Mohamed Lamine Debaghine University

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

***Ancient Greece***

ICL lectures - 1st  Year- 1st semester

Ancient Greece was a civilization that emerged about twenty five hundred years ago. It was a significant culture, having left behind a host of ideas, concepts, and art; formed the basic foundation of western civilizations.

1. ***The Human Prehistory of Greece***

The period before the written records encompasses the Greek prehistory, which in turn was a part of the prehistory of Europe. The latter has its beginnings with the movement of early people coming from the African Continent. The prehistoric human existence started in the latter part of the Stone Age.

The reason behind naming the Age by stone was that the people of that time, in addition to bone and wood, had only stone from which they fashioned their daily life tools and weapons. Momentously, those human beings had no knowledge yet of how to cultivate crops and produce their food.

* ***Before Agriculture***

Historians have subdivided the Stone Age into three periods: Palaeolithic (old stone), Mesolithic (middle stone), and Neolithic (new stone). The period between the first and the last part is placed from ten to twelve thousand years ago.

Searching for food, the first inhabitants of Greece during Palaeolithic period roamed throughout their lives in the wild. By chasing, fishing, and collecting plants and fruits; these early people lived as hunter-gatherers. They sometimes migrated for long distances to remain alive; survival was a risky business at best.

The ancient hunter-gatherers of Greece recognized social differences according to the individual social status. That is, persons enjoyed a sense of power, wealth, and respect in their groups according to their possession of mere expensive and elaborate goods.

Referring to the inhabitants of Greece using the term “Greeks” (meaning the same sense for the people of the later historical period) would be misleading, because we have no evidence that allowing us to distinguish between European ethnic groups during this early period. Therefore; the population, who inhabited the territory we call Greece during the Palaeolithic Age, are a subset of people of Prehistoric Europe.

* ***Transformation of Daily Life in the Late Stone Age***

Starting some ten to twelve thousand years ago at the opening of the Neolithic period, the daily life of Ancient Greece inhabitants became dependant on agriculture and the domestication of animals. By gaining this new knowledge, human beings style of living changed in a radical way.

Instead of just gathering and hunting, human beings became able to produce their food. To produce it, or in other words for a successful farming, people had to live in settled locations. That is, in place of travelling, they had to stay in one place and cultivate the land. Tis was the direct reason for the emergence of small communities, which is considered as the first gathering of people. That led later to the emergence of social and political systems.

* ***Explaining the Technological Change***

To explain the reasons behind Ancient Greece inhabitants’ knowledge of the transformative technologies during the late Stone Age, historians proposed two explanations. They regarded that agriculture was derived from the East through a process of diffusion: traders, farmers, and herders -coming to Europe- brought with them the knowledge and technologies of food production. The second reason historians explained was that the inhabitants of Greece introduced the change on their own, by independent innovation rather than through diffusion.

1. ***The Bronze Age***

The Bronze Age is the second principal period of the three ages: Stone, Bronze, and Iron Age (a system used for classifying and studying ancient societies). Beginning in the third millennium B.C., this Age is characterized by the introduction of using metals in people’s daily life.

The technology of the Bronze Age was substituting stone by metals in daily activities. Again, the application of new substance: bronze, affected people life in a radical way. From metals, people created new luxury goods, better agricultural tools, and warfare constructions. Consequently, these new technologies of various bronze objects made metallurgy important and served as a new symbol of wealth. The desire to accumulate wealth in the form of possessing metal objects stimulated the demand for metals and for skilled workers who could fashion these objects. People now acquired wealth in not only food, animals, or land, but also meals. Thus, bronze marked the division of the society into different classes.

Using bronze in agriculture led to the creation of new effective technologies, which in turn evolved the agricultural system. The emergence of such system, in addition to the exploitation of new plants (olives and grapes), had two important consequences: an increase in food supply that stimulated population growth, and further diversification and specialization of agriculture. This diversified agriculture led to the production of new and valuable products: olive oil and wine, which both of them -for local use and for trade- required new stocking techniques. In fact, to make great storage jars, people needed other specialized skilled workers. Specialization in the production of food and goods also meant that the specialists in these fields (skilled workers) had no time to make their food by their own, together with fashioning the variety of objects needed for everyday life. Likewise, to acquire their food and goods; they had to exchange with other people. Therefore, the society became increasingly interdependent both socially and economically.

The process of exchange existed from the Neolithic Period but it differed from that in that of the Bronze Age. Reciprocity in the small village of the late Neolithic Greece governed exchange of food and goods between self-sufficient farmers. That is, reciprocal exchange did not aim at economic gain but rather promoted a social value; I give you what I produce and you give me your production. We exchange not because either of we needs what the other produce but to reoffer social alliances in a small group. However, in the Bronze Age exchange was a necessity: each person obligatory needed what the other one produced; that is why people exchanged.

* ***Bronze Age Civilizations***

Historians have identified distinct civilizations to identify the Bronze Age: Minoan (occupied the large Island of Greece), Cycladic (developed in the Island of Aegean) , Helladic (was in Greece mainland), and Mycenaean civilization.

The Minoan Age lasted from 2000 to 1400 B.C, a civilization so called after the legendary King Minos. They produced a culture that was based on agriculture and intense commercial activity. Lived in contact with major civilizations of that time, the Minoans developed naval power. Constructing large architectural complexes known as Palaces, they employed an economic system using a language known by historians as Linear A. This centralized economic system was based on redistribution; the Minoan central authority of the Place told producers how much they had to contribute to the central collection facility and decided what each member of the society would receive for subsistence and reward. They recorded lists by writing on clay tablets using a language called Linear A. The scripts’ language have never been decoded.

On the Greek mainland, another civilization existed today called Mycenaean after its archaeological site “Mycenae” in the south of Greece. It was the last phase of the Bronze Age in Ancient Greece and lasted from 1600 to 1100 B.C. The Mycenaeans established both commercial and diplomatic relationships with the Near East. They were the earliest Greek-speaking people, developing a decoded language called by historians Linear B.

* ***The End of the Mycenaean Civilization***

The period from 1200-1600 B.C saw enormous catastrophes for the Mycenaean civilization. Internal conflicts, natural disasters, and external raids led to the collapse of this civilization. Foreign mercenaries, who were brought by the Mycenaean people to serve in their army, turned against the Mycenaean rulers. After being exploited, those hired foot soldiers realized that they could use their long swords against their lords. They attacked them and conducted raids on other rich cities which were not able to defend themselves. The rebellion fatally weakened the civilization; the rebels raided against the rulers but were not interested in replacing the political system they destroyed.

In addition to the internal struggle, an external invasion led by the Dorians (people of the northwest of Greece) destroyed the civilization. Major earthquakes in the seismically active region probably augmented the distractive consequences. In fact, the more plausible explanation of the collapse of Mycenaean civilization is the internal conflict the region witnessed, because the external invaders, (the Dorians) who came into small groups, could not cause such damage.

The warfare destroyed the economic system of the Palace, which caused a devastating effect on the large part of the Mycenaean population that was dependant on that system for its subsistence. Peasant farmers who knew how to grow their own food could support themselves even when the redistributive system broke down. Whereas other people, also warriors who left the Army, had to move to new places to find food.

The damage done by the destruction of the Mycenaean Civilization and the dissolution of its redistributive economies took centuries to repair fully; Greece entered a new period of Dark Age.

1. ***The Dark Age***

The destruction of the Mycenaean civilization in Greece; caused by local conflicts, economic disruption, and the movement of people; brought grinding poverty to many of the population that managed to survive the widespread violence.

Because of the shortage of literary and documentary sources, enormous difficulties impede our understanding of the history of the troubled period, explaining the reasons that followed, and supplementing the incomplete information provided by archaeology. The absence of written records from Greece limits us to a dim view of what happened there in these years, it is a customary to refer to this era as Dark Age (the fortunes of people of the time seem generally dark, as does our understanding of the period).

* ***Economy and Society in the Dark Age***

The violence of the period after about 1200 B.C had destroyed the economic system on which the Mycenaean prosperity depended, which in turn caused the collapse of Mycenaean society. The startling indication of the severe conditions of life in the early Dark Age is that the Greeks lost their knowledge of writing. Only the Palace scribes probably knew Linear B scripts, used by Mycenaeans, this language was difficult to master. In fact, these scribes used writing in keeping records for their redistributive economic system. Once the Palaces of Mycenaean Greece had fallen apart, with no central authority to keep records, there was no place or a need for writing. However, the oral transmission of the past allowed the Greek culture to survive this loss. By storytelling, singing, music, and oral performances of poetry; the most basic cultural ides of Greeks passed down through generations.

The large communities no more existed as was the prosperous Mycenaean ones. In fact, the entire Greek population in the early Dark Age was far smaller than it had been previously. As the population decreased, less land was cultivated which in turn led to a decline in food production. The decreased food supply tended to encourage a further decline in population and the new way of life became pastoral.

By the late of the Dark Age, the Greeks had relearned the technology of writing due to the contact with the literate civilizations of the Near East. The Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet to represent the sounds of their language and then innovated their own. Actually, the Greek version of the Alphabet formed the base of today’s English Alphabet. Subsequently, the Greeks applied their newly language to write down their oral literature.

1. ***The Archaic Age***

After the long period of dark life in Greece, the Greek history entered a new era that witnessed widespread new social and political forms marking the beginning of what is called as the Archaic Age. Meaning the “old fashioned age”, the archaic period stems from art history and designates the Greek history from 750 to 550 B.C.

* ***Developing the City-State***

With the destruction of old social and political structures, the archaic era saw a gradual development of socio-political organization that had begun in Ancient Greece Dark Age and led to the emergence of the Greek City-State. The new social and political form, the city-state, was a combination of the town, its centre, and the villages surrounding it. The Greek city-state was organized on the concept of citizenship (the state of being a member of a state and having rights). That is, each free and indigenous Greek inhabitant was a citizen belonging to the city-state and enjoying certain political rights. Abandoning the old socio-political structures, which was based on hierarchy and hereditary rule, the New Greek city-state based its institution on a general equality between people which depend on wealth but just on being a citizen.

* ***Forming the City-State***

Some reasons led behind the changes in Greek politics that led to the gradual emergence of Polis (city-state) in the Archaic Age. The economic revival of the archaic period had an impact on raising the Greek city-states. In fact, people who managed to acquire property after succeeding in agriculture started demanding for greater say in political affairs from the social elite. A second cause behind forming the Polis in Greece was the growth of population. Indeed, the increase in population number in this era probably came mostly in the ranks of the non-elite. The most important reason that did affect the formation of the city-state was the lack of powerful imperial states. Truly, the absence of power and authority during the Dark Age led to the emergence of independent city-states. These drawn reasons explains the way the Greek city-states arose.

The creation of such social and political institution in Greece in this particular period of time was necessary in developing many city-states and not one nation. The geography of Greece influenced the process by which this way of organization came about. The country’s mountainous of terrain, the many isolated valleys, and the numerous offshore islands encouraged the formation of local centres of power rather than one powerful capital. In fact, the city-states were often physically isolated by significant barriers to easy communication. Another key factor influencing the formation of Polis was the Mediterranean. Indeed, such an easy navigable sea provided the Greeks with an opportunity to find new colonies in times of crisis and population explosion. A final reason was that the Greek aristocracy acted to prevent any permanent monarchies from forming and created the institution of the city-sate. With the formation of the Polis and the dramatical raise of the population, the Greeks needed other revenues to support its large population.

* ***Early Colonization***

The Archaic Age was a period of colonization. Starting around 750 B.C., the Greeks started emigrating from their homeland and established colonies in Southern France, Italy, and Spain. Eventually, the Greeks created hundreds of city-states. In fact, emigration was because of a scarcity of arable lands, but the stimulus for the Greeks to leave their homeland was due to the revival of international trade in the Mediterranean in the archaic era. Thus, some Greeks with commercial interests moved to reside in foreign settlements. At first, people moved out for commercial avails, but with the population explosion in Greece; they began to move abroad permanently. Indeed, emigration helped solving this problem by sending men to lands in foreign regions. As a result of Greece emigration, two kinds of colonies were established: colonies as trading posts ( the Greeks resided there just for trade) like in Italy and Sicily, and new mini city-state like Tunisia and Libya that soon broke away from the mother city-state in Greece.

* ***The Political Development of the Archaic Age***

The Greek city-states were different from each other in size and naturel resources, but they shared fundamental political institutions and social traditions. By the end of the Mycenaean civilization, Monarchy ( rule by one and the total power was in the hands of one king) had died and the Greek city-states developed new political institutions. In Sparta and other city-states, only a restricted number of men exercised meaningful political power (creating a political system called an oligarchy, oligarchia in Greek meaning rule by few). Other city-states experienced periods of domination by rulers who took over and seized the power whom the Greeks called a tyrant (from Greek tyrannos). Nevertheless, other city-states created early forms of democracy (democratia meaning rule by one) by giving all male citizens the power to participate in governing. For instance, Athens established democracy with the most flourishing freedom to its citizens. These diverse changes of political and social development reveal the Greeks struggles to construct a new way of life during the Archaic Age.

***-Oligarchy in Sparta***

Sparta established a complex oligarchic system in governing. Its political system was a combination of monarchy (dual kings), oligarchy (Gerousia), and democracy (Ephors). The city-state of Sparta was formed by four villages and ruled by two kings, who had been the leaders of the dominant villages. However, the kings did not enjoy absolute power to make decisions or set policy, because they did not operate as pure monarchs but as the leaders of the oligarchic institution that governed the Spartan city-state. The few who made policy were a group of twenty-eight men over sixty years old, joined by the two kings. That is, this group of thirty, called the Council of Elders or Gerousia formulated proposals that were submitted to an assembly of all free adult males. In turn the Assembly (or Apella) had the authority to decide issues and elect members of Gerousia and Ephorate, but it had a limited power. The Ephorate consisted of an elected broad of five overseers (or Ephores) chosen by the Assembly. They- Ephores- decreased the power of the Kings and the Gerousia as their job was to ensure the supremacy of law. Ephores exercised judicial judgment and punishment having the ability to bring charges against the King and imprison him until his trial.

***-Democracy in Athens***

The city-state of Athens did not suffer the big damage of the Dark Age. When the number of population increased in the early Archaic Age (peasants constituted the fast growing segment of people), these small farmers began to insist on their rights in political affairs. Under the pressure of the small peasants, and to avoid anarchy, the social elite was obliged to respond to the growing demands of the farmers. By the 7th C. all free born adults male citizens of Athens had the right to attend open meetings called the Assembly ( Ekklasia: the main democratic body of Athens). Tis Assembly elected nine magistrates each year called Archons or rulers whom chosen by the Athenians. Even though Athens established early forms of democratic governing, the rights of the poor at this stage were very limited.

***-The Rise of Tyranny***

Opposition to the oligarchic system brought the first Greek tyrants to power in various states; the most famous early tyranny arose at Corinth (a Geek city-state located in south central Greece) around 657 B.C. Corinth was ruled by a family called The Bacchiads. In fact, the family members were very unpopular, despite the city’s prosperity, because the Bacchiads ruled violently. Cypselus, a member of the social elite and whose mother was a Bacchaid, prepared himself to take over the power. Becoming very popular among the masses, Cypselus overthrew the Bacchiads rule and seized power. After taking control over Corinth with the help of the masses, he suppressed rivals. Cypselus set up the first tyrant dynasty because he manipulated public emotions and gained popularity and power.

1. ***Classical Greece***

The flurry of development and expansion of the Archaic Era was followed by the period of maturity we came to know as **“Classical Greece”.** Between 480 and until 323 BCE Athens and Sparta dominated the Hellenic world with their cultural and military achievements. These two cities, with the involvement of the other Hellenic states, rose to power through alliances, reforms, and a series of victories against the invading Persian armies. They eventually resolved their rivalry in a long, and particularly nasty war that concluded with the demise of Athens first, Sparta second, and the emergence of Macedonia as the dominant power of Greece. Other city-states like Miletus, Thebes, Corinth, and Syracuse among many others played a major role in the cultural achievements of this period we came to call Classical Greece.

Athens and Sparta coexisted peacefully through their underlying suspicion of each other until the middle of the fifth C. BCE. The political and cultural disposition of the two city-states occupied the opposite ends of the spectrum. Sparta was a closed society governed by an oligarchic government led by two kings, and occupying the harsh southern end of the Peloponnesus, organized its affairs around a powerful military that protected the Spartan citizens from both external invasion and internal revolt of the helots. Athens on the other hand grew to an adventurous, open society, governed by a Democratic government that drew its power from commercial activity. The period of Perikles’ leadership in Athens is described as the “Golden Age”. It was during this period that the massive building project, that included the [Acropolis](http://www.ancient-greece.org/history/acropolis.html), was undertaken.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |

The Athenian adventurous spirit and their loyalty to their Ionian kin led them to come to the aid of the Asia Minor colonies that were feuding with the powerful Persian Empire. To aid the Ionian Revolt, led by Miletus, the Athenians landed a small garrison in Ionia to fight against the Persians and to spread the revolt. The Greek forces burned the capital of Lydia, Sardis in 498 enraging the Persians, before they were finally defeated in 494 BCE. The sacking of Sardis invoked the wrath of Darius who vowed revenge. In 490 BCE, he landed his forces twenty miles north of Athens, at Marathon. While the Spartans were occupied with a religious festival, the outnumbered Athenians under the leadership of Miltiades mounted a surprise attack and routed the dumbfounded Persians at Marathon to preserve Greek independence for the time being.

It took ten years, but the Persian king Xerxes, determined to succeed in his second attempt, amassed what Herodotus described as the greatest army ever put together in order to attack Greece again. The Athenians, expecting a full attack from the Persians, under the leadership of Themistokles cashed the silver extracted from the newly dug mines of Lavrion, and built a formidable navy of triremes. Xerxes crossed the Hellespont in 480 BCE with his massive army and began annexing Greece through land and sea. The first line of defence for the Greek alliance of city-states was at the narrow passage of Thermopylae where Leonidas with 300 Spartans and 700 Thespians held back the mighty Persian army for three days before they fell to a man through deceit. At the same time, the Athenian ships fought the Persian navy to a stalemate at nearby Artemision before it withdrew to the straights of Salamina.

The Athenians vacated the entire non-combat population from their city, so when the Persians arrived they met no resistance. They took vengeance on the buildings and temples of Athens by burning them to the ground, and anchored their fleet at Faliron in pursuit of the Greek navy that was sheltered at nearby Salamina Island. While the joint leadership of the Hellenes argued in typical Greek fashion if they should withdraw to the Peloponnese and where to engage the Pesians next; Themistokles, seeking an advantageous quick battle, invoked the Persian fleet into attacking as the Greek ships faked an early morning escape from Salamina. As the Persians pursued what they thought was a fleeing foe, the Greek triremes turned and engaged the surprised Persians inflicting massive casualties and decimating the Persian navy. With his navy destroyed, Xerxes feared that the Greek triremes would rush to the Hellespont to cut off his only way home, so he withdrew back to Asia leaving his able general Mardonious to fight the Greeks. The next year, in 479 BCE, this Persian army was defeated at Plataea by the alliance of Greek states under the leadership of the Spartan general Pausanias, putting a permanent end to further Persian ambitions to annex Greece.

The victory of the Greek forces at Marathon and Salamis are hailed as pivotal points in the development of western civilization. The reason being that, if the Persians were victorious all the achievements of Greece (and especially Athens) that followed immediately after and what is widely consider to be the foundation of western civilization, would not have transpired. Following the successful defence of their homeland, the Greek states entered a state of high development. Athens especially emerged as a major superpower that led a host of other Greek city-states (some willing, some unwilling, and some reluctant) in a defensive alliance, the Delian League, against the Persians. The tributes collected by the allies helped Athens expand and maintain a formidable, yet difficult, empire in the Aegean world. At the same time, Sparta led the Peloponnesian League, an alliance of states mostly from the Peloponnese that acted as a counter-balance against the perceived Athenian hegemony of Greece.

The competitive spirit, suspicion, and animosity toward each other that characterized all Greek cities re-emerged once the external danger of the Persians threat subsided, and with the two dominant empires occupying opposite ends of the political and cultural spectrum. It was not long before the underlying differences and mistrust spilled over in a particularly long and nasty conflict: the Peloponnesian War. While Sparta and Athens were the primary adversaries, just about every other Greek city took part at one time or another. With Sparta possessing the stronger land forces, and Athens dominating at sea with its navy of triremes, the war lasted for from 431 until 404 BCE with the Peace of Nicias interrupting it briefly in 421-418 BCE. After surviving a decimating plague in 430/9 BCE and a devastating defeat in Sicily by Syracuse in 413 BCE, Athens drained of resources finally capitulated to the Spartans in 404 BCE.

The Classical Period produced remarkable cultural and scientific achievements. The city of Athens introduced to the world a direct Democracy the likes of which had never been seen hitherto, or subsequently, with western governments like Great Britain, France, and USA emulating it a thousand years later. The rational approach to exploring and explaining the world as reflected in Classical Art, Philosophy, and Literature became the well-grounded springboard that western culture used to leap forward, beginning with the subsequent Hellenistic Age. The thinkers of the Classical Greek era have dominated thought for thousands of years, and have remained relevant to our day. The teachings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle among others, either directly, in opposition, or mutation, have been used as reference point of countless western thinkers in the last two thousand years. Hippocrates became the “Father of modern medicine”, and the Hippocratic Oath is still used today. The dramas of Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, and the comedies of Aristophanes are considered among the masterpieces of western culture.

The art of Classical Greece began the trend towards a more naturalistic (even in its early idealistic state) depiction of the world, thus reflecting a shift in philosophy from the abstract and supernatural to more immediate earthly concerns. Artists stopped merely “suggesting” the human form and began “describing” it with accuracy. Man became the focus, and “measure of all things” in daily life through Democratic politics, and in cultural representations. Rational thinking and Logic became the driving force behind this Cultural Revolution at the expense of emotion and impulse. The most striking illustration of this “Logic over Emotion” approach is frozen on the faces of the statues of the temple of Zeus west pediment at Olympia. In the complex array of sculptures, it is easy to know who is a “Barbarian” and who is a “civilized Hellene” through the expression of their faces. Barbarian Centaurs exhibit an excess of emotion, while Lapithae women and Apollo remain collected and emotionless even in the direst of situations (photo on the right).

Even after its defeat at the Peloponnesian war, Athens remained a guiding light for the rest of Greece for a long time, but this light that shone so bright, began to fade slowly. Sparta won the Peloponnesian war and emerged as the dominant power in Greece, but her political prowess failed to match her military reputation. While Sparta fought against other city-states all over Greece, Athens reconstructed her empire after rebuilding her walls, her navy and army. Sparta’s power and military might were eventually diminished, especially after two crashing defeats at the hands of the Thebans first in Leuctra in 371 BCE, and again nine years later at Mantinea. The Macedonians, who under the leadership of Philip II emerged as the only major military authority of Greece after their victory at Chaeronea against the Athenians in 338 BCE, quickly filled this power vacuum, however.

Through diplomacy and might, Philip II who became king in 359 BCE, managed to consolidate the areas around northern Greece under his power, and until his assassination in 336 BCE had added central and southern Greece to his hegemony. The pretext for his military expeditions to southern Greece was the protection of the Delphi Oracle from the Phoceans, but his sight was fixed beyond the borders of Greece. His ambition was to lead a military expedition of united Greece against the Persian Empire to avenge the Persian incursions of Greece.  This ambition was fulfilled by his son Alexander the Great who became king after his father’s assassination.

With a copy of the Iliad and a dagger in his hand, Alexander continued the centuries-old conflict between East and West by leading a united Greek army into Asia. His success on the battlefield and the amount of land he conquered became legendary and earned him the epithet “the Great”. Besides brilliant military tactics, Alexander possessed leadership skills and charisma that made his army unbeatable in numerous battles against more numerous opponents, pushing the Greeks all the way to Egypt, India and Bactria (today Afghanistan). Alexander led his army in battle always placing his own self at the point of attack, partaking in the common soldier’s jeopardy, and thus won a series of major battles that obliterated all opposition in its path. In the process he amassed the largest empire hitherto known and altered the composition of the ancient world.

In 334 BCE, Alexander led his army across the Hellespond into Asia and scored successive wins against the Persian Empire. His fist success came at Granicus River in northwest Asia Minor where his Calvary routed the outnumbered Persian mercenaries who fought under the leadership of Memnon of Rhodes. In 333 BCE Alexander’s outnumbered army defeated the Persians at Issus and forced king Darius to flee for his life. The subsequent conquest of Miletus, Tyre (332 BCE), and Egypt (331 BCE) gave the Greeks control of the entire eastern shore of the Mediterranean, and allowed Alexander to move inland towards the heart of the Persian Empire. In Egypt Alexander was proclaimed to be the son of god Ammon (the equivalent of the Greek Zeus), and he proclaimed himself King of Asia after his victory at the battle at Gaugamela in 331 BCE, which sealed the fate of the Persian Empire.

From Babylon, Alexander led his army towards the heart of south Asia, subduing all resistance and establishing cities along the way. Despite the objections of his officers, he incorporated into his army forces from the conquered lands, adopted local customs, and married a Bactrian woman, Roxanne. His march eastward eventually stopped on the edge of India partly due to the objections of his fatigued army. He returned from the frontier to Babylon to plan his next expedition southward, towards Arabia, but in 323 BCE, his sudden death of a fever at the age of 32 put an end to a brilliant military career, and left his vast conquered land without an apparent heir.

The conquests of Alexander the Great changed the course of Ancient history. The centre of gravity of the Greek world moved from the self-containment of city-states to a more vast territory that spanned the entire coast of Eastern Mediterranean and reached far into Asia. Alexander’s conquests placed a plethora of diverse cultures under common hegemony and Greek influence around the Mediterranean and southern Asia, paving the way for the distinct Hellenistic culture that followed his death

*References:*

# Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times by [Thomas R. Martin](https://www.pdfdrive.com/search?q=Thomas+R.+Martin)

# www.ancient-greece.org