

# CHAPTER 10

## MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY: THE GREEK PHASE

### INTRODUCTION

Although the Greeks did not build a centralized state until the short reign of Alexander of Macedon, they did serve to link the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions through colonization, commerce, and cultural interaction. Through their unprecedented abilities as sea traders, and later through the unification provided by the Hellenistic empires, the Greeks left a rich cultural legacy of politics, philosophy, art, literature, and science that would go on to shape the European and Islamic worlds for centuries. Some of the enduring innovations for which the classical Greek cultures are best known include

- The earliest form of democracy, the best realization of which was found in Athens under the leadership of the statesman Pericles.
- The establishment of hundreds of cities throughout the Mediterranean basin and southwest Asia.
- Unique contributions to literature in the forms of mythology, poetry, drama, and essays.
- The contributions of the rational philosophical thought of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and later the Epicureans, the Skeptics, and the Stoics.

### OUTLINE

#### **I. Early development of Greek society**

##### **A. Minoan and Mycenaean societies**

1. Minoan society arose on the island of Crete, late third millennium B.C.E.
  - a) Between 2200 and 1450 B.C.E., was the center of Mediterranean commerce
  - b) Received early influences from Phoenicia and Egypt
  - c) Untranslated form of writing, Linear A, was used
  - d) By 1100 B.C.E., Crete fell under foreign domination
2. Mycenaean society: named after important city, Mycenae
  - a) Indo-European immigrants settled in Greece, 2000 B.C.E.
  - b) Adapted Minoan Linear A into their script, Linear B
  - c) Stone fortresses in the Peloponnesus (southern Greece) protected agricultural settlements
  - d) Overpowered Minoan society and expanded to Anatolia, Sicily, and Italy
3. Chaos in the eastern Mediterranean after Trojan War (1200 B.C.E.)

##### **B. The world of the polis gradually emerged in Greece**

1. Sparta began to extend control during eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.

- a) Reduced the neighboring peoples to the status of helots, or semi-free servants
- b) Maintained domination by a powerful military machine
- 2. Spartan society
  - a) Discouraged social distinction, observed austere lifestyle
  - b) Distinction was drawn by prowess, discipline, and military talent
- 3. Athens gradually broadened base of political participation
  - a) Solon sought to negotiate order by democratic principles
  - b) Citizenship was open to free adult males, not to foreigners, slaves, and women
- 4. Athenian society
  - a) Maritime trade brought about prosperity to Attica, the region of Athens
  - b) Aristocratic landowners were primary beneficiaries
  - c) Class tension became intensified in the sixth century B.C.E.
- 5. Pericles (ca. 443–429 B.C.E.), most popular democratic leader of Athens

## **II. Greece and the larger world**

### **A. Greek colonization**

- 1. Greeks founded more than four hundred colonies
  - a) Facilitated trade among Mediterranean lands and people
  - b) Spread of Greek language and cultural traditions
  - c) Stimulated development of surrounding areas

### **B. Conflict with Persia and its results**

- 1. The Persian War (500–479 B.C.E.)
  - a) Greek cities on Ionian coast revolted against Persia, 500 B.C.E.
  - b) Battle of Marathon, 490 B.C.E., is decisive victory for Athens
  - c) Xerxes tried again to seize Athens; his navy lost battle of Salamis (480 B.C.E.)
  - d) Persian army retreated back to Anatolia (479 B.C.E.)
- 2. The Delian League
  - a) Military and financial alliance among Greek poleis against Persian threat
  - b) When Persian threat subsided, poleis, other than Athens, no longer wanted to make contributions
- 3. The Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.E.)
  - a) Tensions led to two armed camps, under leadership of Athens and Sparta
  - b) Unconditional surrender of Athens, 404 B.C.E.

### **C. The Macedonians and the coming of empire**

- 1. The kingdom of Macedon, a frontier state north of peninsular Greece

2. Philip of Macedon (reigned 359–336 B.C.E.) brought Greece under control
  3. Alexander of Macedon succeeds Philip at age twenty and begins conquests
    - a) By 331 B.C.E., controlled Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia
    - b) Invaded Persian homeland and burned Persepolis, 331 B.C.E.
    - c) Crossed Indus River by 327 B.C.E., army refused to go farther
    - d) Died in 323 B.C.E. at age of thirty-three
- D. Hellenistic Empires: Alexander's realm was divided into Antigonid, Ptolemaic, Seleucid
1. Antigonid empire: Greece and Macedon
    - a) Continuous tension between the Antigonid rulers and Greek cities
    - b) Economy of Athens and Corinth flourished again through trade
  2. The Ptolemaic empire: Egypt—the wealthiest
    - a) The rulers did not interfere in Egyptian society
    - b) Alexandria, capital at mouth of the Nile
    - c) Cultural center: the famous Alexandria Museum and Alexandria Library
  3. The Seleucid empire: largest, from Bactria to Anatolia
    - a) Greek and Macedonian colonists flocked to Greek cities of the former Persia
    - b) Colonists created a Mediterranean-style urban society
    - c) Bactria withdrew from Seleucids and established independent Greek kingdom

### **III. The fruits of trade: Greek economy and society**

- A. Trade and the integration of the Mediterranean Basin
1. Trade and commerce flourished resulting in population growth and more colonies
    - a) Production of olive oil and wine, in exchange for grain and other items
    - b) Led to broader sense of Greek community
  2. Panhellenic festivals (like Olympic Games) became popular
- B. Family and society
1. Greek society in Homer's works
    - a) Heroic warriors and outspoken wives in Homer's world
    - b) Strong-willed human beings clashed constantly
  2. Patriarchal society was the norm
    - a) Women could not own landed property but could operate small businesses
    - b) Priestess was the only public position for women
    - c) Spartan women enjoyed higher status than women of other poleis
  3. Sappho: talented female poet wrote poems of attraction to women
    - a) Instructed young women in music and literature at home

- b) Critics charged her with homosexual activity (not acceptable for women)
- 4. Slavery: private chattel, property of their owners
  - a) Worked as cultivators, domestic servants
  - b) Educated or skilled slaves worked as craftsmen and business managers

#### IV. The cultural life of classical Greece

##### A. Rational thought and philosophy

1. The formation of Greek cultural traditions: philosophy based on human reason
2. Socrates (470–399 B.C.E.): “An unexamined life is not worth living”
  - a) Encouraged reflection on questions of ethics and morality
  - b) Was condemned to death on charge of corrupting Athenian youths
3. Plato (430–347 B.C.E.): A zealous disciple of Socrates
  - a) The theory of Forms or Ideas—world of ideal qualities
  - b) This world is imperfect reflection of world of Forms
  - c) His *Republic* expressed the ideal of philosophical kings
4. Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.): Plato’s student, but distrusted theory of Forms
  - a) Devised rules of logic to construct powerful arguments
  - b) Philosophers should rely on senses to provide accurate information
5. Legacy of Greek philosophy
  - a) Intellectual authorities for European philosophers until seventeenth century
  - b) Intellectual inspiration for Christian and Islamic theologians

##### B. Popular religion and Greek drama

1. Greek deities: Zeus and scores of subordinate deities
2. Various types of religious cults; Cult of Dionysus most popular
3. Drama was performed at annual theatrical festivals
  - a) Great tragedians explored the possibilities and limitations of human action
  - b) Comic drama took delight in lampooning the public figures

##### C. Hellenistic philosophy and religion

1. The Hellenistic philosophers: search for personal tranquility
  - a) Epicureans: identified pleasure as the greatest good
  - b) Skeptics: doubted certainty of knowledge, sought equanimity
  - c) Stoics: taught individuals duty to aid others and lead virtuous lives
2. Religions of salvation spread through trade routes
  - a) Mystery religions, like Cult of Osiris, promised eternal bliss for believers
  - b) Speculation about a single, universal god emerged

### IDENTIFICATION: PEOPLE

What is the contribution of each of the following individuals to world history? Identification should include answers to the questions *who, what, where, when, how, and why is this person important?*

Homer

Solon

Pericles

Philip II of Macedon

Alexander III of Macedon

King Menander

Sappho

Socrates

Plato

Aristotle

Euripides

Aristophanes

### IDENTIFICATION: TERMS/CONCEPTS

State in your own words what each of the following terms means and why it is significant to a study of world history. (Terms with an asterisk are defined in the glossary.)

Minoan society\*

Knossos

Linear A\*

Mycenaean society\*

Linear B\*

Trojan War

*Polis/ Poleis\**

Sparta

Athens  
Persian Wars  
Delian League  
Peloponnesian War  
Macedon  
Hellenistic Age\*  
Antigonid Empire  
Ptolemaic Empire\*  
Seleucid Empire\*  
Ai Khanum  
Olympic games  
Forms or Ideas  
Cult of Dionysus\*  
Stoicism\*  
Epicureans\*

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast the Minoan and the Mycenaean societies.
2. What was Greece like during the "Dark Ages," from about 1200 to 800 B.C.E.?
3. What is a polis? How did having the polis as the central political institution of classical Greece shape the history of Greece during this period?
4. Compare and contrast Sparta and Athens.
5. What was the significance of Greek colonization to the history of the Mediterranean region?
6. How did the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars influence the development of the Greek city-states?
7. How do you explain Alexander of Macedon's success as a conqueror in such a short period of time?

8. What was the legacy of the empire of Alexander?
9. Trace the development of Greek philosophical thought from Socrates through the Hellenistic philosophers.
10. How did Greek religion and drama influence each other?

### INQUIRY QUESTIONS

1. Many of the contributions made by Athens during the classical age have continued to influence European and American society up to the present day. First, what are the enduring contributions? Where can you observe them in modern American culture? What was it about Athens at the time that nurtured these developments? Why were these contributions so enormously influential?
2. Even though classical Greece seemed to be an enlightened culture, it still supported slavery and the oppression of women. How do you reconcile this dichotomy?
3. Alexander of Macedon created one of the largest empires in the world in less than thirteen years. What was the significance of the feat? Have you studied any other conquerors who were as successful?

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### MATCHING

Match these figures or terms with the statements that follow.

- |                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| A. <i>Iliad</i>   | F. Massalia            |
| B. <i>Odyssey</i> | G. Epicurean           |
| C. Helots         | H. <i>The Republic</i> |
| D. Poleis         | I. Akrotiri            |
| E. Bacchae        | J. Parthenon           |

1. \_\_\_ Semi-free agricultural laborers for Sparta.
2. \_\_\_ Hellenistic philosophy that argued for the pursuit of pleasure as the greatest good.
3. \_\_\_ Greek colony on the southern coast of what is present-day France.
4. \_\_\_ Marble temple dedicated to the goddess Athena.
5. \_\_\_ Greek city that was destroyed during the volcanic eruption of 1628 B.C.E.

6. \_\_\_ Plato's work in which he advocates states ruled by philosopher-kings.
7. \_\_\_ Greek epic that recounts the war between Greek warriors and the city of Troy.
8. \_\_\_ Commercial cities and their surrounding regions that were the principal centers of Greek society.
9. \_\_\_ The celebrants of the festival of the cult of Dionysus.
10. \_\_\_ Greek epic that recounts a hero's journey home from the Trojan War.

### SEQUENCING

Place the following cluster of events in chronological order. Consider carefully how one event leads to another, and try to determine the internal logic of the sequence.

- \_\_\_ Philip II takes advantage of the disarray of the Greek city-states and conquers them.
- \_\_\_ Band of Greek warriors engage in war with the city of Troy in Anatolia.
- \_\_\_ Solon promulgates a series of reforms to the Athenian government and economy.
- \_\_\_ Antigonus takes over the rule of Greece and Macedon.
- \_\_\_ Greek city-states begin establishing colonies in the Mediterranean basin.
- \_\_\_ Athenians have spectacular victory on the plains of Marathon.

### QUOTATIONS

For each of the following quotes, identify the speaker, if known, or the point of view or the subject. What is the significance of each passage?

1. "Never in all the world was there another like him, and therefore I cannot but feel that some power more than human was concerned in his birth."
2. "When my sons grow up . . . vex them in the same way that I have vexed you if they seem to you to care for riches or for anything other than virtue."
3. "To sum up: I say that Athens is the school of Hellas, and that the individual Athenian in his own person seems to have the power of adapting himself to the most varied forms of action with the utmost versatility and grace."
4. "But how can I help? What am I capable of doing? It is on you that everything depends. My duty, my mother said, is to be well behaved."

5. "When, therefore, we maintain that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in sensuality . . . but freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind."
6. His "career was the motive force for the spread of Hellenism throughout the western Mediterranean and the Near East, and his achievement thus provided the matrix in which the Roman Empire, Christianity and other important aspects of western civilization could take root."

### MAP EXERCISES

1. Using the map on page 238 in the textbook (Map 10.2) and a more modern map of the region, identify what modern cities were originally Greek colonies.
2. Using the map, follow the course of Alexander's conquest. Using what you have learned in previous chapters, figure out which states he would have had to conquer along this route. Figure out what his logic was for taking the route that he did. What did he hope to gain? Why did he not proceed into India?

### CONNECTIONS

In fifty words or less, explain the relationship between each of the following pairs. How does one lead to or foster the other? Be specific in your response. (May be done individually or in small groups.)

- Mycenae and the *Iliad*
- Sparta and the Peloponnesian War
- Pericles and Socrates
- Colonization and the Olympic games
- The poleis and the Hellenistic empires

### FILMS

*Troy* (2004). Brad Pitt.

*The Spartans* (2004). PBS Home Video.

*300 Spartans* (1962). Richard Egan.

*Ancient Civilizations: Athens and Ancient Greece* (2002).

*Visions of Greece* (2004). A breathtakingly beautiful virtual tour shot in high definition from a helicopter-mounted camera. With nearly an hour of bonus footage not seen on public television.

*The Rise and Fall of the Spartans*. The History Channel.

*Treasure! The Ancient Gold of Troy*. A&E.