## Chapter 10: Mediterranean Society: The Greek Phase

1. Greek society borrowed heavily from all the major societies known in the region - Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, India
2. Minoan Society (2700 BCE - 1400 BCE)
   1. First major Greek society, developed on the Island of Crete
   2. Crete was a major economic hub and dealt with all the major and minor societies in the Mediterranean and beyond
   3. Like the Harappan society, Minoan society used an indecipherable written language, now called Linear A.
   4. There is no definitive reason for the decline and fall of the Minoan society, but most evidence points to natural disaster followed by invasion
3. Mycenaean Society (1600 - 1100 BCE)
   1. Replaced Minoan as the dominant Greek society
   2. It was built on the Greek mainland and unlike the Minoans, Mycenaean society was focused on the military - it was probably them that conquered Crete
   3. They had a written language, called Linear B, which was based on Linear A and is understandable
      1. It also formed the basis for what would become Greek
   4. It is also theorized that this is the society that fought against Troy in the Iliad
      1. The ensuing chaos, in addition to possible results of climate change, invasion by (mysterious) foreigners and internal conflict - all of which are considered to be reasons for decline or collapse of other societies
      2. This created what some call the “Greek Dark Age” in which people fled the mainland and settled on islands in the Aegean Sea.
      3. Greek societies became more isolated and settled into poleis or city states
4. Greek City States - many, each with different political systems and societies
   1. Sparta - used military force to maintain order
      1. Economic strength in agriculture - helots were serfs, tied to the land
      2. City run by the strongest, most adept fighters
         1. Run by an oligarchy - one in charge of the city, one in charge of the army
      3. Ascetic society (origin of the word “Spartan” in this regard)
         1. Children inculcated into military at early age
         2. Men lived in barracks w/o their wives
         3. Wives ran domestic affairs of the city
         4. Family life for men began at age 30, when discharged by army
   2. Athens - used democracy to relieve tension within the city
      1. Increasing tension between rich and poor in the city
         1. Solon was appointed dictator in order to relieve this
            1. Rich aristocrats kept land, but he forgave debts and liberated those that had sold themselves or family members into slavery
            2. This didn’t solve the problem, though, and Solon was overthrown and the land redistributed forcefully
      2. Under Pericles (461-429 BCE), Athens became the most influential city state, by leading Athens in the Persian Wars and Peloponnesian Wars
5. Persian and Peloponnesian Wars
   1. Persians and Greeks came into contact as the Persians moved west
      1. Greeks united under Athens’ leadership (Sparta not involved) and defeated the Persians (Achaemenid)
   2. Athens sets up a defensive league, called the Delian League
      1. Administered by Athens, but funded mostly by the other members
      2. Sparta led the opposition to this and rallied cities against Athens
   3. In the P. War, Sparta wins, but at a huge cost - both sides lost a lot of money and military force fighting this war.
      1. Leaves the door open for…
6. Alexander the Great (356 - 323 BCE)
   1. Phillip II (Alex’s dad) took over Macedonia and began taking over the surrounding area.
      1. He was assassinated in 336 and Alex took over at the age of 20.
   2. Alex was one of the greatest military leaders of all time and conquered the Achaemenid empire
      1. He never lost a military campaign and only turned back because his soldiers mutinied and refused to enter India
   3. He died (under mysterious circumstances) on the return to Macedonia.
      1. Two results - his empire was divided among his generals
         1. Selecuis got Persia, Ptolemy got Egypt and Antigonid got Greece and Persia
      2. Alex also spread Greek culture and language throughout regions that he conquered - these were called Hellenistic Kingdoms
         1. Antigonid - still run by the poleis and became wealthy
         2. Ptolemaic - Centered around the massive port of Alexandria, the cultural capital of Hellenistic world
         3. Seleucids - Greek culture and language spread through Persia, but was resented by them.
            1. Even reached India through the Bactrians
7. Greek Colonization
   1. Instead of spreading their society by military conquest, like the other societies we’ve discussed, the Greeks expanded by setting up colonies throughout the M. basin.
      1. The Greek mainland was not good for agricultural production, so they looked elsewhere, like southern Italy
      2. Also meant to exploit resources like tin, copper or iron
      3. Relieve population pressure in other city states
8. Greek Trade
   1. Greece is also the first complex society that did not arise around agriculture
      1. Greece was not suited to large scale agriculture - mountainous w/ rocky soil
      2. This soil, though, was ideal for growing grapes and olives, which they traded for grain
      3. Ships from as far away as 1000 miles were common in the Aegean Sea
   2. Greek Economic Partnerships
      1. Merchants began spreading the risk of shipping and trading between ship owners, merchants and moneylenders
      2. Should the ship sink, the contract would be void and everyone absorbs the loss - no one party was responsible for the whole thing
         1. This was necessary for conducting large scale sea trade, especially for big things, like timber
         2. Land based trade focused on luxury items, high value to weight ratios
9. Greek Society
   1. City states were separate entities, but they did participate in all-Greek festivals and ceremonies
      1. The Olympics were the best example of this - these linked Greek people together in a collective identity
      2. Greece didn’t have military or territorial empire, but this might be considered a cultural empire fueled by colonies and the spread of language
   2. Greek society was patriarchal (with the exception of Sparta)
      1. Men were in charge of the family and the government
         1. The highest women could reach was as a priestess (like Mesopotamia)
         2. This was less so for the upper classes, as these women could read and write
            1. Sappho is example of woman who became famous poet
   3. Slavery was common
      1. Most slaves were either soldiers or people in debt that sold themselves (or their family) into slavery to pay off debts.
      2. These slaves were property and masters could do with them as they pleased
      3. OTOH, many slaves were given a lot of responsibility within households or businesses and some even bought their freedom
10. Greek Science and Philosophy
    1. Greeks adapted the Phoenician alphabet to include vowels - it became the most adaptable written language thus far.
    2. Greek scientists focused on observable evidence, reason and logic instead of mysticism or religious explanations
       1. Pythagoras - math, Hippocrates - medicine, Democritus - astronomy and atomic science
    3. Greece is perhaps best known for their philosophers, starting with Socrates
       1. Socrates did not write anything down himself, all we know about him came from his students
          1. He believed that honor was more important than wealth, people should behave honorably and authority should be questioned
             1. He was a social gadfly that taught his students to question their leaders
             2. As a result, he was convicted of treason (he openly praised Sparta after the Peloponnesian War) and corruption of youth (for having them question authority) and sentenced to death

He could have saved himself and fled, but chose to stay because he believed in the rule of law

* + 1. Plato was Socrates most famous student and most of what we know about Socrates came from him
       1. He argued that there are two version of everything - its ideal version and its actual version
          1. When we compare them, we can see what needs to be fixed
       2. He also argued that philosophers understood the world best, so philosopher kings should run things.
    2. Aristotle was Plato’s student - radically different views that Plato.
       1. Explain the world with logic and reason, not with imaginary ideas but senses and logic

1. Greek Religion
   1. Greek religion began to be associated with different aspects of society
      1. They formed cults devoted to specific gods
      2. For example, the cult of Dionysis became the basis for Greek Drama and Comedy
   2. Other philosophies arose in the areas influenced by the Greeks - Hellenistic Philosophies mostly argued for people to shy away from society because it was so stressful
      1. Epicureans - quiet satisfaction in the simple pleasures of life to shield oneself from the pressures of the world
      2. Skeptics - we have no definite knowledge of the world; they sought balance and avoiding conflict
      3. Stoics - did not withdraw from society; had a responsibility to help people despite society’s pressures
   3. Religions of salvation began to flourish in Greece, just as they did in other societies, although these were mainly spread from other places, like Egypt or Persia.