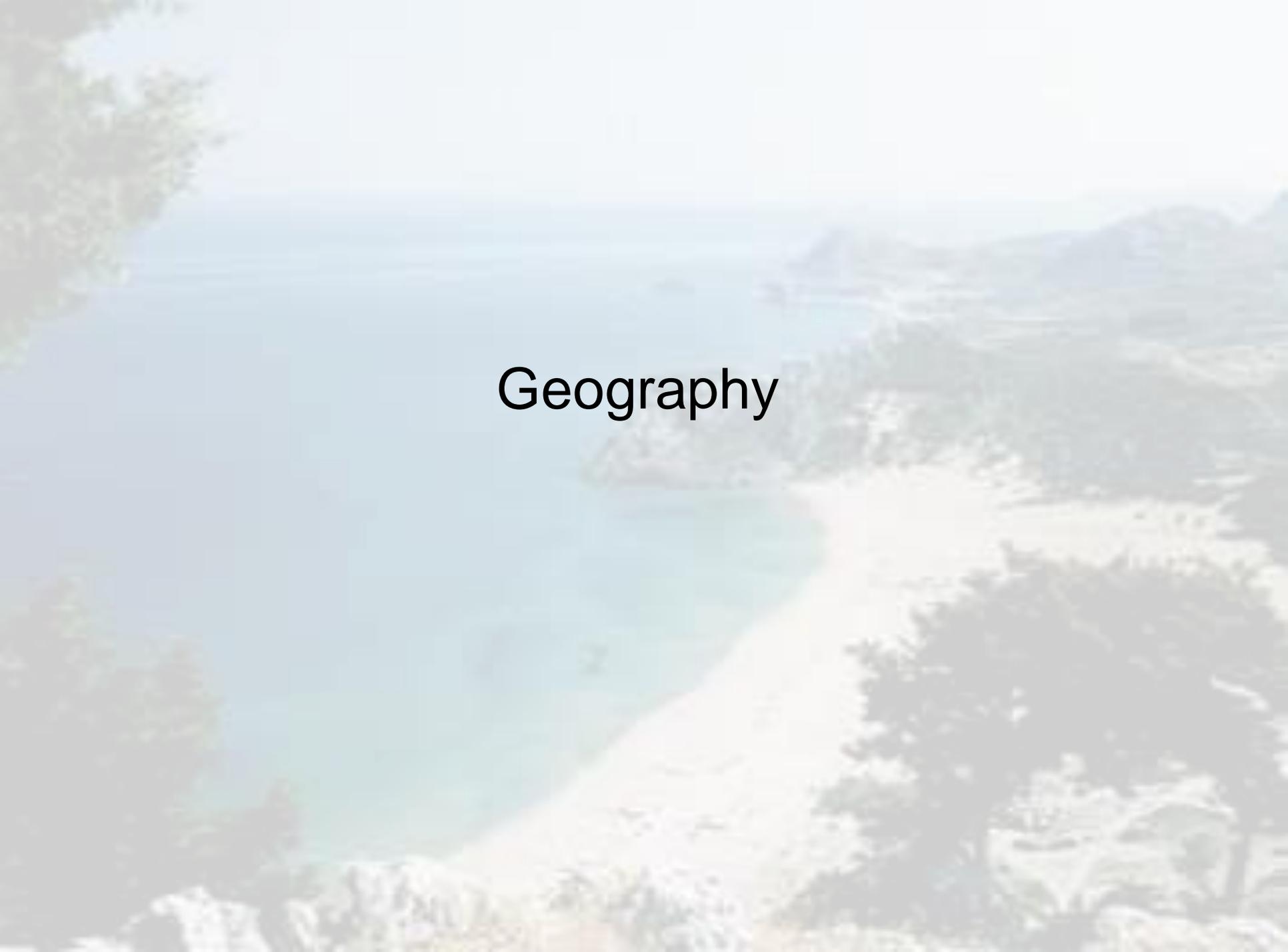


Ancient Greece

The Crucible of Civilization

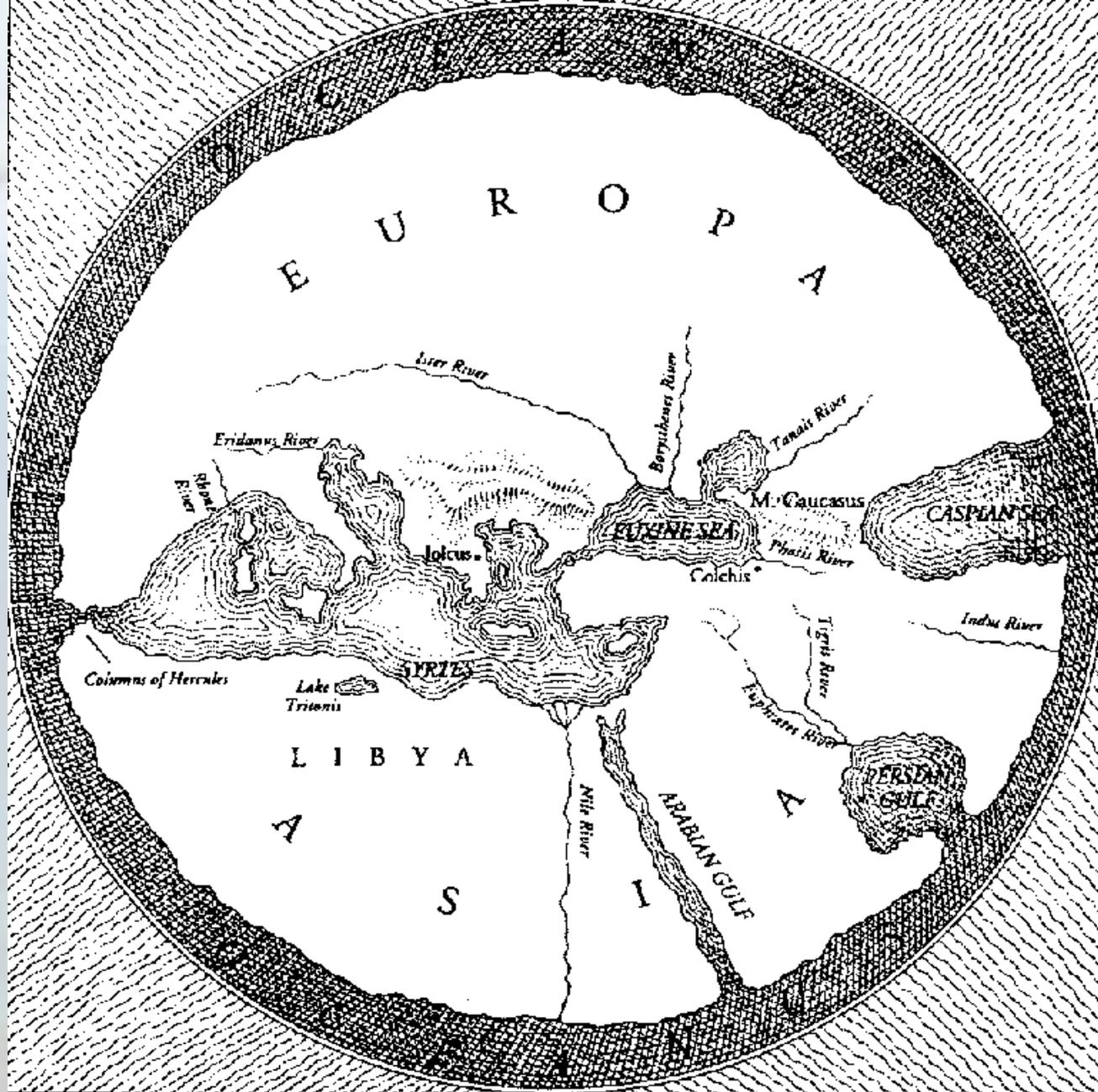
cru·ci·ble: a place or situation in which concentrated forces interact to cause or influence change or development

A scenic view of a coastline with a sandy beach, turquoise water, and mountains in the background. The word "Geography" is overlaid in the center.

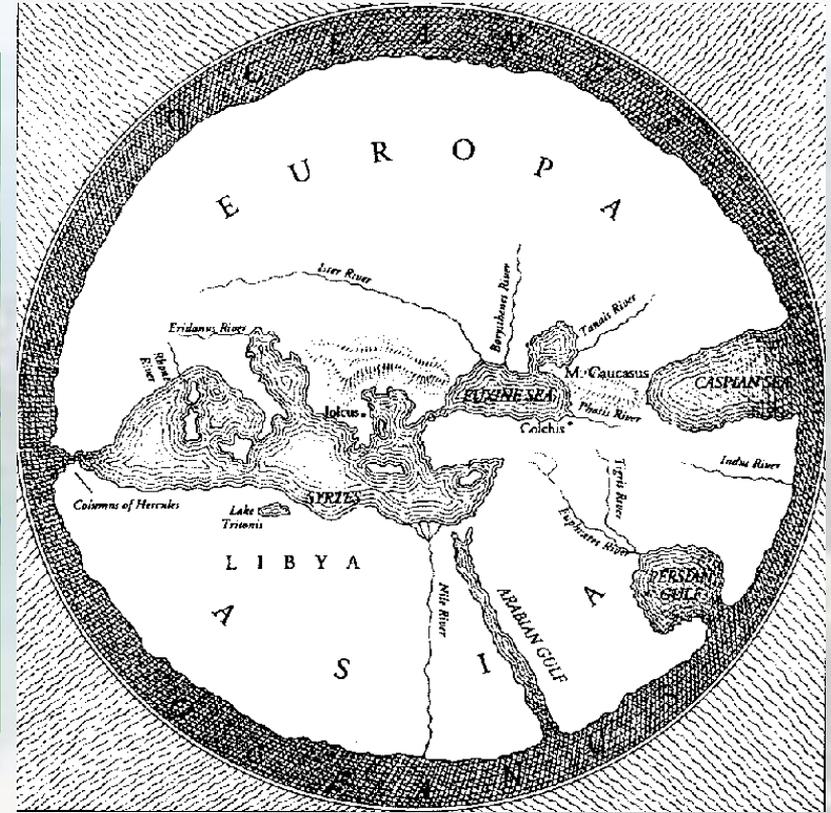
Geography



Located in southeastern Europe, Greece is defined by a series of mountains and surrounded on all sides except the north by water.



Ancient Greek View of the World

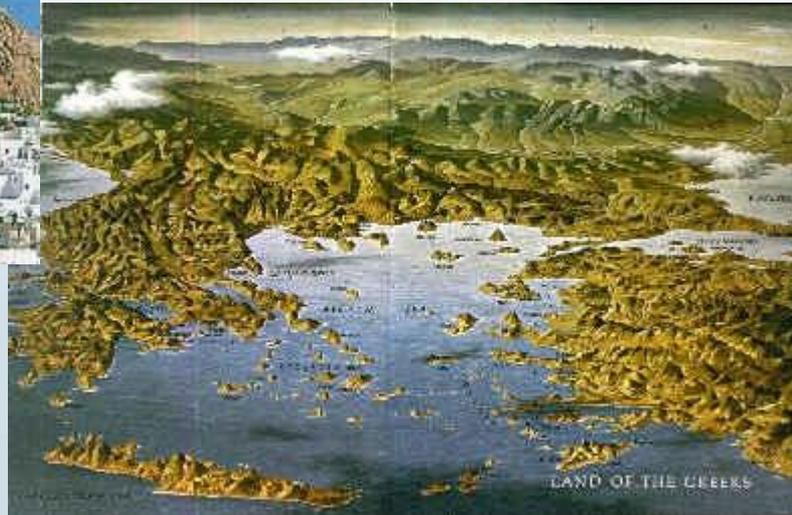
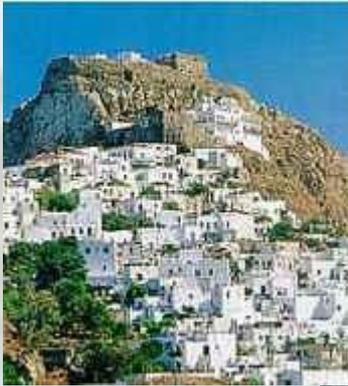


A scenic view of a Mediterranean coastline. In the foreground, a sandy beach curves along the shore, bordered by dark green trees and rocky terrain. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, transitioning to a deeper blue as it extends into the distance. In the background, a range of mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear sky. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

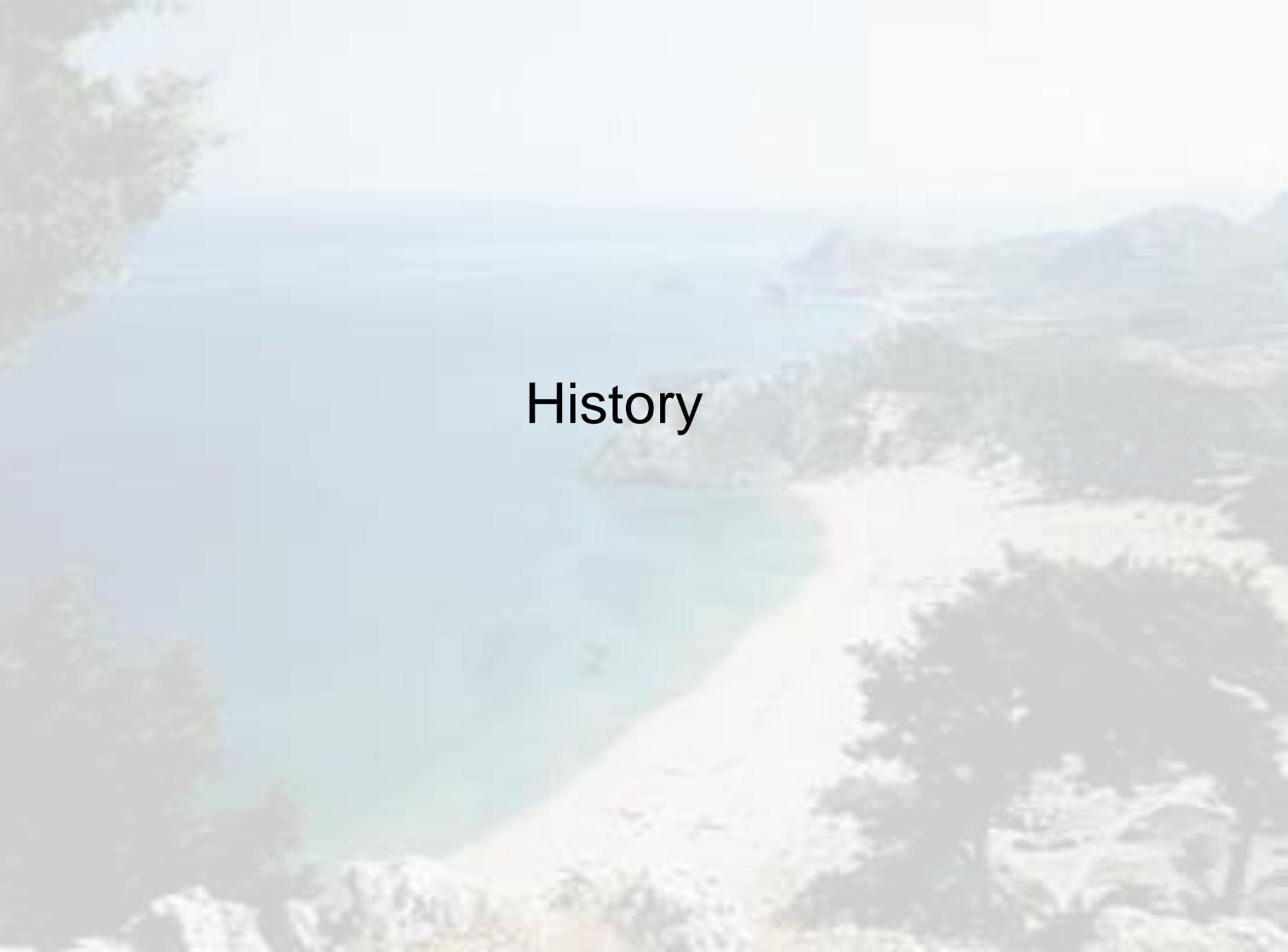
The Mediterranean Sea moderates Greece's climate, cooling the air in summer and providing warmth in the winter months. Summers are generally hot and dry. Winters are moderate and rainy in coastal regions and cold and snowy in mountainous areas.



Geographic factors played an important role in Greek history.



- Numerous **MOUNTAIN RANGES**, which crisscross the peninsula, hampered internal communications and led to the development of independent city-states.
- Numerous **ISLANDS** and the indented coastlines of the Greek peninsula and of Asia Minor stimulated a seagoing trade.
- The **ROCKY SOIL** and limited natural resources encouraged the Greeks to establish colonies abroad.

A scenic view of a coastline with a sandy beach, turquoise water, and mountains in the background. The word "History" is overlaid in the center.

History



GREEK HISTORY: AN OVERVIEW

Greek **CIVILIZATION** started around 2000 B.C. By 1600 B.C., the Greek people had built fortified cities in the major valleys and many people were educated. Greece then had several wars, including the Trojan War around 1200 B.C., which threw them into what is known as the Dark Age.

During the **DARK AGE**, knowledge of writing was lost and most people lived in isolated villages. The Dark Age ended in about 800 B.C when the Greeks started to write again with an alphabet based on that of the Phoenicians.

During that time, many city-states emerged and struggled with each other for power for hundreds of years after that. In 480 B.C., the Greeks **UNITED** to defeat the invading Persians, but the alliance didn't last long.

Around 477 B.C., two city-states, **ATHENS AND SPARTA**, became the dominant powers in that region and constantly fought each other for power. Greece had its **GOLDEN AGE** in Athens around 477 - 431 B.C.

In 334 B.C., **ALEXANDER THE GREAT**, leader of the country of Macedonia to the north, conquered the Greeks and started what is called the **HELLENISTIC AGE**. Greece unwillingly remained under Macedonian control until the Romans conquered both Macedonia and Greece around 140 B.C.

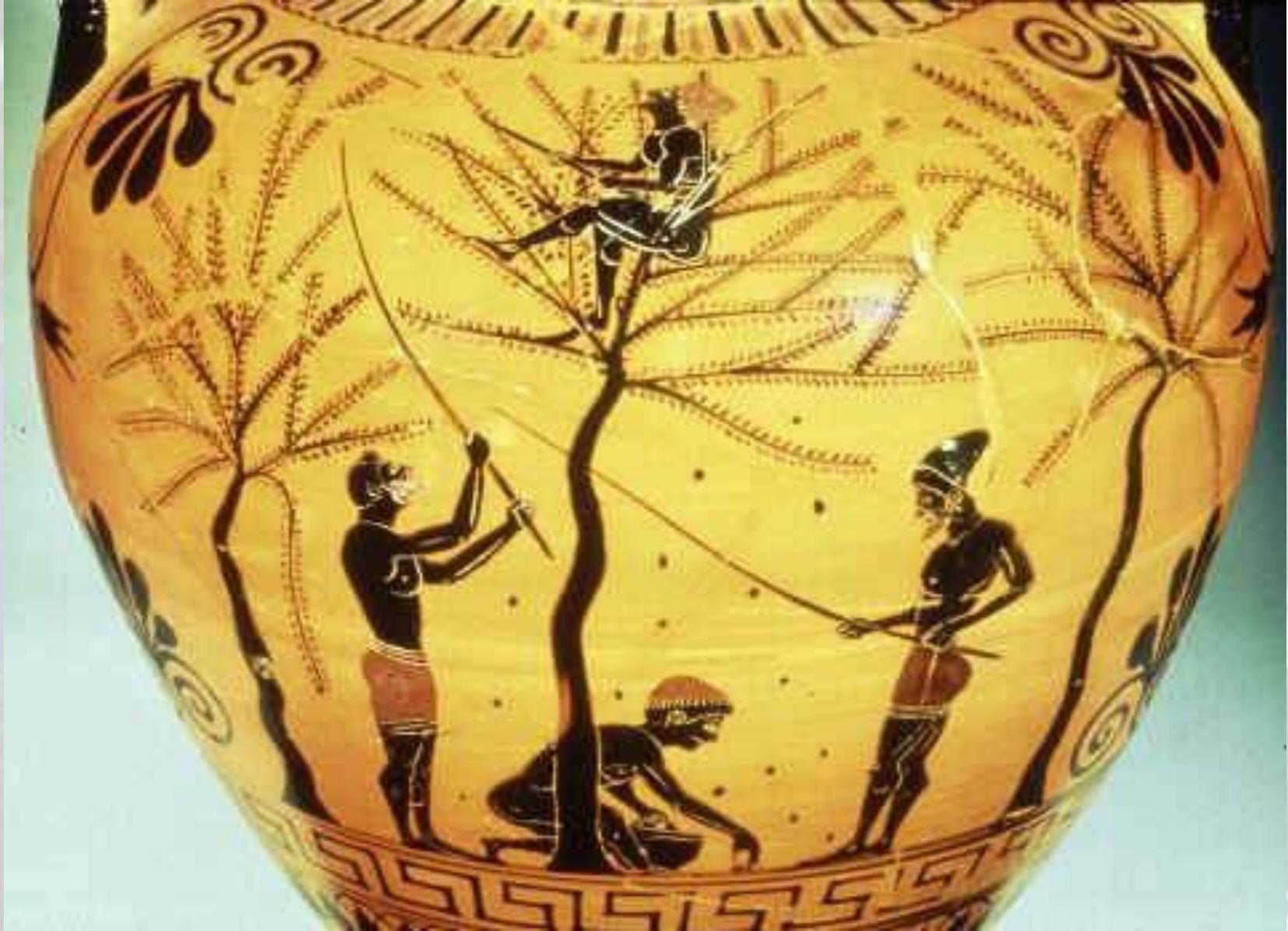
The **ROMANS** then spread the knowledge of the ancient Greek philosophers throughout their empire. The Roman Empire lasted as a unified empire until 395 A.D. when it was split into the eastern and western empires.

Greece became part of the eastern or **BYZANTINE EMPIRE** and Greek literature became the basis for learning in Byzantine institutions, especially in Constantinople, its capital. When Constantinople was destroyed by the Turks in 1453 A.D., the Greek literature stored there spread to the rest of Europe and helped start the **RENAISSANCE**.



A scenic view of a coastline. In the foreground, there are rocky outcrops and some greenery. A wide, sandy beach curves along the shore. The water is a clear, light blue, meeting the sky at a distant horizon. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a bright, slightly hazy sky. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Agriculture



Only 20-30% of ancient Greece's land was arable. The most important crops were olives, grapes, and barley.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS were those of a simple, self-sufficient agricultural system.

CROPS: The Greeks used **OLIVES** for eating and to make olive oil, used for cooking and as a lubricant.



They made wine from **GRAPES**. The common drink of everyone was a mixture of wine and water. Even children drank it. Dionysius, the mythological god of the vine, oversaw and blessed everything having to do with growing grapes and making wine.

BARLEY was used to make bread and was a staple part of the Greek diet. Demeter was the mythological goddess of grain.

LIVESTOCK: The ancient Greeks kept **CHICKENS**, **PIGS**, **SHEEP**, and **GOATS** (for milk and meat). They would only eat the meat of animals who had been *sacrificed* in the name of a god.



Generally, they did not eat a lot of meat, but instead depended upon **FISH** and **LEGUMES** (beans, chickpeas, and lentils) for protein.

A scenic view of a coastline with a sandy beach, turquoise water, and mountains in the background. The word "Government" is overlaid in the center.

Government



The **POLIS** (city-state) consisted of a city and its surrounding plains and valleys. The nucleus of the *polis* was the elevated, fortified site called the **ACROPOLIS** where people could take refuge from attack. With the revival of commerce, a **TRADING CENTER** developed below the acropolis



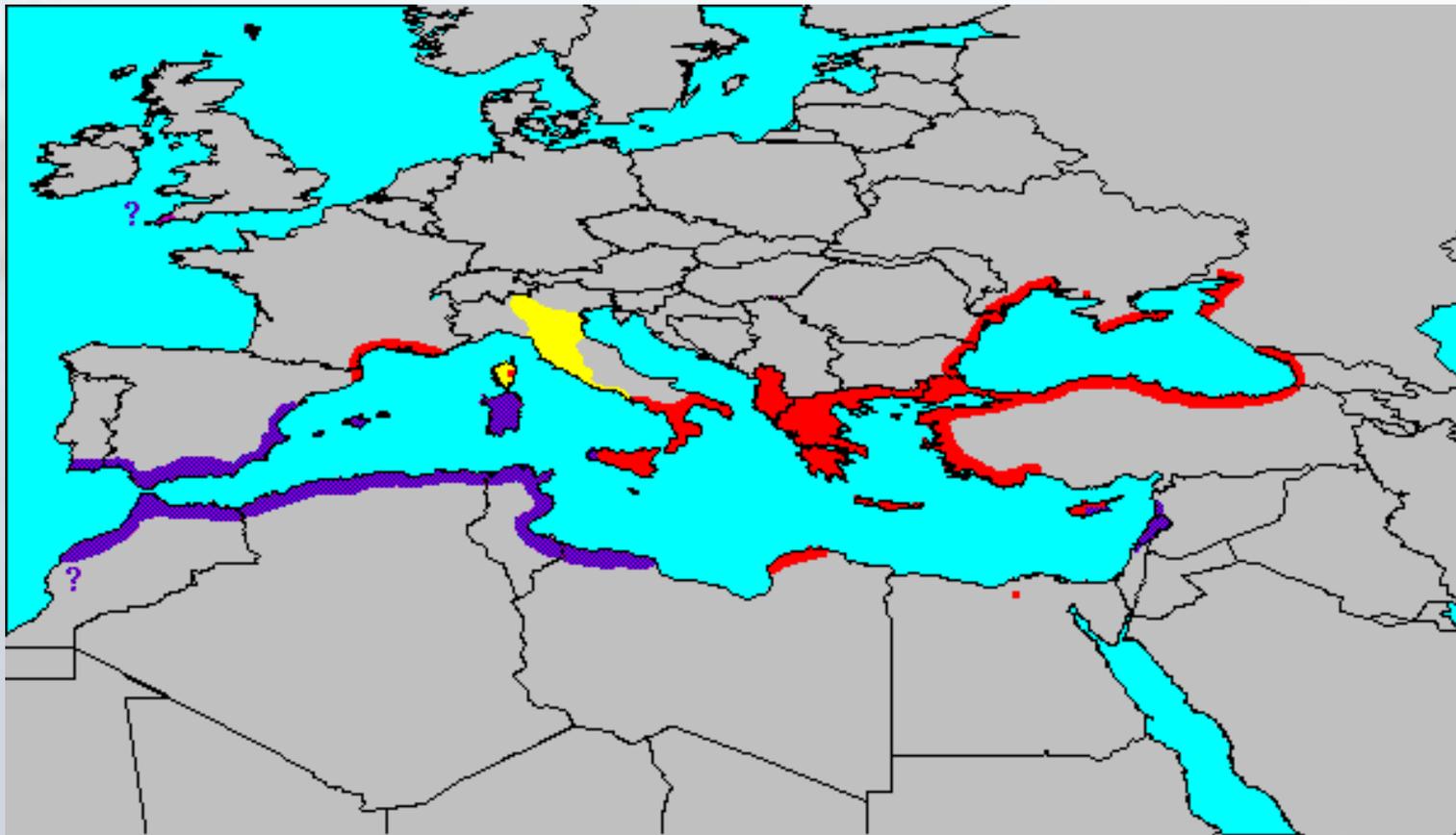
Four major **TYPES OF GOVERNMENT** evolved in ancient Greece:

- **Monarchy** (rule of a king) limited by an aristocratic council and a popular assembly.
- **Oligarchy** (rule of the few) arising when the aristocratic council ousted the king and abolished the assembly.
- **Tyranny** (rule by one who ruled without legal authority) rising to power on the discontent of the lower classes.
- **Democracy** (rule of the people), the outstanding political achievement of the Greeks.



By the middle of the 8th century B.C., the nobles, who resented the power of the tribal king, had taken over the government, ushering in the **AGE OF OLIGARCHY**:

- Nobles ruthlessly acquired the best land.
- Many commoners were reduced to virtual serfdom.
- Other commoners were forced to seek a living on rocky, barren soil.



Greece and her colonies (red) in the mid-sixth century B.C. Also shown are the two main rivals of Greece, the Phoenicians (purple) and the Etruscans (yellow).

In time, **COLONIZATION** ameliorated Greece's economic and social problems.

- By 600 B.C., the use of coined money had created the beginnings of a middle class.
- The Greek home states focused on the production of specialized wares (vases, metal goods, textiles, olive oil, wine) for export.



The continuing land hunger of the peasants contributed to a **POLITICAL REVOLUTION**.

- After 650 B.C., **TYRANTS** arose in many Greek city-states and, supported by the peasantry and rising merchant class, seized the reigns of government from the nobility.
- Tyrants redistributed land to the peasants and by promoting further colonization, trade, and industry, accelerated the rise of the mercantile class and completed the **ECONOMIC REVOLUTION**.



Athens to 500 B.C.

In 594 B.C, when Athenian nobles realized their failure to reform would result in a tyrant, they agreed to the policy of compromise advocated by the liberal aristocrat **SOLON**. Inspired by the new ideals of moderation and justice, Solon instituted **MODERATE REFORMS**:

- Provided a new start for the lower classes by **CANCELING DEBTS**.
- Sought **FULL EMPLOYMENT** by stimulating trade and industry and requiring fathers to teach their sons a trade
- Granted common people **POLITICAL RIGHTS** but not equality.



Unfortunately, Solon's moderate reforms satisfied neither party. After a period of civil strife, **PISISTRATUS**, a military hero and champion of the commoners, took over as tyrant.

- Solved the economic problem by **BANISHING MANY NOBLES**, whose lands he distributed among the poor, and by promoting commerce and industry.
- Supported **PUBLIC WORKS** and the **PATRONAGE OF THE ARTS** -- starting Athens on the path to cultural leadership in Greece.



CLEISTHENES temporarily seized power in 508 B.C. and put through constitutional reforms that destroyed the remaining power of the nobility.

- Created **TEN NEW TRIBES**, embracing citizens of all classes and districts.
- Gave the popular **ASSEMBLY** the **RIGHT TO INITIATE LEGISLATION**.
- Gave the new and democratic **COUNCIL OF FIVE HUNDRED, SELECTED BY LOT** from the ten tribes the power to advise the assembly and supervise the administrative actions of the *archons*.
- Started the institution of **OSTRACISM** (an annual referendum) in which a quorum of 6,000 citizens could vote to exile for ten years any individual thought to be a threat to Athenian democracy.

[Go to film clips about Cleisthenes](#)

During the **GOLDEN AGE** of Greece (461-429 B.C.), the great statesman **PERICLES** guided Athenian policy.

- Power resided in a board of **TEN ELECTED GENERALS**.
- To insure that the **POOR COULD PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT**, Athens paid jurors (a panel of 6,000 citizens chosen annually by lot) and members of the Council.

Although **DEMOCRACY** was an outstanding achievement, it is important to keep in mind that the majority of the inhabitants of Athens were not recognized citizens.

- **WOMEN, SLAVES**, and **RESIDENT ALIENS** were **DENIED CITIZENSHIP**.
- These groups had no standing in the law courts.
(If a woman sought the protection of the law, she had to ask a citizen to plead for her in court.)





Sparta to 500 B.C.

The city-state of Sparta expanded by conquering and enslaving its neighbors. To guard against revolts by the state slaves (helots), who worked the land, Sparta transformed itself into a militaristic **TOTALITARIAN STATE**.

- For the small minority of ruling Spartans, it was a democracy.
- For the masses, it was an oligarchy (rule by the few).



The state enforced **ABSOLUTE SUBORDINATION** of the individual to its will.

- Every Spartan was first of all a soldier.
- Sickly infants were left to die on lonely mountaintops.
- Boys were taken from their families at age 7 to live under rigorous military discipline.
- Girls were trained to be the mothers of warrior sons.
- Spartan women bid the men farewell by saying: "Come back with your shield or on it."



- Sparta remained **BACKWARD** culturally and economically.
- Trade and travel were prohibited for fear that alien ideas would disturb the status quo.
- A **SELF-IMPOSED ISOLATION** resulted in:
 - Intellectual stagnation
 - Rigid social conformity
 - Military regimentation



- To insure that its helots would remain uncontaminated by democratic ideas, Sparta formed the **SPARTAN LEAGUE** of oligarchic states. When the Persians conquered Lydia in 547 B.C., they also annexed Ionia.
- In 499 B.C., the Ionian cities revolted, established democratic regimes, and appealed to the Athenians to help.
- The **BATTLE OF MARATHON** in 490 B.C. was a decisive victory for the Athenian army, which was half the size of the Persians. (6400 Persians died as opposed to 192 Athenians.)
- Ten years later, in the **BAY OF SALAMIS**, the Greek fleet (largely Athenian) turned the tide of victory and forced the Persians to retreat.



- In 478 B.C., Athens invited the city-states bordering on the Aegean to form a defensive alliance called the **DELIAN LEAGUE**.
- To maintain a 200 ship navy that would police the seas, each state was assessed ships or money in proportion to its wealth.
- By 468 B.C., after the Ionian cities had been liberated and the Persian fleet destroyed, various League members thought it unnecessary to continue the confederacy.
- Motivated by fear of the Persians and by the need to protect free-trade, the Athenians suppressed all attempt to secede and created an informal **EMPIRE**.
- By aiding in the suppression of local aristocratic factions within its subject states, Athens emerged as the leader of a union of democratic states.
- However, its **HUBRIS** (excessive pride) proved to be its undoing.



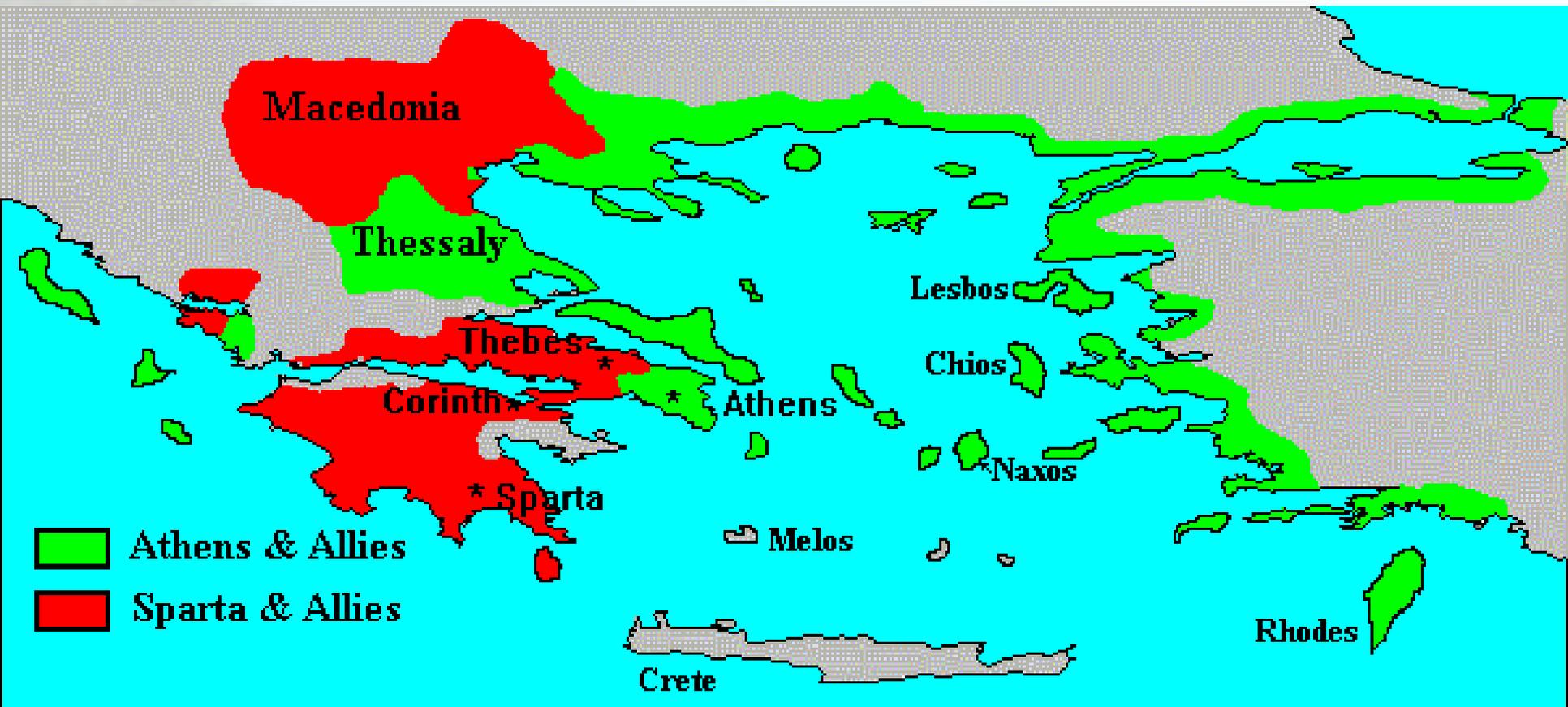
- To many Greeks, especially the oligarchic **SPARTAN LEAGUE** and the aristocratic factions within the Athenian empire, **ATHENS WAS A TYRANT CITY** and an enslaver of Greek liberties.
- In 431 B.C., the **PELOPONNESIAN WAR** broke out between the Spartan League and the Athenian empire.
- **COMMERCIAL RIVALRY** between Athens and Sparta's ally Corinth was an important factor.
- Real cause: **SPARTAN FEAR** of Athens' growth of power.

STRENGTHS:

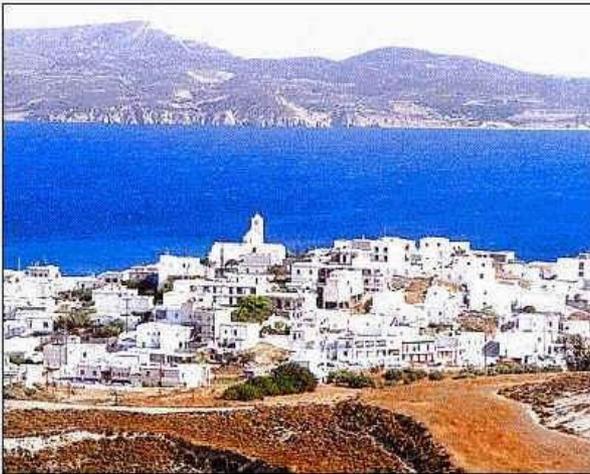
- Sparta's army had the ability to besiege Athens and lay waste to its fields.
- Athens' unrivaled navy could import foodstuffs and harass its enemies' costs.

WEAKNESSES:

- In 2nd year of war, a plague killed a third of the Athenian population, including Pericles.
- Leadership of the Athenian government passed to demagogues.



The Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.)
Nearly all of Greece was polarized between two alliances.



- A compromise peace was reached in 421 B.C. During the succeeding period, **ATHENIAN IMPERIALISM** manifested itself in its worst form.
- In 416 B.C., an expedition embarked for **MELOS, A NEUTRAL AEGEAN ISLAND**, to force it to join the Athenian empire.
- Acting on the premise that "might makes right," the Athenians **PUT ALL MELIANS OF MILITARY AGE TO DEATH** and **SOLD THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN INTO SLAVERY**.
- This exhibition of **HUBRIS** was their downfall.
- In 404 B.C., **ATHENS CAPITULATED** after its last fleet was destroyed by a Spartan fleet built with money received from Persia in exchange for the Greek cities in Ionian.
- The once great city of Athens was stripped of its possessions and demilitarized.

A scenic view of a coastline with a sandy beach, turquoise water, and mountains in the background. The image is slightly faded and has a soft, ethereal quality. The word "Architecture" is centered in the middle of the image.

Architecture



The Parthenon Today

The Acropolis of Athens

Erechtheion

Pinakotheke

Erechtheum

Parthenon

King's Shrine

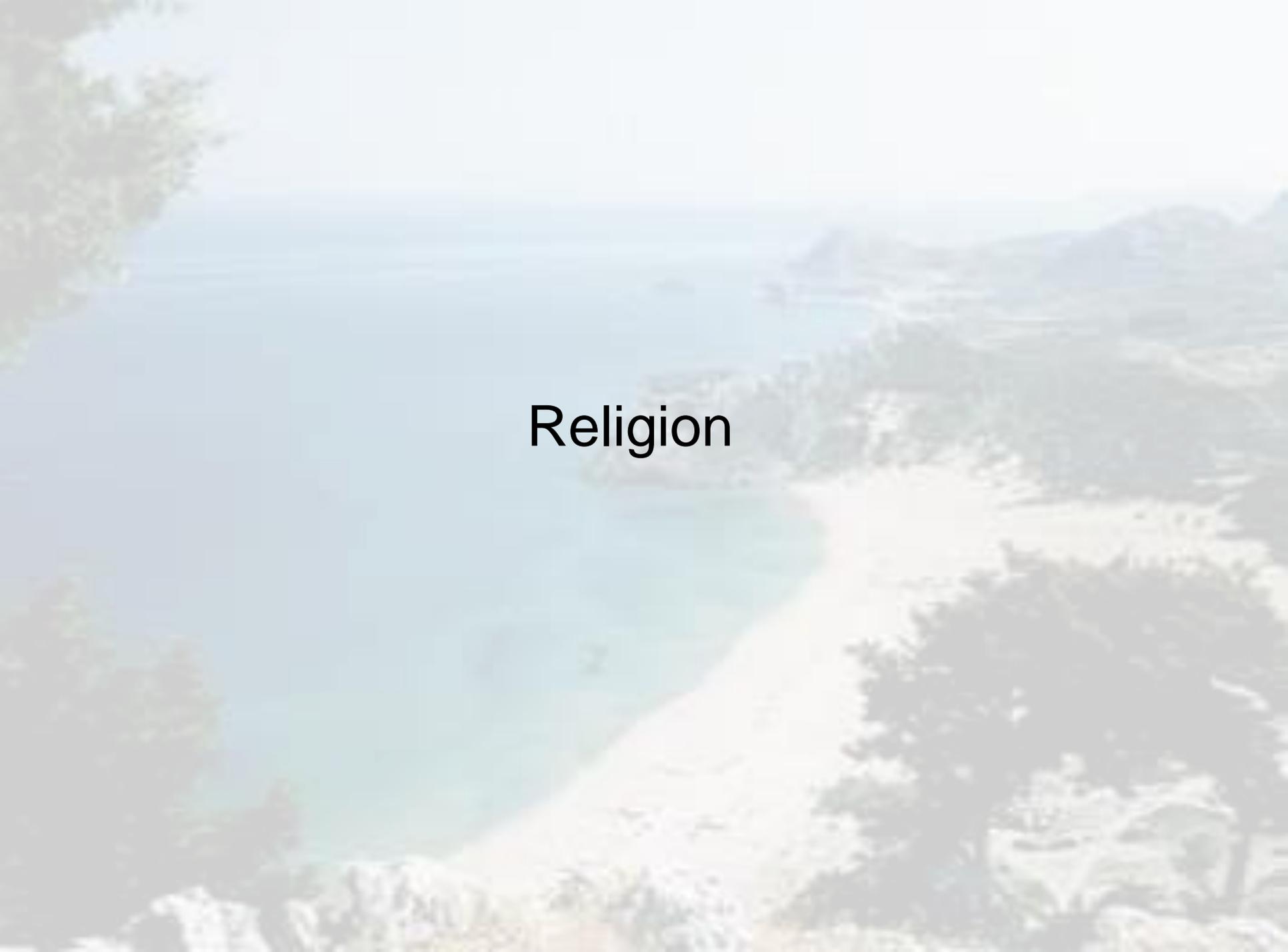
Theater of Dionysius



Odeum of Herodes Atticus (Roman)

Stoa of Eumenes

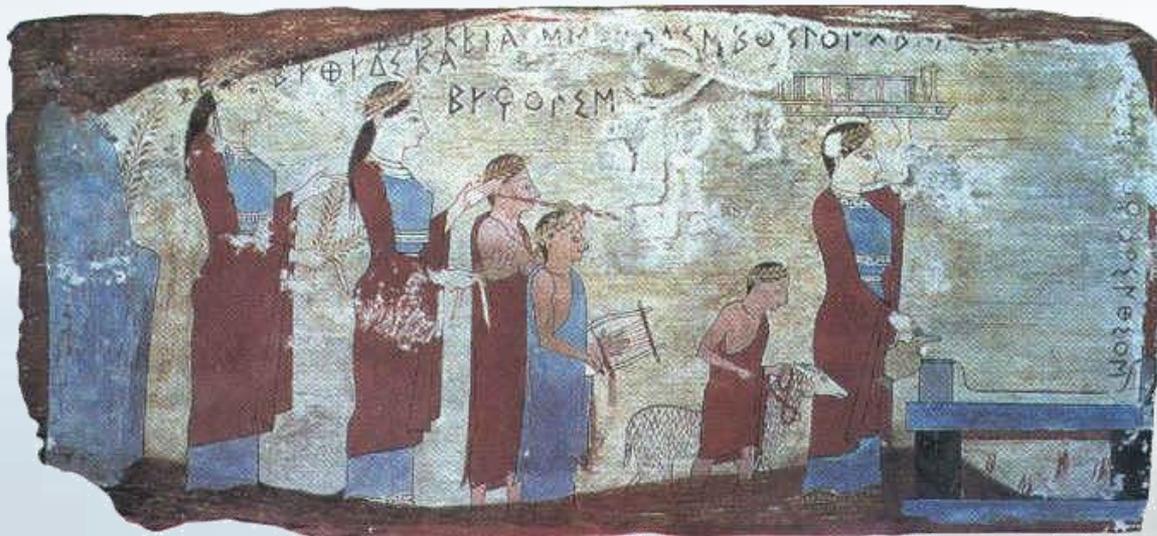
Sanctuary of Asclepius

A scenic view of a coastline with a sandy beach, turquoise water, and mountains in the background. The word "Religion" is overlaid in the center.

Religion



- The Greeks were **POLYTHEISTIC** and did not all worship the same gods.
- Some small villages worshiped the main gods and their own village gods.
- There were hundreds of Greek gods (perhaps around 1,000). Some of the most famous gods were **Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Artemis, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Athena, Demeter, Hermes, Ares, and Hades.**
- **ZEUS** surpassed all other gods in spirit, wisdom and justice and his wife **HERA** was the queen of the gods.



SACRIFICES to please the gods were a major part of every Greek's religion. Most gods preferred an animal sacrifice -- generally a **DOMESTICATED ANIMAL** like a chicken, goat or cow.

When an animal was sacrificed, it was burned on top of an altar. After it was fully cooked, it had to be **EATEN ON THE SPOT** -- usually before nightfall. These sacrifices were the property of the god, and had to be eaten in his presence.

This was especially important because the ancient Greeks believed that the god's spirit was within the animal sacrificed, and by eating the animal, the worshippers **CONSUMED HIS POWER**. In this way, they strengthened the connection between man and god.

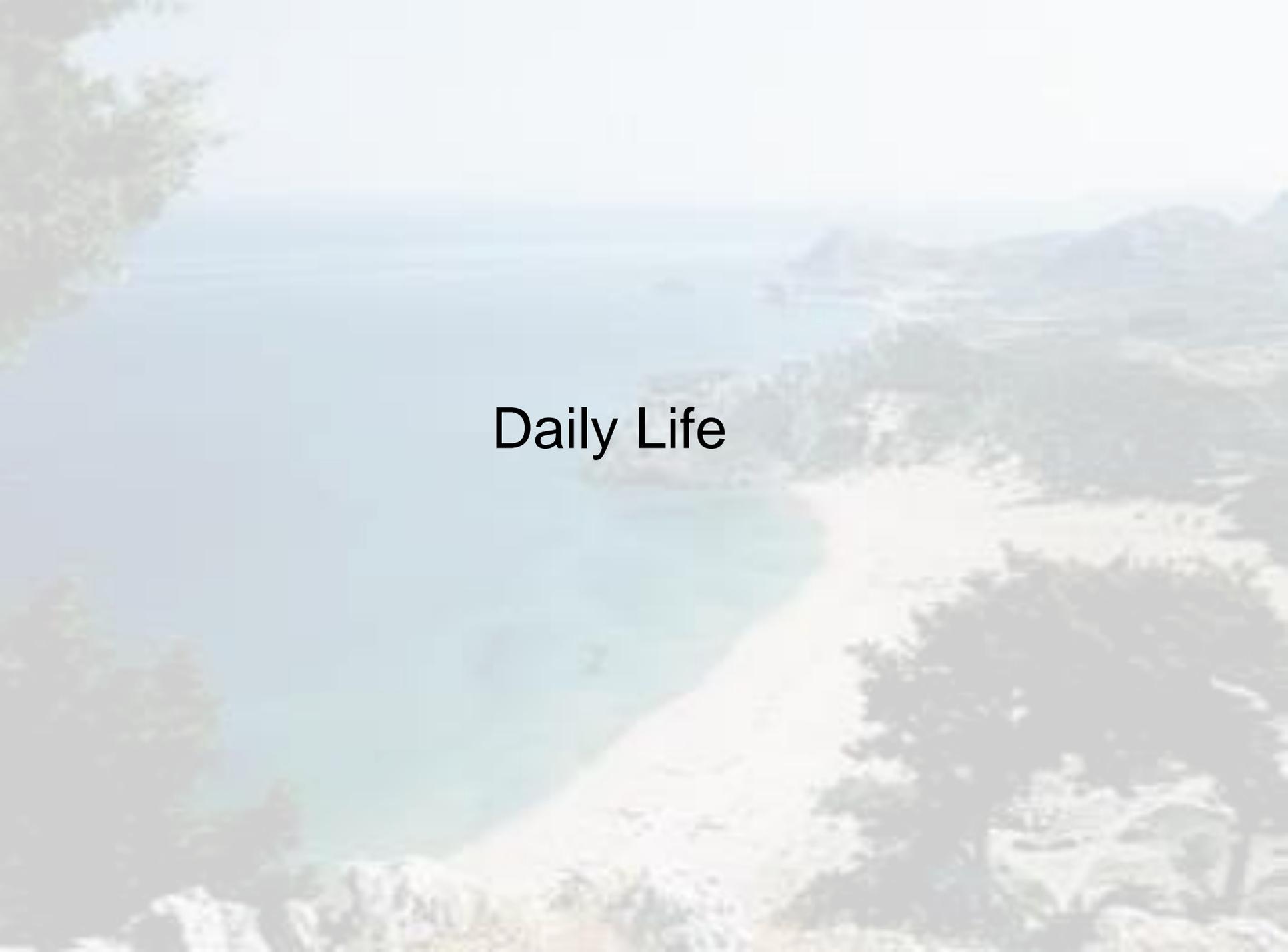


Dating back to 1200 BC, the Oracle of Delphi was the most important shrine in all Greece. Built around a sacred spring, Delphi was considered to be the *omphalos* - the center (literally navel) of the world.

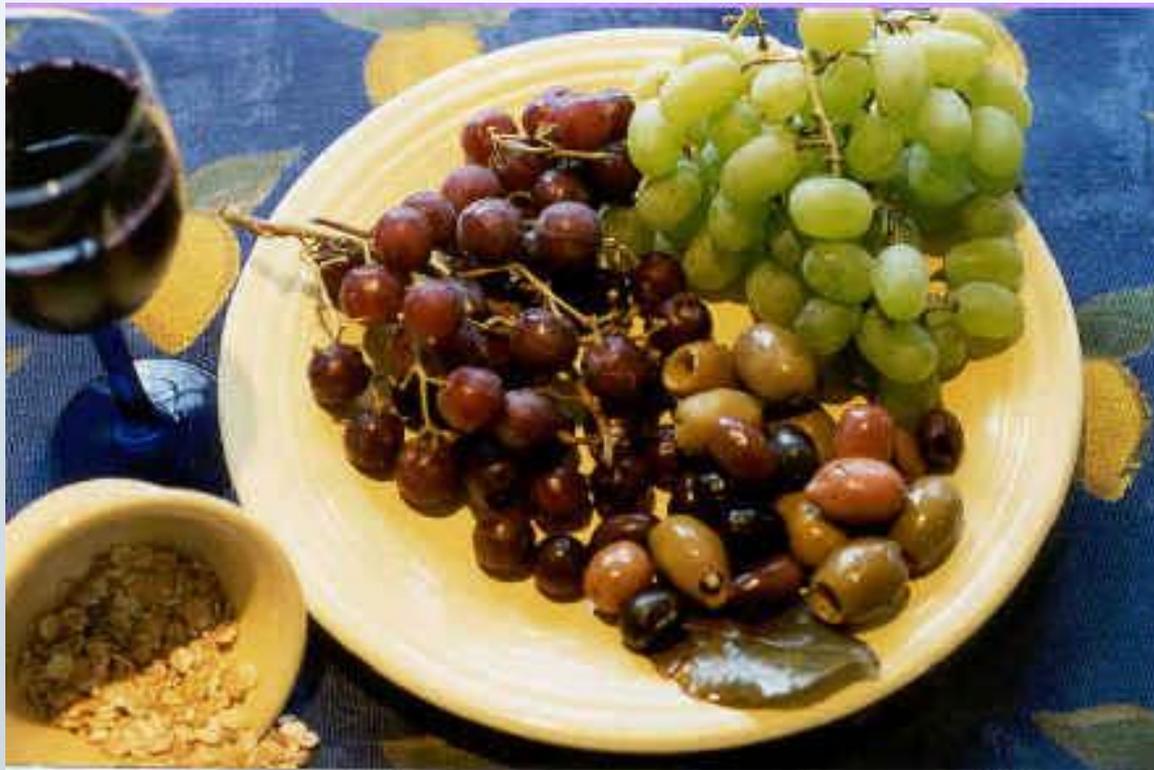
People came from all over Greece and beyond to have their questions about the future answered by the Pythia, the priestess of Apollo. And her answers, usually cryptic, could determine the course of everything from when a farmer planted his seedlings, to when an empire declared war.



[Visit the Parthenon as It was 2000 Years Ago](#)

A scenic view of a coastline. In the foreground, there are rocky outcrops and some greenery. The middle ground features a wide, sandy beach that curves along the shore. The water is a clear, light blue, meeting the beach at a gentle slope. In the background, there are several mountains or hills, some with sparse vegetation, under a bright, clear sky. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Daily Life



The daily diet included **CEREALS** (like wheat and barley), **GRAPES**, and **OLIVES** -- commonly called the **MEDITERRANEAN TRIAD**.

The Greeks typically made grapes into **WINE** and olives into **OLIVE OIL**, so they would keep without refrigeration. Grains and cereals were commonly used for **BREAD** and **PORRIDGE**.

Diets were supplemented with **VEGETABLES** and **HERBS** from kitchen gardens as well as **BERRIES**, and **MUSHROOMS**. The poor usually ate **FISH**, while oysters, sea urchins, octopus, and eels were considered **DELICACIES** and only eaten by the wealthy.

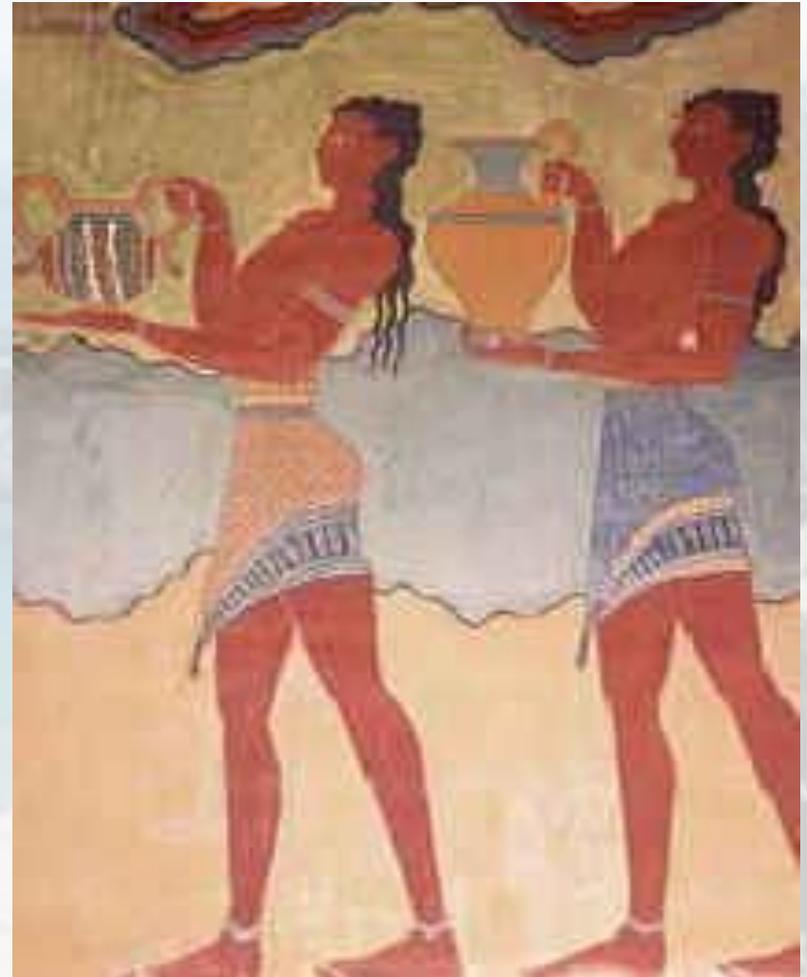


BREAD in ancient Greece was a very important part of the daily diet. At first all breads were prepared in the embers of a fire. Eventually the Greeks developed a bread **OVEN** that is similar in function to the ovens we use today. Because they required less wood or charcoal (which was expensive), these ovens made bread **AVAILABLE TO ALMOST EVERYONE**.

The most common type of bread in Greece was called **MAZA** which was a flat bread made from barley flour. Most meals consisted of *maza* and some sort of accompaniment to the bread called **OPSON**. This might be vegetables, fish, olives, onions, garlic, fruit, and on a rare occasion, meat.

MEN did most of the hard, muscle power jobs such as **PLOWING AND REAPING**.

The **WOMEN SOWED SEED**, **WEEDED THE FIELDS** and **TENDED THE HOUSEHOLD** and **CHILDREN**. Women might also grow **SMALL GARDENS** around the house with vegetables and beans. Women might also bring in extra income for the farm with a **CRAFT TRADE** such as weaving that they might sell at a market.



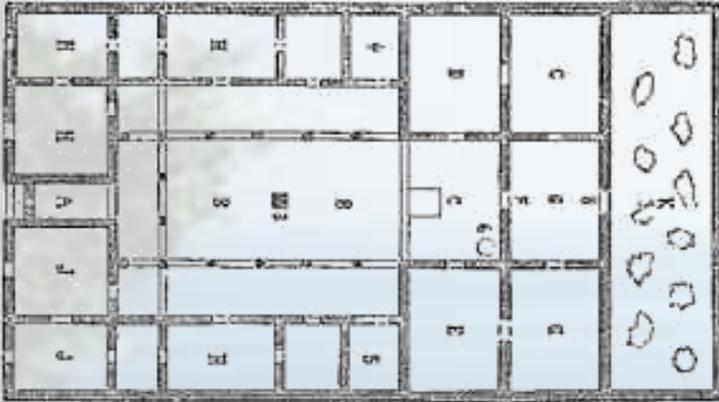


Farmers had to give a **SMALL PORTION** of their crops to the gods as a **SACRIFICE** and to the city-state for **TAXES**. This left the farmers with just enough to feed their families.

The land was divided very precisely. Each household in a polis was given a plot of land. This plot would be handed down to the children. If the farmer could not pay his land taxes; a **WEALTHIER LAND OWNER COULD TAKE IT** and pay the debt for the farmer. Many aristocrats built their wealth this way.



- **GREEK WOMEN:** Greek women had very **LITTLE FREEDOM** outside the home. They could attend weddings, funerals, some religious festivals, and could visit female neighbors for brief periods of time.
- In their homes, Greek women were in charge. Their job was to **RUN THE HOUSE AND TO BEAR CHILDREN.**
- Most Greek women themselves as most households had slaves. **DID NOT DO HOUSEWORK**
- **FEMALE SLAVES** cooked, cleaned, and worked in the fields.
- **MALE SLAVES** watched the door to make sure no one came in when the man of the house was away, except for female neighbors, and acted as tutors to the young male children
- Wives and daughters were **NOT ALLOWED TO WATCH THE OLYMPIC GAMES** as the participants in the games did not wear clothes.



- **GREEK HOUSING:** Citizens wanted to live within the **CITY** because it was the **CENTER OF CIVIC LIFE**. They built private houses along **NARROW STREETS**; crowded up against one another
- Unlike the luxurious public buildings, houses were built in a simple manner. They were made up of **TWO OR THREE ROOMS**, around an open air **COURTYARD** and were made of **STONE, WOOD, OR CLAY BRICKS**.
- **LARGER HOMES** might also have a **KITCHEN**, a **ROOM FOR BATHING**, a **MEN'S DINING ROOM**, and perhaps a **WOMAN'S SITTING AREA**.
- **MEN** spent most of the time in the Agora or abroad - only returning home to **EAT AND SLEEP**.
- **WOMEN** were **SEGREGATED** in their own quarters - on the ground floor or second level of a two storey home

Typical Day of a Greek Housewife

- **7:05** Rises
- **7:08** Eats small piece of bread soaked in wine. Is still hungry, but must be careful about her figure
- **7:09** Pecks husband on cheek and sends him off to the agora. Sighs. Looks at the four bare (slightly tinted) walls. Rarely allowed out of the house, she prepares for another day at home.
- **7:15** Summon hand maiden to cool her with huge peacock feather.
- **8:30** All dressed up with no place to go, she wanders into the kitchen, eyes a piece of honey cake. Resists.
- **9:27** Hears argument between two servants, rushes out to mediate.
- **11:15** Wanders into the courtyard near flowerbed where slave girls are spinning and giggling. Asks to join them. Is reminded this is improper behavior - they suggest she ready herself for lunch.
- **12:15** Husband arrives, chiding her about the foolishness of make-up. Pretends to agree. Husband leaves at 12:22
- **3:00** Instructs daughter on her duties of being a wife.
- **8:05** Husband and wife sit down at low table to dinner; bread, oil, wine, a few figs, small portion of fish (only 320 calories) and beans. She hears about his day. He tells her she should not bother about the affairs of men. Pretends to agree. She is too hungry to argue.
- **10:10** Falls asleep. Does not dream of tomorrow

Excerpt from: Lynn, Schnurnberger. Let There Be Clothes.



According to tradition the first **OLYMPICS** took place in 776 BC. They became a central aspect of Greek culture and in many ways were the most important factor uniting the Greeks, except for their language and mythology.