Ch. 4 – Classical Civilizations in the Mediterranean and the Middle East

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<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1. Persian defeat at Marathon and Thermopylae – legend of Pheidippides – ran 26 miles to bring news to Athens (dropped dead). Modern Olympic games race named after</td>
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<td>2. Persian invasion of Greece: punishment for Greek revolts, tried to attack Athens by sea but failed.</td>
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<td>3. Persian King Xerxes amassed army 2 to 1. Athenians retreat, watch city burn. Themistocles tricks Persian’s to a sea battle, battle at Thermopylae (300), Persians defeated</td>
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<td>4. History is full of might-have-beens. Important to look at what difference would have taken place if Persians had won.</td>
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<td>5. Defeat highlights developments of two civilizations: Persian Empire – durable presence in region and around Iran.</td>
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<td>6. Greek city states – culture that spread in Hellenistic world. Built on earlier civilizations, Greeks thought foreigners sounded “bar bar bar” hence the name barbarians, when Greece fades Alexander the Great forges great military empire that embraces Persia as well</td>
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<td>7. Impact of Classic Civilizations between 800 BCE and 476 CE: centered first in Greek peninsula, then Rome, Italy. Had limited control over Middle East Civilizations, pushed to expand westward, institutions created and values affect Europe, Later Middle East</td>
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<td>8. Challenges: figure out leading features of Greco-Roman Culture, compare w/other civilizations, recognize western legacy without confusing legacy</td>
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<td>9. Distinguish between Greek and Roman Legacies, Romans preserved Greek achievements, and not identical: <strong>Greeks</strong> – not interested in science, formed city-states, poor at empire building, stronger impact in eastern Mediterranean. <strong>Romans</strong> - interested in engineering, excellent at empires, law and language greater impact in Europe. Shared Greco-Roman legacy: Political ideas, religion and artistic styles, Economic structures</td>
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<td>10. Persian Empire surpassed Greece for several centuries: impact in Middle East &amp; Mediterranean, interaction with Greek culture a result of Hellenistic world</td>
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**I. The Persian Empire: A New Perspective in the Middle East**

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<td>1. 550 BCE Cyrus the Great – Persian Empire: Northern Middle East into Northwest India, conquered peoples, retained cultures such as cuneiform. Advanced iron technology, enormous impact</td>
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<td>2. Surpassed Greece in significance. Shaped a strong Persian political and cultural presence in Iran</td>
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**A. Political Styles and Innovations**

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<td>1. Emphasis: toleration of diversity, authoritarianism – little power sharing. Darius: centralization of laws, tax collection, unified infrastructure (east west highway, paved, inns, 1st regular postal service) growth of transregional trade</td>
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<td>2. Centralized bureaucracy: control of officials in distant regions of the Empire, oversight of tax collection – sent spies to check on officials, keep loyal to government</td>
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<td>3. Zoroastrianism – Zoroaster: revised Sumerian polytheism, introduced monotheism to area, banned intoxicants and animal sacrifice. Life is battle between good and evil, salvation is a choice of God over evil, Last Judgement – righteous gain heaven, evil eternal pain.</td>
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<td>4. Spreads widely among populations – enormous effect on Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Small group of Zoroastrians survive today</td>
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<td>5. Durability of the Empire: long period of peace and prosperity, conquered N. Africa and into Indus River Valley. At height, empire of 14 million people, later conquered by Alexander the Great</td>
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<td>6. Persian language and culture survived Hellenistic period, Persian states persisted in east</td>
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II. Patterns of Greek and Roman History

1. River Valley Civs spread to Greek islands. Greeks are Indo-European people. Island of Crete influenced by Egypt, Mycenae by Crete (Homer, Trojan War), destroyed by 800 BCE

   A. Stages of Greek Development


2. 5th Century BCE, rule of Pericles in Athens, aristocrat, democratic political structure, citizen assemblies, elected officials, passed laws. Pericles ruled by negotiation, influence, did not expand but could not prevent war between Athens and Sparta.

3. Political decline during Peloponnesian Wars (Athens vs Sparta). Phillip II of Macedon conquered Greek city-states. His son, Alexander the Great extends Macedonian empire (Middle East, Persia, into India, through Egypt), dies at 33 after 13 years of conquest. Hellenistic Period – extended consolidated Greek art and culture, blended with Middle East culture, trade flourishes, scientific centers at Alexandria

B. Rome

1. Final stage of Classical Mediterranean civilization, by 1st Century BCE had conquered Greece and Hellenistic kingdoms. origins of Rome: small monarchy in Italy 800 BCE, 509 BCE aristocrats drive out monarchy establish Roman Republic. Republic: conquests, expansion, the Punic Wars 264 to 146 BCE vs Carthage (General Hannibal), Rome seizes captures western Mediterranean, including Greece and Egypt

2. Political Instability: 45 BCE Julius Caesar defeats enemies in civil war, ends Republic. 27 BCE Augustus Caesar triumphant, creates structure for Roman Empire. 200 years of prosperity, peace in Mediterranean and Europe.

3. 180 CE marks beginning of slow fall for next 250 years, invaders conquer Rome 476 CE. Manifestation of decline: trade levels fell, birth rate fell, government was less effective – only two strong emperors (Diocletian and Constantine), and Constantine tries to unite empire under Christianity. Empire unable to supply order, armies filled with non-Romans, inability to defend against invaders, similar timing as Gupta and Han Dynasties

4. Summary: Mediterranean builds on earlier civs, Greek city-states (introduced diverse political forms, commercial based economy, colonies, and decline). Macedonian conquest (from Middle East to Egypt), a Roman Republic (political virtue, stability, and conquests), Replaced Republic with Empire (controlled Mediterranean, W and SE Europe, N Africa), 200 years of peace prosperity and glory

III. Greek and Roman Political Institutions

1. Politics were extremely important. “Politics” from “Polis” Greek word for city-state. Concept of Good Life – public participation and discussing of affairs of state. Geopolitics – city-states surrounded by mountainous terrain, small, local ownership of laws, concern for rights and obligations, civic military duty. Under Empire – city-states left alone, pride in Roman Citizenship

2. No set of political institutions to rival China, later societies reflected on diverse Mediterranean. Monarchy not preferred (Tyrants), wanted effective rulers, promoted public works, protected people from abusive aristocracy. Roman generals adopted these attributes.

   A. Greece

1. Democracy from Greek demos “the people”, new political form, Athens 5th C. BCE – rejects tyrants, Direct Democracy – all citizens members, made all major decisions, met
every 10 days. Executive officers, judges chosen for brief terms, reviewed by assembly, chosen by lot. Women – no rights, half of adult males not citizens (slaves, foreigners)

2. Lower class citizens encouraged reckless military actions

B. Rome

1. Roman Republic – constitutional attempt to reconcile political forms, relied on aristocracy and citizen assemblies, magistrates (represent common people), senate (legislature of aristocrats), executive offices (senators and two consuls who shared power) and dictator appointed during a crisis.
2. Classical Mediterranean: aristocratic, political participation by people, political ethics, duties of the citizens, importance of incorruptible service, the skill of speaking (Cicero). all of this is different than Confucianism – greater emphasis on participation and analysis
3. Roman Empire – kept strong local authority, destroyed the Jewish state (63 BCE) but had general tolerance to local customs/religions. Preserved the Senate but was meaningless, strong organized army, organized fair laws for people of Rome – balance between property rights and needs of poor, access to law courts (judged by Roman citizens).
4. Twelve Tables
5. Roman Law of Roman Empire: rule of law not of individuals, laws should be flexible, common sense
6. Regulates social life (citizenship, appointed judges, same laws, property), all subject to law, fair and reasoned
7. Citizenship in Rome, uniform laws and non Romans given citizenship
8. Functions of Government: concentration of system of courts and military. securing supplies of grain, public works: roads, harbors, stadiums, public baths. “bread and circuses” in Rome, 1 million inhabitants,
10. Legacies: localism, political interests, loyalty to state, diverse political systems, aristocratic rule, law, unified a large region, legal procedures, no definition of individual rights.

IV. Religion and Culture

1. Greeks and Romans did not create world religion: India, Persia, China did. Christianity rises during Roman Empire – spread by Roman peace and infrastructure, not product of culture, and important after Rome decline’s. Greco Roman religion: spirit of nature as gods/goddesses, different names but same people (Zeus/Jupiter), political importance of ceremonies to gods (telling of future, good harvests)

1. Religious Values
2. Lacked spiritual passion divided population, and were drawn to Middle East religions (greater comfort and contact with gods).
3. Moral system’s such as Aristotle’s Greece focused on personal balance in behavior, inner moral independence, discipline, and bravery. This develops separately from religion but later blends with Christianity.

2. Philosophy and Science
1. Classical Philosophy and political theory: emphasized power of human thought. Socrates in Athens – questions conventional wisdom, improvement of the soul, government thought he was corrupting youth, suicide or exile (chose hemlock poison), legacy of inquiry demands skeptical questioning
2. Greek rationality: similar to Confucianism, emphasis on questioning and speculation, inquiry over nature. No radical new scientific findings from Greece or Rome, did have math findings – geometry, Pythagorean Theorem. Hellenistic scientific advancement from Middle East and Egypt: anatomy, treatment. Ptolemy on sun’s rotation around earth (wrong). Middle East knew Earth revolved around sun.

3. Roman science: taught Greek and Hellenistic science in school, engineering – roads, aqueducts, arches

4. Art and Literature: religion inspired art, human centered themes – realistic, beauty of humans

5. Drama central role in culture: comedies and tragedies – human reason, balance of virtues, consequences for actions (Oedipus)

6. Greek literature – Iliad, Odyssey from Homer, Virgil linked Roman and Greek histories, Rome contributes poetic form due to richness of Latin language


8. Roman Engineering done on grander scale, domes, used in temples, baths, markets, homes, structures for entertainment – races and gladiators

9. Roman style blended with Christianity during later empire, Greeks pursued ceramics, Romans pursued painting.

V. Economy and Society in the Mediterranean

1. Politics and formal culture were affairs of cities. Most Greeks and Romans were farmers. Local rituals tied to harvests or afterlife. Free farmers owned land (large part of population), problems with landholders. Issues with free farming: shaped problems between tyrants and aristocrats and democrats. Decline of Rome – too many farmers dependent on large landowners, lost ability to vote freely

A. Agriculture and Trade

1. Greek and much of Italian soil unsuitable for grain, produced olives and grapes instead (cooking and wine), converted to market economy (investment needed), sale’s needed to purchase necessities, farmer’s went into debt, advantage to landholders

2. Commercial agriculture reason to establish empire. Greeks establish colonies to gain access to grain production, traded olive oil, and wine, silver. Rome: sought granary from Sicily and North Africa (leads to soil depletion), later soil infertility.

3. Trade is KEY: private merchants transported goods, governments invest in infrastructure, luxury items from China/India embellished upper class, West’s products were cruder

4. Merchants had higher status than in China but lower than India. In Greece they were foreigners, in Rome were recognized but not fully accepted as aristocrats

B. Slavery

1. Slaves important for classical economy – Athens: justified in Aristotle’s philosophy, household slaves, silver mines and brutal conditions. Sparta: Agricultural work. Rome: Households, tutoring children of elites, mines, agriculture. Theme of slavery: necessary, come from conquered territories, and increased need for military expansion

2. Technology: Greek – shipbuilding, navigation, Rome – engineering, cities, troop movements, little interest in agricultural improvements, upper class in politics and art, slave labor prevents need for becoming better in other areas

3. Family: Tight patriarchal families, women important in farming and agricultural houses, upper class Roman women influential in households, in law and culture women are inferior. Female infanticide (daughter killings) practiced – drained economy, Husbands had rights over wives, laws modify family controls, Women active in business, could control city property.

4. Generalizations: Many lived as farmers like previous civilizations, ordinary life had influence such as Christianity.

VI. Toward the Fall of Rome
1. Fall not like Han China – no disruption. Not like Gupta India – no central religion to link people (Hinduism). Collapse not the same across empire, no one civilization rose to claim empire, Greece and Rome lived on in its own way.

**A. A Complex Legacy**

1. 600 years of Persia, Greece, Hellenistic Period, Rome
2. Greek Legacy: political ideas, art & philosophy, not religion.
3. American love for Greece and Rome: buildings copied, and education from this region. Democracy does not spread out of Greece
5. Middle East point of exchange between merchants and cultures

**GLOBAL CONNECTIONS**

**A. Persia, Greece, Rome, and the World**

1. Persia – trade and roads that help commerce
2. Greece – develop contact more slowly, with more prejudices. Similar to China and attitude to non-Greeks “barbarians”, Sparta closed to outsider, Greek traders traveled to Egypt to learn science, Herodotus 1st historian
3. Alexander the Great extends Greek culture
4. Rome – world connections beyond borders, trade with Africa and India