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Section 1 early people of the Aegean

Minoan Civilization

1750 BC to 1500 BC

Sea traders, Egypt and Mesopotamia

Named after Minos – a legendary king of Crete by British archeologists

Studying their remains in the 1800s

Lived mainly on the island of Crete

Highly advanced and technologically advanced society info gathered from travels

No evidence of writing or recordkeeping has been found that we understand

Palace at Knossos is main evidence

Huge – plumbing – use of trees in construction may have caused ecological issues

Ornate – frescoes, shrines, paintings

Many sea related works of art, men and women mingling freely in social situations

Bull-leaping, bull images

Snake goddesses, fine pottery

End? Approx. 1400 BC –

Island of Santorini to the north erupts

Evidence of invasions from the Mycenaens.

Mycenae – first Greek speaking people that we have records of

1400 to 1200 BC

Sea traders – Italy, Sicily, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Carried home info and technology to their own people – had a system of writing that is later developed into

written Greek probably acquired from their travels (Phoenicians)

Lived in separate city-states on the Peloponnesus

Heavily fortified cities – evidence of huge treasuries. Some gold still

Found in burials – probably remnants of earlier fortunes

Trading Rivals with Troy in Asia Minor – used to be believed to be legend but archeologists found evidence of large scale warfare that matched the time period and the general area where the war was believed to take place…..Troy and Mycenae went to war for a prolonged period probably over economic issues…..but the blind poet Homer’s tale is a little different:

Illiad – kidnap of Helen queen of Sparta, by Paris a prince of Troy. The Mycenaians saddle up and go after her and fight for 10 years – the Greeks finally seize the city and burn it to the ground.

Odyssey – the companion piece – Odysseus trying to get home from the war has a lot of adventures in his trip. Cyclops, sirens, sea monsters…before he gets home to his wife Penelope

Homer, the blind poet who compiled these tales wandered telling them (tradition)These were told as oral traditions for many generations before they were written down and preserved

After this conflict the Mycenaeans go into a decline—attacked by Dorians from the North (more Greek speakers – can’t get along) they fade away – cities are abandoned, less trading occurs. From 1100 bc to 800 bc Greek civilization takes a backward slide and many of the skills, including that of writing are forgotten. The Greeks live in scattered villages and have little contact with the outside world.

But we aren’t done with them yet…..

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Geography of Greece – Mountanous, isolated valleys, scattered islands

Small city-states cut off from each other by mountains or water

Fiercely independent with lots of conflict between them

The sea is vital to the Greeks.

coastline has safe harbor for ships

become sailors, traders

produced wine, olive oil and mined marble from their hillsides

traded these for grain, metals other necessities

took the Phoenician alphabet, adapted it for their own use

Overpopulation pushes Greeks out of the valleys

limited fertile land at home

colonies overseas – around the Med

spread their culture wherever they go

Governing the City-States

New version of the city-states called the polis – two physical levels

the acropolis – a high place above the city where the temples for the gods were located and below the plain where the walled city – theaters, open air markets, the houses and public buildings.

Populations were generally small, and people had a sense of responsibility about their city-state. The marketplace – Agora – became the place where free men would meet and debate ideas and the issues of the day. Festivals for the local deities were community events.

Between 750 BC and 500 BC

first the rulers of the polis were kings

then a shift to noble landowners

they underwrite defense of the city and pay for weapons and soldiers and at first fought to defend the king, then decided to fight for themselves. – aristocracy

trade creates a class of wealthy merchants, farmers and artisans – they challenge the landed aristocracy for political control – oligarchy – power in the hands of a small powerful elite usually from the business class.

Warfare – bronze weapons are replaced by iron – cheaper, more people could afford them and participate

phalanx

ordinary people are invested. sense of equality in battle.

Sparta – Dorians from the north

conquered people became state owned slaves called helots are were forced to work the land for their conquerers

more helots than Spartans – need for strict control

two kings and a council of elders to advise them

Citizens were male native-born over the age of 30

five ephors, elected by citizens, held the real power, ran day to day affairs

Everything for the military state

Babies were examined at birth, if not robust enough left to die

age seven boys moved into military barracks and began training – coarse diet, hard physical training, rigid discipline – encouraged to steal food, but severely beaten if caught.

at 20 men could marry but lived in the barracks til 30, and continued to eat there until 40. at 30 men could join the assembly

Women had a rigorous upbringing also

produce health boys for the army

exercise and stay strong, competed in athletic events with men

controlled by fathers and husbands BUT could inherit property were expected to know how to manage things when men were gone.

Sparta isolated itself from the other Greek states, and viewed them as inferior and soft.

Their citizens were forbidden to travel, they had very little use for trade, wealth art or ideas.

“Spartans are willing to die for their city because they have no reason to live”

Athens: Limited Democracy

in Attica, north of Peloponnesus

government evolved from monarchy to democracy

around 700 bc noble landowners take power -- judge cases run assembly

Demands for change –

Aristocracy made for a wealthy Athens

People become dissatisfied, want more say in government

Farmers, artisans, soldiers, foreign born people get rich, want power

slow move toward a form of democratic government

Code of Solon – 594 bc Solon appointed leader or archon –

freehand to enact needed reforms

outlawed debt slavery and freed debt slaves

opened high offices to more citizens

granted citizenship to some foreigners

gave the Athenian assemble more say in important decisions

economic reforms – export market for wind and olive oil means farmers have larger markets for their goods

Solon’s reforms meant more fair and just laws for Athens

citizenship is still limited to wealthy landowners

tyrants – gained power by force, gained support of the merchants and poor by reforms that helped these groups

Later reforms

Pisistratus – loans for farmers, land taken from nobles given to farmers

building projects employed the poor

gave poor a larger political voice, undermine aristocracy

Cleisthenes 507 BC the Council of 500 – chosen by lot from eligible citizens – first legislature – prepared laws from assembly and ran day to day affairs of the city. Laws were debated before passage, and all male citizens over the age of 30 sat in the assembly.

Democracy right? well….

Only males were citizens

tens of thousands of slaves not represented

women, not represented

led secluded lives – stayed at home, spun, woved, cooked

children or slaves ran outside errands

were not educated formally

boys attended school if family could afford it

read, write, speech, music, poetry

military training, athletic contests for good health

Unity – Not always the best of friends but shared an identity

Common culture – religious beliefs

Natural laws – Aristotle, Plato

Non-greeks = barbaroi, don’t speak Greek