

Eurasian Empires 500 BCE to 500 CE

AP World History Notes
Chapter 4



What is an Empire?

Eurasian Empires of the Classical Era

- Persia
- Greece under Alexander the Great
- Rome
- China during the Qin and Han dynasties
- India during the Mauryan and Gupta dynasties

Common Problems of Empires

The Hittites



- 2000 BCE = **Hittites** conquered Asia Minor → very powerful military
- Set up city-states on plateau called **Anatolia** → evolved into a kingdom
- 1st military in Middle East to have large amounts of iron weapons

The Hittites

- Army used chariots on lighter wheels that could carry 2 soldiers + a driver
 - Gave them an advantage over their enemies using 2-person chariots
- Hittite Empire covered Asia Minor, Syria, & part of Mesopotamia



The Hittites

- Hittites got most of their culture from Mesopotamia and Egypt
 - They DID contribute a legal system considered less harsh than Hammurabi's Code → emphasized payments for damages rather than harsh, violent punishments

The Assyrians

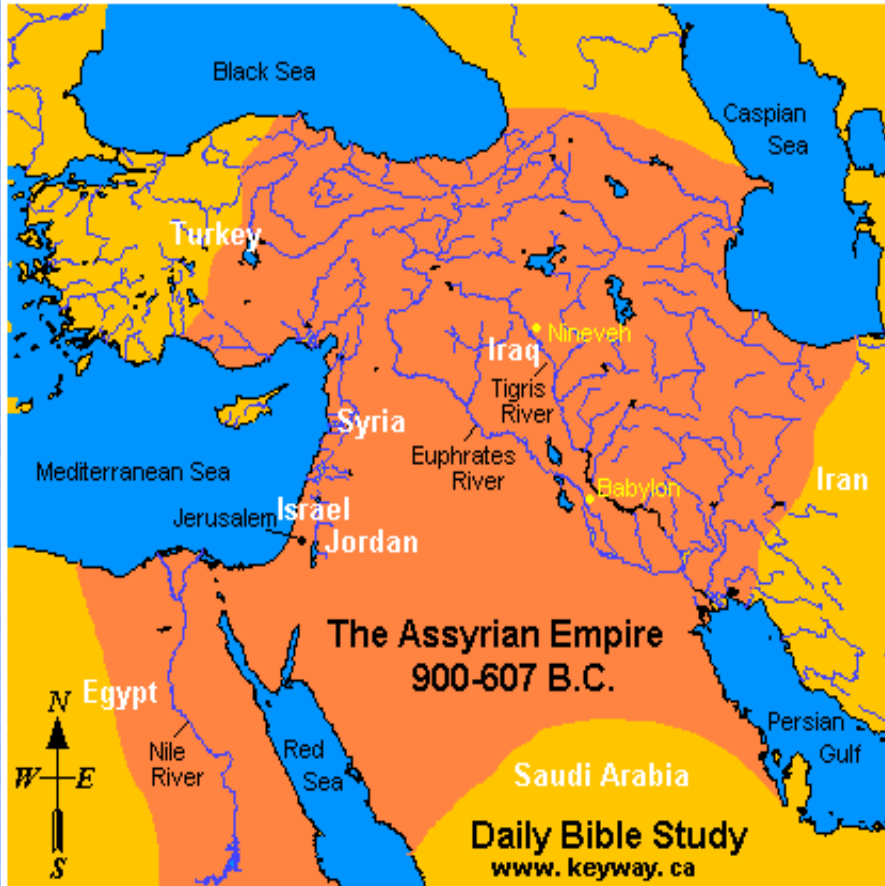


- Lived in northern Mesopotamia
- Most lethal army in the Middle East
 - Army organized into units: foot soldiers, charioteers & cavalry on horseback
 - Fought with iron weapons & used battering rams to run into walled cities

The Assyrians

- Treated people they conquered very cruelly
 - Burned cities; tortured and killed thousands of captives
 - Deported people from their homelands
 - Forced people to pay heavy taxes to pay for army, buildings, and roads

The Assyrians



- Empire stretched from the Persian Gulf to Egypt
 - Empire divided into provinces
→ each one ruled by a governor
- Conquered people began to rebel & the empire began to fall apart
 - 612 BCE = **Chaldeans** take down Assyrian empire

The Chaldeans



- Dominated the entire Fertile Crescent
- Great King = Nebuchadnezzar
 - Extended the empire
 - Made Babylon one of the most beautiful & richest cities
 - Created the Hanging Gardens (one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world)



The Hanging Gardens of Babylon



The Chaldeans

- Studied the stars & moon phases → foundation for modern astronomy
- Empire started to weaken due to poor harvests and slow trade
- 539 BCE = Conquered by the **Persians**



The Persians



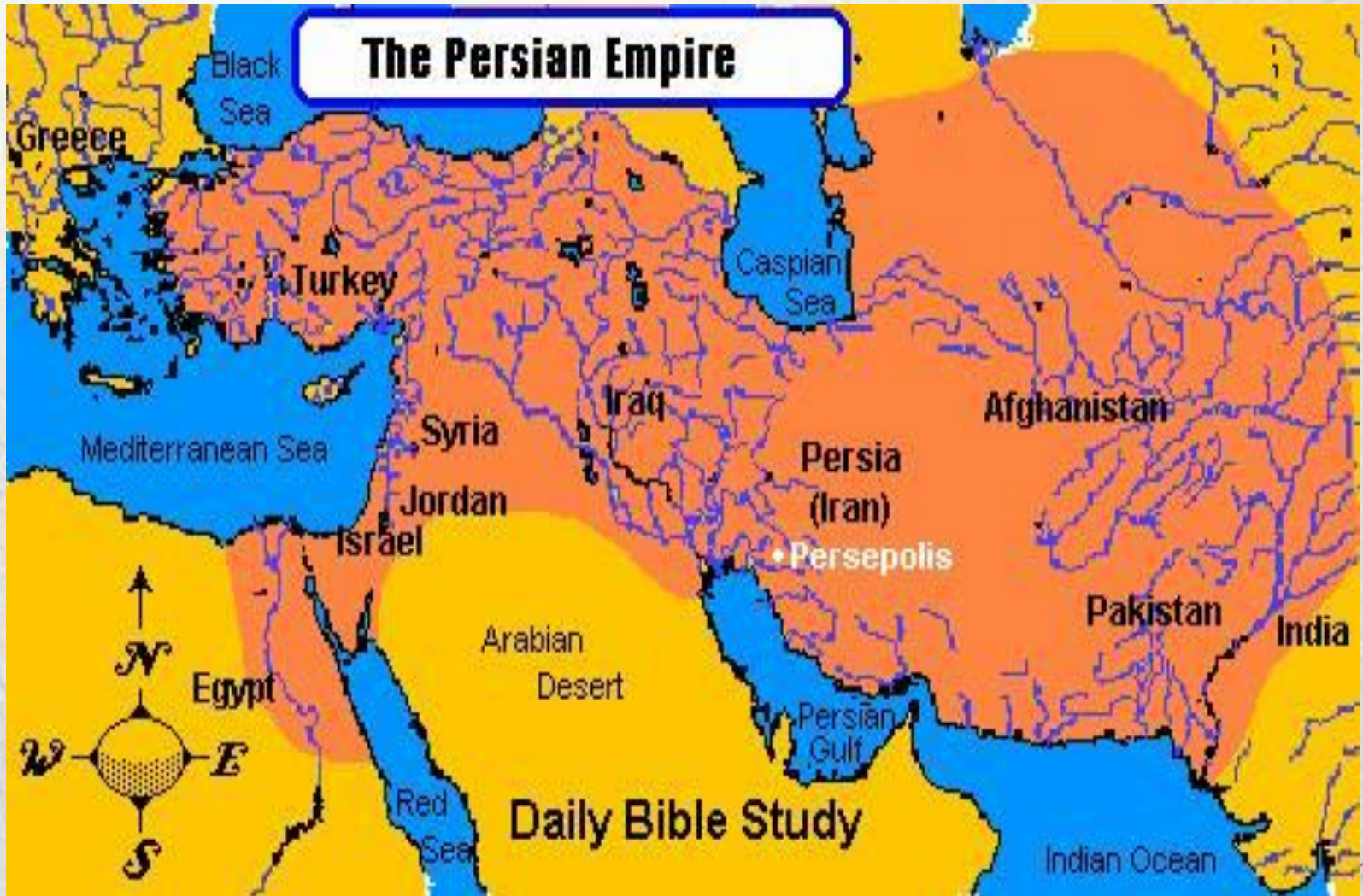
- Lived in present-day Iran
- King Cyrus added many new territories to the empire
 - Northern Mesopotamia, Syria, Canaan, Phoenician cities, Lydia, Greek city-states in Asia Minor
 - Later his son conquered Egypt → brought the entire Middle East under Persian control

The Persians



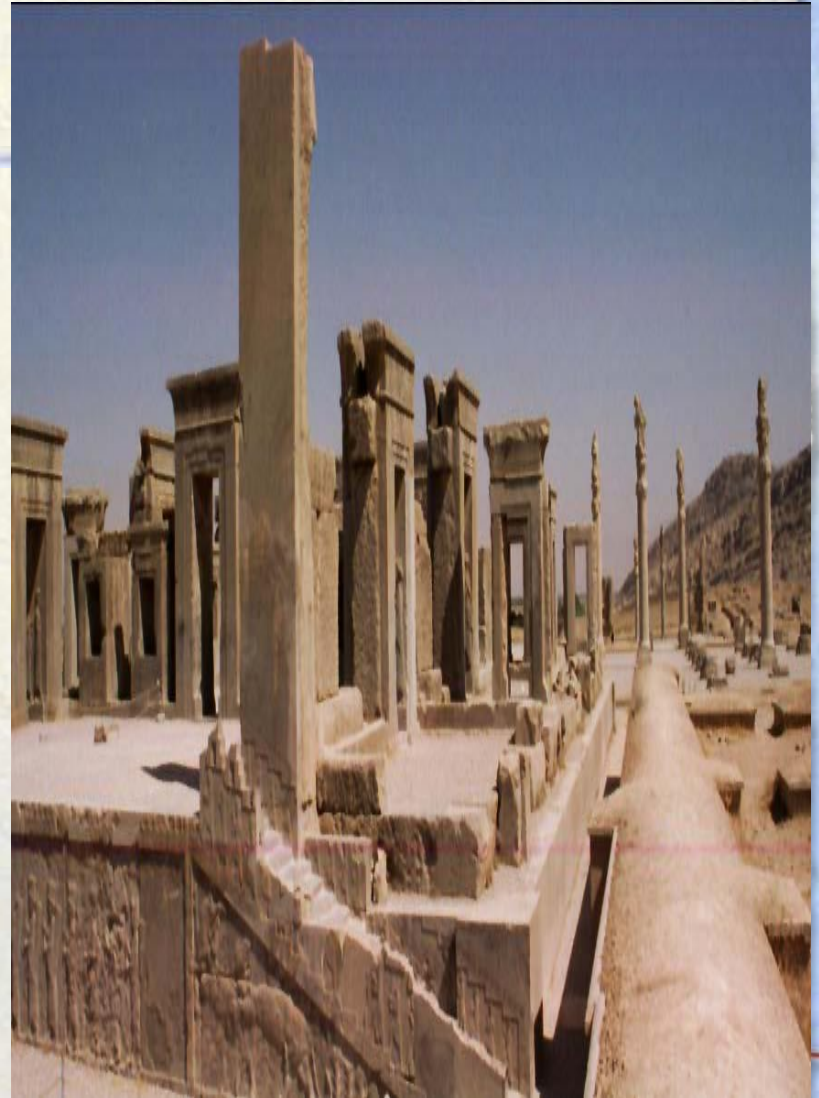
- Ruled more than 35 million people
- Empire stretched more than 3000 miles – from Nile to Indus River
- Best organizer among Persian kings = Darius
 - Divided empire into 23 provinces
 - Each province ruled by a satrap = governor

Persian Empire



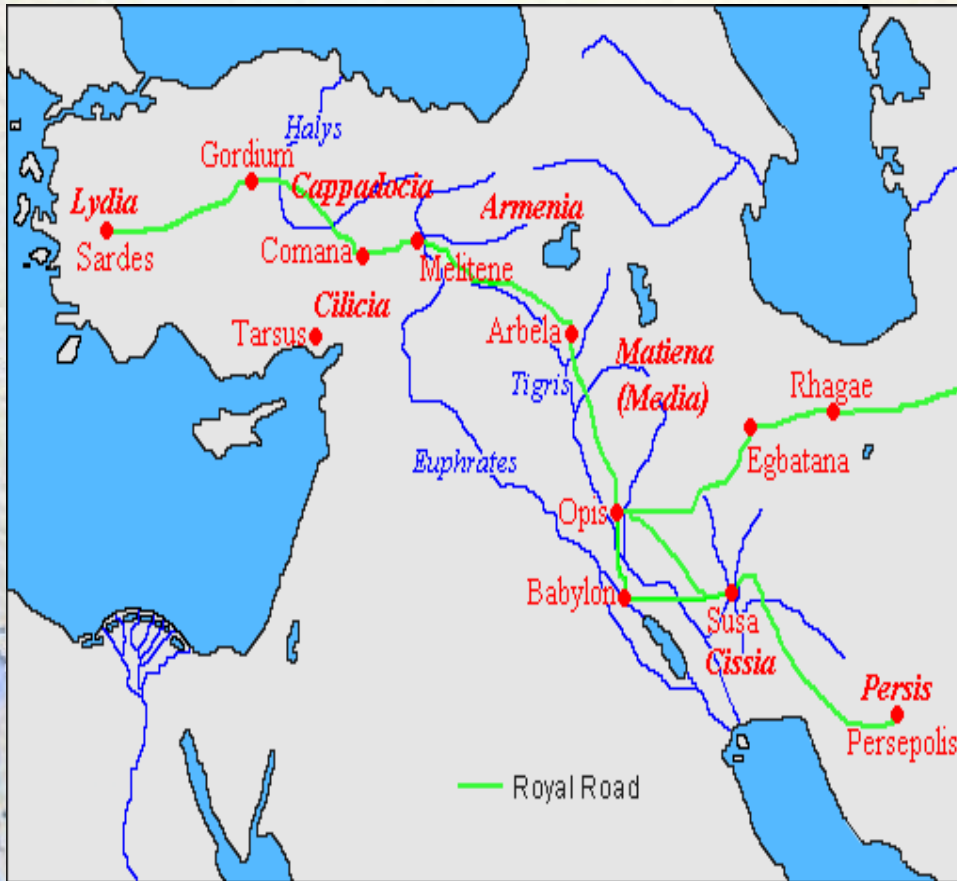
The Persians

- Persians = very tolerant rulers
 - Allowed conquered people to keep own languages, religions, and laws
- Artisans built city of **Persepolis** = most magnificent city in the empire



The Persians

- Big network of roads
 - Allowed for trade between different peoples/cultures in the empire
 - Allowed for easy movement of soldiers
 - Royal Road = longest road in the empire → had stations along it so travelers could get food, water, and fresh horses



The Persians

- 480 BCE = Darius's son Xerxes tried to conquer Greece to expand the empire
 - Failed to defeat the Greeks



Ancient Greece



The Aegean Area

- Ancient Greece included the Balkan Peninsula & small rocky islands in the Aegean Sea



The Aegean Area

- 3/4 of Greek mainland = mountains
 - Protected Greeks from foreign invaders/attackers
 - Kept Greeks isolated from other communities
 - Prevented Greeks from uniting under one government
- Between the mountain ranges = fertile plains good for farming



The Aegean Area

- Mild climate

- So people spent much of their time outdoors
- Meetings held in public squares
- Teachers met students in public gardens
- Actors performed in open theaters



The Aegean Area

- Despite lack of government -- Greeks spoke same language & practiced same religion (polytheistic)
- Greeks turned to the seas to earn a living --> no place in Greece is more than 50 miles from a coast

Aegean Civilization [2500 BCE - 1100 BCE]

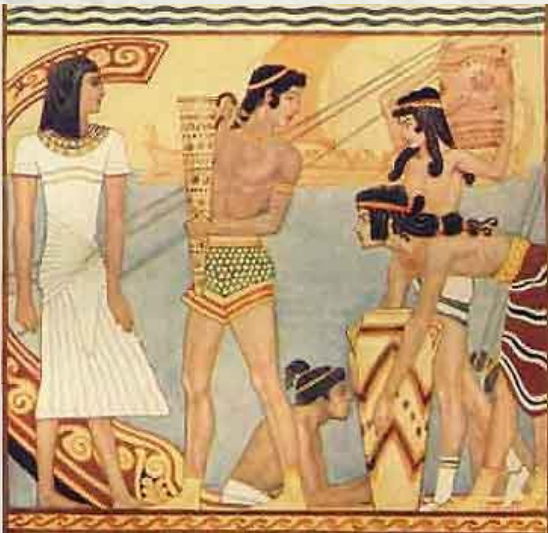
The Minoans

- Lived on the island of Crete (off the coast of Greece)
- Ruled by King Minos
 - Had a large palace that contained **labyrinths = mazes**
 - Story of Minos and the Minotaur (half man, half bull)



The Minoans

- Murals show that both men and women:
 - Curled their hair
 - Wore gold jewelry
 - Wore wide metal belts
 - Liked dancing, sporting events, and boxing



The Minoans

- Women enjoyed a higher status in society than in other civilizations
 - Chief deity = goddess of the Earth
- Made a living from sea trade -- dominated eastern Mediterranean Sea trade
 - Protected the seas from pirates



The Minoans

- Collapsed about 1350 BCE --> 2 theories why:
 - Large tidal wave destroyed cities
 - Mycenaeans (from mainland) attacked & invaded Crete

The Mycenaeans

- Migrated from central Asia to the Balkan Peninsula (Greece)
 - Intermarried with local people there (called **Hellenes**) and set up a group of kingdoms



The Mycenaeans

- Each kingdom centered around a hilltop with a royal fortress
 - Surrounded by stone walls for protection
 - Palaces = centers of government and production of goods
 - Officials kept track of the wealth of every person
 - People were taxed in the form of livestock, wheat, and honey

The Mycenaeans

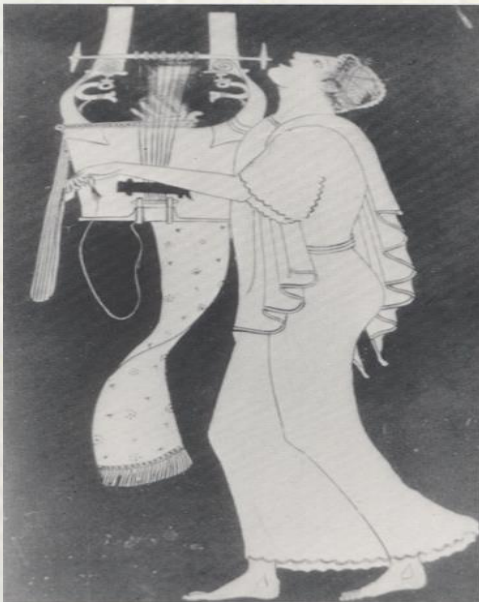
- Adopted many parts of Minoan culture
 - Worshipped same Mother Earth
 - Metalworking, shipbuilding, navigation by sun & stars

The Mycenaeans

- Mycenaeans conquered the Minoans but were then themselves conquered by the Dorians from the north around 1100 BCE
 - Began “dark ages” of Greek culture
 - Trade stopped, people lost skills, poverty increased
 - Ionians reintroduced Greek culture 300 years later (Ionians = refugees that had escaped when the Dorians took over)
 - New Greek civilization emerged --> called **Hellenic** after the original people of Greece

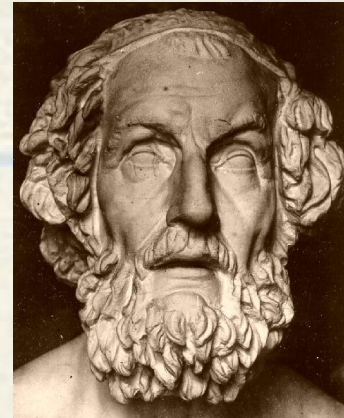
Poets and Heroes

- **Bards** = singing storytellers that kept the Mycenaean traditions alive during the “dark ages”



Poets and Heroes

- Two most famous Greek epics = *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*
 - Written by blind poet named **Homer**
 - *The Iliad* = about the Trojan War & features the story of the Trojan Horse
 - *The Odyssey* = about the journey of King Odysseus after the fall of Troy
 - Stories were used to teach Greek values



A Family of Deities

- Greeks believed that gods caused the physical events of Earth to occur and controlled how people behaved, as well as what happened to people
- Unlike other early cultures, Greeks didn't fear their deities
 - Stressed importance of the individual & self-worth --> this self-respect allowed them to approach the gods with dignity

A Family of Deities



- Greeks humanized their gods & goddesses
 - They had a totally human form
 - Had human behavior
- Chief god = Zeus

A Family of Deities

- Each city-state had a particular god as its protector
- Each god controlled a part of the natural world (ex: Zeus ruled the sky & weather; Hades ruled the underworld; Poseidon ruled the sea; etc.)



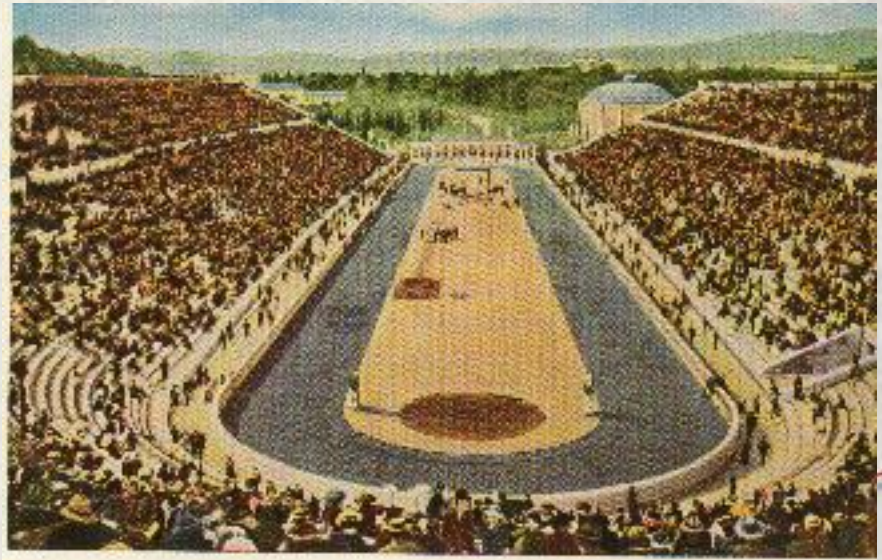
A Family of Deities

- 12 most important gods lived on Mount Olympus



A Family of Deities

- Every 4 years, athletic contests were held to honor Zeus
 - Called the Olympic Games --> held in Olympia



A Family of Deities

- Greeks began performing plays = beginnings of theater
 - 1st play = tribute to Dionysus = god of wine, fertility, and parties
 - Started off as songs then poems then dialogue



Ancient Greece: The Polis



The Polis

- Polis = city-state
- Each polis developed independently, but shared certain features with other city-states



The Typical Polis

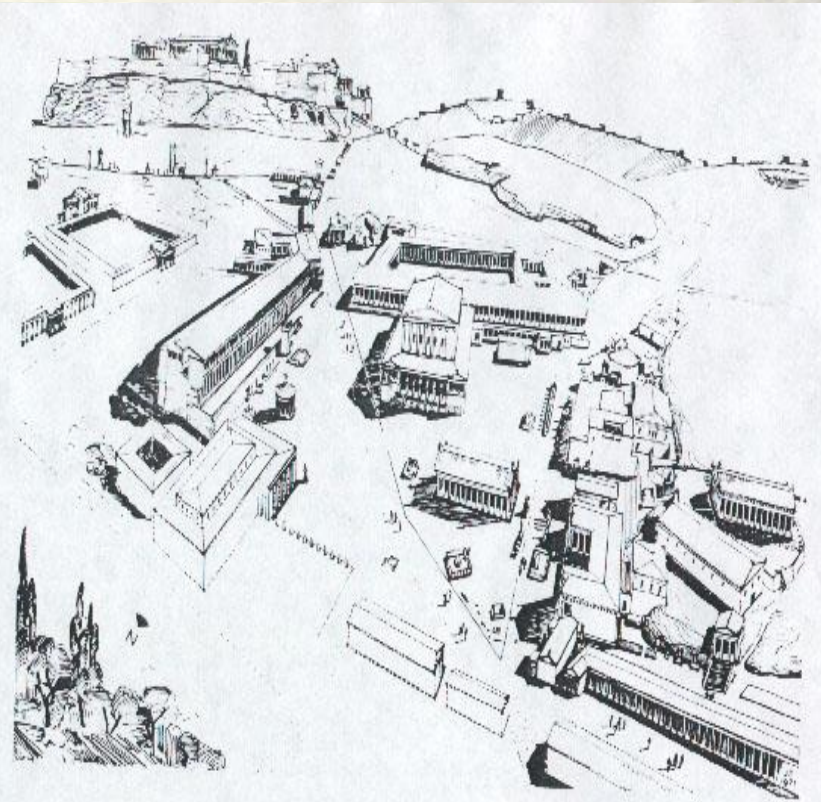


- Polis included: a city and the surrounding villages, fields, and orchards
- At the center of the city = an Acropolis = fortified hill
 - On top of Acropolis = temple of the local god or goddess
 - Foot of Acropolis = the agora = public square



The Typical Polis

- Public square was political center of the polis
- Citizens gathered there to choose officials, pass laws, etc.
- Artisans & merchants did business there



Roman styles is a monument on the Hill of the Muses, southwest and close to the Acropolis (Fig. E.6). Dated between 200 and 250 AD.

E.4 The Agora, Athens, as it appeared in the second century of the Christian era. Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Agora, Athens.

The Typical Polis

- **Citizens** = those who took part in government
 - Could vote and hold public office
 - Could speak for themselves in court
 - Could own property
 - In return: expected to serve in government and protect the polis



The Typical Polis

- Most Greeks were NOT citizens
- Slaves, foreign-born, and women couldn't be citizens



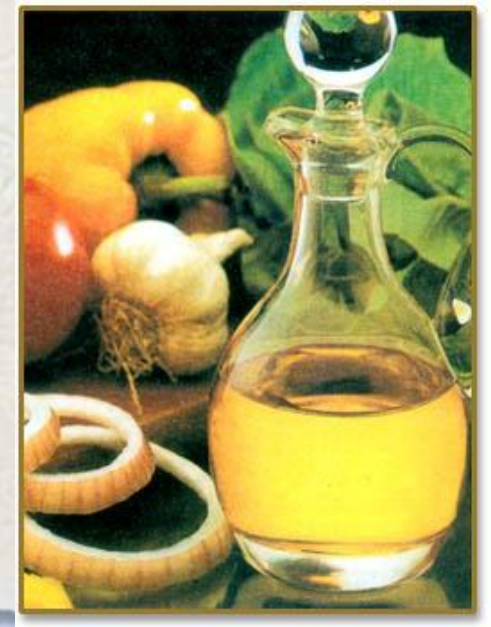
Greek Colonies & Trade

- Increase in population after the “dark ages” --> farmers couldn't grow enough grain to feed everyone
- Each polis sent out groups of people to set up colonies
 - Colonists sent grain back to the “parent city”



Greek Colonies & Trade

- Farmers on mainland produced wine, olive oil, and other cash crops for export
 - Greek trade expanded throughout the Mediterranean region



Greek Colonies & Trade

- 600s BCE = Greeks replaced barter system with money system
- Began producing textiles (cloth) and pottery



Political and Social Change

- Greek communities first ruled by kings -
- kings soon lost power
- Each polis was then ruled by
landholding aristocrats = nobles

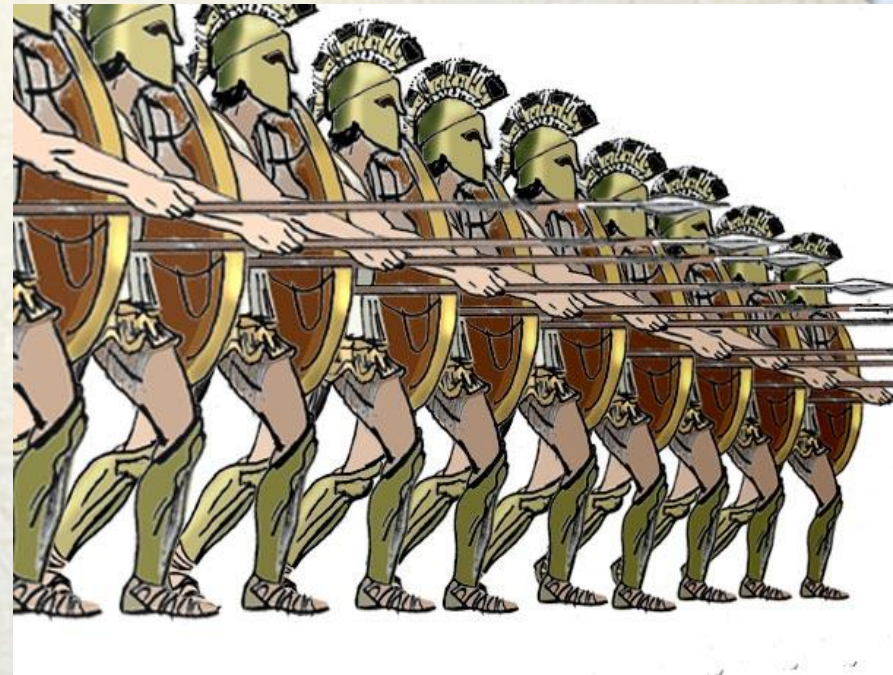


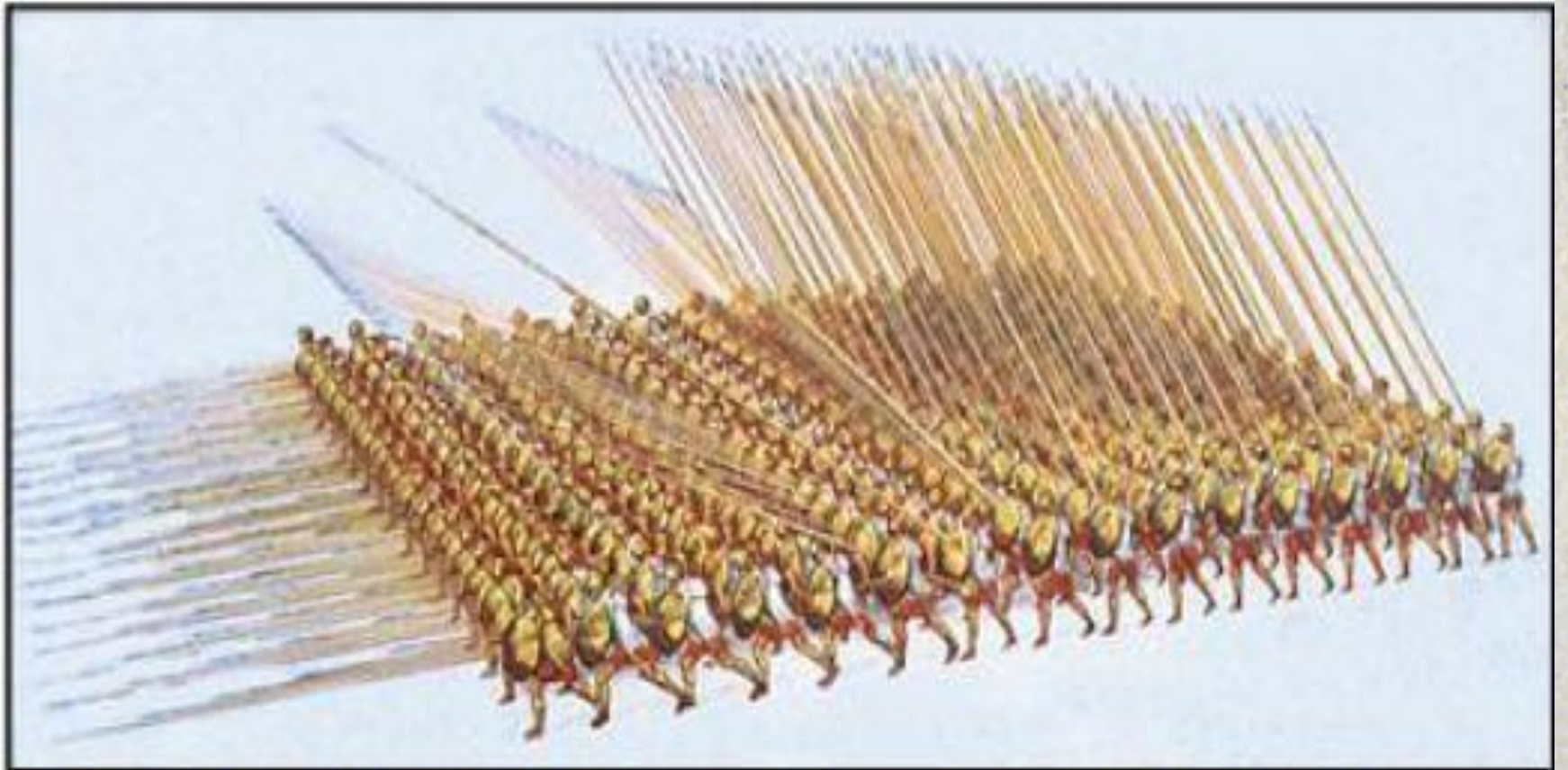
Political and Social Change

- Disputes between aristocrats and commoners (especially farmers) often arose
 - Farmers often had to borrow money from the aristocrats until harvest --> when they couldn't pay back the money, the aristocrats took the land, made farmers become sharecroppers/day laborers, or sold farmers into slavery

Political and Social Change

- Farmers began to protest
- Farmers were very powerful in Greek armies because they were the foot soldiers
- Greek armies relied on the **phalanx** = rows of foot soldiers close together with shields to form a wall





**Greek military formation known as the Phalanx
was instrumental in victory**

Political and Social Change

- Middle-class artisans & merchants wanted a voice in government & joined the farmers in protest

Political and Social Change



- As a result of the unrest: tyrannies arose
 - Tyrant = one man --> seized power and ruled the polis
 - Most were fair; a few were cruel and unjust
 - Tyrannies ruled until 500 BCE

Political and Social Change

- 500 BCE - 336 BCE = city-states were oligarchies or democracies
 - **Oligarchy** = a few wealthy people hold power
 - **Democracy** = government by the people
 - 2 most famous Greek city-states:
 - Athens = democracy
 - Sparta = oligarchy

