

**Classical Civilization in
Mediterranean: Greece and Rome**

Chapter 4

EQ: How did early society evolve
and change in the Mediterranean?

Introduction...

- The civilizations of Greece and Rome rivaled those in India and China with their cultural richness and their effect on world history
- Their institutions and values shaped both Middle Eastern AND Western society
- However, Mediterranean civilization is complicated because Greek and Roman political, social and economic traditions were shared but often shaped uniquely

**Early Greek and Roman
Societies**

- Greece
 - Early Greek civilizations emerged on Crete (Minoans) and on the mainland Balkan Peninsula (Mycenae)
- Rome
 - According to legend, Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus in 753 BC
 - The area around Rome was influenced by the Etruscans

[The Persian Tradition]

- Early Greek and Roman society had contacts with the Persian empire and were influenced to a degree by their civilization
- Persia had stretched its empire all the way to Mediterranean, and had control over at least several early Greek states in Turkey (300!)
- Cyrus the Great and other future Persian leaders (Darius, Xerxes) were bent on expanding into Greece, but met resistance from the city states
- Persia (as noted in your PERSIA charts) instituted the first federal system in world history, with states (satrapies) and governors (satraps) and also initiated the use of coins as money
- They also were the creators of Zoroastrianism, the world's SECOND monotheistic religion
- They were ultimately conquered by Alexander the Great of Macedonia

[Patterns in Greek History]

- Rapid civilization in Greece in the form of city states (*polis*) began between 800 and 600 BCE
- Greece WAS NOT unified (geographic barriers)
- Trade with the Phoenicians brought the alphabet
- The Olympics showcased each city states' might, and Athens and Sparta became the leading dominate states
- Cooperation between city states from around 500 BCE to 449 BCE led to the successful final repelling of Persia invasions...AS a result, Athens became the dominate city-state, and began to spread its influence (Map 4.1)

[Patterns in Greek History]

- During the 5th century BCE, we see the emergence of DEMOCRACY first under the leadership of Pericles
- Despite his best efforts, Pericles was unable to prevent the Peloponnesian Wars with Sparta (431-404 BCE) which weakened not only Sparta, but Athens as well
- The Macedonians under Phillip the II and his son, Alexander the Great conquered Greece and expanded what would be the first and only Greek Empire
- It was during this era, the Hellenistic period, that Greek ideas spread

Patterns in Roman History

- Rome started out as an Etruscan monarchy, until 509 BCE when aristocrats drove off the king and established the Roman Republic (more on this later)...this republic expanded all over the "boot" even expelling Greeks who had settled in the south
- Rome developed its military, mainly to protect territory at first, and got tested during the Punic Wars (264 – 164 BCE) with Phoenician Carthage

Patterns in Roman History

- Eventually the Republic fell apart (think STAR WARS) and civil wars broke out amongst venerable leaders, with the eventual victory of Julius Caesar in 45 BCE (dictatorship)
- It would be under his grandnephew, (Gaius Octavius) Augustus Caesar in 27 BCE that the Roman Empire was first laid out
- Rome, except for a few minor bumps (Nero and Caligula) experienced an age known as the *Pax Romana* during which the empire grew
- The death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 CE (think *Gladiator*) signaled for historians the end of this era
- In the last 300 years of the empire, only 2 emperors, Diocletian and Constantine, tried to turn the tide of decline
- Constantine adopted Christianity and eventually moved most of the empire to Constantinople, which would become a new empire after the fall of Rome in 476 CE

Greek Political Institutions

- Democracy = Demos = The People
- The Athenian state was at the forefront of its formation in the 5th century...major decisions were made in general assemblies that met every 10 days in which ALL MALE citizens could participate (though not all attended nor could slaves/foreigners participate)...this was DIRECT DEMOCRACY, founded in Athens!
- The *aristocracy* (rule of the best) emerged in this system as well, in some city states, like Sparta, where elites ruled to continue control over the masses
- This formed the **basis** of REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY, however, it was not widely practiced

Roman Political Institutions

- Greek political institutions found their way into Rome...the Republic was based on aristocratic rule and citizenship of the people...all citizens had a say in government but in the end were not the overall leaders
- Republican Rome had a Senate of aristocrats and two consuls who held the executive powers...in times of crisis, the Senate had the power to choose a dictator...Patricians and Plebians!
- Early Rome created the 12 Tables, a system of laws that prevented abuse of power amongst the classes...laws were always considered adaptable
- The Empire was a different beast...although the Senate remained in a meaningless state...emperors retained the confidence of the people through "bread and circuses"...it maintained local autonomy under the rule of Roman governors during its existence...rebel and the Roman military was sent to quell you!
- Rome was generally tolerant of other cultures and beliefs and religions...though they had a problem with Christians during the empire, it was only because the Christians would not put matters of the state of their God

Religion and Culture

- Greece and Rome had polytheism, as you know, BUT THEIR RELIGIONS DID NOT TRANSFORM INTO MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS...lest they be described today as mythology rather than religion
- Their religions, however, tended to be predominately humanist, as gods and goddesses took human forms and had human shortcomings and failures
- Ordinary people felt not connection to this religion and were easily swept up by other foreign beliefs (Christian, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, etc.)
- Eventually these religions transformed into the moral philosophy provided by the great Greek philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) and Rome's Cicero, who became known as Stoics (much like Confucius and Lao Tzu)
- These philosophies transformed into the plays and epics written by the greatest authors of this era

Religion and Culture

- Greeks took to the forefront in architecture, formulating the columns for which they become well known (Doric, Ionic and Corinthian)
- Greeks again created the classical sculpting art of depicting humans in statuesque form
- Romans again "borrowed" their themes and intellectuals ideas from Greece, but still managed stunning feats of their own (roads, aqueducts, concrete)
- Rome would be glorified more for its athletic feats rather than arts

Economy and Society

- Whereas most of Greece and Rome were ruled politically and culturally from urban centers, it was the rural farmers that held Roman and Greek economies together, with farming done on large commercial estates...it would be the urban leaders who would squeeze these farmers for funds to maintain the early governments and eventually the empires that formed
- This would create extensive commercial trade in the Mediterranean region with other city states/civilizations (Carthage, Phoenicia, Asia Minor, Egypt and Arabia) in the years before the empires formed
- Slavery was a mainstay in both societies...it was even justified by philosophers to maintain a proper society and economy...slaves were housemaids, worked the farms, sailed the ships, even worked in mines (brutal), but NOT soldiers
- Because of slave labor, Greece and Rome ignored advancing agricultural technology, leaving engineers to focus on better ships, roads, buildings, weapons, and the like

Economy and Society

- Both Greece and Rome emphasized a tight family structure, with men being superior, though women could be active in business, and in some cases controlled property and wealth
- Early Roman law even stipulated that men were the judge of their women (wives) with complete control over their actions
- Women could not commit adultery lest they be treated like prostitutes
- In many cases, young girl children were put to death if a family was burdened financially, because traditionally a woman who is to be married would cost a father a dowry
