



Greece and Iran, 1000–30 B.C.E.

The Greek historian Herodotus (**heh-ROD-uh-tuhs**) (ca. 485–425 B.C.E.) describes a famine on the island of Thera in the Aegean Sea in the seventh century B.C.E. that caused the desperate inhabitants to send out a portion of young men to found a new settlement called Cyrene on the coast of North Africa (modern Libya). 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 populous and prosperous city-state, largely thanks to its exports of silphium—a plant valued for its medicinal properties—as seen on this painted cup with an image of Arcesilas, the ruler of Cyrene, supervising the weighing and transport of the product.

Greek Cyrene quietly submitted to the Persian king Cambyses (**kam-BIE-sees**) in the 520s B.C.E., in one of the more peaceful encounters of the city-states of Greece with the Persian Empire. This event 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 had little direct contact previously, thereby stimulating new cultural syntheses. The claim has often been made that the rivalry and wars of Greeks and Persians from the sixth to fourth centuries B.C.E. were 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 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 more in common than they realized. Both spoke languages belonging to the same Indo-European language family 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.

ANCIENT IRAN, 1000–500 B.C.E.

Iran, the “land of the Aryans,” links western Asia with 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. Heirs to the long legacy of Mesopotamian culture, they introduced distinctly Iranian elements and developed new forms of political and economic organization in western Asia.

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, often 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 less informed about 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 (**ZUHG-roes**) Mountains to the west, the Caucasus (**KAW-kuh-suhs**) Mountains and Caspian Sea to the northwest and north, the mountains of Afghanistan and the desert of Baluchistan (**buh-loo-chi-STAN**) 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 draining into interior salt lakes and marshes. 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. On the interior plateau, oasis settlements sprang up beside streams or springs. The Great Salt Desert, which covers most of eastern Iran, and Baluchistan in the southeast corner were extremely inhospitable. 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 of precious water in the hot, dry climate, they devised underground irrigation channels. Constructing and maintaining these 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 organized large numbers of laborers. Even so, human survival

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 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 two centuries. © Cengage Learning



CHRONOLOGY

	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 431–404 B.C.E. Peloponnesian War	480–479 B.C.E. Xerxes' invasion of Greece
400 B.C.E.	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.	ca. 300 B.C.E. Foundation of the Museum in Alexandria 200 B.C.E. First Roman intervention in the Hellenistic East	
100 B.C.E.	30 B.C.E. Roman annexation of Egypt, the last Hellenistic kingdom	

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 such as textiles and carpets.

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 across western and Central Asia—an area comprising not only the modern state of Iran but also Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. 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. According to Greek sources, Median kings extended their control westward across Assyria into Anatolia (modern Turkey) and also southeast toward the Persian Gulf, a region occupied

Cyrus Founder of the Achaemenid Persian Empire. Between 550 and 530 B.C.E. he conquered Media, Lydia, and Babylon. Revered in the traditions of both Iran and the subject peoples, he employed Persians and Medes in his administration and respected the institutions and beliefs of subject peoples.

Darius I Third ruler of the Persian Empire (r. 522–486 B.C.E.). He crushed the widespread initial resistance to his rule and gave major government posts to Persians rather than to Medes. He established a system of provinces and tribute, began construction of Persepolis, and expanded Persian control in the east (Pakistan) and west (northern Greece).

Gold 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.

by another Iranian people, the Persians (*Parsa*). However, some scholars doubt the Greek testimony about a well-organized Median kingdom controlling such extensive territories.

The Persian rulers—called Achaemenids (**a-KEY-muh-nid**) 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 around 550 B.C.E. His victory should perhaps be seen less as a conquest than as an alteration of the relations between groups, for Cyrus placed both Medes and Persians in positions of responsibility and retained the framework of Median rule. The differences between these two Iranian peoples were not great, and the Greeks could not readily tell them apart.

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—with warriors being 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 defeated the kingdom of Lydia, and all Anatolia, including the Greek city-states on the western coast, came under Persian control. In 539 B.C.E. he swept into Mesopotamia and overthrew the Neo-Babylonian dynasty that had ruled since the decline of Assyrian power (see Chapter 2). A skillful propagandist, Cyrus showed respect to the Babylonian priesthood and native traditions.

After Cyrus lost his life in 530 B.C.E. while campaigning against 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. After the Persians prevailed in a series of bloody battles, 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., a Persian nobleman distantly related to the royal family, **Darius I** (**duh-RIE-uhs**) (*Darayavaush*), seized the throne. His success in crushing many early challenges to his rule testifies 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 Scythian (**SITH-ee-uhn**) peoples north of the Black Sea. The Persians erected a string of forts in Thrace (modern-day





AP® Exam Tip The imperial organization of ancient civilizations, such as Persia, is important to know.

satrap The governor of a province in the Achaemenid Persian Empire, often a relative of the king. He was responsible for protection of the province and for forwarding tribute to the central administration. Satraps in outlying provinces enjoyed considerable autonomy.

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

The empire of Darius I was the largest the world had yet seen (see Map 4.1). Stretching from eastern Europe and Libya to Pakistan, from southern Russia to Sudan, it encompassed multiple ethnic groups and many forms of social and political organization. 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 about twenty provinces, each under the supervision of a Persian **satrap (SAY-trap)**, or governor, who was often 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 knowledge about local conditions, and formed connections with the local 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.

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. Some of it was disbursed for necessary expenditures, but most was hoarded. As 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. The increasing burden of taxation and official corruption may have inadvertently caused the economic downturn.

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. Military garrisons controlled strategic points, such as mountain passes, river crossings, and important urban centers.

The king had numerous wives and children. Women of the royal family could become pawns in the struggle for power, as when Darius strengthened his claim to the throne by marrying two daughters and a granddaughter of Cyrus. Greek sources portray Persian queens as vicious intriguers, poisoning rival wives and plotting to win the throne for their sons. However, a recent study suggests that the Greek stereotype misrepresents the important role played by Persian women in protecting family members and mediating conflicts.¹ 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.

The king and his court moved with the seasons, living in luxurious tents on the road and in palaces in the ancient capitals of Mesopotamia and Iran. 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 "bow land," "horse land," and "chariot land" in Babylonian documents obliged the recipient to provide the corresponding form of military service. Scattered around the empire were gardens, orchards, and hunting preserves belonging to the king and 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 reveal how the complex tasks of administration were managed. Government officials distributed food and other essential

¹Maria Brosius, *Women in Ancient Persia, 559–331 B.C.* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).



AP® Exam Tip Understand how ancient cities served as centers of trade, religion, and political administration.

Persepolis A complex of palaces, reception halls, and treasury buildings erected by the Persian kings Darius I and Xerxes in the Persian homeland. It is believed that the New Year's festival was celebrated here, as well as the coronations, weddings, and funerals of the Persian kings, who were buried in cliff-tombs nearby.



AP® Exam Tip Understand the core beliefs of Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrianism A religion originating in ancient Iran that became the official religion of the Achaemenids. It centered on a single benevolent deity, Ahuramazda, who engaged in a struggle with demonic forces before prevailing and restoring a pristine world. It emphasized truth-telling, purity, and reverence for nature.

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 additional support. Men and women performing skilled jobs received more than their unskilled counterparts. Administrators were provided with authorizations to requisition food and other necessities while traveling on official business.

The central administration was not based in the Persian homeland but closer to the geographical center of the empire, in Elam and Mesopotamia, where it could employ the trained administrators and scribes of those ancient civilizations. The administrative center of the empire was Susa, the ancient capital of Elam, in southwest Iran near the present-day border with Iraq. It was to Susa that Greeks and others went with requests and messages for the king. A party of Greek ambassadors would need at least three months to make the journey. Additional time spent waiting for an audience with the Persian king, delays due to weather, and the duration of the return trip probably kept the ambassadors away from home a year or more.

However, on certain occasions the kings returned to one special place back in the homeland. Darius began construction of a ceremonial capital at **Persepolis** (**per-SEH-poe-lis**) (*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 (**ZERK-sees**), who completed the project, were inspired by Mesopotamian traditions, for the great Assyrian kings had created new fortress-cities as advertisements of their wealth and power.

Ideology and Religion

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 bringing gifts to the king. In this exercise in what today we would call public relations or propaganda, Darius crafted a vision of an empire of vast extent and abundant resources in which all the subject peoples willingly cooperate. On his tomb Darius subtly contrasted the character of his rule with that of the Assyrian Empire, the Persians' predecessors in these lands (see Chapter 2). Where Assyrian kings had gloried in their power and depicted subjects staggering under the weight of a giant platform that supported the throne, Darius's artists showed erect subjects shouldering the burden willingly and without strain.

What actually took place at Persepolis? This opulent retreat in the homeland 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-e Rostam (**NUHK-shee ROOS-tuhm**).

Another perspective on what the Persian monarchy claimed to stand for is provided by several dozen royal inscriptions that have survived (see Diversity and Dominance: Persian and Greek Perceptions of Kingship). At Naqsh-e Rostam, Darius makes the following claim:

Ahuramazda (**ah-HOOR-uh-MAZZ-duh**) [the chief deity], when he saw this earth in commotion, thereafter bestowed it upon me, made me king. . . . By the favor of Ahuramazda I put it down in its place. . . . I am of such a sort that I am a friend to right, I am not a friend to wrong. It is not my desire that the weak man should have wrong done to him by the mighty; nor is that my desire, that the mighty man should have wrong done to him by the weak.²

As this inscription makes clear, behind Darius and the empire stands the will of god. Ahuramazda made Darius king, giving him a mandate to bring order to a world in turmoil and ensure that all people be treated justly. Ahuramazda is the great god of a religion called **Zoroastrianism** (**zo-roe-ASS-tree-uh-niz-uhm**), and it is probable 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 (**zo-roe-ASS-ter**) (*Zarathushtra*), who probably lived in eastern Iran sometime between 1700 and 500 B.C.E. He revealed that the world had been created by Ahuramazda, "the wise lord," but its original state of perfection and unity had been badly damaged by the attacks of Angra Mainyu (**ANG-ruh MINE-yoo**), "the hostile spirit,"

²Quoted in Roland G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, 2d ed. (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1953), 138, 140.



Sculpted Images on a Stairwell at Persepolis, ca. 500 B.C.E. 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. Relief images like these on the stone foundations, walls, and stairways, representing members of the court and embassies bringing gifts, broadcast a vision of the grandeur and harmony of the Persian Empire. arazu/Shutterstock.com

backed by a host of demons. The struggle between good and evil plays out over thousands of years, with good ultimately destined to prevail. Humanity is a participant in this cosmic struggle, and individuals are rewarded or punished in the afterlife for their actions in life.

Darius has brilliantly joined the moral theology of Zoroastrianism to political ideology. In essence, he is claiming that the divinely ordained mission of the empire is to bring all the scattered peoples of the world back together again under a regime of justice and thereby to restore the perfection of creation.

SECTION REVIEW

- The Medes and the Persians of western Iran created complex societies in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. under Mesopotamian influence.
- Cyrus, the founder of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, conquered most of western Asia, while his son Cambyses captured Egypt.
- Darius was a second founder of the empire, creating new systems for administration and collection of tribute.
- The king and his large entourage moved among several imperial centers: Susa was the administrative capital, and Persepolis in the homeland was the site of royal ceremonials.
- Darius was a brilliant propagandist, adapting Zoroastrian religious teachings to create an ideology justifying the empire.
- Zoroastrianism was one of the great religions of the ancient world, holding people to a high ethical standard, and may have influenced Judaism and Christianity.

In keeping with this Zoroastrian worldview, the Persians were sensitive to the beauties of nature and venerated beneficent elements, such as water, which was not to be polluted by human excretion, and fire, which was worshiped at fire altars. Corpses were exposed to wild beasts and the elements to prevent them from putrefying in the earth or tainting the sanctity of fire. Persians were also expected to keep promises and tell the truth. In his inscriptions 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, and the Messiah and the End of Time all appear to be legacies of this profound belief system. Because of the accidents of history—the fall of the Achaemenid Persian Empire in the later fourth century B.C.E. and the Islamic conquest of Iran in the seventh century C.E. (see Chapter 8)—Zoroastrianism has all but disappeared, except among a relatively small number of Parsees, as Zoroastrians are now called, in Iran and India.

Persian and Greek Perceptions of Kingship

An important internal source of information about the Persian Empire are the inscriptions commissioned by several kings. They 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. Darius carved the longest text into a cliff face at Behistun (beh-HISS-toon), high above the road leading from Mesopotamia to northwest Iran.

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. . . .

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. . . .

Another document, found at Persepolis, expands on the qualities of an exemplary ruler. Although it purports to be the words of Xerxes, it is almost an exact copy of an inscription of Darius, illustrating 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. . . .

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 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. . . .

The royal inscriptions are certainly propaganda, but that does not mean they lack validity. 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 inscriptions also allow us to glimpse the personalities of Darius and Xerxes and how they wished to be perceived.

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 on 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

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

Because Greece was a relatively resource-poor region, the cultural developments of the first millennium B.C.E. were only possible because the Greeks had access to raw materials and markets abroad. Greek merchants, mercenaries, and travelers were in contact with other peoples and brought home foreign goods and ideas. Under the pressure of population, poverty, war, or political crisis, Greeks settled in other parts of the Mediterranean and Black Sea, bringing their language and culture and influencing other societies. Encounters with the different practices and beliefs of other peoples stimulated the formation of a Greek identity and sparked interest

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. . . . 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.

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 liars 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?

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 (<http://www.livius.org>); third selection from *Herodotus*, Volume III, Loeb Classical Library Volume 119, translated by A. D. Godley, pp. 27–29, 34–35, 38–39, 44–46, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Copyright 1922 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College, The Loeb Classical Library is a registered trademark of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

in geography, ethnography, and history. A two-century-long rivalry with the Persian Empire helped shape the destinies of the Greek city-states.

Geography and Resources

Greece is part of an ecological zone encompassing the Mediterranean Sea and the lands surrounding it (see Map 2.5). This zone is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the 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 similar climate, a similar sequence of seasons, and similar plants and animals. In summer a weather front near the entrance of the Mediterranean impedes

the passage of storms from the Atlantic, allowing hot, dry air from the Sahara to creep up over the region. In winter the front dissolves and 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 altering familiar cultural practices and means of livelihood.

Greek civilization arose in the lands bordering the Aegean Sea: the Greek mainland, the Aegean islands, and the western coast of Anatolia (see Map 4.2). Southern Greece is a dry and rocky land with small plains separated by low mountain ranges. No navigable rivers ease travel or the transport of commodities. The small islands dotting the Aegean were inhabited from early times. People could sail from Greece to Anatolia almost without losing sight of land. The sea was always a connector, not a barrier. From about 1000 B.C.E. Greeks began settling on the western edge of Anatolia. Broad and fertile river valleys near the coast made Ionia, as the ancient Greeks called this region, a comfortable place.

Greek farmers depended on rainfall to water their crops. The limited arable land, thin topsoil, and sparse rainfall in the south could not sustain large populations. Farmers 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 lands had few metal deposits and little timber, but both building stone, including fine marble, and clay for the potter were abundant.

The Greek mainland has a deeply pitted coastline with many natural harbors. A combination of circumstances—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. Thus, some Greeks reluctantly embarked upon the sea in their small, frail ships, hugging the coastline or island-hopping where possible.

The Emergence of the Polis

The first flowering of Greek culture in the Mycenaean civilization of the second millennium B.C.E., described in Chapter 2, was largely an adaptation to the Greek terrain of the imported institutions of Middle Eastern palace-dominated states. For several centuries after the destruction of the Mycenaean palace-states, Greece lapsed into a “Dark Age” (ca. 1150–800 B.C.E.), a time of depopulation, poverty, and backwardness that left few traces in the archaeological record.

During the Dark Age, the Greeks were largely isolated from the rest of the world. The importation of raw materials, especially metals, had been the chief source of Mycenaean prosperity. Lack of access to resources lay behind the poverty of the Dark Age. With fewer people to feed, the land was largely given over to grazing animals. Although 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. This opened the way for the development of new political, social, and economic forms rooted in the Greek environment.

The isolation of Greece ended by 800 B.C.E. when Phoenician ships began to visit the Aegean (see Chapter 2), inaugurating what scholars 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.

New ideas arrived from the east, such as the depiction of naturalistic human and animal figures and imaginative mythical beasts on painted pottery. The most auspicious gift of the Phoenicians was a writing system. The Phoenicians used 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 hundreds of signs, they were known only by a scribal class whose elevated social position stemmed from their mastery of the technology. With an alphabet only a few dozen signs are required, and people can learn to read and write in a relatively short period of time.

Some scholars maintain that the Greeks first used alphabetic writing for economic purposes, such as to keep inventories of a merchant’s wares. Others propose that it was created to preserve 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. © Cengage Learning

oral epics so important to the Greeks. Whatever its first use, the Greeks soon applied the new technology to 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, resulted from the dynamic interaction of speaking and writing.

The early Archaic period saw a veritable explosion of population. Studies of cemeteries in the vicinity of Athens show a dramatic population increase (perhaps fivefold or more) during the eighth century B.C.E. This was probably due, in part, to more intensive use of the land, as farming replaced herding and families began to work previously unused land on the margins of the plains. The accompanying shift to a diet based on bread and vegetables rather than meat

polis The Greek term for a city-state, an urban center and the agricultural territory under its control. It was the characteristic form of political organization in southern and central Greece in the Archaic and Classical periods. Of the hundreds of city-states in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions settled by Greeks, some were oligarchic, others democratic, depending on the powers delegated to the Council and the Assembly.

hoplite A heavily armored Greek infantryman of the Archaic and Classical periods who fought in the close-packed phalanx formation. Hoplite armies—militias composed of middle- and upper-class citizens supplying their own equipment—were for centuries superior to all other military forces.



AP® Exam Tip Be prepared to explain the causes and effects of migration in classical societies.

may have increased fertility and life span. Another factor was increasing prosperity based on the importation of food and raw materials. Rising population density caused villages to merge and become urban centers. Freed from agricultural tasks, some members of the society were able to develop specialized skills in other areas, such as crafts and commerce.

Greece at this time consisted of hundreds of independent political entities, reflecting the facts of Greek geography—small plains separated by mountain barriers. The Greek **polis (POE-lis)** (usually translated “city-state”) consisted of an urban center and the rural territory 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 (uh-KRAW-poe-lis)** (“top of the city”) offered refuge in an emergency. The town spread out around the base of this fortified high point. An **agora (ah-go-RAH)** (“gathering place”) was an open area where citizens came together to ratify decisions of their leaders or to assemble with their weapons before military ventures. Government buildings were located there, but the agora developed into a marketplace as well, since vendors everywhere 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.

City and country were not as sharply distinguished as they are today. The urban center depended on its agricultural hinterland to provide food, and many people living within the walls of the city worked on nearby farms during the day. Unlike the dependent workers on the estates of Mesopotamia, the rural populations of the Greek city-states were free members of the community.

Each polis was fiercely jealous of its independence and suspicious of its neighbors, leading to frequent conflict. By the early seventh century B.C.E. the Greeks had developed a new kind of warfare, waged by **hoplites (HAWP-lite)**—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. 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.

There was a close relationship between hoplite warfare and agriculture. 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, as well as courage to stand one’s ground in battle, no special training was needed. 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 toiled to develop their land and buildings, rarely refused the challenge. Though brutal and terrifying, the clash of two hoplite lines provided 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 (see the story at the beginning of this chapter). 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 sought 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 semiservile status; in other cases there was intermarriage between colonists and natives.

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 2.5) another Greek core area was established. Greek colonists were able to transplant their entire way of life because of the general similarity in climate and ecology in the Mediterranean lands.



Robert Harding Picture Library Ltd / Alamy

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.

Greeks began to use the term *Hellenes* (**HELL-leans**) (*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. Developments first appearing in the colonial world traveled back to the Greek homeland—urban planning, new forms of political organization, and new intellectual currents.

Coinage was invented in the early sixth century B.C.E., probably in Lydia (western Anatolia), and soon spread throughout the Greek world and beyond. 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, virtually indestructible, and therefore permanent. Prior to the invention of coinage, people weighed out quantities of metal in exchange for items they wanted to buy. Coinage allowed for more rapid exchanges of goods as well as for more efficient record keeping 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 Archaic Greek communities. 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

tyrant The term the Greeks used to describe someone who seized and held power in violation of the normal procedures and traditions of the community. Tyrants appeared in many Greek city-states in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E., often taking advantage of the disaffection of the emerging middle class and, by weakening the old elite, unwittingly contributing to the evolution of democracy.

democracy System of government in which all “citizens” (however defined) have equal political and legal rights, privileges, and protections, as in the Greek city-state of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E.

sacrifice A gift given to a deity, often with the aim of creating a relationship, gaining favor, and obligating the god to provide some benefit to the sacrificer, sometimes in order to sustain the deity and thereby guarantee the continuing vitality of the natural world.

from ownership of large tracts of land. Peasant families worked this land, occupying small plots and handing over a portion of the crop to the owner. Debt-slaves, who had borrowed money or seed from the lord and lost their freedom when unable to repay the loan, also worked the land. 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.”

In the mid-seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. in one city-state after another, a **tyrant**—a person who seized and held power in violation of the normal political traditions of the community—gained control. Greek tyrants were often disgruntled or ambitious members of the aristocracy who were 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 and serve as hoplite soldiers in the local militias. These individuals must have demanded increased political rights as the price of their support for the tyrant.

Ultimately, the tyrants 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 (**OLL-ih-gahr-key**), the exercise of political privilege by the wealthier members of society, or toward **democracy**, the exercise of political power by all free adult males.

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. Male gods predominated, but several female deities had important roles. Some 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 of Homer, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which Greek schoolboys memorized and professional performers recited, put a distinctive stamp on the personalities of these deities. The Homeric gods were anthropomorphic (**an-thruh-puh-MORE-fik**)—that is, conceived as humanlike in appearance (though taller, more beautiful, and far more powerful than mere mortals) and humanlike in their displays of emotion. Indeed, the chief difference between them and human beings was humans’ mortality.

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.

Greek individuals and communities sought 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, who gave forth obscure utterances. Because most Greeks were farmers, a popular form of worship was the fertility cult, in which members worshiped and sought to enhance the productive forces in nature (usually conceived as female). This kind of popular religion is often hidden from modern view because of our dependence on literary texts privileging the values of an educated, urban elite.

New Intellectual Currents

The changes taking place in Greece in the Archaic period—new technologies, increasing prosperity, and social and political development—led to innovations in intellectual outlook and artistic expression. One distinctive feature of the period was a growing emphasis on the uniqueness and rights of the individual.

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. Archilochus (**ahr-KIL-uh-kuhs**), 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 behind under a bush. But I got away, so what does it matter? Let the shield go; I can buy another one equally good.*³

³Richmond Lattimore, *Greek Lyrics*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 2.



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

Here Archilochus is poking fun at the heroic ideal that regarded dishonor as worse than death. In challenging traditional values and expressing personal views, lyric poets paved the way for the modern Western conception of poetry.

Some daring thinkers rejected traditional religious conceptions and sought rational explanations for events in nature. For example, in the sixth century B.C.E. Xenophanes (**zeh-NOFF-uh-nees**) 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 like horses, and cattle like cattle, and they would make their bodies such as they each had themselves.⁴

These early philosophers were primarily concerned with how the world was created, what it is made of, and why changes occur. Some 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”) moving through the void of space, colliding randomly and combining in various ways to form many substances. This model, in some respects startlingly similar to modern atomic theory, was essentially a lucky intuition, but it attests to the sophistication of these thinkers. Most of these thinkers came from Ionia and southern Italy, where Greeks were in close contact with non-Greek peoples. The shock of encountering different ideas may have stimulated new lines of inquiry.

In Ionia in the sixth century B.C.E., a group of men referred to as logographers (**loe-GOG-ruff-er**) (“writers of prose accounts”), taking advantage of the nearly infinite capacity of writing to store information, gathered data on a wide range of topics, including ethnography (description of foreign people’s physical characteristics and cultural practices), the geography of unfamiliar lands, 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 in an oral society. *Historia*, “investigation/research,” was the Greek term for the method they used to collect, sort, and select information.

⁴G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 169.

Herodotus Heir to the technique of *historia* (“investigation/research”) developed by Greeks in the late Archaic period. He came from a Greek community in Anatolia and traveled extensively, collecting information in western Asia and the Mediterranean lands. He traced the antecedents and chronicled the wars between the Greek city-states and the Persian Empire, thus originating the Western tradition of historical writing.

An important successor to these early researchers was **Herodotus** (ca. 485–425 B.C.E.), who published his *Histories* in the later fifth century B.C.E. Early parts of the work are filled with the geographic and ethnographic reports, legends, 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.*⁵

In seeking to discover *why* Greeks and Persians came to blows, Herodotus became a historian, directing the all-purpose techniques of *historia* to the narrower service of *history* in the modern sense. 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 communities underscores the potential for diversity in human societies, even those arising in similar environmental and cultural contexts.

The ancestors of the Spartans migrated into the Peloponnese (**PELL-uh-puh-neze**), 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 altered the character of the Spartan state. Like many other parts of Greece, the Spartan community was feeling the effects of increasing population and a shortage of arable land. However, instead of sending out colonists, the Spartans invaded the fertile plain of neighboring Messenia (see Map 4.2). They took over Messenia and reduced the native population to the status of helots (**HELL-ut**), or state-owned serfs, who became 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 and assigned to Spartan citizens. Helots worked the land and turned over a portion of what they grew to their Spartan masters, who were freed from food production and able to spend their lives in military training and service.

The Spartan soldier was the best in Greece, and the professional Spartan army was superior to the citizen militias of other Greek states. 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 severe discipline, beatings, and deprivation. A Spartan male’s whole life was subordinated to the needs 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. 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. Athenian historian Thucydides (**thoo-SID-ih-dees**) 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, practicing a foreign policy that was cautious and isolationist, cultivated a mystique by rarely putting their reputation to the test. Reluctant to march far from home for fear of a helot uprising, the Spartans maintained regional peace through the Peloponnesian League, a system of alliances between Sparta and its neighbors.

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

In 594 B.C.E., however, Athens was on the verge of civil war, and a respected member of the elite class, Solon, was appointed lawgiver and granted extraordinary powers. Solon divided

⁵Herodotus, *The History*, trans. David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 33. (Herodotus 1.1)

SECTION REVIEW

- In the resource-poor Greek Aegean, prosperity and advancement depended on seaborne trade for metals and other vital materials.
- Hundreds of independent city-states existed in the fragmented Greek landscape. Rainfall-based agriculture allowed the land to be worked by independent farmers who were free citizens of their communities.
- Rapidly expanding population led to urbanization and to colonization, the migration of Greeks to new settlements around the Mediterranean and Black Seas.
- The rise of a middle class and the dependence of communities on a hoplite militia led to political unrest and an extension of political rights to more people.
- The Greeks created the first true alphabetic writing system, but Greece long remained a primarily oral society. New ideas challenged traditional notions, leading to individualism, science, and history.
- Sparta and Athens, though part of the same Greek civilization, evolved politically in different directions: Sparta toward a military oligarchy, Athens to democracy.

Pericles Aristocratic leader who guided the Athenian state through the transformation to full participatory democracy for all male citizens, supervised construction of the Acropolis, and pursued a policy of imperial expansion that led to the Peloponnesian War. He formulated a strategy of attrition but died from the plague early in the war.

could participate fully in the political process, being selected by lot to fill even the highest offices and being paid for public service so they could 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; decisions were made openly, and any citizen could speak to the issues of the day.

During this century and a half of internal political evolution, Athens's economic clout and international reputation rose steadily. From the time of Pisistratus, Athenian exports, especially olive oil, became increasingly prominent all around the Mediterranean, crowding out the products of other Greek commercial powerhouses such as Corinth (see Map 4.2). Extensive trade increased the numbers and wealth of the middle class and helps explain why Athens took the path of increasing democratization.

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, with little or no property, could participate in meetings of the Assembly. This arrangement, which made political rights a function of wealth, was far from democratic, but it broke the monopoly on power of a small circle of aristocratic families. Solon also abolished the practice of enslaving individuals for failure to repay their debts, thereby guaranteeing the freedom of Athenian citizens.

Nevertheless, political turmoil continued until 546 B.C.E., when an aristocrat named Pisistratus (**pie-SIS-truh-tuhs**) seized power. To strengthen his position and weaken the aristocracy, the tyrant enticed the largely rural population to identify with 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. **Pericles** (**PER-eh-kleez**) 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. Men of moderate or little means now

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

For many Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., Persia was the great enemy and the wars with Persia were crucial events. The Persians probably were more concerned about threats farther east. Nevertheless, the encounters of Greeks and Persians over a period of two centuries were of profound importance for the history of the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia.

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, local groups or individuals who collaborated with the Persian government ruled their home cities 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.

Persian Wars Conflicts between Greek city-states and the Persian Empire, ranging from the Ionian Revolt (499–494 B.C.E.) through Darius's punitive expedition that failed at Marathon (490 B.C.E.) and the defeat of Xerxes' massive invasion of Greece by the Spartan-led Hellenic League (480–479 B.C.E.). This first major setback for Persian arms launched the Greeks into their period of greatest cultural productivity. Herodotus chronicled these events in the first "history" in the Western tradition.

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 force to punish Eretria (**er-EH-tree-uh**) and Athens, two mainland states that had aided the Ionian rebels. Eretria was betrayed to the Persians, and the survivors were marched off to permanent exile in southwest Iran. The Athenians probably would have suffered a similar fate if their hoplites had not defeated the more numerous but lighter-armed Persian troops in a sharp engagement at Marathon, 26 miles (42 kilometers) from Athens.

In 480 B.C.E. Darius's son and successor, Xerxes (*Khshayarsha*, r. 486–465 B.C.E.), set out with a huge invasionary force consisting of the Persian army, contingents from all the peoples of the empire, and a large fleet of ships drawn from maritime subjects. Crossing the narrow Hellespont strait, Persian forces descended into central and southern Greece (see Map 4.2). Xerxes sent messengers ahead to most Greek states, demanding "earth and water"—tokens of submission.

Many Greek communities acknowledged Persian overlordship. But an alliance of southern Greek states bent on resistance was formed under the leadership of the Spartans. This Hellenic League initially failed to halt the Persian advance. At the pass of Thermopylae (**thuhr-MOP-uh-lee**) in central Greece, three hundred Spartans and their king gave their lives to buy time for their allies to escape. However, after the city of Athens had been sacked, the Persian navy was lured into the narrow straits of nearby Salamis (**SAH-lah-miss**), sacrificing their advantage in numbers and maneuverability, and suffered a devastating defeat. The following spring (479 B.C.E.), the Persian land army was routed at Plataea (**pluh-TEE-uh**), and the immediate threat to Greece receded. A number of factors account for the outcome: the Persians' difficulty in supplying their very large army in a distant land; their tactical error at Salamis; the superiority of heavily armed Greek hoplite soldiers over lighter-armed Asiatic infantry; and the tenacity of people defending their homeland and liberty.

The Greeks then went on the offensive. Athens's stubborn refusal to submit and the vital role played by the Athenian navy, which made up half the allied fleet, had earned the city a large measure of respect. The next phase of the war—driving the Persians away from the Aegean and liberating 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 (**DEE-lih-yuhn**) League was formed. Initially a voluntary alliance of Greek states to prosecute the war against Persia, in less than twenty years Athenian-led League forces swept the Persians from the waters of the eastern Mediterranean and freed all Greek communities except those in distant Cyprus (see Map 2.5).

The Height of Athenian Power

The Classical period of Greek history (480–323 B.C.E.) begins with the successful defense of the Greek homeland. 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 complacent Greek allies to 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. States that deserted the League were brought back by force, stripped of their defenses, and subordinated to Athens.

Athens's mastery of naval technology transformed Greek warfare and politics and brought great 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** (**TRY-reem**), a sleek, fast vessel powered by 170 rowers, had become the premier warship. Athenian crews, by constant practice, became the best in the eastern Mediterranean, able to reach speeds of 7 knots and perform complex maneuvers.

The effectiveness of the Athenian navy had significant consequences at home and abroad. The emergence at Athens of a democratic system in which each male citizen had an equal share is connected to the new primacy of the fleet. Hoplites, who had to provide their own armor and weapons, were members of the middle and upper classes. Rowers, in contrast, came from the lower classes, but because they were the source of Athens's power, they could insist on full rights.

The navy allowed Athens to project its power farther than would be possible with a hoplite militia, which could be kept in arms for only short periods of time. In previous Greek wars, the

trireme Greek and Phoenician warship of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. It was sleek and light, powered by 170 oars arranged in three vertical tiers. Manned by skilled sailors, it was capable of short bursts of speed and complex maneuvers.

AP® Exam Tip Be able to explain the core ideas of Greek philosophy.

Socrates Athenian philosopher (ca. 470–399 B.C.E.) who shifted the emphasis of philosophical investigation from questions of natural science to ethics and human behavior. He attracted young disciples from elite families but made enemies by revealing the ignorance and pretensions of others, actions that culminated in his trial and execution by the Athenian state.

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, manned by international volunteer crews, is helping scholars to determine attainable speeds and maneuvering techniques.

victorious state could not occupy a defeated neighbor permanently and 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 used its power to promote its economic interests. Its port, Piraeus (**pih-RAY-uhs**), became the most important commercial center in the eastern Mediterranean. The money collected from the subject states helped subsidize the increasingly expensive Athenian democracy as well as construction of beautiful buildings on the Acropolis, including the majestic new temple of Athena, the Parthenon. The Athenian leader Pericles redistributed the profits of empire to the many Athenians working on the construction and decoration of these monuments and gained extraordinary popularity.

Other cultural achievements were supported indirectly by the profits of empire. Wealthy Athenians paid the production costs of the tragedies and comedies performed at state festivals, and the 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.

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 easily disposed of the charges of corrupting the youth 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 for the controversial teachings of the Sophists, which were widely believed to contradict traditional religious beliefs and 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 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’s 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 witnesses an important stage in the transition from orality to literacy. Socrates himself wrote nothing, preferring to converse with people. His student Plato (ca. 428–347 B.C.E.) may represent the first truly literate generation that gained much knowledge from books and

Replica of the trireme “Olympia” at sea (photo)/Private Collection/Ancient Art and Architecture Collection Ltd./Mike Andrews/The Bridgeman Art Library



habitually wrote down their thoughts. On the outskirts of Athens Plato founded the Academy, 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 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 in the northern Aegean. After several decades of study at Plato’s Academy, he was chosen by the king of Macedonia, Philip II, who had a high regard for Greek culture, to tutor his son Alexander. Later, Aristotle returned to Athens to found his own school, the Lyceum. Of a very different temperament than the mystical Plato, Aristotle collected and categorized 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.

Inequality in Classical Greece

Athens, the inspiration for the concept of democracy in the Western tradition, was a democracy only for the relatively small percentage of inhabitants who were citizens—free adult males 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 attended meetings of the Assembly or served 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 the owner ordained. 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 that a relationship often developed, making it hard for slave owners to deny the essential humanity of their slaves. Still, Aristotle 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, made possible the high degree of freedom enjoyed by men in the democratic state. 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.

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. The primary function of marriage was to produce children, preferably male. It is likely that many more girls than boys were victims of infanticide—the killing through exposure of unwanted children.

Husbands and wives had limited contact. The man spent the day outdoors attending to work or political responsibilities; he dined with male friends at night; and 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, going out only to attend funerals and religious rituals and to make discreet visits to female relatives. During the three-day Thesmophoria (*thes-moe-FOE-ree-uh*) festival, the women of Athens lived together and managed their own affairs in a great encampment, carrying out mysterious rituals to enhance the fertility of the land. The appearance of assertive women on the Athenian stage is also suggestive. Although the 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.



AP® Exam Tip Social inequality and labor systems are important topics for comparison.



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. Scala/Art Resource, NY

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 wooing a youth, in the process mentoring him and initiating him into the community of adult males.

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, a nightmarish struggle between the Athenian and Spartan alliance systems that involved most of the Greek world.

In this war unlike any previous Greek war, the Athenians used their naval power to insulate themselves from the dangers of a siege by land. In midcentury they had built three long walls connecting the city with the port of Piraeus and the adjacent shoreline. When the war began, Pericles, devising an unprecedented strategy, refused to engage the Spartan-led armies that invaded Attica each year, knowing 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.

The Peloponnesian War dragged on for nearly three decades with great loss of life and squandering of resources. It sapped the morale of all Greece and ended only with the surrender of Athens after defeat in a naval battle in 404 B.C.E. Because the Persian Empire had bankrolled the construction of ships by the Spartan alliance, 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. The independent polis, from one point of view the glory of Greek culture, was also fundamentally flawed because it fostered rivalry, fear, and warfare 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 intrigues among 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. Philip II (r. 359–336 B.C.E.) transformed 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, many modern

Peloponnesian War A protracted (431–404 B.C.E.) and costly conflict between the Athenian and Spartan alliance systems that convulsed most of the Greek world. The war was largely a consequence of Athenian imperialism. Possession of a naval empire allowed Athens to fight a war of attrition, but ultimately Sparta prevailed because of Athenian errors and Persian financial support.

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 north-west 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, made from wheat or barley by an 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 chaff floating on the surface of the liquid, various means were employed to filter this out. Sculptures on Mesopotamian stone reliefs and seals show several drinkers drawing on straws immersed in a 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.

The sharing of beer from a common vessel by several people probably was seen as 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 and then crushed—with a winepress or by people trampling on them—to produce a liquid that was sealed in casks for fermentation. The new vintage



Photo By DEAG/DAGLORTY/De Agostini/Getty Images

Dionysus in the Vineyard This Greek vase of the late sixth century B.C.E. depicts Dionysus, the god of wine. Carrying a large kantharos or drinking vessel, he is enveloped by vines carrying bunches of ripe grapes, and accompanied by several Satyrs (mythical creatures combining human features with those of goats or horses) and his human bride Ariadne. Greek drinking paraphernalia often depicted Dionysus and elements of his mythology and cult.

scholars regard their language and culture as Greek at base, though much influenced by contact with non-Greek neighbors.) Philip 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 plains of the north, he experimented with the coordinated use of infantry and cavalry. His engineers also developed new kinds of siege equipment, including the first catapults—machines using the power of twisted cords to hurl 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. Philip apparently was following the advice of Greek thinkers who had pondered the lessons of the Persian Wars of the fifth century B.C.E. and 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 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. After more than two centuries of domination in the Middle East, the Achaemenid Persian Empire had fallen.

Alexander King of Macedonia in northern Greece. Between 334 and 323 B.C.E. he conquered the Persian Empire, reached the Indus Valley, founded many Greek-style cities, and spread Greek culture across the Middle East. Later known as Alexander the Great.

was sampled the following February. Exuberant religious festivals marked 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 ancient lands. The usual containers for wine were long, conical pottery jars, which the Greeks called *amphoras*.

The Greeks, who normally mixed wine with water (and thought it scandalous that Persians drank undiluted wine), 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 the facing 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 and elegantly narrow vessels with spouts were used to pour the concoction into the drinkers' cups. The most popular shapes for individual drinking 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," female worshipers 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 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. 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 also 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 used in elaborate ceremonies at ancestral shrines (see photo on page 76). 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.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What social benefits arise from drinking together?
2. How does wine serve religious purposes?
3. What evidence is there that collective drinking was practiced by the privileged social classes?

SECTION REVIEW

- The unsuccessful revolt of Greek city-states in western Anatolia led to two Persian attacks on Greece in the early fifth century B.C.E.
- An ambitious Athens took control of a naval empire in the Aegean. The wealth brought in by the empire subsidized Athenian democracy and culture.
- Ironically, Athenian male citizens were freed up to participate in government and politics by restricting the rights and exploiting the labor of slaves and women.
- The Spartans and their allies, frightened by the growing power of Athens, initiated the lengthy Peloponnesian War but were only able to win with Persian help.
- In the mid-fourth century B.C.E., Philip II made Macedonia into a military power and forcibly united the Greek city-states.
- His son Alexander the Great conquered and took over the Persian Empire.

Alexander the Great, as he came to be called, maintained the framework of Persian administration in the lands he conquered, recognizing that it was well adapted to local circumstances and familiar to the subject peoples. At first, 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 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 the circle of his courtiers, and he adopted elements of Persian dress and court ceremonial. Finally, he married several Iranian women who had useful royal or aristocratic connections, and he pressed his leading subordinates to do the same.

Scholars have reached widely varying conclusions about why Alexander adopted these policies, which were fiercely resented by the Macedonian nobility. Alexander may have operated from a combination of pragmatic and idealistic motives. He set off on his Asian campaign

with visions of glory, booty, and revenge. But the farther east he traveled, the more he began to see himself as the legitimate successor of the Persian king (a claim facilitated by the death of Darius III at the hands of subordinates). Besides recognizing that he had responsibilities to all the diverse peoples who fell under his control, he also may have realized the difficulty of holding down so vast an empire by brute force and without the cooperation of important elements among the conquered peoples. In this, he was following the example of the Achaemenids.

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

Alexander died suddenly in 323 B.C.E. at the age of thirty-two, with no clear plan for the succession. This event 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 (**sih-LOO-sid**), Ptolemaic (**tawl-uh-MAY-ik**), and Antigonid (**an-TIG-uh-nid**) kingdoms (see Map 4.3). Each kingdom faced a unique set of circumstances, and although they 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.

Hellenistic Age Historians' term for the era, usually dated 323–30 B.C.E., in which Greek culture spread across western Asia and northeastern Africa after the conquests of Alexander the Great. The period ended with the fall of the last major Hellenistic kingdom to Rome, but Greek cultural influence persisted until the spread of Islam in the seventh century C.E.

Historians call the epoch ushered in by Alexander the “**Hellenistic Age**” (323–30 B.C.E.) because the lands in northeastern Africa and western Asia that came under Greek rule became “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.

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. From their capital at Syrian Antioch (**AN-tee-awk**), the Seleucid monarchs controlled Mesopotamia, Syria, and parts of Anatolia. Their sprawling territories were open to attack from many directions, and, like the Persians before them, they had to deal

with many ethnic groups organized under various political and social forms. In the countryside, where most of the native peoples resided, the Seleucids largely maintained the Persian administrative system. They also continued Alexander's policy of founding Greek-style cities throughout their domains. These cities served as administrative centers and were also used to attract colonists from Greece, since the Seleucids needed Greek soldiers, engineers, and administrators.

The dynasty of the **Ptolemies** (**TAWL-uh-meze**) ruled Egypt and sometimes laid claim to adjacent Syria-Palestine. The people of Egypt belonged to only one ethnic group and were easily controlled because the vast majority were farmers in villages alongside the Nile. The Ptolemies essentially perfected

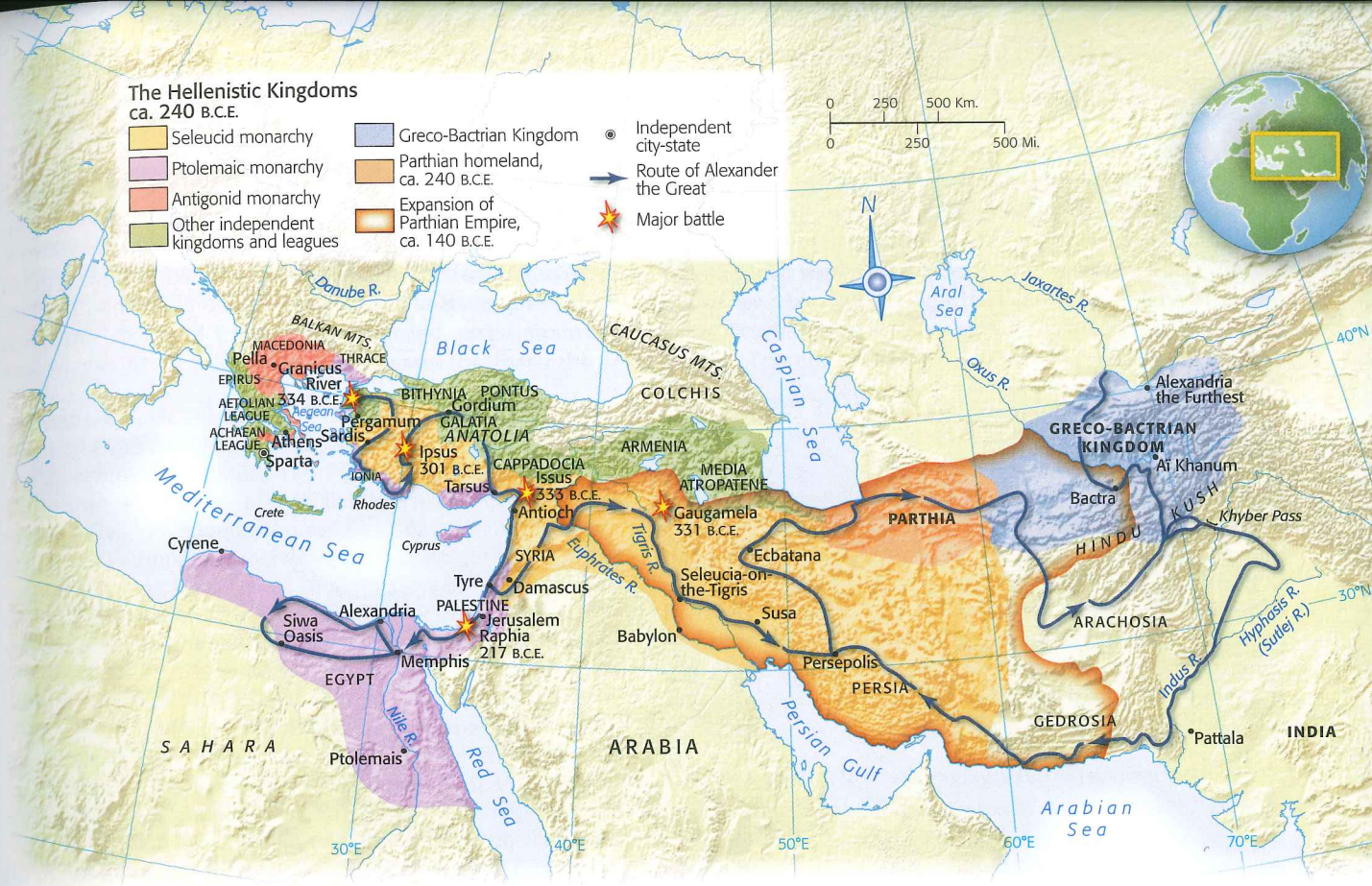
Ptolemies The Macedonian dynasty, descended from one of Alexander the Great's officers, that ruled Egypt for three centuries (323–30 B.C.E.). From their magnificent capital at Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast, the Ptolemies largely took over the system created by Egyptian pharaohs to extract the wealth of the land, rewarding Greeks and Hellenized non-Greeks serving in the military and administration.



Marshall/Konography/Alamy

Marble Statue of a Naked Aphrodite Bathing

This second century C.E. Roman copy of a Hellenistic original shows the goddess of love and sex crouching and trying to cover herself. While nude male figures were sculpted in previous eras, the female nude is a Hellenistic innovation, perhaps reflecting changing societal attitudes.



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. © Cengage Learning

Alexandria City on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt founded by Alexander. It became the capital of the Hellenistic kingdom of the Ptolemies. It contained the famous Library and the Museum, a center for leading scientific and literary figures. Its merchants engaged in trade with areas bordering the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean.

an administrative structure devised by the pharaohs 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. Whereas Memphis and Thebes, the capitals of ancient Egypt, had been located upriver, Alexandria was situated where the westernmost branch of the Nile runs into the Mediterranean Sea, linking Egypt and the Mediterranean world. In the language of the bureaucracy, Alexandria was technically "beside Egypt" rather than in it, as if to emphasize the gulf between rulers and subjects.

The Ptolemies also 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 plant Greek-style cities throughout the Egyptian countryside. Only the last Ptolemy, Queen Cleopatra (r. 51–30 B.C.E.), even bothered to learn the language of her Egyptian subjects. Periodic insurrections in the countryside were signs of the Egyptians' growing resentment of the Greeks' exploitation and arrogance.

The Antigonid dynasty ruled a compact and ethnically homogeneous kingdom in the Macedonian homeland and northern Greece. Garrisons at strong-points gave the Antigonids a toe-hold 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, such as the Achaean (**uh-KEY-uhn**) League in the Peloponnese, in which 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 clung to 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

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 coordinated their activities 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 on 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? They oriented themselves by close 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**) are 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 during the night 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 derived from astronomical observation, and these needs reflected the distinctive characteristics of those societies. In ancient Egypt an administrative calendar was essential for record keeping 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,

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 its heart was the royal compound, containing the palace and administrative buildings, as well as the magnificent Mausoleum of Alexander. (The first Ptolemy had stolen the body of Alexander on its way back to Macedonia for burial, seeking legitimacy for his dynasty by claiming the blessing of the great conqueror, who was declared to be a god.) Two harbors 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, with several hundred thousand volumes, and from its Museum, or "House of the Muses" (divinities who presided over the arts and sciences), a research institution supporting the work of the greatest poets, philosophers, doctors, and scientists of the day. These well-funded institutions made possible significant advances in sciences such as mathematics, medicine, and astronomy (see Environment and Technology: Ancient Astronomy).

Greek residents of Alexandria enjoyed citizenship in a Greek-style polis with an Assembly, a Council, and officials who dealt with local affairs. Public baths and shaded arcades offered places to relax and socialize with friends. Ancient plays were revived in the theaters, and musical performances and demonstrations of oratory took place in the concert halls. Gymnasia, besides providing facilities for exercise, were where young men of the privileged classes were schooled in athletics, music, and literature. Jews had their own civic government, officials, and law courts

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 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.

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”) 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. Other 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



De Agostini/Getty Images

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, and a water-driven mechanism inside the tower revealed the hours, days, and phases of the moon.

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. Copyright © 1993. Reprinted by permission of Hackett Publishing Company.

SECTION REVIEW

- In the Hellenistic Age, Greeks controlled western Asia and northwest Africa. Greek culture would have a strong influence in this region for a thousand years.
- Alexander’s empire was broken up into three major successor kingdoms in Europe, Asia, and Africa, each with its own unique challenges.
- Alexandria in Egypt, capital of the Ptolemies, was the greatest city in the world. It had a large and diverse population and was a center of commerce for the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean.
- The Ptolemies created the greatest library of antiquity and the Museum, a center of research fostering advances in scholarship, science, technology, and medicine.
- Ambitious and elite members of indigenous peoples learned Greek and adopted a Greek lifestyle in order to be part of the privileged ruling class, while Greeks borrowed from the ancient heritages of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

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 Greek lifestyle, since this put them in a position to become part of the privileged and wealthy ruling class. For the ancient 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.

CONCLUSION

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, encompassing a wide variety of landscapes, peoples, and social, political, and economic systems. How did the Persians manage 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. Their brand of 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 prosperity, at least for some. It also organized labor on a large scale to construct an expanded water distribution network and work the extensive estates of the Persian royal family and nobility.

Most difficult to assess is the cultural impact of Persian rule. A new synthesis of the long-dominant culture of Mesopotamia with Iranian elements is most visible in the art, architecture, and inscriptions of the Persian monarchs. The Zoroastrian religion may have 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. The Persian king's response in the later fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. was to hire Greek mercenaries to employ hoplite tactics for his benefit.

Alexander's conquests brought changes to the Greek world almost as radical as those experienced 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 had been 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 foundation of 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 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. And even after Islam spread over this region in the seventh century C.E., it absorbed and maintained elements of the Hellenistic legacy (see Chapter 9).

A final point should be made about the Greeks, one that is particularly apt for students of world history who are learning about the diversity of ways in which humans have addressed the challenges of living in the natural world and among other humans. Readers of this book are encouraged to compare Greek civilization to another great contemporary civilization where the sheer distance and lack of communication precluded any possibility of borrowing—ancient China in the Zhou era (see Chapter 3). Beyond discovering that the similarities are great, one is struck by the fact that the most innovative developments in both civilizations took place during

periods of political fragmentation and persistent rivalry and warfare—the Archaic and Classical periods of Greek history and the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods in China—rather than in the more stable centuries of imperial rule under the Roman and Han emperors (in Chapter 5 we will be making comparisons between Rome and early imperial China). The differences between Greek and early Chinese civilization are equally revealing and underlie the ways in which Western and East Asian civilizations have diverged, with implications for our own times.

KEY TERMS

Cyrus p. 108
Darius I p. 108
satrap p. 109
Persepolis p. 110
Zoroastrianism p. 110

polis p. 116
hoplite p. 116
tyrant p. 118
democracy p. 118
sacrifice p. 118

Herodotus p. 120
Pericles p. 121
Persian Wars p. 122
trireme p. 122
Socrates p. 123

Peloponnesian War p. 125
Alexander p. 126
Hellenistic Age p. 128
Ptolemies p. 128
Alexandria p. 129

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