was a time of nearly continuous skirmishing among Greek states. One can make the case that the independent polis, from one point of view the glory of Greek culture, was also the fundamental structural flaw because it fostered rivalry, fear, and mistrust among neighboring communities.

Internal conflict in the Greek world allowed the Persians to recoup old losses. By the terms of the King's Peace of 387 B.C.E., to which most of the states of war-weary Greece subscribed, all of western Asia, including the Greek communities of the Anatolian seacoast, were conceded to Persia. The Persian king became the guarantor of a status quo that kept the Greeks divided and weak. Luckily for the Greeks, rebellions in Egypt, Cyprus, and Phoenicia as well as trouble with some of the satraps

in the western provinces diverted Persian attention from thoughts of another Greek invasion.

Meanwhile, in northern Greece developments were taking place that would irrevocably alter the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia. Philip II (r. 359–336 B.C.E.) was transforming his previously backward kingdom of Macedonia into the premier military power in the Greek world. (Although southern Greeks had long doubted the “Greekness” of the rough and rowdy Macedonians, modern scholarship is inclined to regard their language and culture as Greek at base, though much influenced by contact with non-Greek neighbors.) Philip had made a number of improvements to the traditional hoplite formation. He increased the striking power and mobility of his force by equipping soldiers with longer thrusting spears and less armor. Because horses thrived in the broad, grassy plains of the north, he experimented with the coordinated use of infantry and cavalry. His engineers had also developed new kinds of siege equipment, including the first catapults—machines using the power of twisted cords that, when released, hurled arrows or stones great distances. For the first time it became possible to storm a fortified city rather than wait for starvation to take effect.

In 338 B.C.E. Philip defeated a coalition of southern states and established the Confederacy of Corinth as an instrument for controlling the Greek city-states. Philip had himself appointed military commander for a planned all-Greek campaign against Persia, and his generals established a bridgehead on the Asiatic side of the Hellespont. It appears that Philip was following the advice of Greek thinkers who had pondered the lessons of the Persian Wars of the fifth century B.C.E. and had urged a crusade against the national enemy as a means of unifying their quarrelsome countrymen.

We will never know how far Philip's ambitions extended, for an assassin killed him in 336 B.C.E. When Alexander (356–323 B.C.E.), his son and heir, crossed over into Asia in 334 B.C.E., his avowed purpose was to exact revenge for Xerxes' invasion a century and half before. He defeated the Persian forces of King Darius III (r. 336–330 B.C.E.) in three pitched battles in Anatolia and Mesopotamia, and he ultimately campaigned as far as the Punjab region of modern Pakistan.



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Interactive Map: The Conquests of Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great, as he came to be called, maintained the framework of Persian administration in the lands he conquered. He realized that it was well adapted to local circumstances and familiar to the subject peoples. At first, however, he replaced Persian officials with his own Macedonian and Greek comrades. To control strategic points in his expanding empire, he established a series of Greek-style cities, beginning with Alexandria in Egypt, and settled wounded and aged former soldiers in them. After his decisive victory at Gaugamela in northern Mesopotamia (331 B.C.E.), he began to experiment with leaving cooperative Persian officials in place. He also admitted some Persians and other Iranians into his army and into the circle of his courtiers, and he adopted elements of Persian dress and court ceremony. Finally, he married several Iranian women who had useful royal or aristocratic connections, and he pressed his leading subordinates to do the same.

THE HELLENISTIC SYNTHESIS, 323–30 B.C.E.

At the time of his sudden death in 323 B.C.E. at the age of thirty-two, Alexander apparently had made no plans for the succession. Thus his death ushered in a half-century of chaos as the most ambitious and ruthless of his officers struggled for control of the vast empire. When the dust cleared, the empire had been broken up into three major kingdoms, each ruled by a Macedonian dynasty—the Seleucid^o, Ptolemaic^o, and Antigonid^o kingdoms (see Map 4.3). Each major kingdom faced a unique set of problems, and although the three frequently were at odds with one another, a rough balance of power prevented any one from gaining the upper hand and enabled smaller states to survive by playing off the great powers.

Historians call the epoch ushered in by the conquests of Alexander the “Hellenistic Age” (323–30 B.C.E.) because the lands in northeastern Africa and western Asia that came under Greek rule tended to be “Hellenized”—that is, powerfully influenced by Greek culture. This was a period of large kingdoms with heterogeneous populations, great cities, powerful rulers, pervasive bureaucracies, and vast disparities in wealth—a far cry from the small, homogeneous, independent city-states of Archaic and Classical Greece. It was a cosmopolitan age of long-distance trade and communications, which saw the rise of new institutions like libraries and universities, new

kinds of scholarship and science, and the cultivation of sophisticated tastes in art and literature. In many respects, in comparison with the preceding Classical era, it was a world much more like our own.

Of all the successor states, the kingdom of the Seleucids, who took over the bulk of Alexander’s conquests, faced the greatest challenges. The Indus Valley and Afghanistan soon split off, and over the course of the third and second centuries B.C.E. Iran was lost to the Parthians. What remained for the Seleucids was a core in Mesopotamia, Syria, and parts of Anatolia, which the Seleucid monarchs ruled from their capital at Syrian Antioch^o. Their sprawling territories were open to attack from many directions, and, like the Persians before them, they had to administer lands inhabited by many different ethnic groups organized under various political and social forms. In the countryside, where most of the native peoples resided, the Seleucids maintained an administrative structure modeled on the Persian system. They also continued Alexander’s policy of founding Greek-style cities throughout their domains. These cities served as administrative centers and were also the lure that the Seleucids used to attract colonists from Greece. The Seleucids desperately needed Greek soldiers, engineers, administrators, and other professionals.

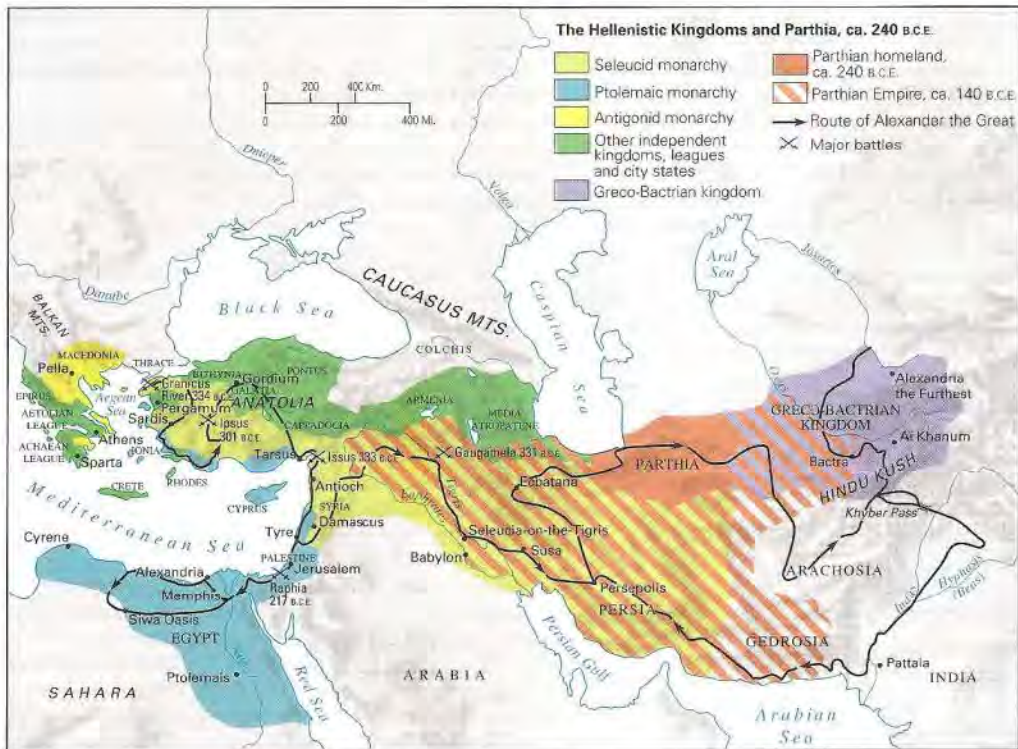
The dynasty of the Ptolemies^o ruled Egypt and sometimes laid claim to adjacent Syria-Palestine. The people of Egypt belonged to only one ethnic group and were fairly easily controlled because the vast majority of them were farmers living in villages alongside the Nile. The Ptolemies were able to take over much of the administrative structure of the pharaohs and to extract the surplus wealth of this populous and productive land. The Egyptian economy was centrally planned and highly controlled. Vast revenues poured into the royal treasury from rents (the king owned most of the land), taxes of all sorts, and royal monopolies on olive oil, salt, papyrus, and other key commodities.

The Ptolemies ruled from Alexandria, the first of the new cities laid out by Alexander himself. Alexandria was situated near to where the westernmost branch of the Nile runs into the Mediterranean Sea and was meant to be a link between Egypt and the Mediterranean world.


Like the Seleucids, the Ptolemies actively encouraged the immigration of Greeks from the homeland and, in return for their skills and collaboration in the military or civil administration, gave them land and a privileged position in the new society. But the Ptolemies did not seek to plant Greek-style cities throughout the Egyptian countryside, and they made no effort to encourage the native population to adopt the Greek language or ways. In fact, so

Seleucid (sih-LOO-sid) **Ptolemaic** (tawl-uh-MAY-ik)
Antigonid (an-TIG-uh-nid)

Antioch (AN-tee-awk) **Ptolemies** (TAWL-uh-meze)

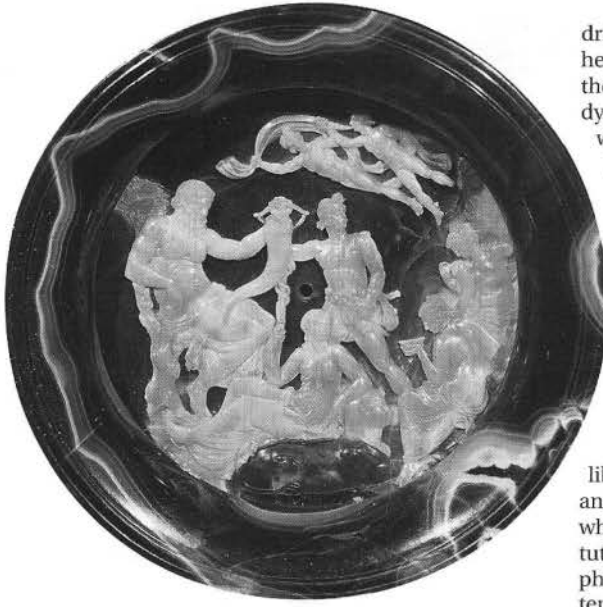


Map 4.3 Hellenistic Civilization After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E., his vast empire soon split apart into a number of large and small political entities. A Macedonian dynasty was established on each continent: the Antigonids ruled the Macedonian homeland and tried with varying success to extend their control over southern Greece; the Ptolemies ruled Egypt; and the Seleucids inherited the majority of Alexander's conquests in Asia, though they lost control of the eastern portions because of the rise of the Parthians of Iran in the second century B.C.E. This period saw Greeks migrating in large numbers from their overcrowded homeland to serve as a privileged class of soldiers and administrators on the new frontiers, where they replicated the lifestyle of the city-state.

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 Interactive Map: The
 Hellenistic World

separate was the Greek ruling class from the subject population that only the last Ptolemy, Queen Cleopatra (r. 51–30 B.C.E.), even bothered to learn the language of the Egyptians. For the Egyptian peasant population laboring on the land, life was little changed by the advent of new masters. Yet from the early second century B.C.E., periodic native insurrections in the countryside, which government forces in cooperation with Greek and Hellenized settlers quickly stamped out, were signs of Egyptians' growing resentment of the Greeks' exploitation and arrogance.

In Europe, the Antigonid dynasty ruled the Macedonian homeland and adjacent parts of northern Greece. This was a compact and ethnically homogeneous kingdom, so there was little of the hostility and occasional resistance that the Seleucid and Ptolemaic ruling classes faced. Macedonian garrisons at strongpoints gave the Antigonids a toehold in central and southern Greece, and the shadow of Macedonian intervention always hung over the south. The southern states met the threat by banding together into confederations,



Hellenistic Cameo, Second Century B.C.E. This sardonyx cameo is an allegory of the prosperity of Ptolemaic Egypt. At left, the bearded river-god Nile holds a horn of plenty while his wife, seated on a sphinx and dressed like the Egyptian goddess Isis, raises a stalk of grain. Their son, at center, carries a seed bag and the shaft of a plow. The Seasons are seated at right. Two wind-gods float overhead. The style is entirely Greek, but the motifs are a blending of Greek and Egyptian elements. (G. Dagli-Orti/The Art Archive)

such as the Achaean^o League in the Peloponnese, in which the member-states maintained local autonomy but pooled resources and military power.

Athens and Sparta, the two leading cities of the Classical period, stood out from these confederations. The Spartans never quite abandoned the myth of their own invincibility and made a number of heroic but futile stands against Macedonian armies. Athens, which held a special place in the hearts of all Greeks because of the artistic and literary accomplishments of the fifth century B.C.E., pursued a policy of neutrality. The city became a large museum, filled with the relics and memories of a glorious past, as well as a university town that attracted the children of the well-to-do from all over the Mediterranean and western Asia.

In an age of cities, the greatest city of all was Alexandria, with a population of nearly half a million. At the heart of this city was the royal compound, containing the palace and administrative buildings for the ruling dynasty and its massive bureaucracy. The centerpiece was the magnificent Mausoleum of Alexander. The first Ptolemy had stolen the body of Alexander while it was being brought back to Macedonia for burial. The theft was aimed at gaining legitimacy for Ptolemaic rule by claiming the blessing of the great conqueror, who was declared to be a god. Two harbors served the needs of the many trading ventures that linked the commerce of the Mediterranean with the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. A great lighthouse—the first of its kind, a multistory tower with a fiery beacon visible at a distance of 30 miles (48 kilometers)—was one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Alexandria gained further luster from its famous library, which had several hundred thousand volumes, and from its museum, or “House of the Muses” (divinities who presided over the arts and sciences), a research institution that supported the work of the greatest poets, philosophers, doctors, and scientists of the day. The existence of such well-funded institutions made possible significant advances in science, both in the systematization and extension of earlier work. Some of the greatest achievements were in mathematics and astronomy. The mathematical writings of Euclid^o (ca. 276–194 B.C.E.) and the astronomical text of Claudius Ptolemy (second century C.E.), each a grand synthesis of Greek accomplishments in these areas, were highly influential in Europe and the Islamic world into early modern times (see *Environment and Technology: Ancient Astronomy*). While the claim is often made that the Greeks had a strong predilection for abstract theorizing rather than experimental verification and practical application, experience was put to use in some fields. Archimedes^o (ca. 287–211 B.C.E.) invented many mechanical devices, including the screw pump for extracting underground water, and developed a technique for determining the volume of an object. Galen^o (ca. 129–210 C.E.), a Greek physician of the Roman era, conveyed the legacy of Greek medical knowledge to subsequent ages.

Greek residents of Alexandria enjoyed citizenship in a Greek-style polis with an Assembly, a Council, and officials who dealt with purely local affairs, and they took advantage of public works and institutions that signified the Greek way of life. Public baths and shaded arcades were places to relax and socialize with friends. Ancient

Achaean (uh-KEY-uhn)

Euclid (YOO-klid) **Archimedes** (ahr-kih-MEE-dees)

Galen (GAY-luhn)

Ancient Astronomy

Long before the advent of writing, people studied the appearance and movement of objects in the sky and used this information for a variety of purposes. Ancient hunters, herders, and farmers all regulated their activities in conformity with the cycle of seasons during the year so that they could follow the migrations of prey, find appropriate pastures for domestic animals, and perform vital agricultural tasks.

Ancient farmers drew upon an intimate knowledge of the night sky. Hesiod (HEE-see-uhd), who lived around 700 B.C.E., composed a poem called *Works and Days* describing the annual cycle of tasks on a Greek farm. How did the ancient Greeks, with no clocks, calendars, or newspapers, know where they were in the cycle of the year? As Hesiod makes clear, they oriented themselves by acute observation of natural phenomena such as the movements of planets, stars, and constellations in the night sky. Hesiod gives the following advice for determining the proper times for planting and harvesting grain:

*Pleiades rising in the dawning sky,
Harvest is nigh.
Pleiades setting in the waning night,
Plowing is right.*

The Pleiades (PLEE-uh-dees) is a cluster of seven stars visible to the naked eye. The ancient Greeks observed that individual stars, clusters, and constellations moved from east to west and appeared in different parts of the sky at different times of the year. (In fact, the apparent movement of the stars is due to the earth's rotation on its axis and orbit around the sun against a background of unmoving stars.) Hesiod is telling his audience that, when the Pleiades appear above the eastern horizon just before the light of the rising sun makes all the other stars invisible (in May on the modern calendar), a sensible farmer will cut down his grain crop. Some months later (in our September), when the Pleiades dip below the western horizon just

before sunrise, it is time to plow the fields and plant seeds for the next year's harvest.

Farmers such as Hesiod were primarily concerned with the seasons of the year. However, there was also a need to divide the year up into smaller units. The moon, so easily visible in the night sky and with clear phases, offered the unit of the month. Unfortunately, the lunar and solar cycles do not fit comfortably together, since twelve lunar months falls eleven days short of the solar cycle of a 365-day year. Ancient peoples wrestled with ways of reconciling the two cycles, and the months of varying lengths and leap years in our present-day calendar are the legacy of this dilemma.

The complex societies that arose from the fourth millennium B.C.E. onward had additional needs for information based on astronomical observation, and these needs reflected the distinctive characteristics of those societies. In ancient Egypt an administrative calendar was essential for recordkeeping and the regular collection of taxes by the government. The Egyptians discovered that a calendar based on lunar months could be kept in harmony with the solar year by inserting an extra month five times over a nineteen-year cycle. They also learned from experience that the flooding of the Nile River—so vital for Egyptian agriculture—happened at the time when Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, rose above the eastern horizon just before the sun came up.

In the second millennium B.C.E., the Babylonians began to make and record very precise naked-eye observations of the movements of the sun, the moon, and the visible planets, of occasional eclipses, and of other unusual celestial occurrences. Believing that the phenomena they saw in the sky sometimes contained messages and warnings of disaster, the rulers supported a group of specialists who observed, recorded, and interpreted these "signs" from the gods. Using a sophisticated system of mathematical notation, they figured out the regularities of certain cycles and were able to predict future occurrences of eclipses and the movements of the planets.

Early Greek astronomy had somewhat different concerns. Whereas Babylonian science observed and recorded

data, Greek philosophers tried to figure out why the heavenly bodies moved as they did and what the actual structure of the *kosmos* (Greek for an orderly arrangement of things) was. Aristotle pointed out that because the earth's shadow, as seen on the face of the moon during a lunar eclipse, was curved, the earth must be a sphere. Eratosthenes (eh-ruh-TOSS-thih-nees) made a surprisingly accurate calculation of the circumference of the earth. Aristarchus (ah-ris-TAWR-kiss) calculated the distances and relative sizes of the moon and sun. He also argued against the prevailing notion that the earth was the center of the universe, asserting that the earth and other planets revolved around the sun. Greek theorists pictured the earth as a sphere at the center of a set of concentric spheres that rotated, carrying along the seven visible "planets"—the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn—with the outermost ring containing the stars that maintain a fixed position relative to one another.

As a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great, Mesopotamia came under Greek control and Greek astronomers gained access to the many centuries of accumulated records of Babylonian observers. This more precise information allowed Greek thinkers to further refine their models for the structure and movement of celestial objects. The Greek conception of the universe, in the form set down by the second-century c.e. astronomer Claudius Ptolemy, became the basis of scientific thinking about these matters for the next 1,400 years in the Islamic Middle East and Christian Europe.

Source: From *Hesiod: Works and Days and Theogony*, translated by Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1993). Reprinted by permission of Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved.

plays were revived in the theaters, and musical performances and demonstrations of oratory took place in the concert halls. Gymnasiums offered facilities for exercise and fitness and were places where young men of the privileged classes were schooled in athletics, music, and literature. Jews had their own civic corporation, officials, and courts and predominated in two of the five main residential districts. Other quarters were filled with the sights, sounds, and smells of ethnic groups from Syria, Anatolia, and the Egyptian countryside.

In all the Hellenistic states, ambitious members of the indigenous populations learned the Greek language and adopted elements of the Greek way of life, because doing so put them in a position to become part of the privileged and wealthy ruling class. For the ancient



Tower of the Winds, Athens, Second Century B.C.E. Designed in the Hellenistic period by the astronomer Andronicus of Cyrrhus, the eight sides are decorated with images of the eight directional winds. Sundials on the exterior showed the time of day, while a water-driven mechanism inside the tower revealed the hours, days, and phases of the moon. (Ronald Sheridan/Ancient Art & Architecture Collection, Ltd.)

Greeks, to be Greek was primarily a matter of language and lifestyle rather than physical traits. In the Hellenistic Age there was a spontaneous synthesis of Greek and indigenous ways. Egyptians migrated to Alexandria, and Greeks and Egyptians intermarried in the villages of the countryside. Greeks living amid the monuments and descendants of the ancient civilizations of Egypt and western Asia were exposed to the mathematical and astronomical wisdom of Mesopotamia, the elaborate mortuary rituals of Egypt, and the many attractions of foreign religious cults. With little official planning or blessing, stemming for the most part from the day-to-day experiences and actions of ordinary people, a great multicultural experiment unfolded as Greek and Middle Eastern cultural traits clashed and merged.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Profound changes took place in the lands of the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia in the first millennium B.C.E., with Persians and Greeks playing pivotal roles. Let us compare the impacts of these two peoples and assess the broad significance of these centuries.

The empire of the Achaemenid Persians was the largest empire yet to appear in the world. It was also a new kind of empire because it encompassed such a wide variety of landscapes, peoples, and social, political, and economic systems. How did the Persians manage to hold together this diverse collection of lands for more than two centuries?

The answer did not lie entirely in brute force. The Persian government demonstrated flexibility and tolerance in its handling of the laws, customs, and beliefs of subject peoples. Persian administration, superimposed on top of local structures, left a considerable role for native institutions.

The Persians also displayed a flair for public relations. The Zoroastrian religion underlined the authority of the king as the appointee of god, champion of justice, and defender of world order against evil and destructive forces. In their art and inscriptions, the Persian kings broadcast an image of a benevolent empire in which the dependent peoples gladly contributed to the welfare of the realm.

Western Asia underwent significant changes in the period of Persian supremacy. By imposing a uniform system of law and administration and by providing security and stability, the Persian government fostered commerce and prosperity, at least for some. It also possessed an unprecedented capacity to organize labor on a large scale to construct an expanded water distribution network and to work the extensive estates of the Persian royal family and nobility.

Most difficult to assess is the cultural impact of Persian rule. The long-dominant culture of Mesopotamia fused with some Iranian elements. The resulting new synthesis is most visible in the art, architecture, and inscriptions of the Persian monarchs. It has been suggested that the Zoroastrian religion spread across the

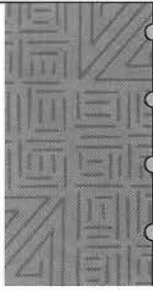
empire and influenced other religious traditions, such as Judaism, but Zoroastrianism does not appear to have had broad, popular appeal. The Persian administration relied heavily on the scribes and written languages of its Mesopotamian, Syrian, and Egyptian subjects, and literacy remained the preserve of a small, professional class. Thus the Persian language does not seem to have been widely adopted by inhabitants of the empire.

Nearly two centuries of trouble with the Greeks on their western frontier vexed the Persians, but they were primarily concerned with the security of their eastern and northeastern frontiers, where they were vulnerable to attack by the nomads of Central Asia. The technological differences between Greece and Persia were not great. The only significant difference was the hoplite arms and military formation used by the Greeks, which often allowed them to prevail over the Persians. In the later fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. the Persian king gained the benefit of hoplite tactics by hiring Greek mercenaries.

Alexander's conquests brought changes to the Greek world almost as radical as those suffered by the Persians. Greeks spilled out into the sprawling new frontiers in northeastern Africa and western Asia, and the independent city-state became inconsequential in a world of large kingdoms. The centuries of Greek domination had a far more pervasive cultural impact on the Middle East than did the Persian period. Whereas Alexander was inclined to preserve the Persian administrative apparatus, leaving native institutions and personnel in place, his successors relied almost exclusively on a privileged class of Greek soldiers, officers, and administrators.

Equally significant were the Greek-style cities, which exerted a powerful cultural influence on important elements of the native populations, and a system of easily learned alphabetic Greek writing, which led to more widespread literacy and far more effective dissemination of information. The result was that the Greeks had a profound impact on the peoples and lands of the Middle East, and Hellenism persisted as a cultural force for a thousand years.

SUMMARY



- How did the Persian Empire rise from its Iranian homeland and spread to encompass diverse cultures?
- How did Greek civilization evolve and spread beyond its original territories?
- How did the Persian Wars and their aftermath affect the politics and culture of ancient Greece?
- How did a cultural synthesis develop during the Hellenistic Age?

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ACE the Test

Less hospitable than Mesopotamia, ancient Iran could not sustain a large population, and its agriculture depended on underground irrigation channels. Among the first Iranians to build a complex political order were the Medes, who helped to destroy the Assyrian Empire. Cyrus later united the Persians and overthrew the Medes, prompting the two similar cultures to blend. The empire reached its fullest extent under Darius I, who built its basic governmental structure: provinces governed by satraps, tribute money funneled to the center, and a decentralized legal system. An extensive road and post system connected the imperial center with the periphery. Persian art and architecture drew from earlier Mesopotamian models, and imagery broadcast the imperial ideology of wealth, power, and cooperativeness.

Barriers inhibiting overland travel and communication turned the Greeks to the sea. At the end of the Dark Age they came into contact with the Phoenicians, whose cultural influences included alphabetic writing and naturalistic art. The focus of this Greek civilization was the polis, whose citizens participated in government and defended it as hoplites. Population pressures spurred overseas colonization, which spread Greek culture throughout the Mediterranean world. This period saw the emergence of new forms of literary and intellectual endeavor, such as history and philosophical inquiry. The military polis of Sparta and the democracy of Athens emerged as the preeminent city-states, the latter achieving unrivaled economic prosperity.

Cyrus's conquests brought Persian and Greek civilizations into contact with one another. Mainland Greek support for the Ionian rebels prompted the Persian Wars,

during which Athens, Sparta, and their allies repulsed Persian invasions on land and at sea. Victory left Athens a naval power in command of an overseas empire. Wealth from tribute and trade enriched the city, financed the building projects on the Acropolis, and nourished the culture in which drama flourished. Philosophical inquiry evolved further, led by the Sophists, Socrates, and Plato. Although progressive by the standard of the day, Athenian democracy rested on significant inequality and exploitation of the labor of slaves and women. Rivalry between Sparta and Athens exploded into the Peloponnesian War, which shattered Athens and left all of the Greek city-states weakened. Exploiting this weakness, Persia recovered old losses, and Macedonia imposed its rule on southern Greece. Macedonian expansion continued under Alexander the Great, who conquered Persia and attempted a fusion of Greek and Persian culture.

The death of Alexander the Great ushered in the Hellenistic Age. From his empire his generals carved kingdoms for themselves, founding Macedonian dynasties that presided over an international Greek culture. The Seleucids ruled the largest kingdom in western Asia, founding Greek-style cities, and both they and the Ptolemies in Egypt encouraged Greek immigration, but in Egypt Greeks largely remained a class apart and had little to do with native Egyptians. The Antigonids ruled Macedonia, but the southern and central Greek cities resisted them through alliances. Only Sparta and Athens remained apart, living on past glories and having little power in the region. Alexandria became the major Hellenistic city, a showcase of the cultural synthesis that marked the age.

KEY TERMS

Cyrus p. 103
 Darius I p. 103
 satrap p. 104
 Persepolis p. 105
 Zoroastrianism p. 109
 polis p. 112
 hoplite p. 112

tyrant p. 114
 democracy p. 114
 sacrifice p. 114
 Herodotus p. 116
 Pericles p. 117
 Persian Wars p. 118
 trireme p. 118

Socrates p. 120
 Peloponnesian War p. 124
 Alexander p. 124
 Hellenistic Age p. 125
 Ptolemies p. 125
 Alexandria p. 125



SUGGESTED READING

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Other general treatments include J. B. Bury and Russell Meiggs, *A History of Greece* (1975), and Nancy Demand, *A History of Ancient Greece* (1996). For the Archaic period see Oswyn Murray, *Early Greece*, 2nd ed. (1993), and Robin Osborne, *Greece in the Making, 1200–479 B.C.* (1996).

Social history is emphasized by Frank J. Frost, *Greek Society*, 3rd ed. (1987). Robert Morkot, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Greece* (1996), and Peter Levi, *Atlas of the Greek World* (1980), are filled with maps, pictures, and general information about Greek civilization, as is Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Greece* (1997). Michael Grant and Rachel Kitzinger, eds., *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean* (1987), is a three-volume collection of essays by contemporary experts on nearly every aspect of ancient Greco-Roman civilization and includes select bibliographies.

We are fortunate to have an abundant written literature from ancient Greece, and the testimony of the ancients themselves should be the starting point for any inquiry. Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon chronicled the history of the Greeks and their Middle Eastern neighbors from the sixth through fourth centuries B.C.E. Arrian, who lived in the second century C.E., provides the most useful account of the career of Alexander the Great. Among the many collections of documents in translation, see Michael Crawford and David Whitehead, eds., *Archaic and Classical Greece: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation* (1983); Matthew Dillon and Lynda Garland, eds., *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Socrates (800–399 B.C.)* (2000); David G. Rice and John E. Stambaugh, eds., *Sources for the Study of Greek Religion* (1979); Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, eds., *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation* (1982); Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (1981); Michael M. Sage, *Warfare in Ancient Greece: A Sourcebook* (1996); and Michael Gagarin and Paul Woodruff, *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists* (1995). The Perseus Project (www.perseus.tufts.edu) is a remarkable Internet site containing hundreds of ancient texts, thousands of photographs of artifacts and sites, maps, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other resources for the study of Greek (and Roman) civilization.

Victor Davis Hanson, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (1995), emphasizes the centrality of farming to the development of Greek institutions and values. Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (1986), and Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (1992), explore the profound effects of alphabetic literacy on the Greek mind.

Valuable treatments of other key topics include Elaine Fantham, Helene Peet Foley, Natalie Boymel Kampen, Sarah B. Pomeroy, and H. Alan Shapiro, *Women in the Classical World* (1994); Cynthia Patterson, *The Family in Greek History* (1998); Marilyn B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (2005); Yvon Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (1988); Jon D. Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion* (2005); Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (1985); Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (1989); Lionel Casson, *The Ancient Mariners: Seafarers and Sea Fighters of the Mediterranean in Ancient Times*, 2nd ed. (1991); Stephen G. Miller, *Ancient Greek Athletics* (2004); Kurt Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient*

Greece (2004); Joint Association of Classical Teachers, *The World of Athens: An Introduction to Classical Athenian Culture* (1984); N. G. L. Hammond, *The Macedonian State: The Origins, Institutions and History* (1989); Joseph Roisman, ed., *Alexander the Great: Ancient and Modern Perspectives* (1995); and William R. Biers, *The Archaeology of Greece: An Introduction* (1990). Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, *Black Athena Revisited* (1996), explores the controversies surrounding the Greek cultural obligation to Egypt and western Asia.

For the Hellenistic world see Andrew Erskine, ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (2003); F. W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World*, rev. ed. (1993); and Michael Grant, *From Alexander to Cleopatra: The Hellenistic World* (1982). Roger S. Bagnall and Peter Derow, *The Hellenistic World: Historical Sources in Translation*, 2nd ed. (2004), and M. M. Austin, ed., *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation* (1981), provide sources in translation. Jean-Yves Empereur, *Alexandria Rediscovered* (1998), summarizes exciting new finds from the palace precinct in the waters off Alexandria.

NOTES

1. Richmond Lattimore, *Greek Lyrics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 2.
2. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 169.
3. Herodotus, *The History*, trans. David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 33 (Herodotus 1.1).