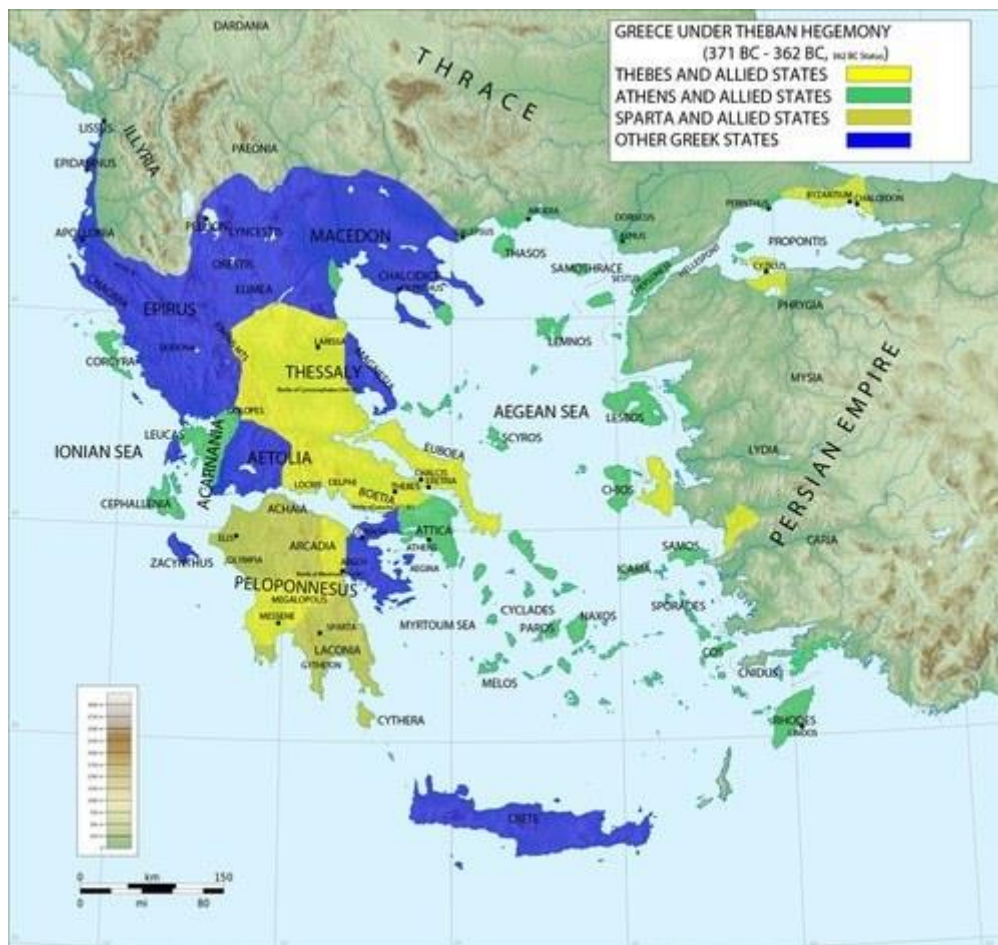


Lesson One

The Greek Civilization

Part One

Definition



Greece is a country in southeastern Europe, known in Greek as *Hellas* or *Ellada*, and consisting of a mainland and an archipelago of islands. Ancient Greece is the birthplace of Western philosophy (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle), literature (Homer and Hesiod), mathematics (Pythagoras and Euclid), history (Herodotus), drama (Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes), the Olympic Games, and democracy. The concept of an atomic universe was first posited in Greece through the work of Democritus and Leucippus. The process of today's scientific method was first introduced through the work of Thales of Miletus and those who followed him. The Latin alphabet also comes from ancient Greece, having been introduced to the region during the Phoenician

colonization in the 8th century BCE, and early work in physics and engineering was pioneered by Archimedes, of the Greek colony of Syracuse, among others.

Mainland Greece is a large peninsula surrounded on three sides by the Mediterranean Sea (branching into the Ionian Sea in the west and the Aegean Sea in the east) which also comprises the islands known as the Cyclades and the Dodecanese (including Rhodes), the Ionian islands (including Corcyra), the isle of Crete, and the southern peninsula known as the Peloponnese.

THE GREEKS BECAME SKILLED SEAFARING PEOPLE & TRADERS WHO BUILT SOME OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE STRUCTURES IN ANTIQUITY.

The geography of Greece greatly influenced the culture in that, with few natural resources and surrounded by water, the people eventually took to the sea for their livelihood. Mountains cover 80 percent of Greece and only small rivers run through a rocky landscape which, for the most part, provides little encouragement for agriculture. Consequently, the early ancient Greeks colonized neighboring islands and founded settlements along the coast of Anatolia (also known as Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey). The Greeks became skilled seafaring people and traders who, possessing an abundance of raw materials for construction in stone, and great skill, built some of the most impressive structures in antiquity.

Etymology of *Hellas*

The designation *Hellas* derives from Hellen, the son of Deucalion and Pyrrha who feature prominently in Ovid's tale of the Great Flood in his *Metamorphoses*. The mythical Deucalion (son of the fire-bringing titan Prometheus) was the savior of the human race from the Great Flood, in the same way Noah is presented in the biblical version or Utnapishtim in the Mesopotamian one. Deucalion and Pyrrha repopulate the land once the floodwaters have receded by casting stones which become people, the first being Hellen. Contrary to popular opinion, *Hellas* and *Ellada* have nothing to do with Helen of Troy from Homer's *Iliad*. Ovid, however, did not coin the designation. Thucydides writes, in Book I of his *Histories*:

I am inclined to think that the very name was not as yet given to the whole country, and in fact did not exist at all before the time of Hellen, the son of Deucalion; the different tribes, of which the Pelasgian was the most widely spread, gave their own names to different districts. But when Hellen and his sons became powerful in Phthiotis, their aid was invoked by other cities, and those who associated with them

gradually began to be called Hellenes, though a long time elapsed before the name was prevalent over the whole country. Of this, Homer affords the best evidence; for he, although he lived long after the Trojan War, nowhere uses this name collectively, but confines it to the followers of Achilles from Phthiotis, who were the original Hellenes; when speaking of the entire host, he calls them Danäans, or Argives, or Achaeans.



Minoan Bull Leaping

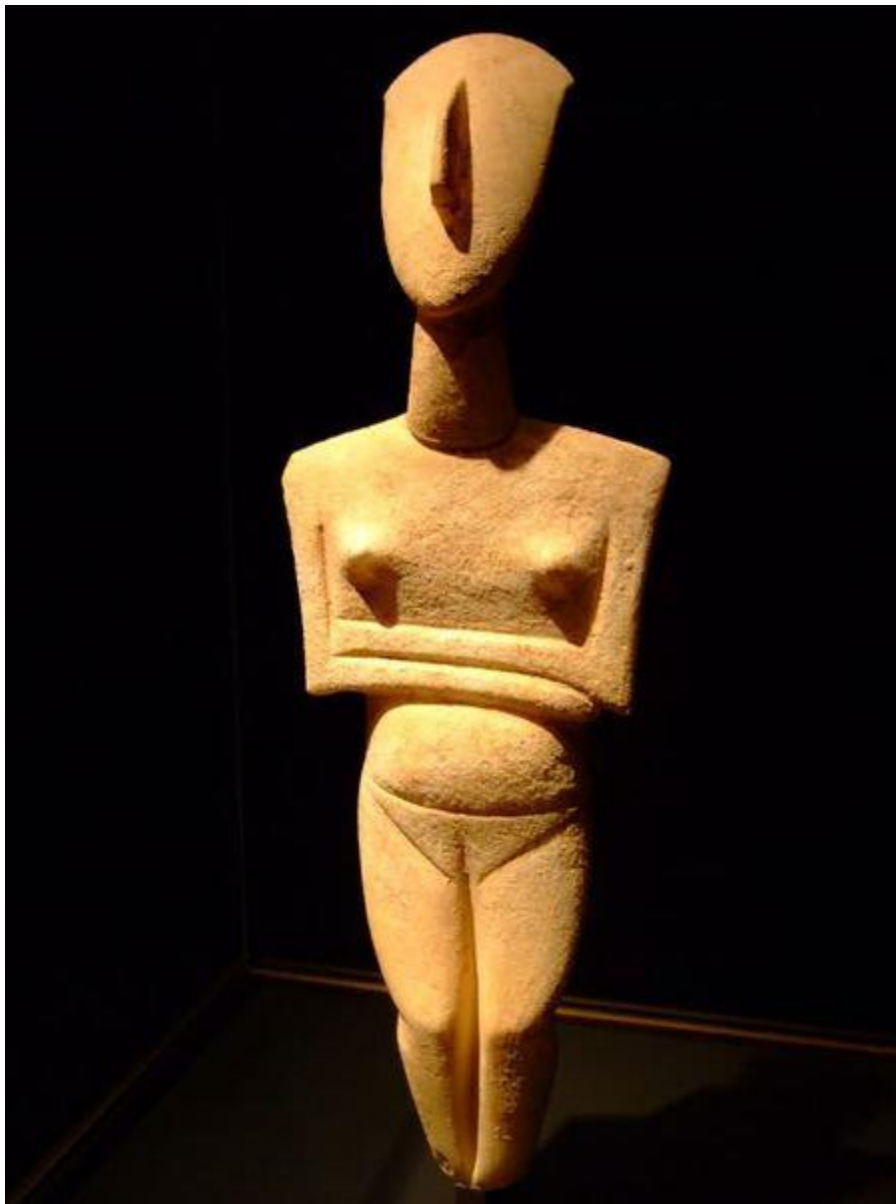
by Mark Cartwright (CC BY-NC-SA)

Early History of Ancient Greece

Ancient Greek history is most easily understood by dividing it into time periods. The region was already settled, and agriculture initiated, during the Paleolithic era as evidenced by finds at Petralona and Franchthi caves (two of the oldest human habitations in the world). The Neolithic Age (c. 6000 - c. 2900 BCE) is characterized by permanent settlements (primarily in northern Greece), domestication of animals, and the further development of agriculture. Archaeological finds in northern Greece (Thessaly, Macedonia, and Sesklo, among others) suggest a migration from Anatolia in that the ceramic cups and bowls and figures found there share qualities distinctive to Neolithic finds in Anatolia. These inland settlers were primarily farmers, as

northern Greece was more conducive to agriculture than elsewhere in the region, and lived in one-room stone houses with a roof of timber and clay daubing.

The Cycladic **Civilization** (c. 3200-1100 BCE) flourished in the islands of the Aegean Sea (including **Delos**, **Naxos**, and **Paros**) and provides the earliest evidence of continual human habitation in that region. During the Cycladic Period, houses and temples were built of finished stone and the people made their living through fishing and **trade**. This period is usually divided into three phases: Early Cycladic, Middle Cycladic, and Late Cycladic with a steady development in art and **architecture**. The latter two phases overlap and finally merge with the **Minoan Civilization**, and differences between the periods become indistinguishable.



Cycladic Figurine c. 2400 BCE

by Mary Harrsch (Photographed at the Getty Villa, Malibu) (CC BY-NC-SA)

The **Minoan** Civilization (2700-1500 BCE) developed on the island of Crete, and rapidly became the dominant sea power in the region. The term 'Minoan' was coined by the archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans, who uncovered the Minoan **palace** of **Knossos** in 1900 CE and named the culture for the ancient Cretan king Minos. The name by which the people knew themselves is not known. The Minoan Civilization was thriving, as the Cycladic Civilization seems to have been, long before the accepted modern dates which **mark** its existence and probably earlier than 6000 BCE.

The Minoans developed a **writing** system known as Linear A (which has not yet been deciphered) and made advances in shipbuilding, construction, ceramics, the arts and sciences, and **warfare**. King Minos was credited by ancient historians (Thucydides among them) as being the first person to establish a navy with which he colonized, or conquered, the Cyclades. Archaeological and geological evidence on Crete suggests this civilization fell due to an overuse of the land causing deforestation though, traditionally, it is accepted that they were conquered by the Mycenaeans. The eruption of the volcano on the nearby island of **Thera** (modern-day Santorini) between 1650 and 1550 BCE and the resulting tsunami is acknowledged as the final cause for the fall of the Minoans. The isle of Crete was deluged and the cities and villages destroyed. This event has been frequently cited as Plato's inspiration in creating his myth of **Atlantis** in his dialogues of the **Critias** and *Timaeus*.

The Mycenaeans & Their Gods

The **Mycenaean Civilization** (approximately 1900-1100 BCE) is commonly acknowledged as the beginning of Greek culture, even though we know almost nothing about the Mycenaeans save what can be determined through archaeological finds and through Homer's account of their **war** with Troy as recorded in the *Iliad*. They are credited with establishing the culture owing primarily to their architectural advances, their development of a writing system (known as Linear B, an early form of Greek descended from the Minoan Linear A), and the establishment, or enhancement of, religious rites. The Mycenaeans appear to have been greatly influenced by the Minoans of Crete in their worship of earth goddesses and sky gods, which, in time, become the classical Greek **pantheon**.



Death Mask of Agamemnon
by Xuan Che (CC BY)

Greek mythology provided a solid paradigm of the creation of the universe, the world, and human beings. An early myth relates how, in the beginning, there was nothing but chaos in the form of unending waters. From this chaos came the goddess Eurynome who separated the water from the air and began her dance of creation with the serpent Ophion. From their dance, all of creation sprang and Eurynome was, originally, the Great Mother Goddess and Creator of All Things.

By the time Hesiod and Homer were writing (8th century BCE), this story had changed into the more familiar myth concerning the titans, Zeus' war against them, and the birth of the Olympian Gods with Zeus as their chief. This shift indicates a movement from a matriarchal religion to a patriarchal paradigm. Whichever model was followed, however, the gods clearly interacted regularly with the humans who worshipped them and were a large part of daily life in ancient Greece. Prior to the coming of the Romans, the only road in mainland Greece that was not a cow path was the Sacred Way which ran between the city of Athens and the holy city of Eleusis, the birthplace of the Eleusinian Mysteries celebrating the goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone.



Greater Propylaea of Eleusis
by Carole Raddato (CC BY-SA)

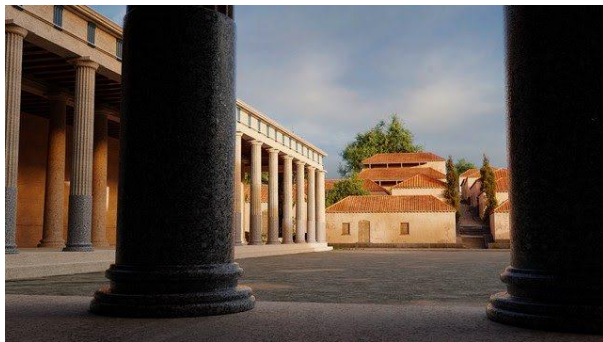
By 1100 BCE, around the time of the Bronze Age Collapse, the great Mycenaean cities of southwest Greece were abandoned and, some claim, their civilization destroyed by an invasion of Doric Greeks. Archaeological evidence is inconclusive as to what led to the fall of the Mycenaeans. As no written records of this period survive (or have yet to be unearthed) one may only speculate on causes. The tablets of Linear B script found thus far contain only lists of goods bartered in trade or kept in stock. It seems clear, however, that after what is known as the Greek Dark Ages (approximately 1100-800 BCE, so named because of the absence of written documentation) Greek colonization was ongoing in much of Asia Minor, and the islands surrounding mainland Greece and began to make significant cultural advances. Beginning in c. 585 BCE the first Greek philosopher, Thales of Miletus, was engaged in what, today, would be recognized as scientific inquiry on the Asia Minor coast, and this region of Ionian colonies would make significant breakthroughs in Greek philosophy and mathematics.

Part Two: From the Archaic to the Classical Periods **GREECE REACHED THE HEIGHTS IN ALMOST EVERY AREA OF HUMAN LEARNING DURING THE CLASSICAL PERIOD.**

The Archaic Period (800-500 BCE) is characterized by the introduction of republics instead of monarchies (which, in Athens, moved toward democratic rule) organized as a single city-state or polis, the institution of laws (Draco's reforms in Athens), the

great Panathenaic Festival was established, distinctive Greek pottery and Greek sculpture were born, and the first coins minted on the island kingdom of Aegina. This, then, set the stage for the flourishing of the Classical Period of ancient Greece given as 500-400 BCE or, more precisely, as 480-323 BCE, from the Greek victory at the Battle of Salamis to the death of Alexander the Great. This was the Golden Age of Athens, when Pericles initiated the building of the Acropolis and spoke his famous eulogy for the men who died defending Greece at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE. Greece reached the heights in almost every area of human learning during this time and the great thinkers and artists of antiquity (Phidias, Plato, Aristophanes, to mention only three) flourished. Leonidas and his 300 Spartans fell at Thermopylae and, the same year (480 BCE), Themistocles won victory over the superior Persian naval fleet at Salamis leading to the final defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Plataea in 479 BCE.

PARTNER PROMOTION



Democracy (literally *Demos* = people and *Kratos* = power, so power of the people) was established in Athens allowing all male citizens over the age of twenty a voice in the Greek government. The Pre-Socratic philosophers, following Thales' lead, initiated what would become the scientific method in exploring natural phenomena. Men like Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Democritus, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus abandoned the theistic model of the universe and strove to uncover the underlying, first cause of life and the universe.

Their successors, among whom were Euclid and Archimedes, continued to advance Greek science and philosophical inquiry and further established mathematics as a serious discipline. The example of Socrates and the writings of Plato and Aristotle after him have influenced western culture and society for over two thousand years. This period also saw advances in architecture and art with a movement away from the ideal to the realistic. Famous works of Greek sculpture such as the Parthenon Marbles and Discobolos (the discus thrower) date from this time and epitomize the artist's interest in depicting human emotion, beauty, and accomplishment realistically, even if those qualities are presented in works featuring immortals.



The Parthenon

by Andrew Griffith (CC BY-NC-SA)

All of these developments in culture were made possible by the ascent of Athens following the victory over the Persians in 480 BCE. The peace and prosperity which followed the Persian defeat provided the finances and stability for culture to flourish. Athens became the superpower of the day and, with the most powerful navy, was able to demand tribute from other city-states and enforce its wishes. Athens formed the Delian League, a defensive alliance whose stated purpose was to deter the Persians from further hostilities.

The city-state of Sparta, however, doubted Athenian sincerity and formed their own association for protection against their enemies, the Peloponnesian League (so named for the Peloponnese region where Sparta and the others were located). The city-states which sided with Sparta increasingly perceived Athens as a bully and a tyrant, while those cities which sided with Athens viewed Sparta and its allies with growing distrust. The tension between these two parties eventually erupted in what has become known as the Peloponnesian Wars. The first conflict (c. 460-445 BCE) ended in a truce and continued prosperity for both parties while the second (431-404 BCE) left Athens in ruins and Sparta, the victor, bankrupt after her protracted war with Thebes.

This time is generally referred to as the Late Classical Period (c. 400-330 BCE). The power vacuum left by the fall of these two cities was filled by Philip II of Macedon (382-336 BCE) after his victory over the Athenian forces and their allies at the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE. Philip united the Greek city-states under Macedonian rule and, upon his assassination in 336 BCE, his son Alexander assumed the throne.

Alexander the Great & the Coming of Rome

Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) carried on his father's plans for a full scale invasion of Persia in retaliation for their invasion of Greece in 480 BCE. As he had almost the whole of Greece under his command, a standing army of considerable size and strength, and a full treasury, Alexander did not need to bother with allies nor with consulting anyone regarding his plan for invasion and so led his army into Egypt, across Asia Minor, through Persia, and finally to India. Tutored in his youth by Plato's great student Aristotle, Alexander would spread the ideals of Greek civilization through his conquests and, in so doing, transmitted Greek art, philosophy, culture, and language to every region he came in contact with.



Alexander the Great [Profile View]
by Egisto Sani (CC BY-NC-SA)

In 323 BCE Alexander died and his vast empire was divided between four of his generals. This initiated what has come to be known to historians as the Hellenistic Period (323-31 BCE) during which Greek thought and culture became dominant in the various regions under these generals' influence. After the wars of the Diadochi ('the successors' as Alexander's generals came to be known), Antigonus I established the Antigonid Dynasty in Greece which he then lost. It was regained by his grandson, Antigonus II Gonatus, by 276 BCE who ruled the country from his palace at Macedon.

The Roman Republic became increasingly involved in the affairs of Greece during this time and, in 168 BCE, defeated Macedon at the Battle of Pydna. After this date, Greece steadily came under the influence of Rome. In 146 BCE, the region was designated a Protectorate of Rome and Romans began to emulate Greek fashion, philosophy and, to a certain extent, sensibilities. In 31 BCE Octavian Caesar annexed the country as a province of Rome following his victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium. Octavian became Augustus Caesar and Greece a part of the Roman Empire.

Lesson Two

Part One: The Roman Empire



The **Roman Empire**, at its height (c. 117 CE), was the most extensive political and social structure in western **civilization**. By 285 CE the **empire** had grown too vast to be ruled from the central government at **Rome** and so was divided by Emperor **Diocletian** (r. 284-305 CE) into a Western and an Eastern Empire. The **Roman** Empire began when **Augustus Caesar** (r. 27 BCE-14 CE) became the first emperor of Rome and ended, in the west, when the last **Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus** (r. 475-476 CE), was deposed by the Germanic King **Odoacer** (r. 476-493 CE). In the east, it continued as the **Byzantine Empire** until the **death** of **Constantine XI** (r. 1449-1453 CE) and the fall of **Constantinople** to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 CE. The influence of the Roman Empire on western civilization was profound in its lasting contributions to virtually every aspect of western culture.

The Early Dynasties

Following the **Battle of Actium** in 31 BCE, Gaius **Octavian** Thurinus, **Julius Caesar**'s nephew and heir, became the first emperor of Rome and took the name Augustus Caesar. Although **Julius** Caesar is often regarded as the first emperor of Rome, this is incorrect; he never held the title 'Emperor' but, rather, 'Dictator', a title the Senate could not help but grant him, as Caesar held supreme military and political power at the time. In contrast, the Senate willingly granted Augustus the title of emperor, lavishing praise and power on him because he had destroyed Rome's enemies and brought much-needed stability.

AUGUSTUS: "I FOUND ROME A CITY OF CLAY BUT LEFT IT A CITY OF MARBLE."

Augustus ruled the empire from 31 BCE until 14 CE when he died. In that time, as he said himself, he "found Rome a city of clay but left it a city of marble." Augustus reformed the laws of the city and, by extension, the empire's, secured Rome's borders, initiated vast building projects (carried out largely by his faithful general **Agrippa** (l. 63-12 BCE), who built the first **Pantheon**), and secured the empire a lasting name as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, political and cultural powers in history. The **Pax Romana** (Roman Peace), also known as the Pax Augusta, which he initiated, was a time of peace and prosperity hitherto unknown and would last over 200 years.

Following Augustus' death, power passed to his heir, **Tiberius** (r. 14-37 CE), who continued many of the emperor's policies but lacked the strength of character and vision which so defined Augustus. This trend would continue, more or less steadily, with the emperors who followed: **Caligula** (r. 37-41 CE), **Claudius** (r. 41-54 CE), and **Nero** (r. 54-68 CE). These first five rulers of the empire are referred to as the Julio-Claudian Dynasty for the two family names they descended from (either by birth or through adoption), Julius and Claudius. Although Caligula has become notorious for his depravity and apparent insanity, his early rule was commendable as was that of his successor, Claudius, who expanded Rome's power and territory in **Britain**; less so was that of Nero. Caligula and Claudius were both assassinated in office (Caligula by his **Praetorian Guard** and Claudius, apparently, by his wife). Nero's suicide ended the Julio-Claudian Dynasty and initiated the period of social unrest known as The Year of the Four Emperors.



Empreror Claudius or Nero

by Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin (CC BY-NC-SA)

These four rulers were Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian. Following Nero's suicide in 68 CE, Galba assumed rule (69 CE) and almost instantly proved unfit for the responsibility. He was assassinated by the Praetorian Guard. Otho succeeded him swiftly on the very day of his death, and ancient records indicate he was expected to make a good emperor. General Vitellius, however, sought power for himself and so initiated the brief civil war which ended in Otho's suicide and Vitellius' ascent to the throne.

Vitellius proved no more fit to rule than Galba had been, as he almost instantly engaged in luxurious entertainments and feasts at the expense of his duties. The legions declared for General Vespasian as emperor and marched on Rome. Vitellius

was murdered by Vespasian's men, and Vespasian (r. 69-79 CE) took power exactly one year from the day Galba had first ascended to the throne.

Vespasian founded the Flavian Dynasty which was characterized by massive building projects, economic prosperity, and expansion of the empire. Vespasian reign was prosperous as evidenced by his building projects which included initial construction of the Flavian Amphitheatre (the famous Coliseum of Rome) which his son Titus (r. 79-81 CE) would complete. Titus' early reign saw the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE which buried the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.



Pompeii and Mt. Vesuvius
by mchen007 (Copyright)

Ancient sources are universal in their praise for his handling of this disaster as well as the great fire of Rome in 80 CE. Titus died of a fever in 81 CE and was succeeded by his brother Domitian (r. 81-96 CE). Domitian expanded and secured the boundaries of Rome, repaired the damage to the city caused by the great fire, continued the building projects initiated by his brother, and improved the economy of the empire. Even so, his autocratic methods and policies made him unpopular with the Roman Senate, and he was assassinated in 96 CE.

The Five Good Emperors

Domitian's successor was his advisor Nerva who founded the Nerva-Antonin Dynasty which ruled Rome 96-192 CE. This period is marked by increased prosperity owing to the rulers known as The Five Good Emperors of Rome. Between 96 and 180 CE, five exceptional men ruled in sequence and brought the Roman Empire to its height:

- Nerva (r. 96-98 CE)
- Trajan (r. 98-117 CE)

- Hadrian (r. 117-138 CE)
- Antoninus Pius (r. 138-161 CE)
- Marcus Aurelius (r. 161-180 CE)

Under their leadership, the Roman Empire grew stronger, more stable, and expanded in size and scope. Lucius Verus and Commodus are the last two of the Nervan-Antonin Dynasty. Verus was co-emperor with Marcus Aurelius until his death in 169 CE and seems to have been fairly ineffective. Commodus (r. 180-192 CE), Aurelius' son and successor, was one of the most disgraceful emperors Rome ever saw and is universally depicted as indulging himself and his whims at the expense of the empire. He was strangled by his wrestling partner in his bath in 192 CE, ending the Nervan-Antonin Dynasty and raising the prefect Pertinax (who most likely engineered Commodus' assassination) to power.

The Severan Dynasty

Pertinax governed for only three months before he was assassinated. He was followed, in rapid succession, by four others in the period known as The Year of the Five Emperors, which culminated in the rise of Septimus Severus to power. Severus (r. 193-211 CE), founded the Severan Dynasty, defeated the Parthians, and expanded the empire. His campaigns in Africa and Britain were extensive and costly and would contribute to Rome's later financial difficulties. He was succeeded by his sons Caracalla and Geta, until Caracalla had his brother murdered.



Roman Beach Attack

by The Creative Assembly (Copyright)

Caracalla ruled until 217 CE, when he was assassinated by his bodyguard. It was under Caracalla's reign that Roman citizenship was expanded to include all free men within the empire. This law was said to have been enacted as a means of raising tax revenue, simply because, after its passage, there were more people the central government could tax. The Severan Dynasty continued, largely under the guidance

and manipulation of Julia Maesa (referred to as 'empress'), until the assassination of Alexander Severus (r. 222-235 CE) in 235 CE which plunged the empire into the chaos known as The Crisis of the Third Century (lasting from 235-284 CE).

PARTNER PROMOTION



Lesson Two: Part Two

Two Empires: East & West

This period, also known as The Imperial Crisis, was characterized by constant civil war, as various military leaders fought for control of the empire. The crisis has been further noted by historians for widespread social unrest, economic instability (fostered, in part, by the devaluation of Roman currency by the Severans), and, finally, the dissolution of the empire which broke into three separate regions. The empire was reunited by Aurelian (270-275 CE) whose policies were further developed and improved upon by Diocletian who established the Tetrarchy (the rule of four) to maintain order throughout the empire.

THE IMPERIAL CRISIS WAS CHARACTERIZED BY CONSTANT CIVIL WAR, AS VARIOUS MILITARY LEADERS FOUGHT FOR CONTROL OF THE EMPIRE.

Even so, the empire was still so vast that Diocletian divided it in half in c.285 CE to facilitate more efficient administration by elevating one of his officers, Maximian (r. 286-305 CE) to the position of co-emperor. In so doing, he created the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire (also known as the Byzantine Empire). Since a leading cause of the Imperial Crisis was a lack of clarity in succession, Diocletian decreed that successors must be chosen and approved from the outset of an individual's rule. Two of these successors were the generals Maxentius and Constantine. Diocletian voluntarily retired from rule in 305 CE, and the tetrarchy dissolved as rival regions of the empire vied with each other for dominance. Following Diocletian's death in 311 CE, Maxentius and Constantine plunged the empire again into civil war.

Constantine & Christianity

In 312 CE Constantine defeated Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge and became sole emperor of both the Western and Eastern Empires (ruling from 306-337 CE but holding supreme power 324-307 CE). Believing that Jesus Christ was responsible for his victory, Constantine initiated a series of laws such as the Edict of Milan (313 CE) which mandated religious tolerance throughout the empire and, specifically, tolerance for the faith which came to known as Christianity.



The Colossus of Constantine
by Dana Murray (CC BY-NC-SA)

In the same way that earlier Roman emperors had claimed a special relationship with a deity to augment their authority and standing (Caracalla with Serapis, for example, or Diocletian with **Jupiter**), Constantine chose the figure of **Jesus** Christ. At the First Council of Nicea (325 CE), he presided over the gathering to codify the faith and decide on important issues such as the divinity of Jesus and which manuscripts would be collected to form the book known today as The **Bible**. He stabilized the empire, revalued the currency, and reformed the military, as well as founding the city he called New Rome on the site of the former city of **Byzantium** (modern-day Istanbul) which came to be known as Constantinople.

He is known as **Constantine the Great** owing to later Christian writers who saw him as a mighty champion of their faith but, as has been noted by many historians, the honorific could as easily be attributed to his religious, cultural, and political reforms,

as well as his skill in battle and his large-scale building projects. After his death, his sons inherited the empire and, fairly quickly, embarked on a series of conflicts with each other which threatened to undo all that Constantine had accomplished.

His three sons, Constantine II, **Constantius II**, and Constans divided the Roman Empire between them but soon fell to fighting over which of them deserved more. In these conflicts, Constantine II and Constans were killed. Constantius II died later after naming his cousin Julian his successor and heir. Emperor Julian ruled for only two years (361-363 CE) and, in that time, tried to return Rome to her former glory through a series of reforms aimed at increasing efficiency in government.

As a Neo-Platonic philosopher, Julian rejected Christianity and blamed the faith, and Constantine's advocacy for it, for the decline of the empire. While officially proclaiming a policy of religious tolerance, Julian systematically removed Christians from influential government positions, banned the teaching and spread of the **religion**, and barred Christians from military service. His death, while on campaign against the Persians, ended the dynasty Constantine had begun. He was the last pagan emperor of Rome and came to be known as 'Julian the Apostate' for his opposition to Christianity.



Byzantine Empire c. 460 CE
by Tataryn77 (CC BY-SA)

After the brief rule of Jovian, who re-established Christianity as the dominant faith of the empire and repealed Julian's various edicts, the responsibility of emperor fell to Theodosius I. Theodosius I (r. 379-395 CE) took Constantine's and Jovian's religious reforms to their natural ends, outlawed pagan worship throughout the empire, closed the schools and universities, and converted pagan temples into Christian churches after proclaiming Christianity Rome's state religion in 380 CE.

THE UNITY OF SOCIAL DUTIES & RELIGIOUS BELIEF WHICH PAGANISM PROVIDED WAS SEVERED BY THE INSTITUTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

It was during this time that Plato's famous Academy was closed by Theodosius' decree. Many of his reforms were unpopular with both the Roman aristocracy and the common people who held to the traditional values of pagan practice. The unity of social duties and religious belief which paganism provided was severed by the institution of a religion which removed the gods from the earth and human society and proclaimed only one God who ruled from the heavens.

This new god, unlike the gods of old, had no special interest in Rome - he was the god of all people - and this distanced the religion of Rome from the state of Rome. Previously, Roman religious belief was state-sponsored and the rituals and festivals went to enhancing the status of the government. Theodosius I devoted so much effort to promoting Christianity that he seems to have neglected other duties as emperor and would be the last to rule both Eastern and Western Empires.

The Fall of the Roman Empire

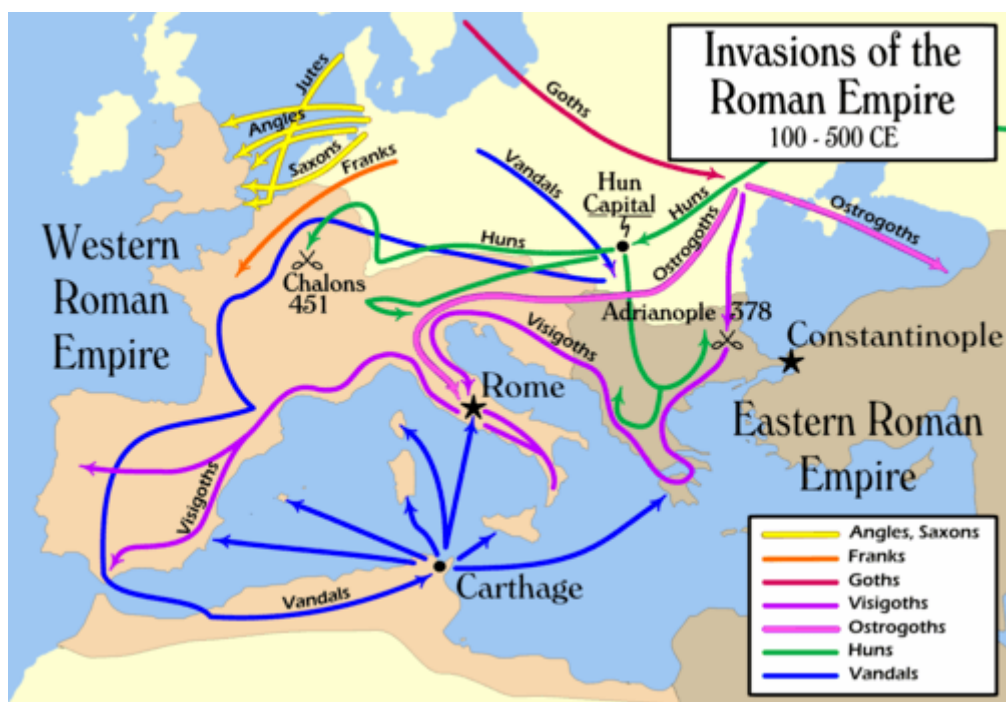
From 376-382 CE, Rome fought a series of battles against invading Goths known today as the Gothic Wars. At the Battle of Adrianople, 9 August 378 CE, the Roman Emperor Valens (r. 364-378 CE) was defeated, and historians mark this event as pivotal in the decline of the Western Roman Empire. Various theories have been suggested as to the cause of the empire's fall but, even today, there is no universal agreement on what those specific factors were. Edward Gibbon has famously argued in his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* that Christianity played a pivotal role, in that the new religion undermined the social mores of the empire which paganism provided.

The theory that Christianity was a root cause in the empire's fall was debated long before Gibbon, however, as the theologian Orosius (l. c. 5th century CE) argued Christianity's innocence in Rome's decline as early as 418 CE. Orosius claimed it was primarily paganism itself and pagan practices which brought about the fall of Rome. Other contributing factors to Rome's fall include:

- Political instability due to size of empire
- The self-interest of the two halves of the empire
- Invasion of barbarian tribes
- Government corruption
- Mercenary armies
- Over-reliance on slave labor
- Massive unemployment and inflation

The ungovernable vastness of the empire, even divided in two, made it difficult to manage. The Eastern Empire flourished while the Western Empire struggled and neither gave much thought to helping the other. Eastern and Western Rome saw each other more as competitors than teammates and worked primarily in their own self-interest. The growing strength of the Germanic tribes and their constant incursions into Rome could have been dealt with more effectively if not for government corruption, especially among provincial governors, and fair treatment of the Goths by the Romans overall.

The **Roman military**, manned largely with barbarian mercenaries who had no ethnic ties to Rome, could no longer safeguard the borders as efficiently as they once had nor could the government as easily collect taxes in the provinces. Further, the debasement of the currency, begun under the Severan Dynasty, had steadily encouraged inflation and slave labor, which was widespread, deprived lower-class citizens of jobs so unemployment levels soared. The arrival of the **Visigoths** in the empire in the third century CE, fleeing from the invading **Huns**, and their subsequent rebellions has also been cited a contributing factor in the decline.



Invasions of the Roman Empire
by MapMaster (CC BY-SA)

The Western Roman Empire officially ended 4 September 476 CE, when Emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed by the Germanic King Odoacer (though some historians date the end as 480 CE with the death of Julius Nepos). The Eastern Roman Empire continued on as the Byzantine Empire until 1453 CE, and though known early on as simply 'the Roman Empire', it did not much resemble that entity

at all. The Western Roman Empire would become re-invented later as The Holy Roman Empire (962-1806 CE), but that construct, also, was far removed from the Roman Empire of antiquity and was an 'empire' in name only.

Legacy of the Roman Empire

The inventions and innovations which were generated by the Roman Empire profoundly altered the lives of the ancient people and continue to be used in cultures around the world today. Advancements in the construction of roads and buildings, indoor plumbing, aqueducts, and even fast-drying cement were either invented or improved upon by the Romans. The calendar used in the West derives from the one created by Julius Caesar, and the names of the days of the week (in the romance languages) and months of the year also come from Rome. Even the practice of returning some purchase one finds one does not want comes from Rome whose laws made it legal for a consumer to bring back some defective or unwanted merchandise to the seller.

Apartment complexes (known as 'insula), public toilets, locks and keys, newspapers, even socks all were developed by the Romans as were shoes, a postal system (modeled after the Persians), cosmetics, the magnifying glass, and the concept of satire in literature. During the time of the empire, significant developments were also advanced in the fields of medicine, law, religion, government, and warfare. The Romans were adept at borrowing from, and improving upon, those inventions or concepts they found among the indigenous populace of the regions they conquered. It is therefore difficult to say what is an 'original' Roman invention and what is an innovation on a pre-existing concept, technique, or tool. It can safely be said, however, that the Roman Empire left an enduring legacy which continues to affect the way in which people live in the present day.